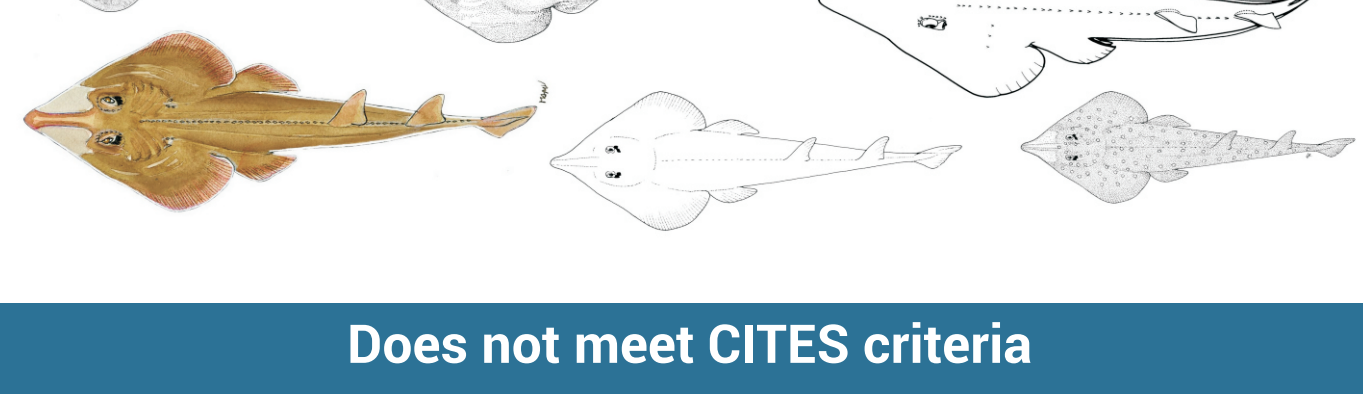


## Six species in the family Rhinobatidae

and all other guitarfishes, etc. nei



### Does not meet CITES criteria

Most species of guitarfish (family Rhinobatidae) are data limited, although the data available for the better-studied species suggest that members of this family are of low to medium productivity.

Available scientific data and technical information indicated that domestic utilization of meat is the primary reason for exploitation of all the guitarfish species assessed. Hence, these were considered not to have met the CITES criteria for "affected by trade" (Article II 1 and 2 of the CITES Convention). Additionally, guitarfish are generally associated with coastal waters and the inner continental shelf, and so they would be caught in national, and not international, waters.

Data on the extent of decline were of variable quality. Data for the common guitarfish *Rhinobatos rhinobatos* indicated a longer-term decrease in distributional range, although the reduced range was most pronounced in the northern limits of the species range (e.g. northwestern Mediterranean). No reliable time-series data were available for the southern and eastern Mediterranean.

Data were also limited for the coasts of west Africa, although trawl survey data (Mauritanian waters; 1990–2010) indicated an initial decline followed by recent stability, and stakeholder surveys conducted in Ghana indicated a probable decline. While the magnitude of the overall decline was uncertain, the Expert Panel considered this species would have met the decline-related CITES listing criteria for Appendix II.

Data available for the Brazilian guitarfish *Pseudobatos horkelii* indicated a longer-term decrease in distributional range, especially in Brazil, with some reliable information indicating a decline, possibly as much as about 85–90 percent in some areas, with a reported stock collapse in 2010. No reliable time-series data were available to the Expert Panel for other parts of the species' range (e.g. in the waters off northern Argentina and Uruguay). While the magnitude of the overall decline was uncertain, the Expert Panel considered this species would have met the decline-related CITES listing criteria for Appendix II.

There were insufficient data or information to quantify population trends for the other four guitarfish species proposed for listing.

Two of the other guitarfish species from western Africa, namely whitespotted guitarfish (*Rhinobatos albomaculatus*) and spineback guitarfish (*R. irvinei*) are smaller-bodied species. While they may have also declined, any decline would likely be to a lesser degree than noted for common guitarfish (*R. rhinobatos*). Data for the proposed species occurring in the Indo-Pacific Ocean – stripenose guitarfish (*Acroteriobatus variegatus*) in the northern Indian Ocean and brown guitarfish (*R. schlegelii*) from the Northwest Pacific – were also limited.

#### Management

Many guitarfish species are associated with the inner continental shelf, and often with shallower waters. Guitarfish may be taken in a range of fishing gear, including trawl, longline, gill- and tangle-nets, and beach seines. Gravid females of several species are known to move inshore at certain times of the year for pupping. In some areas, such aggregations may be, or may have been, subject to seasonal target fisheries, resulting in high levels of fishing pressure on gravid females and young.

