



Marine Fishes

Hawaiian ladyfish

Awa'aua

Elops hawaiiensis

SPECIES STATUS:
IUCN Red List – Not considered
Endemic

SPECIES INFORMATION: The awa'aua is one of the most primitive bony fish. They are often confused with mullet. Spawning takes place offshore. The larvae are leptocephalus (eel-like) and as they develop they move into inshore waters and can be found in tidal streams, salt water marshes, and canals. It feeds on fishes and crustaceans. They swim in schools. They are noted for their hard-fighting nature when caught.

DISTRIBUTION: Found throughout the State and especially common at Hanauma Bay, O'ahu.

ABUNDANCE: Commercial landings in the Main Hawaiian Islands have been about 225 kilograms (500 pounds) a year in recent years. No other abundance data are available.

LOCATION AND CONDITION OF KEY HABITAT: Awa'aua prefer shallow waters around the shoreline or shallow protected waters over sandy or silty bottoms. They may also be found in brackish water as well as fish ponds.

THREATS:

- Localized heavy fishing pressure and susceptibility to nearshore pollution and runoff.

CONSERVATION ACTIONS: The goals of conservation actions are to not only protect current populations, but to also establish further populations to reduce the risk of extinction. In addition to common statewide and island conservation actions, specific actions include:

- Restoration of habitat through reduction in pollution;
- Restore healthy populations with appropriate fishing regulations and education.

MONITORING:

- Survey populations and distribution in known and likely habitats.

RESEARCH PRIORITIES:

- Improve understanding of factors affecting population size, ecology, and basic biology of this species.

References:

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