

New record of the giant freshwater whipray, *Urogymnus polylepis* from West Bengal waters, east coast of India

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The giant freshwater whipray, *Urogymnus polylepis* belongs to the family Dasyatidae, the most species-rich family of the order Myliobatiformes comprising 19 genera and 89 species (Last et al., 2016a). Whiprays (subfamily Urogymniinae) mostly live in marine environments worldwide in both tropical and temperate waters, while only a few species penetrate into estuarine and freshwater environments due to their remarkable physiological adaptability (Last et al., 2016b). *Urogymnus polylepis* is one of such species which primarily lives in freshwater environment; however there are records from brackish waters and even from marine coastal habitats (Last et al., 2010; Vidthayanon, et al. 2016).

Urogymnus polylepis is believed to be distributed in the waters of south and south-east Asia, from India to eastern Indonesia (Akhilesh et al., 2014; Last et al., 2010, 2016b). According to Vidthayanon et al. (2016), the presence of this species is uncertain in Bangladesh, Myanmar, Indonesia (Java) and in certain localities of India (Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal) and therefore, needs confirmation.

Populations of *Urogymnus polylepis* are threatened by fishing pressure and pollution in Thailand and Cambodia (Vidthayanon et al., 2016). The species is assessed as ‘Endangered A2bcd’ on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (Vidthayanon et al., 2016). Population trends from India, Malaysia and Indonesia are not known, but there are very few recent records from these countries and therefore information on the presence, distribution and status of population in the region is needed. The present paper reports a new record of *Urogymnus polylepis* from West Bengal waters, east coast of India.

Five specimens of *Urogymnus polylepis* were captured from December, 2018 to March, 2019: two males (DW: 144 and 141 cm; weight: 120 and 117 kg) and three females (DW: 144, 145, 223 cm, weight: 160, 190 and 300 kg). The specimens were captured in five separate capture events on 14 Dec 2018, 22 Jan, 12 Feb, 7 and 19 Mar 2019. From the interview with the fishermen it was learned that the trawlers that captured the specimens were operating in the waters of Hooghly River (21°40'05" N 87°54'47" E) at a depth range

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