

Himantura randalli sp. nov., a new whipray (Myliobatoidea: Dasyatidae) from the Persian Gulf

Abstract

A new whipray, *Himantura randalli* sp. nov., described from material collected off Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar, appears to be endemic to the Persian Gulf. It has been frequently confused with forms of the more widely distributed whipray *Himantura gerrardi* Gray and other presently unidentified species from the Indian Ocean. *Himantura randalli* sp. nov. is distinguished from these species by a combination of characters, i.e. disc shape, morphometrics, squamation (including its rapid denticle development and denticle band shape), plain dorsal disc coloration, and whitish saddles on a dark tail in young. It is a medium-sized whipray with a maximum confirmed size of 620 mm disc width (DW) and a birth size of around 150-170 mm DW. Males mature at approximately 400 mm DW. *Himantura randalli* sp. nov. is relatively abundant in the shallow, soft-sedimentary habitats of the Persian Gulf from where it is commonly taken as low-value or discarded bycatch of gillnet and trawl fisheries.