

Eastern cowtail stingray in eastern Johor Strait

Subject: Eastern cowtail stingray, *Pastinachus atrus* (Chondrichthyes: Myliobatoidei: Dasyatidae).

Subject identified by: Kelvin K. P. Lim.

Location, date and time: Eastern Johor Strait, off Pulau Ubin; 1 June 2015.

Habitat: Estuarine.

Observer: Philip Lim.

Observation: A male example of about 120 cm disc width and 2.8 m total length was caught on hook baited with live prawn from a floating fish farm. The attached picture shows a dorsal view of the stingray with its head pointing to the upper left.

Remarks: Four species of cowtail rays of the genus *Pastinachus* are found in the seas of the Indo-Malayan region (Last et al., 2010: 222-229), all readily recognisable by the plain grey or brown dorsum and a broad fringe of skin on the underside of their long tails, and all were formerly known as *Pastinachus sephen*. The featured example is identified as *Pastinachus atrus* on the basis of the following diagnostic characters that can be seen on the attached picture: quadrangular disc profile with a short, rounded snout; very broad skin fold on the underside of the tail (its depth over 5 times the thickness of the tail above); and no row of thorns along the middle of the tail (Last et al., 2010: 222). *Pastinachus sephen* has been recorded from Singapore waters (Fowler, 1938: 17 as *Dasyatis sephen*), but it is not known if it includes *Pastinachus atrus* as the record does not appear to be based on museum specimens.

A similar species, the narrowtail stingray, *Pastinachus gracilicaudus*, with a comparatively narrower skin fold under its tail, is also known from Singapore (Last & Manjaji-Matsumoto, 2010: 116). However, the record is based on material purchased from the fish market, and may not have been obtained from local waters.



Photograph by Philip Lim

References:

- Fowler, H. W., 1938. A list of the fishes known from Malaya. *Fisheries Bulletin*. 1: 1-268.
- Last, P. R. & B. M. Manjaji-Matsumoto, 2010. Description of a new stingray, *Pastinachus gracilicaudus* sp. nov. (Elasmobranchii: Myliobatiformes), based on material from the Indo-Malay Archipelago. In: Last, P. R., W. T. White & J. J. Pogonoski (eds.). Descriptions of new sharks and rays from Borneo. *CSIRO Marine and Atmospheric Research Paper*. 032: 115-127.
- Last, P. R., W. T. White, J. N. Caira, Dharmadi, Fahmi, K. Jensen, A. P. K. Lim, B. M. Manjaji-Matsumoto, G. J. P. Naylor, J. J. Pogonoski, J. D. Stevens & G. K. Yearsley, 2010. *Sharks and Rays of Borneo*. CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood, Australia. v + 298 pp.

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