

Arafura Skate, *Okamejei arafurensis*

Report Card assessment	Sustainable		
IUCN Red List Australian Assessment	Least Concern	IUCN Red List Global Assessment	Least Concern
Global Assessors	Awruch, C.A. & White, W.T.		
Australian Assessors	Kyne, P.M., Heupel, M.R., White, W.T., Simpfendorfer, C.A. (Shark Action Plan) & Rigby, C.L.		
Report Card Remarks	Fishing pressure is low and significant spatial refuge across its range.		

Summary

The Arafura Skate is a small continental shelf and upper slope species with a relatively restricted range across tropical waters in Western Australia, Northern Territory, and adjacent Indonesian waters. It is possibly caught incidentally in the Commonwealth Northwest Slope Trawl Fishery although that fishery operates at the southern limit of the species' range and interactions are likely minimal. Further, trawl effort is limited in this



fishery and chondrichthyans have been assessed as at low risk. It may be caught incidentally in the Northern Territory Demersal Fishery which also has have limited effort. If it is caught it would likely be released as it is of little commercial value; post-release mortality is unknown. The Arafura Skate would receive refuge in the Commonwealth North and North-west Marine Parks Networks and state and territory waters where considerable areas are closed to trawling. Overall, fisheries interactions are likely currently minimal, fishing effort is low across its range, and there is significant spatial refuge. Therefore, the Arafura Skate is assessed as globally and in Australia as Least Concern (IUCN) (Kyne et al. 2021), and in Australia as Sustainable (SAFS).

Distribution

The Arafura Skate occurs in tropical northwest Australia and in adjacent waters off Indonesia (Last et al. 2016, Kyne et al. 2021). In Australia, it occurs from the Arafura Sea (Northern Territory) to the southwest of Scott Reef (Western Australia) (Last and Stevens 2009).

Stock structure and status

There is currently no information on population size, structure, or trend for the species.

Fisheries

The Arafura Skate may be caught incidentally by the Northwest Slope Trawl Fishery which targets prawns and scampi (*Metanephrops australiensis*) and operates at 200–600 m depth (Patterson et al. 2022). However, the fishery only overlaps the southern part of the species' range and as the fishery has limited effort with only 1–6 active vessels, the interactions are likely to be minimal. Further, chondrichthyans have been assessed as at low risk in this fishery (Zhou et al. 2009). The southern part of Arafura Skate's range also overlaps partly with the Australian-Indonesian MOU Box where Indonesian fishers may operate using only traditional methods (Patterson et al. 2022), and are unlikely to fish at depths of this species occurrence. It may also be caught in the Northern Territory Demersal Fishery which has low effort (NTG 2019, Kyne et al. 2021). The species would receive refuge in the Commonwealth North-west and North Marine Parks Networks that came into effect in 2018 and also considerable refuge in state and territory waters; more than 90% of the area within the 200 m isobath of Western Australian northern waters may never have been trawled due to a combination of spatial trawl closures and marine parks, and considerable areas of Northern Territory are closed to trawling (Gaughan and Santoro 2021, Kyne et al. 2021, Park Australia 2023).

Habitat and biology

The Arafura Skate is demersal on the outer continental shelf and upper slope at depths of 180–300 m (Last et al. 2016). Maximum size is approximately 50 cm total length (TL) and males mature at 38–41 cm TL (Last and Gledhill 2008). Little else is known of its biology.

Longevity and maximum size	Longevity: unknown Max size: ~50 cm TL
Age and/or size at maturity (50%)	Males: 38–41 cm TL Females: unknown

CAAB Code: 37 031044

Link to IUCN Page: <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/195469/68637757>

Link to page at Shark References: <https://shark-references.com/species/view/Okamejei-arafurensis>

References

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