

Indigo Legskate, *Sinobatis caerulea*

Report Card assessment	Sustainable		
IUCN Red List Australian Assessment	Least Concern* (Endemic to Australia)	IUCN Red List Global Assessment	Data Deficient
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.		

*The Australian assessment status is more recent than the Global assessment and the shift from DD to LC aligns with a less evidentiary and more precautionary approach to Red List assessments rather than any new available information.

Summary

The Indigo Legskate is a small poorly-known continental slope species endemic to tropical and subtropical waters of Western Australia in a relatively restricted area from North West Cape to Shark Bay. It is only known from a limited number of specimens and it may occur more widely. It may be incidentally 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



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fisheries have limited effort and the species would receive considerable refuge at depth as it occurs to 1,170 m which is beyond the maximum depth fished of 700 m. Chondrichthyans have been assessed as at low risk in these fisheries. The species would also receive refuge in the Commonwealth Northwest Marine Parks Network. Overall, fishing effort is very low across its range where there is also significant depth refuge. Therefore, the Indigo Legskate is assessed as Least Concern (IUCN) (Kyne et al. 2021) and Sustainable (SAFS).

Distribution

The Indigo Legskate is endemic to Western Australia where it occurs in tropical and subtropical waters from west of North West Cape, Exmouth to west of Dirk Hartog Island, Shark Bay (Last and Stevens 2009, Last et al. 2016). There are reports that it occurs off Indonesia which suggests it may occur more widely (Last et al. 2016), but until they are confirmed it is considered an Australian endemic species.

Stock structure and status

The Indigo Legskate is known only from a limited number of specimens and there is currently no information on population size, structure or trend for the species (Last and Stevens 2009, Last et al. 2016).

Fisheries

The Indigo Legskate may be incidentally caught in two Commonwealth trawl fisheries, the Northwest Slope Trawl Fishery and the Western Deepwater Trawl Fishery. The former targets prawns and scampi (*Metanephrops australiensis*) at 200–600 m depths and the latter targets finfish and bugs (*Ibacus* spp.) at 200–700 m depths (Patterson et al. 2022). As it is of little commercial value, the Indigo Legskate is likely released if caught 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 considerable refuge at depth as it occurs at to a depth of 1,170 m. 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 (Parks Australia 2023).

Habitat and biology

The Indigo Legskate is demersal on the upper to mid-continental slope at depths of 480–1,170 m (Last and Séret 2008, Last et al. 2016). Maximum size is at least 69 cm total length (TL) and 43 cm disc width (DW) with size at maturity unknown: the largest male observed was 54 cm TL and immature (Last and Séret 2008). Nothing else is known of its biology.

Longevity and maximum size	Longevity: unknown Max size: at least 69 cm TL
Age and/or size at maturity (50%)	Unknown

CAAB Code: 37 033003

Link to IUCN Page: <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/195478/68643492>

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

References

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