

West Australian Legskate, *Sinobatis bulbicauda*

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

Summary

The West Australian Legskate is a small deepwater skate with a wide range across tropical to subtropical waters in Western Australia and a localised distribution in eastern Indonesia. It is caught incidentally in deepwater trawls. In Australia, it was caught by trawlers targeting prawns and scampi in the 1990s but since then effort has significantly declined. It is likely currently caught in the Commonwealth Northwest Slope Trawl Fishery and Western



Deepwater Trawl Fishery and likely released as it is of little commercial value; post-release mortality is unknown. However, both fisheries have limited effort and the species would receive some refuge at depth as occurs beyond the maximum depth fished. Chondrichthyans have been assessed as at low risk in these fisheries. The species would also receive refuge in the Commonwealth North-west Marine Parks Network. Overall, in Australia, fishing effort is very low across its range where there is also significant spatial and depth refuge. Therefore, the West Australian Legskate is assessed globally and in Australia as Least Concern (IUCN) (Kyne et al. 2021) and in Australia, Sustainable (SAFS).

Distribution

The West Australian Legskate occurs in tropical and subtropical waters of Western Australia and in eastern Indonesia off Tanimbar Island (Last and Stevens 2009, Last et al. 2016). In Western Australia, it has a broad range occurring from Ashmore Reef to Shark Bay (Last and Stevens 2009, Last et al. 2016).

Stock structure and status

There is currently no information on population size, structure, or trend for the species. However, it was considered moderately common off northwest Australia (Last and Stevens 2009).

Fisheries

The West Australian Legskate is caught incidentally by deepwater trawl fisheries. There is no information on catch or use in Indonesia. In Australia, it was caught by deepwater trawlers targeting prawns and scampi (*Metanephrops australiensis*) in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but since then deepwater trawl effort has declined considerably (Last and Stevens 2009, Patterson et al. 2022). It is likely caught in the Commonwealth Northwest Slope Trawl Fishery (targets prawns and scampi at 200–600 m depths) and the Western Deepwater Trawl Fishery (targets finfish and bugs (*Ibacus* spp.) at 200–700 m depths). As it is of little commercial value, the West Australian Legskate is likely discarded and there is no information on post-release mortality. However, both fisheries have limited effort with only 1–6 active vessels and the species would receive some refuge at depth as it occurs deeper than the current maximum depths fished. Chondrichthyans have been assessed as at low risk in these fisheries (Zhou et al. 2009). It would also receive refuge in the Commonwealth North-west Marine Parks Network that came into effect in 2018 which include zoning and gear restrictions. This network includes the Ashmore Reef Marine Park, which has been in place since the 1980s and is mostly a Sanctuary Zone where fishing is prohibited (Parks Australia 2023).

Habitat and biology

The West Australian Legskate is demersal on the outer continental shelf and upper slope at depths of 150–1,125 m (mostly at 400–800 m) (Last and Séret 2008, Last et al. 2016). Maximum size is 56 cm total length (TL) and males mature at approximately 43 cm TL (Last and Séret 2008, Last et al. 2016). Little else is known of its biology.

Longevity and maximum size	Longevity: unknown Max size: 56 cm TL
Age and/or size at maturity (50%)	Males: ~43 cm TL Females: unknown

CAAB Code: 37 033001

Link to IUCN Page: <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/195477/68643373>

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

References

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