FRESHWATER SAWFISH *Pristis microdon* (Latham, 1974)

Other names: Leichhardt's sawfish, great tooth sawfish

Conservation status: IUCN Red List - Critically endangered, NT fisheries - vulnerable

Description: Large thick bodied sawfish; skin rough; olive brown or black dorsally (depending on the environment) and pale white ventrally; first dorsal fin in front of pelvic fin origin; fork in caudal fin; rostrum teeth extend onto base of saw; rostrum tapers distally unlike rostrums of green and narrow sawfishes.

Descriptors:

1. 18-24 pair teeth evenly spaced extending onto base of saw
2. fork in caudal fin
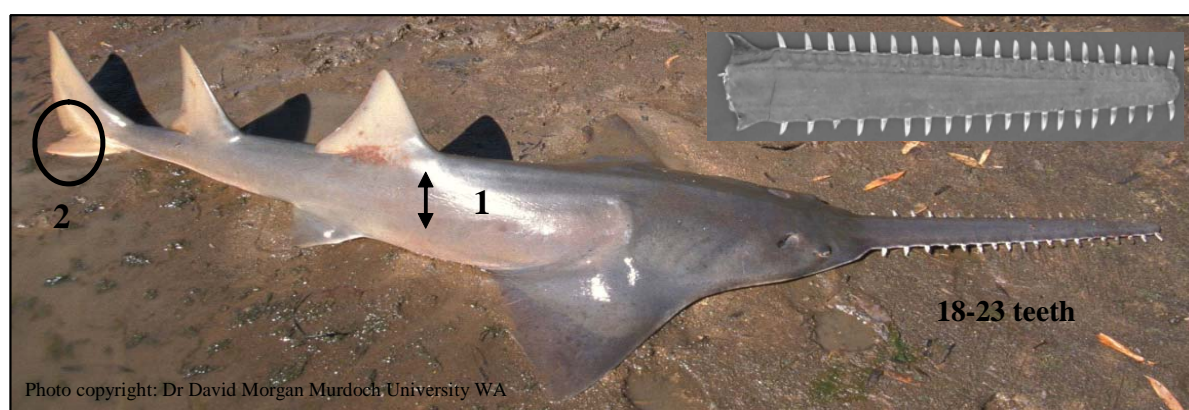3. first dorsal fin in front of pelvic fin origin
4. rough skin

QLD Distribution: Known to inhabit rivers of Princess Charlotte Bay on the east coast and all major river systems of the Gulf of Carpentaria. Freshwater sawfish are reported to be in extremely low abundances on the east coast. The species inhabits fresh and estuarine waters in its juvenile life stages and marine waters in its adult life stages. Adults frequent inshore waters and rivers during the monsoonal wet season to pup. Freshwater sawfish are more vulnerable to recreational line fishing during the dry season months when juvenile animals are restricted to drying water holes of major rivers. During this time there is a reduced amount of prey items in the water hole and freshwater sawfish will actively seek out dead baits or strike at lures.

Size: maximum reported size 700cm, commonly caught in rivers up to 250cm.

Diet: prawns, macrobrachium and fish

Fisheries: Commercial trawl, gill net and long line fisheries. Recreational line fishery and bait collection using small mesh cast nets and seine nets. Indigenous net and harpoon fishing. Foreign illegal gill net and line fishing.

Utilisation: Meat and fins; rostrum trophy collectors; collection of live aquarium specimens.

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Note: **(1)** 1st dorsal fin origin is well in front of pelvic fin origin, **(2)** lobe on caudal fin, rough skin

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