

East Australian Legskate, *Sinobatis filicauda*

Report Card assessment	Negligible		
IUCN Red List Australian Assessment	Least Concern* (Endemic to Australia)	IUCN Red List Global Assessment	Data Deficient
Global Assessors	Rigby, C. & Harry, A.		
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 low and mostly shallower than its depth range and Coral Sea Marine Park provides significant protection.		

*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 East Australian Legskate is a small deepwater species endemic to tropical northeast Australia. It is only known from a limited number of specimens and has a relatively restricted range though it may occur more widely, as there have been few surveys and relatively limited fishing effort across its range. It was mostly collected from research surveys in the mid-1980s. The species may be captured in the Line Sector of the Coral Sea Fishery (CSF), although it rarely fishes beyond 600 m and has low effort and with no commercial value, the species is likely released if caught; the CSF has chondrichthyan handling practices to maximise post-release survival. It is unlikely to have been taken by trawls in the CSF (which is no longer permitted) or by Queensland managed fisheries as they do not operate at its depth range. The East Australian Legskate would also receive significant protection from the Coral Sea Marine Park. Although poorly-known, the species has both significant spatial protection and refuge at depth, as it occurs beyond most depths fished. Therefore, the East Australian Legskate is assessed as Least Concern (IUCN) (Kyne et al. 2021) and Negligible (SAFS).



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Distribution

The East Australian Legskate is endemic to tropical waters off northeast Australia (Last et al. 2016). It has a relatively restricted known range from the Queensland Plateau off Cairns to the Saumarez Plateau off Rockhampton (Queensland) (Last and Séret 2008). This is a relatively small extent of occurrence of 15,405km² (Rigby and Harry 2015), though it may occur more widely (Last et al. 2016), given that there have been few surveys and relatively limited fishing effort across its spatial and depth range.

Stock structure and status

The East Australian 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.

Fisheries

The East Australian Legskate has been mostly collected from research surveys in the mid-1980s (Last et al. 2014). The species may be caught in the Line Sector of the Commonwealth managed Coral Sea Fishery (CSF), though the sector rarely fishes to depths beyond 600 m and it has limited effort with only 1–2 vessels active in recent years (Patterson et al. 2022). It may have been previously captured in the Trawl Sector of the CSF, although this is unlikely as trawl gear rarely fished deeper than 600 m and trawl fishery effort was historically low. As of 2018–2019, trawling is no longer permitted in the CSF (Patterson et al. 2022). The species is likely released if caught as it has no commercial value and the CSF has implemented chondrichthyan handling practices to maximise post-release survival (AFMA 2010). The East Australian Legskate has also received significant protection since 2014 with the implementation of the Coral Sea Marine Park (previously the Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve), which includes zoning and gear restrictions (Patterson et al. 2022, Parks Australia 2023). The species is unlikely to interact with Queensland managed fisheries as it occurs beyond depths fished (DEEDI 2010, DAF 2019).

Habitat and biology

The East Australian Legskate is demersal on the upper continental slope and has been recorded from depths of 605–880 m (Last et al. 2016). Maximum size is at least 55 cm total length (TL) and 37 cm disc width (DW) (Last and Séret 2008). The only adult male specimen recorded to date was 55 cm TL and mature. Little else is known of its biology.

Longevity and maximum size	Longevity: unknown Max size: at least 55 cm TL
Age and/or size at maturity (50%)	Males: mature by 55 cm TL Females: unknown

CAAB Code: 37 033002

Link to IUCN Page: <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/195479/68643584>

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

References

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