# Species of Conservation Interest interactions in the N3 sector of the Queensland Gulf of Carpentaria Inshore Fin Fish Fishery

## A summary of fishery observer records from 2008-09

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Queensland Government

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## Table of contents



## Table of tables



## Table of figures

# Background

In 2014 as part of its assessment of the Gulf of Carpentaria Inshore Finfish Fishery (GOCIFFF) under ecological sustainability guidelines of *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and Commonwealth Department of the Environment agreed a number of recommendations be implemented before the current Wildlife Trade Operation expires in September 2017.

Recommendation 5 states:

By 31 December 2015, the Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to analyse and report to the Department of the Environment the results of the past Fisheries Observer Program in the N3 (inshore) sector of the GoCIFFF for interactions with species protected under the EPBC Act.

During its period of operation, the commercial Fisheries Observer Program (FOP) provided information on the composition of Species of Conservation Interest (SOCI) bycatch in this and other Queensland net fisheries. This report summarises historical observations of SOCI catch data collected by FOP coverage of the inshore gillnet (N3) component of the fishery during the years when the FOP monitored the fishery, i.e. 2008-09. FOP data has been used to verify GOCIFFF fishers' SOCI logbook records, providing a basis for development of subsequent management arrangements designed to reduce fishing related risk to the ecological sustainability of SOCI species.

The Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) continues to provide quarterly reports to the Department of the Environment on the number and type of interactions reported by commercial fishers in the SOCI logbook as part of the 2005 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Australian Government to meet a fisher's reporting obligations under EPBC Act.

# SOCI interactions reported in 2008-09

The total number of GOCIFFF interactions with SOCI reported by fishery observers in 2008-09, including fishery and life status, are in Table 1. Over 90% of reported interactions, were with sawfishes. Narrow Sawfish (*Anoxypristis cuspidata*) was the most prevalent species in the sawfish bycatch, 70%; followed by Dwarf Sawfish (*Pristis clavata*), 15%; Freshwater Sawfish (*Pristis pristis*), 13% and Green Sawfish (*Pristis zijsron*), <1%. Saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*) was the most prevalent species in the non-sawfish bycatch, 62%. Other species including sea snakes, file snakes, green turtles and ghost pipefish were less commonly encountered (Table 1, Figure 1).

Of the total SOCI interactions in the N3, 70% were reported as released alive, 24% were released dead. The remaining 6% of interactions were either dead and retained or unspecified (Figure 2).

***Table 1 Total number of SOCI interactions in the GOCIFFF reported by the Fishery Observer Program in 2008-09***

| Species | Released Alive | Released Dead | Retained | Kept Dead | Not specified | Total interactions |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sawfish-narrow | 70 | 32 | 1 | | 2 | 105 |
| Sawfish-dwarf | 16 | 2 | | | 4 | 22 |
| Sawfish -freshwater | 18 | 2 | | | | 20 |
| Sawfish-green | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Sawfish-not specified | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Crocodile-Saltwater | 4 | 4 | | | | 8 |
| Snake-sea | 2 | | | | | 2 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Snake-file | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Turtle-green | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Ghostpipefish- Halimeda | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| TOTALS | 113 | 40 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 162 |

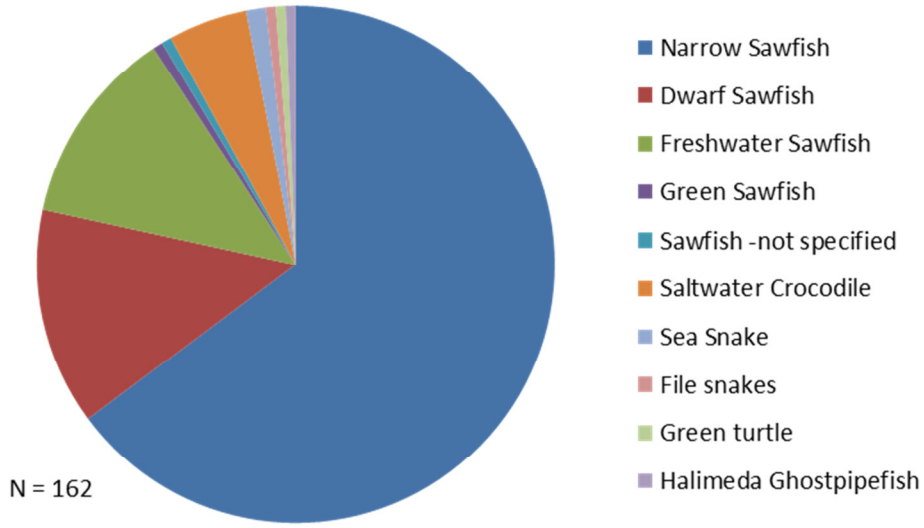


***Figure 1 – Total number of SOCI interactions per species reported by N3 observers in 2008-09***

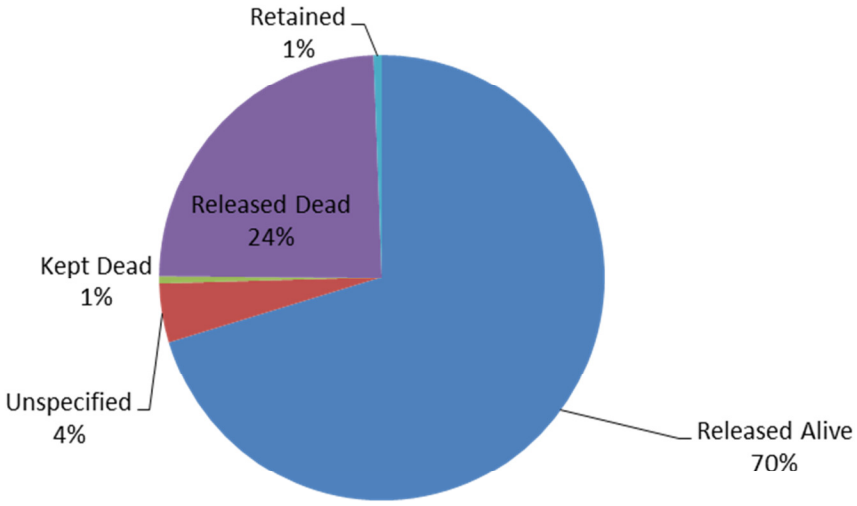


***Figure 2 Fate of observer recorded SOCI interactions with the N3 fishery in 2008-09***