

# Guitarfishes

CoP18 Prop. 43 to include the blackchin guitarfish (*Glaucostegus cemiculos*) and the sharpnose guitarfish (*Glaucostegus granulatus*) in Appendix II in accordance with Article II paragraph 2a, and all other giant guitarfish - family Glaucostegidae - in Appendix II in accordance with Article II paragraph 2b.

Sponsored by: Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, European Union, Gabon, Gambia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Monaco, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Palau, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Togo, and Ukraine.



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## RECOMMEND: SUPPORT ADOPTION OF PROPOSAL

The proposal to include the blackchin guitarfish (*Glaucostegus cemiculos*), sharpnose guitarfish (*Glaucostegus granulatus*), and other giant guitarfish in the family Glaucostegidae in Appendix II is necessary to regulate international trade and prevent future declines driven by the demand from the international fin trade. According to the IUCN/TRAFFIC Analyses of Proposals to CoP18, all species in the Family Glaucostegidae have been recently re-classified as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

### DISTRIBUTION

Blackchin guitarfish are found in the eastern Atlantic from Portugal, throughout the Mediterranean, and as far south as Angola (Last et al., 2016). Sharpnose guitarfish are found in the north Western Indian Ocean, from the United Arab Emirates to Myanmar (Marshall and Last, 2016).

### THREATS

International demand for fins drives much of the targeted and unsustainable catch of Glaucostegidae across their ranges, and consequential depletion of stocks. Blackchin guitarfish are consumed domestically in West Africa as fresh or dried fish, known as “sali” (Akyol and Capape, 2014). In 2016, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported that 5,000 tonnes of the so called “guitarfish” were landed globally in 2014.

### TRADE

Because domestic and regional management is so scarce, almost all trade in Glaucostegidae products is legal unless it is from specimens that are caught within protected areas. In Bangladesh, people often buy dried guitarfish meat while the fins are exported to both European and Asian markets (Haque et al., 2018). Guitarfish and wedgefish (Rhinidae) have a specific trade category (“Qun Chi”) in the Hong Kong Shark trade market. This trade category



Figure 3. Distribution of blackchin guitarfish *Glaucostegus cemiculos*. Source: IUCN, 2018.



Figure 4. Distribution of sharpnose guitarfish *Glaucostegus granulatus*. Source: IUCN, 2018.

has the highest value of any fin type in trade (Fields et al., 2017).

### DECLINES

Historically, giant guitarfish catches have only been reported at the genus level, making it difficult to determine levels of population decline at the species level. Much can be learned, however, from studies of similar population trends in the closely-related sawfish (Pristidae). Marked population declines in sawfish were noted almost three decades before a global strategy was initiated in an attempt to manage them. The strategy, unfortunately, came too late, and recovery is now unlikely for many populations.

Today, sawfish are listed on Appendix I of CITES and all international trade is prohibited.

Both blackchin and sharpnose guitarfish populations have declined by up to 80% over the past three generations (Marshall and Last, 2016). These declines were largely caused by unmanaged fisheries targeting guitarfish for the international shark fin market. Populations of blackchin guitarfish are projected to decline by 50% over the next three generations if no further management is put in place (Notarbartolo di Sciara et al., 2016). Fisheries have caused significant declines in the populations of the entire Glaucostegidae family.

The FAO Expert Panel concluded that there was insufficient evidence to decide if these species merit Appendix II listing. Note, however, that the FAO requires that its expert panel use a narrower interpretation of the CITES listing criteria than CITES itself does. Both the CITES Secretariat and IUCN/TRAFFIC recommend adoption of this listing.

**REGULATING THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN THESE SPECIES THROUGH INCLUSION IN APPENDIX II IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE II PARAGRAPH 2A OF THE CONVENTION AND CRITERION A AND B IN ANNEX 2A OF RES. CONF. 9.24 (REV. COP17); AND THE FAMILY GLAUCOSTEGIDAE IN APPENDIX II IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE II PARAGRAPH 2B OF THE CONVENTION AND CRITERION A IN ANNEX 2B OF RES. CONF. 9.24 (REV. COP17), IS NECESSARY TO ENSURE THAT GUITARFISH POPULATIONS DO NOT FOLLOW THOSE OF THE CLOSELY-RELATED SAWFISHES, WHICH DECLINED TO THE POINT WHERE THEY REQUIRED LISTING ON APPENDIX I.**



**Table: Population Declines for *G. cemiculus* and *G. granulatus*. Source: CoP18 Prop 43.**

Region	Estimated declines	Reference
North western Indian Ocean	50-80% over the past three generation periods (15-30 years)	Jabado et al., 2017
East Atlantic	Over 50% decline in three generation periods; 80% decrease in landings in seven years	Notarbartolo di Sciara, et al., 2016 Diop & Dossa, 2011
Mediterranean	Probable extinction Local extinction in Balearic Islands and Sicily	Notarbartolo di Sciara, 2016; Psomadakis et al., 2009; UNEP Mediterranean Action Plan 2011
Indian Ocean	86% decline over five-year period (less than one generation)	Jabado et al., 2017

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