
Saving the Widenose guitarfish: a success story

In a commendable act of conservation, the critically endangered Widenose guitarfish (*Glaucostegus obtusus*), listed under Schedule I of *The Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act, 2022*, was successfully released back into the sea after being accidentally caught in a bottom-set gillnet. This significant effort was carried out by ICAR-CMFRI technical staff, Mr. Paulose Jacob Peter and Mr. Joby P. J., on 7th November, 2024, at Vypin, Kochi. The neonate guitarfish, measuring 23 cm, was entangled in the net and landed ashore. Recognizing its critical conservation status and its

inclusion under Schedule I of the act (Amendment Act came into force in April 2023), Mr. Joby and Mr. Paulose acted swiftly. Upon confirming that the neonate was alive, they carefully released it back into its natural habitat, where it swam away unharmed.

The timing of this event aligns with the guitarfish's breeding season along the Kerala coast, which occurs from October to December. During this period, neonates, mature individuals, and pregnant females with near-term embryos are frequently encountered

in shallow coastal waters, especially in sandy habitats at depths of 0–2 meters. The released neonate, a female, is particularly significant, as its survival directly supports the fragile population of this critically endangered species. With a small litter size of only 5-6 pups, each individual plays a crucial role in the species' recovery, emphasizing the importance of releasing neonates or accidentally caught individuals back into the wild. This remarkable effort underscores the importance of awareness creation among stakeholders, including fishers, vendors, traders, auctioneers, students



Released neonate of *Glaucostegus obtusus* measuring 23 cm

and government officials. By promoting awareness of conservation laws and the ecological importance of such species, accidental catches like this can lead to similar successful releases,

ensuring the protection of endangered marine resources. The dedication and quick action taken in this instance, set a precedent for responsible conservation practices and highlights how informed

individuals can make a significant difference in the survival of critically endangered species.

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