

Global Conservation of rhino rays (Rhinidae, Glaucostegidae, Rhinobatidae)

NOTING that wedgefishes (Rhinidae), giant guitarfishes (Glaucostegidae), and guitarfishes (Rhinobatidae) are collectively known as rhino rays, based on their distinctive, pointy snouts;

DEEPLY CONCERNED that the recent IUCN Red List Assessment of giant guitarfishes and wedgefishes determined that they are now the most threatened marine fishes, with 15 of 16 species assessed as Critically Endangered;

NOTING that rhino rays, like other elasmobranchs, exhibit relatively low reproductive rates which contribute to their high risk of extinction, hinder population rebound potential, and warrant a particularly precautionary management approach;

STRESSING that rhino rays are fished, essentially without limit, in much of the world's warm, coastal waters, particularly the Arabian Sea and adjacent waters, the Indo-Malay Archipelago, along the Indian coast, and off most of Africa and South America;

AWARE that the fins of rhino rays are prized for shark-fin soup, that the meat is also valued and that the gelatinous filling in their snouts is considered a delicacy;

WELCOMING the inclusion in 2017 of white-spotted wedgefish (*Rhynchobatus australiae*), giant guitarfish (*Rhynchobatus djiddensis*), and smoothnose wedgefish (*Rhynchobatus laevis*) in Appendix II of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and the recent submission of CMS Concerted Actions for the rhino rays; and

ALSO WELCOMING the 2019 listing of white-spotted wedgefish and giant guitarfish in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) with the other members of the family Rhinidae as lookalike species and the Appendix II listing of blackchin guitarfish (*Glaucostegus cemiculus*) and the sharpnose guitarfish (*G. granulatus*) with other members of the family Glaucostegidae as lookalike species;

The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020, at its session in Marseille, France:

1. REQUESTS the Species Survival Commission (SSC) Shark Specialist Group, in consultation with stakeholders, to develop a global conservation strategy for rhino rays;
2. URGES Members to support the implementation of the 'EDGE of Existence' Sharks and Rays initiative for rhino rays (EDGE: Evolutionarily Distinct and Globally Endangered);
3. URGES all rhino ray range states, unless their fisheries have already been determined to be sustainable, to employ the precautionary approach and introduce strict protections without delay for Critically Endangered and Endangered rhino ray species, including prohibitions on retention, as well as measures to mitigate incidental mortality and to conserve critical habitats;
4. FURTHER URGES all rhino ray range states, fishing and trading states, other entities, and relevant regional fisheries and wildlife bodies to immediately ensure that exploitation is consistent with population recovery and sustainability, and urges CITES Parties to fully implement the Appendix II listing through the development of the Non-Detriment and Legal Acquisition Findings before allowing export of these species;
5. ALSO URGES all rhino ray range states to develop species-specific monitoring of catches and population trends, to facilitate determination of population status and sustainable take, trade and, specifically, traceability in trade;
6. URGES researchers to study (with minimal harm) rhino ray life histories and ecological data to assist in the development of population assessments and conservation actions; and
7. URGES conservation organisations to prioritise projects aimed at rhino ray protection and population recovery.