

# Observations on the incidental landings of bowmouth guitarfish along north Andhra Pradesh coast



*Rhina anclystomus* landed by hook and line gear at Bandaruvanipeta on 26<sup>th</sup> December 2021

The bowmouth guitarfish *Rhina anclystomus* has been assessed as Critically Endangered by the IUCN (Kyne *et al.*, 2019). Though not targeted in fisheries along the coast of Andhra Pradesh, the species is landed as incidental bycatch. Here we present

details of the species landed along north Andhra Pradesh coast during 2017-2021. Incidental landings of *R. anclystomus* at Visakhapatnam Fishing Harbour have been observed mainly from mechanized trawlers and gillnetters. The average size of *R. anclystomus* landed

at Visakhapatnam Fishing Harbour was 133.8 cm during 2010-2021 which was lower than the estimated size at maturity for both females (180 cm TL) and males (150-175 cm TL) (Last and Stevens, 2009, Last *et al.*, 2016). Of the 9 specimens measured over the years,

Table 1. Details of *R. anclystomus* incidental landings along the coast of north Andhra during 2010-2021

Day	Month	Year	Total Length (cm)	Total Weight (kg)	Sex	Gear	Location of catch
26	11	2010	94	-	-	-	-
9	8	2011	169	-	-	Trawl	-
13	9	2013	137	20	F	Trawl	-
10	6	2014	135	-	-	-	-
5	1	2016	175	-	F	Trawl	-
4	2	2017	146	-	F	Trawl	-
5	1	2019	67	-	F	Gillnet	Uppada
6	7	2021	147.5	-	F	Trawl	-
26	12	2021	168	50	-	Hook and line	Bandaruvanipeta

5 were females; the others could not be noted for sex. Though there was no clear seasonal indication, most of the incidental landings brought to Visakhapatnam Fisheries Harbour were during the post-trawl ban months, from June onwards. The most recent observation of incidental landings of *R. anclystomus* was at Bandaruvanipeta, Srikakulam district on 26<sup>th</sup> December 2021. A 50 kg sized bowmouth guitarfish measuring 5.5 feet (approximately 168

cm) in total length was landed by hook and line fishers. The species was caught as bycatch from approximately 60 m depth. Local fishermen indicated that this was the first time it was caught by hook and line gear, usually the species is caught as bycatch in trawls or bottom set gillnets once every 3 to 5 years. The species is landed mostly as a single animal, indicating its possible solitary lifestyle. The low numbers seen in the incidental landings along north Andhra

Pradesh coast also indicates its low occurrence in the region. The flesh of the animal is utilized fresh and dried, and is mostly sent to markets situated outside Andhra Pradesh. The species has now been included in Schedule I by The Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act, 2022.

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