

Pondicherry Shark, Red Sea Torpedo and Tentacled Butterfly Ray may have become extinct, fear scientists

Juvenile sharks landed in commercial fishery. | Photo Credit: [Special Arrangement](#)

Three marine species, the Pondicherry Shark, the Red Sea Torpedo and the Tentacled Butterfly Ray might have become possibly extinct in the oceanic waters of the Arabian Seas Region (ASR) since no evidence of its existence has surfaced in the last three decades.

Scientists are also worried about the possible disappearance of other species from the region even before they were known to science.

The first ever assessment of the conservation status of sharks, rays, and chimaeras (collectively called chondrichthyans) in the region has left the scientists grim-faced as 78 of the 153 species revived were found fighting for survival.

The Guitar fish found in coastal waters of Kerala and Tamil Nadu and the Ganges Shark found in Arabian Sea were classified as Critically Endangered, among others.

The “extinction risk and conservation status of all chondrichthyans naturally reproducing” in the region were reviewed by the IUCN Species Survival Commission Shark Specialist Group. Though 184 species of sharks, rays, and chimaeras occur in the region, only the confirmed 153 species were considered for the analysis.

The ASR covers the waters of the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea, Sea of Oman, and the Gulf. The region is also bordered by

20 countries including India, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel and Pakistan.

The assessment also revealed that 27 species were Near Threatened and 19 others were of least conservation concerns. It was also known that less was known about 29 to evaluate their risk of extinction.

The evaluators included two from Kerala including K.V. Akhilesh of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Mumbai centre and K. K. Bineesh of the Zoological Survey of India, Andaman Nicobar unit.

By-catch was found to be the biggest threat to the majority of chondrichthyan fishes besides the “pressure from artisanal and industrial fisheries.”

The assessors were of the view that the “increasing decline in the extent and quality of habitat as a result of coastal development and other anthropogenic disturbances, particularly for those critical habitats that many species depend on coral reefs, mangroves, sea grasses pose a serious threat to the survival of many species.”

India, which banned the exploitation and trade of 10 species of sharks and rays, had in 2015 banned the export and import of shark fins of all species.

Jaggi Vasudev’s Rally for Rivers claims they will, but this is not based on the most nuanced science

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