



Dwarf Sawfish *Pristis clavata*

Distribution

Although once more widespread in the Indo-West Pacific Ocean, the Dwarf Sawfish may now be restricted to northern Australia, where it occurs in tidal reaches of rivers, estuaries and coastal waters of the Kimberley (WA), NT, Gulf of Carpentaria and Cape York (QLD).



Conservation Status

International (IUCN Red List of Threatened Species):
Endangered

Australia: **Vulnerable**

Northern Territory: **Vulnerable**

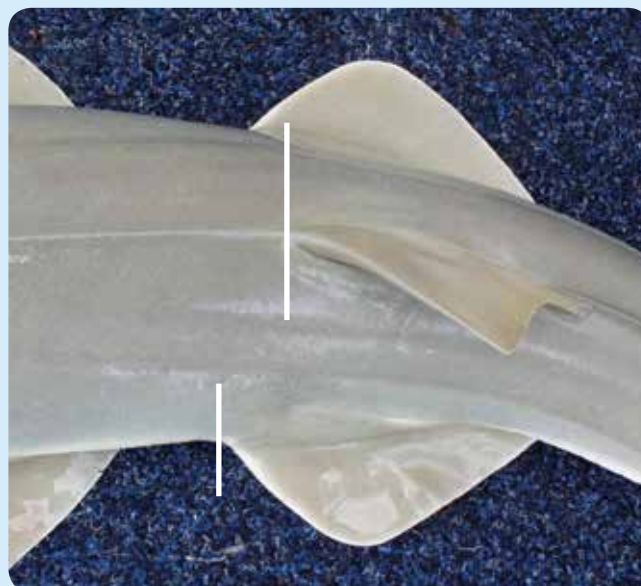
- Dwarf Sawfish is a protected species throughout Australia.
- It has declined across its global range and it now appears to be extinct outside of Australia.
- Northern Australia therefore represents the last population stronghold (although its status here is also of conservation concern).

Dwarf Sawfish Identification

Rostral teeth evenly-spaced and occur along the whole rostrum:



Front of the first dorsal fin is over, or slightly behind, the origin of the pelvic fins:



Dwarf Sawfish Biology

- Occurs in shallow-water coastal and estuarine waters, and in the tidal reaches of rivers (but does not occur in freshwater).
- Size at birth is estimated at 60–81 cm long.
- Despite its name, maximum size is small relative only to other sawfish species; Dwarf Sawfish grow to at least 3.2 m long.
- Pregnant females give birth to live young, but it is unknown how many pups they have.
- Tracking of a few Dwarf Sawfish showed that they rested in inundated mangrove forests at high tide and moved out onto subtidal mudflats at low tide. They moved up to 10 km each tidal cycle and often returned to the same area to rest at high tide.
- Sawfish have low productivity, which limits their ability to recover from depletion.

Research

- This Marine Biodiversity Hub Project is gaining a better understanding of sawfish to inform management.
- Research on Dwarf Sawfish is focused on Kakadu National Park where data is gathered on occurrence in the Park.
- Dwarf Sawfish are tagged to monitor movements and determine critical habitats.

Habitat



Releasing Dwarf Sawfish

- Released sawfish have a high chance of survival.
- If possible, remove hook and all fishing line.
- Beware of the sharp rostral teeth.
- Sawfish >2 m length require a 2-person hold.

Remember: Dwarf Sawfish are protected. Keeping the rostrum as a trophy will kill the animal. Release it safely to ensure its survival, and that of the species.

Seen a Dwarf Sawfish?

If you've seen or caught a sawfish, please send details to: peter.kyne@cdu.edu.au or call (08) 8946 7616

Include:

- Location of sighting or capture
- Date
- Size (if possible)
- Photographs

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Australian Government

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