Israel Nature and Parks Authority

www.parks.org.il

Science Division, Department of Ecology

Scientific Authority for Israel
for the CITES Convention

Response of Israel to Notification No. 2011/049

Information to be submitted for the 26th meeting of the Animals Committee

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Sharks and Rays

Domestic measures

Israel has included the elasmobranchs in its list of protected species. Specifically listed as protected in the latest (2005) regulations, are all sharks (Order Selachii) and all rays (Order Batoidae). They may not be captured, harmed, traded or kept, without a specific permit from the Israel Nature and Parks Authority (INPA).

The INPA had begun a recent campaign to increase awareness of the need to protect these species and has increased enforcement efforts against fishing of these species. A new information sheet about the importance of sharks in the ecosystem and the regulations against fishing them, was prepared in Hebrew and Arabic (Israel's two official languages) and is attached at the end of this report.

Similarly, any import or export of sharks and rays (alive or dead), or any parts and derivatives of these species requires an import or export permit from the INPA. Live specimens also require a permit from the Fishery Department of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Species of Concern for Possible Consideration by the Animals Committee

Israel has concern over the conservation status of guitarfish of the genus *Glaucostegus*; Israel is a range state for two of these species. According to the FAO there are four species of guitarfish (Rhinobatidae) in the genus, three of which are listed in the IUCN Red List as endangered with classification VU (Vulnerable), and one without sufficient data to make a determination (DD - Data Deficient).

Scientific name	Common names (English)	Red Book classification
Glaucostegus granulatus	Sharpnose Guitarfish	VU
Glaucostegus halavi	Halavi Guitarfish	DD
Glaucostegus thouin	Clubnose Guitarfish	VU
Glaucostegus typus	Common Shovelnose Ray, Giant Shovelnose Ray	VU

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Here is specific information on these four species, based on that in the IUCN Red Book (IUCN Red Book web site accessed 1/1/2012):

Glaucostegus granulatus (= *Rhinobatos granularus*) A large (to 215 cm total length) inshore and offshore guitarfish recorded to depths of 119 m. It is an Indo-Pacific species with a poorly documented distribution, but with a centre of abundance around India and Sri Lanka. *Rhinobatos granulatus* was once moderately abundant but is now irregularly caught in local fisheries. It is susceptible to capture in a variety of fishing gear including trawl, gillnet, line and seine net and its occurrence along inshore areas of the continental shelf makes these rays an easy target for such fisheries. The species is impacted by direct and indirect fishing pressure where the flesh is utilised and the demand for fins for the international fin trade could be a factor in the switch from subsistence fisheries to more directed, commercial export fisheries of especially the larger guitarfish in Asia. Habitat requirements are not well understood, but inshore areas are important as nursery areas and these are being impacted upon by fishing activities and environmental degradation/pollution. The entire known area of occurrence of *R. granulatus* is impacted by often intense and generally unregulated and unmonitored fisheries. The centre of abundance for this species, off India and Sri Lanka is impacted upon by a high level of resource utilisation, as is most of the Southeast Asian region. Fishing pressure is consistently increasing in these areas and the demand for fins for the international fin trade is helping drive landings of large guitarfish. Although exact catch data are not available this species is seen much less regularly than it was previously and declines of greater than 30% are expected to have already occurred, while fishing pressure continues unabated over this species. Native range: Australia; India (Andaman Is.); Indonesia; Kuwait; Myanmar; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Sri Lanka; Thailand; Viet Nam.

Glaucostegus halavi (= *Rhinobatos halavi*) - The Halavi Guitarfish is a poorly known guitarfish confirmed from the Red Sea and Gulf of Oman, but likely occurring off the adjacent coastlines of the Gulf of Aden and northwestern Arabian Sea. Reports from the Mediterranean Sea and the coasts of India, Myanmar, Philippines, Vietnam, China, Australia, and West Africa are all unconfirmed. Frequent misidentification complicates any inference of relative population size. A target and utilized bycatch in fisheries, but appears to have some refuge from fishing pressure in certain areas (e.g., Oman). Lack of information about abundance, combined with limited knowledge of the extent of fishing pressure impacting this species necessitates a Data Deficient classification at present. Research is required better to define its distribution and to determine population trends. Native range: Djibouti; Israel; Egypt; Eritrea; Oman; Saudi Arabia; Yemen.

Glaucostegus thouin (= Rhinobatos thouin) has a widespread distribution in the Indo-West Pacific. It was once moderately abundant but is now irregularly caught as bycatch in local fisheries throughout its range, especially in the Western Central Pacific. It is a large species (>300 cm TL), vulnerable to gillnets, inshore trawl fisheries and even line fishing. Rhinobatids are taken by multiple artisanal and commercial fisheries throughout their range as a target species and as bycatch, and population declines in many guitarfish species have been observed in areas of