The Expert Panel also noted that appropriate demersal fish surveys to monitor trends in guitarfish are seemingly lacking for many areas, and improved monitoring of guitarfish populations should be considered by relevant range states in order to inform on management needs.

In the absence of robust stock assessments and field surveys, some of the evidence of decline for the proposed species was based on "historical ecology", whereby comparison of early descriptive accounts were compared with current perceptions. While such approaches provide an informative approach to describing historic reductions in broader geographical extent, by themselves such analyses do not typically provide quantitative data on the magnitude of population decline in relation to the decline thresholds used by CITES.

The Expert Panel noted that the inshore habitats of guitarfish may make them prone to other human-induced impacts, such as habitat degradation. The potential impacts of other anthropogenic impacts could not be examined for any of the proposed species during the Expert Panel meeting. However, the Expert Panel considered that fishing pressure would be the main impact on the populations.

The Expert Panel also noted that the taxonomic knowledge of guitarfish is still evolving. There are currently 37 accepted species, with some additional nominal species of uncertain taxonomic validity. Several new species have been described in recent years and, of the 37 accepted species, nine (24.3 percent) have only been described in the last decade. The changes in the taxonomy, and the potential for misidentifications between species occurring in the same regions, may confound some data. Furthermore, some potential data sources (e.g. landings data) may confound data for the Rhinobatidae with other related groups, including banjo rays (family Trygonorrhinidae), giant guitarfish (family Glaucostegidae) and wedgefish (family Rhinidae). Improved collection of commercial catch, landings and discards data is required for all these groups.

The Expert Panel recognized that there is increasing concern over the status of many species of guitarfish (Rhinobatidae). Of the 37 recognized species within the Rhinobatidae, IUCN Red List Assessments (as of 2022) identified two (5.4 percent) as Not Evaluated, five (13.5 percent) as Data Deficient, three (8.1 percent) as Least Concern, four (10.8 percent) as Near Threatened, eight (21.6 percent) as Vulnerable, five (13.5 percent) as Endangered and ten (27.0 percent) as Critically Endangered.

#### Trade

The Expert Panel noted that domestic consumption and national trade were the primary reasons for fisheries retaining and landing the proposed species of guitarfish, and also for other members of the family Rhinobatidae. The proposed species are commercially harvested and, while there was some data relating to international trade, the Expert Panel did not find any evidence that international trade was a major driver of fishing pressure on these species. In general, guitarfish are caught in localized target fisheries and also as a marketable bycatch component in various mixed demersal fisheries. There was evidence of some fisheries discarding smaller-bodied guitarfish species, presumably due to low market value.

There was some information to indicate that some of the meat may be traded between nearby nations, and that the fins may also be processed and used in the international fin trade. However, the available data did not indicate that the fins of guitarfish of the family Rhinobatidae were an important part of the international fin trade, although this may change in the future. Note that any proportional increase in the use of the fins of smaller elasmobranchs could well be viewed in the context of any efforts to "encourage full use of dead sharks", as is recommended as part of many national shark plans.

The Expert Panel evaluated relevant published information on species occurring in the fin trade. While there was strong evidence of the families Rhinidae and Glaucostegidae being found in the international fin trade, there was no significant evidence of the Rhinobatidae, including look-alike species occurring in this trade. Although based on a limited number of studies, the Expert Panel could not find robust evidence of major international trade in guitarfish of the family Rhinobatidae.

Because of the evolving taxonomy of the family and known identification problems, the Expert Panel noted that any management measures developed by competent authorities for this group would generally be better applied at the family level (Rhinobatidae).

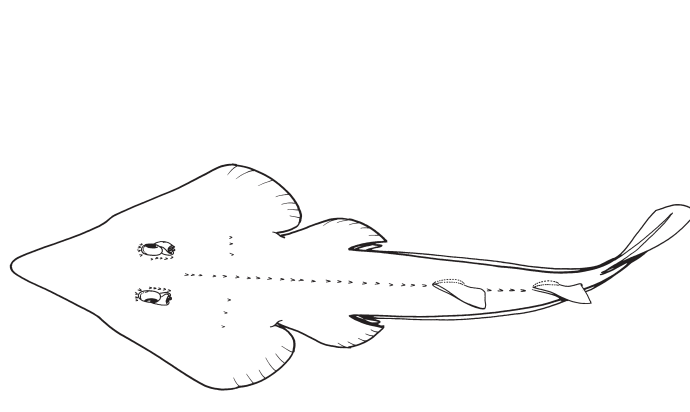
#### Likely effectiveness for conservation

International trade was not found to be a major driver of exploitation for any of the proposed species, and national or regional fisheries management measures are required to regulate fishing pressure and improve stock conservation. Given the potential susceptibility of guitarfish (Rhinobatidae) to overexploitation and localized depletion, improved fisheries management through national authorities and relevant regional fisheries bodies should be promoted.

