

## RETURN OF THE LONGHORNED PYGMY DEVIL RAY

*Taxonomic status, biological notes, and conservation of the longhorned pygmy devil ray *Mobula eregoodoo* (Cantor, 1849)*

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The longhorned pygmy devil ray *Mobula eregoodoo*, formerly known as *Mobula eregoodootenkee*, is a small mobulid with a disc reaching a maximum width of 1.3 m, widely ranging in tropical and subtropical latitudes across the Indian Ocean, the Indo-Pacific region, and the western Pacific Ocean.

A recently emerged opportunity to examine 47 *M. eregoodoo* specimens bycaught in bather protection gillnets off New South Wales, Australia, together with new information assembled from other areas of its range, has allowed this study to undertake a redescription of the species, which was incompletely described in the past because of a paucity of specimens.

Based on the morphometric, morphological, ecological, and behavioural elements presented in this new study, corroborated by recent genetic investigations, the authors argue that *M. eregoodoo* is a valid species, distinct from shorthorned pygmy devil ray *Mobula kuhlii*. These findings are contrary to a recent revision of *Mobula*, where it was assessed as a synonym of *M. kuhlii*.

The accuracy of taxonomic assessments underpins the effectiveness of species conservation, particularly when direct exploitation or bycatch in various fisheries needs to be managed for sustainability. Failing to recognize that two similar looking species are distinct, such as *M. eregoodoo* and *M. kuhlii*, creates uncertainties that could result in mismanagement and underestimating local and global threats of extinction.

This study is the result of a global collaboration over many years between the Manta Trust; Tethys Research Institute; Institut des Sciences de l'Évolution, Université Montpellier; School of Biomedical Sciences, The University of Queensland; NSW Department of Primary Industries, Fisheries Conservation Technology Unit, National Marine Science Centre; Marine and Estuarine Ecology Unit, School of Biological Sciences, University of Queensland; Department of Biology and Environmental Science, Linnaeus University; Blue Resources Trust; Elasmobranch Project; and Department of Oceanography and Fisheries, University of the Azores.



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