

FACT SHEET

GIANT GUITARFISH

Rhynchobatus djiddensis

Family: Rhynchobatidae

Other common names: Giant sandshark, White-spotted wedgefish, Reuse sandkruiper

Description	Head pointed and wedge-shaped. Has a noticeably elongate snout which makes the head region longer than it is wide. The overall body colour is light to dark brown and pale underneath. The upper surface is usually dotted with rows of white spots. Has two dark eye spots ringed with pale spots at the base of the pectoral fins and has a black “mask” between the eyes.
Distribution	From Persian Gulf to the Red Sea and in tropical and sub-tropical waters of the Western Indian Ocean. In southern African waters occurs from northern Mozambique to Knysna, but seldom found south of Port St Johns.
Habitat	Occurs in shelf waters over muddy and sandy bottoms to 70 m but mainly off sandy beaches, where it is most abundant in the surf-zone. Does periodically occur on offshore reefs.
Feeding	Benthic molluscs, crustaceans, polychaete worms, squid and small fish.
Movement	Juveniles appear to be resident in large home ranges along the KwaZulu-Natal coast. Adults move southwards down the coast during the summer months and return to northern KwaZulu-Natal and Mozambique with the onset of winter.
Reproduction	Males mature at 156 cm and females at 177 cm total length at an estimated age of about 7 years. Pupping occurs during summer (December to February) in inshore waters along the northern KwaZulu-Natal and southern Mozambique coast. They are ovoviviparous and produce four young of about 60 cm total length.

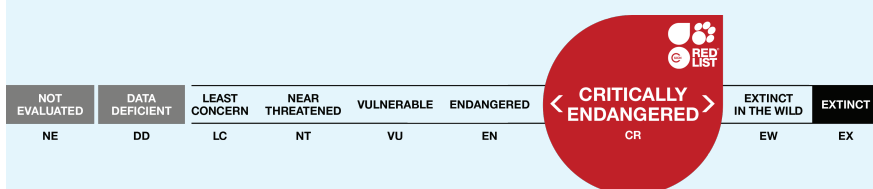
Age and growth

They can reach a maximum size of 310 cm total length and a weight of 123.9 kg. They have not been aged but likely reach ages of at least 20 years.

Current status

The stock of giant guitarfish has not been assessed in South African waters. However, declines in both competitive shore angler's catches and shark net catches along the KwaZulu-Natal coast have been recorded. They have recently been evaluated as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List (2019).

South African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (SASSI) List:
Not assessed.



Capture

Commonly caught by shore anglers in KwaZulu-Natal and forms an important component of the competitive shore fishery but most fish are released. Also taken in shark nets along the KwaZulu-Natal coast, but most (74%) are released alive. Historically comprised a small percentage of the by-catch taken by inshore prawn trawls off the Thukela Banks during summer but this fishery is no longer operational. In Mozambique and other East African countries, both artisanal fisheries operating inshore and foreign vessels offshore (long-liners) target giant guitarfish for their flesh and high value fins. Although this species faces less threats in South African waters, catches are seasonal and it is possible that animals may also move into Mozambican waters during winter, where they are being increasingly targeted.

Current recreational fishing regulations

Daily bag limit: 1 per person per day

Minimum size limit: None

Closed Season: None

Other regulations: None

Marine protected areas (MPAs): Resident juveniles may receive some protection in the MPAs along the KwaZulu-Natal and southern Mozambique coast. However, due to their nomadic behaviour, adults are less likely to benefit from MPA protection.

Reference

Information from the ORI Fish App. www.saambr.org.za



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