

Fishing

We must protect our sawfish and river sharks

February 26, 2016 1:30am
GRANT JOHNSON NT News



It's important to handle and release speartooth sharks with care. Picture: CHARLOTTE KLEMPIN

SAWFISHES and river sharks are protected species; if they are caught by recreational anglers they must be released safely back into the water.

Fishers who are lucky enough to experience a close encounter with one of our protected sawfish or river shark species are meeting with some of the most interesting inhabitants of our northern waterways.

By reporting sightings anglers can help researchers better understand the distribution of these species.

Understanding a species' distribution — where it occurs and what habitat it needs to feed and reproduce — is the basic building block of managing any species. Anglers are an important source of information.

In the Northern Territory, there are four sawfish species (narrow,argetooth, dwarf and green) and two river shark species (northern river shark and speartooth shark).

These species inhabit a wide variety of habitats, but most important are the Northern Territory's relatively pristine estuaries, rivers and coastal regions that provide important nursery and feeding areas.

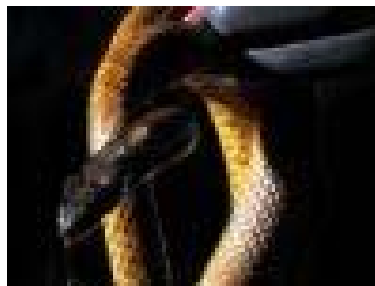
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To better understand the status of northern Australia's current sawfish and river shark populations, research is being conducted under the Australian Government's National Environmental Science Programme (NESP), through a partnership between Fisheries NT, Charles Darwin University (CDU) and CSIRO, with support from Kakadu National Park and traditional owners.

"The project will provide the Department of the Environment with information to improve management and facilitate the recovery of these species," said project leader, Dr Peter Kyne from CDU.

"These species are poorly known, but we have recently discovered new populations of some, including the critically endangered speartooth shark in the Daly River."



It seems the species has a broader distribution and more opportunities for long-term survival than previously thought.

Seen or caught a sawfish or a river shark?

Send an email to: peter.kyne@cdu.edu.au

For more on research visit the Fisheries website at www.dpif.nt.gov.au or use the NT Fishing Mate App. For more on sawfish and river shark species visit the NESP website at www.nespmarine.edu.au/

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