

# Threatened Species of the Northern Territory

## Northern River Shark

### *Glyphis garricki*

#### Conservation status

##### Australia: Endangered

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

##### Northern Territory: Endangered

Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1976

#### Description

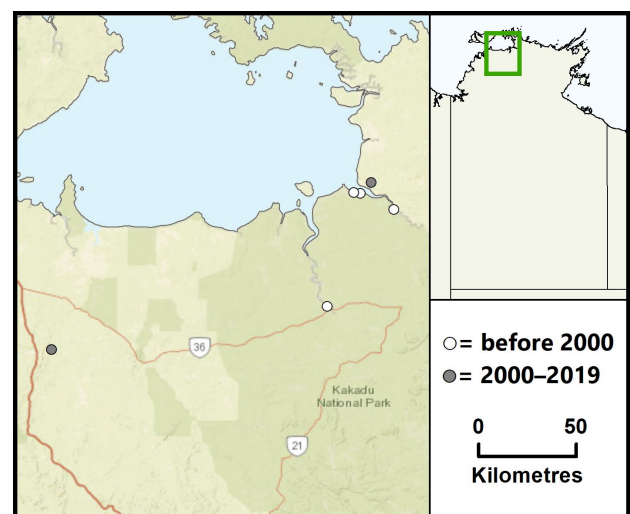
The Northern River Shark is a medium-sized shark that grows to 2–3 m long. The dorsal surface is steely grey, while the ventral surface is white. The dorsal fins are triangular. The second dorsal fin is two-thirds as large as the first dorsal fin, but proportionately larger than that of the otherwise similar Bull Shark *Carcharhinus leucas*. The species can be distinguished from the similar Speartooth Shark *Glyphis glyphis* by a larger area of grey below the eye and a relatively longer and flatter snout<sup>1</sup>.

#### Distribution

The Northern River Shark occurs in northern Australia and in the Fly River of Papua New Guinea. Its distribution in Australia is poorly understood due to a paucity of records. In the Northern Territory (NT), the species is known from the Adelaide, East Alligator and South Alligator River systems. Northern River Sharks have also been recorded from the Kimberley coast and King Sound in Western Australia. It is likely that Northern River Shark will be found in other rivers and estuaries with suitable habitat<sup>2</sup>.



Photo: P. Kyne & G. Johnson



Known localities of the Northern River Shark in the NT  
([nrmaps.nt.gov.au](http://nrmaps.nt.gov.au))

NT conservation reserves where reported:  
Kakadu National Park.

#### Ecology and life-history

Little is known of the biology of the Northern River Shark. The fact that it has not been caught in coastal marine areas, despite considerable fishing and collecting activity in these habitats, suggests that it is restricted to shallow, brackish reaches of large rivers.

#### Threatening processes

Potential threats in NT waters include illegal fishing and mortality resulting from entanglement in commercial gillnets. Negative impacts from fishing activities have been reduced but illegal

fishing, including the use of juveniles as bait in crab fisheries, is an ongoing threat. The deliberate capture and destruction of Northern River Sharks is illegal in the NT.

## Conservation objectives and management

Current conservation priorities for the Northern River Shark are to: i) determine the distribution of the species across the NT; ii) extend close-kin mark-recapture estimates beyond the Van Diemen Gulf, in order to improve understanding of the species' abundance and status throughout the NT<sup>2</sup>; iii) monitor and limit the impacts of fishing in estuarine areas, and increase compliance as any take of this species is illegal; and iv) educate fishers on the identification and protection of the Northern River Shark, as a degree of illegal take is probably due to misidentification and ignorance.

## References

<sup>1</sup> Compagno, L.J.V., White, W.T., Last, P.R. 2008. *Glyphis garricki* sp. nov., a new species of river shark (Carcharhiniformes: Carcharhinidae) from northern Australia and Papua New Guinea, with a redescription of *Glyphis glyphis* (Müller & Henle, 1839). In: Last, P.R. White, W.T., Pogonoski, J.J. (Eds.). Descriptions of New Australian Chondrichthyans, pp. 203-226. CSIRO Marine and Atmospheric Research Paper 022.

<sup>2</sup> Bravington, M., Feutry, P., Pillans, R.D., Hillary, R., Johnson G., Saunders, T., Gunasekera R., Bax, N.J., Kyne, P.M. (2019). Close-kin mark-recapture population size estimate of *Glyphis garricki* in the Northern Territory. Report to the National Environmental Science Program, Marine Biodiversity Hub. CSIRO Oceans & Atmosphere, Hobart.