the Indo-Pacific. Local population depletion can be inferred from Indonesia where the target gillnet fishery fleet declined from a maximum of 500 boats in 1987 to 100 in 1996, due to declining catch rates (Chen 1996). Flesh is sold for human consumption in Asia and the fins from large animals fetch particularly high prices, creating a significant incentive for bycatch to be retained (the value of rhinobatid and rhynchobatid fins far exceeds that of other sharks and rays). Demands for dried fins for the international fin trade could be a factor in the switch from subsistence fisheries to more directed fisheries, although their flesh is also highly sought after. Very little is known about the biology or population status of *R. thouin*. Their existence along coastal inshore areas of the continental shelf makes them an easy target for fisheries and it is likely that habitat degradation in these areas may also be affecting nursery areas. Population declines are inferred from observed declines in bycatch numbers in local fisheries and given its susceptibility to capture by multiple fishing gear types and its high value fins, it is probable that numbers have been locally reduced by fishing throughout its range. This species meets the criteria of A2abd+3bd+4abd for Vulnerable due to the population decline outlined above and the remaining very high level of unmanaged exploitation in Southeast Asia. Native range: Bangladesh; Djibouti; Egypt; Eritrea; Ethiopia; India; Indonesia (Java, Kalimantan, Sumatra); Iran; Israel; Iraq; Japan; Kuwait; Malaysia; Myanmar; Oman; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea; Qatar; Saudi Arabia; Singapore; Somalia; Sri Lanka; Sudan; Thailand; United Arab Emirates; Viet Nam; Yemen.

Glaucostegus typus (=Rhinobatos typus) is taken by multiple artisanal and commercial fisheries throughout its range both as a target species and as bycatch. Flesh is sold for human consumption in Asia and the fins from large animals fetch particularly high prices, creating a significant incentive for bycatch to be retained. Very little is known about the biology or population status of this species. Given its susceptibility to capture by multiple fishing gear types, including trawl nets, gillnets and hooks and its high value fins, it is probable that numbers have been locally reduced by fishing throughout its range. Local population depletion can be inferred from Indonesia where the target gillnet fishery fleet for rhinids and rhynchobatids has declined significantly, reportedly due to declining catch rates. Therefore, globally this species meets the criteria of Vulnerable A2bd+3bd+4bd due to the apparent population decline outlined above and the remaining very high level of exploitation in South East Asia. Furthermore, destruction of habitat, e.g., mangrove areas, and high level of fishing pressure in areas such as Papua (e.g., Merauke) may be having a deleterious effect on juveniles of this species that utilize such inshore regions. There are no target fisheries for *R. typus* in Australia but it is a known bycatch of demersal trawl fisheries in the region. The introduction of Turtle Exclusion Devices (TEDs) in the Australian Northern Prawn Trawl Fishery in 2000 and the implementation of various elasmobranch-finning prohibitions, has probably led to a recent reduction in captures by this sector. However, given the population declines throughout South East Asia and the high value placed on fins (even in Australia) the Australian population may meet the criteria of Vulnerable A2d, but more detailed catch data is required and it is thus assessed as Near Threatened in Australian waters. Native range: Australia (New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, Western Australia); Bangladesh; India; Indonesia; Malaysia; Singapore; Sri Lanka; Viet Nam.

Information pages on sharks and on the regulations protecting them, prepared by the Israel Nature and Parks Authority, in Hebrew and Arabic (Israel's two official languages).

The headline says: "Sharks: The Loyal Guardians of the Sea"

معلومات للجمهور

أسماك القرش

حراس البحر الأوفياء

نشهد في الآونة الأخيرة عمليات صيد واسعة لأسماك القرش في شواطئ إسرائيل.
يتم الصيد بالأساس خلال الأشهر شباط – أيار. إنه موسم المغازلة والتكاثر لدى أسماك القرش. تتجمع إناث سمك القرش في هذه الفترة في المياه الضحلة لولادة أسماك القرش الصغيرة. عدد كبير من الأسماك التي يتم صيدها هي إناث لم تلد صغارها بعد.
وفقاً للتقديرات، يتم في هذه الفترة صيد عشرات أسماك القرش يومياً في شواطئ إسرائيل، مما يعني قتل **مئات أسماك القرش (!)** سنوياً في شواطئ إسرائيل. تُباع غالبية الأسماك لغرض الأكل.

حراسة البحر

لا تشكل أسماك القرش في شواطئ إسرائيل خطراً على الإنسان. على العكس من ذلك – إنها تأتي بمنفعة كبيرة. أسماك القرش هامة للحفاظ على الكائنات الحية في البحر. إنها تنظم مجموعات الأسماك وتنظف البحر من الأسماك والكائنات المصابة. أسماك القرش هي بمثابة " مأمور الصحة " في البحر. من الصعب معرفة نتائج القضاء على أسماك القرش وقد يؤدي الأذى الملموس لها إلى كارثة بيئية وضرر في غلال الصيد.

أسماك القرش - كائنات طبيعية محمية

أسماك القرش هي كائنات طبيعية محمية حسب تعريفها في قانون الحدائق الوطنية، المحميات الطبيعية (موجودات طبيعية محمية) – 2005. كل أذى لأسماك القرش – بما في ذلك الصيد والبيع – **ممنوع !**

ترى سلطة الطبيعة والحدائق أهمية بالغة في حماية أسماك القرش التي تسبح في شواطئ بلادنا. لذلك فإن سلطة الطبيعة، بالتعاون مع هيئات أخرى لتطبيق القانون، تجري خلال الأشهر شباط – أيار عمليات رقابة وتفتيش في شواطئ إسرائيل ضد مخالفي القانون الذين يلحقون الضرر بأسماك القرش ويتاجرون بها.

ساعدونا في الحفاظ على أسماك القرش وعلى الطبيعة في البحر.
نناشد الجمهور لتبليغ مركز سلطة الطبيعة والحدائق عن أي أذى أو تجارة بأسماك القرش وبالموجودات الطبيعية المحمية الأخرى.

مركز سلطة الطبيعة والحدائق في خدمتكم على مدار 24 ساعة يومياً
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