



## FACT SHEET

### HONEYCOMB STINGRAY

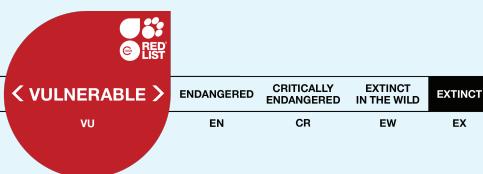
*Himantura leoparda*

**Family:** Dasyatidae

**Other common names:** Leopard whiptray, Heuningkoek pylstert

<b>Description</b>	A large stingray with a sharply pointed snout. Easily recognisable by the pale yellow-brown honeycomb pattern on a brown background. The pattern can be quite variable from reticulated lines to leopard-like spots. They have a very long tail up to 3 times longer than the body with 1-3 sharp, serrated spines near the base.
<b>Distribution</b>	Wide-spread distribution in the Indo-West Pacific. In southern African waters known from East London northwards into Mozambique. Locally abundant off central and northern KwaZulu-Natal during summer.
<b>Habitat</b>	Bottom dwelling on inshore and offshore sandy bottoms down to depths of 50 m. Juveniles mainly found in estuaries and sheltered sandy bays along the coast but also on offshore banks to depths of 30 m.
<b>Feeding</b>	Bivalves, cephalopods, crustaceans, polychaetes and small fish.
<b>Movement</b>	Little known but from a few recaptures of tagged individuals, they appear to be fairly resident.

Reproduction	Little known but they are believed to reach sexual maturity at 80-85 cm disc width and an age of 4-5 years. Pupping occurs in summer in shallow waters off sandy beaches, estuaries and bays in northern KwaZulu-Natal and Mozambique. They are ovoviparous, have a 12 month gestation period and produce between 3-5 pups per litter.
Age and growth	They can reach a maximum size of 200 cm disc width and a weight of 118 kg. They have not been aged.
Current status	<p>Not assessed. However, they are likely to have benefitted from the beach vehicle ban in South Africa and the reduction of inshore trawling on the Thukela Banks. They have been evaluated as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List (2015).</p> <p>South African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (SASSI) List: Not assessed.</p>



Capture	Commonly caught as a bycatch by recreational shore anglers and are often targeted during shore angling competitions, but most are released. Occasionally caught by light tackle boat anglers fishing in estuaries and bays but seldom kept. Historically comprised a small percentage (2.2%) of the bycatch taken by inshore prawn trawls on the Thukela Banks during summer. Often caught in the bather protective gillnets (shark nets) off certain KZN beaches but most released alive. Adults and juveniles are caught as a bycatch in beach seine fishery off Durban.
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Current recreational fishing regulations	<p><b>Daily bag limit:</b> 1 per person per day</p> <p><b>Minimum size limit:</b> None</p> <p><b>Closed Season:</b> None</p> <p><b>Other regulations:</b> None</p> <p><b>Marine protected areas (MPAs):</b> This species receives protection in a number of no-take MPAs along the eastern seaboard of South Africa. The uThukela Banks MPA is probably particularly important for the protection of this species.</p>
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Reference	Information from the ORI Fish App. <a href="http://www.saambr.org.za">www.saambr.org.za</a>
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