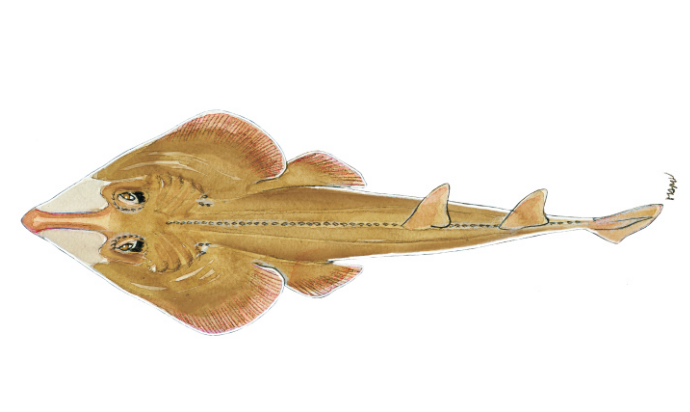
The lack of fishery information for guitarfish (family Rhinobatidae) across range states, and the limited ability for authorities to therefore make non-detriment findings (NDFs), as evidenced by the situation encountered for shark and ray species already listed, may lead to the following outcomes: (i) previous trade is delayed or ceases; (ii) trade continues without proper CITES documentation (also known as "illegal trade"); and/or (iii) trade continues with inadequate NDFs.



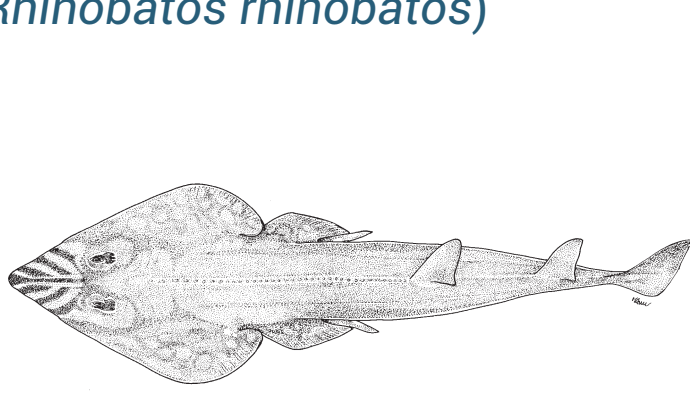
**Brazilian guitarfish (*Pseudobatos horkelii*)**



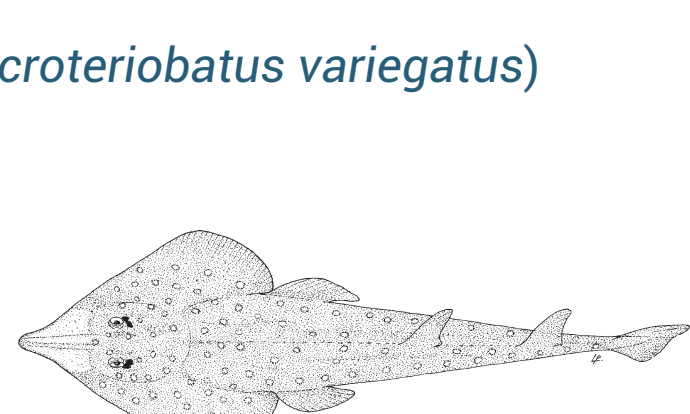
**Common guitarfish (*Rhinobatos rhinobatos*)**



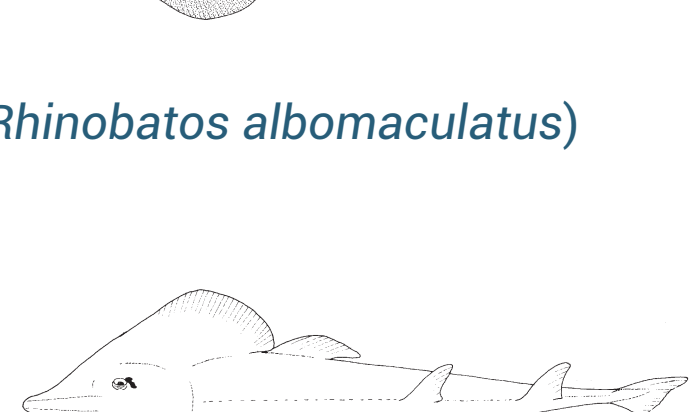
**Stripenose guitarfish (*Acroteriobatus variegatus*)**



**Whitespotted guitarfish (*Rhinobatos albomaculatus*)**



**Spineback guitarfish (*Rhinobatos irvinei*)**



**Brown guitarfish (*Rhinobatos schlegelii*)**

