

## **Nature and diversity of batoid fisheries in the commercial landings of Sri Lanka; a case study from Jaffna, Beruwala, Negombo and Chilaw**

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Present study provides information about status and diversity of batoid fish in major fish landing sites namely; Jaffna (Mathagal and Munai), Negombo, Chilaw and Beruwala. The batoid catches landed at these landing sites were monitored monthly during the period of January, 2016 to December, 2016. Batoids are mainly caught with bottom set gill nets and bottom set longlines operated frequently by OFRP boats. Moreover, batoids were also landed in multiday boats. Herrings (*Amblygaster sirm*), sardines (*Sardinella albella*, *S. gibbosa*) or squids (*Loligo* sp.) were used as the bait. In Jaffna, these species are caught as target species, but in other landings they are caught as by catch. In the four fishery harbours investigated, a total of 28 batoid species belonging to two orders (Myliobatiformes and Torpediniformes), belonging to six families were recorded. During the study, Dasyatidae (higher in day boat catches), Myliobatidae, Gymnuridae, Mobulidae (higher in multiday boat catches), Rhinobatidae and Narcinidae were recorded. Of the observed catch in Jaffna, random sampling of each boat revealed that 65% of the catch consisted of *Himantura undulata* (Leopard whipray 56-237 cm disc width), *Aetobatus narinari* (Spotted eagle ray 48-137 cm disc width) and *Rhinoptera javanica* (Javanese cownose ray). The large size *Himantura* species were caught more in Jaffna than in other landings; in Chilaw over 80 % of the total catch consisted of *Dasyatis kuhlii* (Blue spotted stingray 20-47 cm disc width), *Dasyatis zugei* (Pale-edged sting ray 10-22 cm disc width) and *Himantura undulata* (Leopard whip ray 25-93 cm disc width), and in Negombo and Beruwala, the total contribution of *Manta birostris* (Oceanic/ Giant Manta ray) and *Mobula japonica* (Spinetail mobula) were 70% and 75% respectively. Females with pups were observed for the species *Dasyatis kuhlii*, *Gymnura micrura* and *Aetobatus narinari* and *Dasyatis zugei* was observed with fully matured eggs.

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