A NEW SPECIES OF STINGRAY (F. DASYATIDAE) WITH A KEY TO THE AUSTRALIAN SPECIES

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(with one table and two text figures)

ABSTRACT

Eleven species of dasyatids, Amphotostius kuhlii (Müller and Henle), Dasyatis breviceps (Hutton), D. fluviarum Ogilby, H. gilberti sp. nov., D. sephen (Forskal), D. thetidis Waite, Himantura granulata (Macleay), H. uarnak (Forskal), Taeniura brocki Schultz, T. lymna (Forskal) and Urogymnus asperrimus (Bloch and Schneider) are recognised as occurring in Australian waters. The new species is described and figured. The Australian species are keyed but no attempt was made to unravel the complicated generic synonymy of the group.

INTRODUCTION

Two major schools of thought exist regarding the family status of the Dasyatidae. Several authorities (Fowler, 1941; Garman, 1913; Herald, 1961; Lord and Scott, 1924; Scott, 1957; Smith, 1950; Stead, 1963; Waite, 1923) recognised a family group which now includes about ninety species, including the Australian genera Dasyatis, Taeniura, Urogymnus, Urolophus and Gymnura; the genus Dasyatis was split by Fowler (1941) into the four subgenera: Himantura, Pastinachus, Dasyatis and Amphotostius.

Many recent authors (Bigelow and Schroeder, 1953; Compagno, 1973; Grant, 1975; Munro, 1956; Scott, 1962; Scott, Glover, and Southcott, 1974) have given Urolophus and Gymnura separate family status and elevated Fowler's subgenera to genera.

McClunlloch (1929), employed the former system but recognised Himantura and Pastinachus as distinct genera and checklisted seventeen species from Australia.

These species are: (1) Dasyatis breviceps (Hutton, 1875); (2) D. fluviarum Ogilby, 1908; (3) D. thetidis Waite, 1899; (4) D. kuhlii (Müller and Henle, 1841); (5) Pastinachus sephen (Forskal, 1775); (6) Himantura uarnak (Forskal, 1775); (7) Taeniura lymna (Forskal, 1775); (8) T. mortoni Macleay, 1883; (9) T. meyeni Müller and Henle, 1841; (10) Urogymnus asperrimus (Bloch and Schneider, 1801); Urolophus flavus Whitley, 1929; U. craticus (Lacépède, 1804); U. expanus McClunlloch, 1916; U. testaceus (Müller and Henle, 1841); U. viridis McClunlloch, 1916; and Pteroplatea australis (Ramsay and Ogilby, 1885) which according to Marshall (1964) is a junior synonym of Gymnura australis.

Whitley (1933) erected Toshia and Bathyoschia with type species Dasyatis fluviarum and D. thetidis respectively. Although these generic names have been applied (Oudger, 1937), some authors (Richardson and Garrick, 1953) considered their formation unfounded. Whitley (1940) elevated Urogymnus and Urolophus to family status but retained Gymnura within the Dasyatidae. Apart from including 1 (above) in his Bathyoschia, 9 was expunged from the list; the latter specimen being a misidentification of 7. Another two Himantura species, (11) H. granulata (Macleay, 1883) and (12)
A New Species of Dasyatid Stingray

H. toshi Whitley, 1939, were added.

Mann (1956), followed the latter school by excluding Urolophus and Gymnura, and recognised only nine species. Species 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 10 and 11 were included as above, with 5 as Dasyatis sephen and 4 as Amphotria kuhlii; 8 and 12 were not included.

Allen et al. (1976) added Taeniura brocki Schultz, 1953, from Lord Howe Island.

**METHOD**

As the author was unable to examine specimens of all the Australian species, the following key was constructed largely from the literature and uses those genera recognised by Bigelow et al. 1953. The Australian distribution of each species is also included. Those localities marked with asterisks represent likely occurrences that have not officially been recorded in the literature; the abbreviations for each state being: New South Wales (N.S.W.), Northern Territory (N.T.), Queensland (Qld), South Australia (S.A.), Tasmania (Tas.), Victoria (Vic.) and Western Australia (W.A.).

**KEY TO THE SPECIES OF DASYATID RAYS RECORDED FROM AUSTRALIA**

1. Disc oval; width less than length ........................ 2
   Disc quadrangular or rounded; width greater than or equal to length ....... 3

2(1). Disc studded with tubercles and bucklers. Tail without stinging barbs. *Urogymnus anerrimus* (Qld).
   Disc smooth except for some flattened tubercles along midline. Stinging barbs present present. Taeniura lyman (N.T., Qld, W.A.).

3(1). Dorsal spine inserted on posterior half of tail. Body whitish with dark spots and blotches Taeniura brocki (Lord Howe Is.).
   Dorsal spine inserted on anterior half of tail .................................. 4

4(3). No cutaneous folds on tail ........................................ 5
   Tail with upper, lower or both cutaneous folds; folds sometimes very narrow ............................... 6

5(4). Tail greater than 2.25 length of disc; banded with about 35 blackish blue rings Himantura urvink (N.S.W., N.T., Qld, W.A.).
   Tail less than 2.25 length of disc; without rings .................................. 6

6(4). Tail greater than 1.75 length of disc ....................... 7
   Tail less than 1.75 length of disc ........................................ 9

7(6). Tail with both upper and lower cutaneous folds. Disc spotted. Amphotria kuhlii (N.S.W., N.T., Qld, W.A.*).
   Tail with cutaneous fold only on lower surface. Disc not spotted ......... 8

8(7). Disc with rows of large spiny tubercles on dorsal surface ......
   Dasyatis thetidis (N.S.W., S.A., Tas., Vic.*, W.A.).
   Disc smooth, without rows of spiny tubercles on dorsal surface although one small oval tubercle may be present ......................... Dasyatis breviceps (N.S.W., S.A., Tas., Vic., W.A.).

9(6). Tail with very broad cutaneous fold on lower surface; not typically whiplike. Disc with one or two large central tubercles ...
   Dasyatis sephen (N.S.W., N.T., Qld, W.A.).
   Tail with narrow cutaneous fold on lower surface; typically whiplike.
   Disc with a row of tubercles extending on to tail .......................... 10

10(9). Dorsal surface of disc olive brown, ventral surface white ....
   Dasyatis flaviventer (N.S.W. Qld).
   Dorsal and ventral surfaces black .......... Dasyatis gulleri sp. nov. (Tas.).
FIG. 1a (main figure).—*Dasyatis guileri* sp. nov.; holotype; 889 mm T.L.; stranded, Nutgrove Beach, Derwent River estuary; April, 1977; Queen Victoria Museum Reg. No. 1978/5/108, Type 360; x 1/5.

1b (bottom left).—Anterior ventral aspect showing buccal area; x 1/2.
A New Species of Dasyatid Stingray

Family DASYATIDAE
Genus DASYATIS Rafinesque 1810
Dasyatis guileri sp. nov. (Figure 1)

Material
Holotype: 889 mm total length, male, collected by Dr. E.R. Guiler, stranded, Nutgrove Beach, Derwent River Estuary, (147° 21'E, 42° 55'S), Queen Victoria Museum Reg. No. 1978/5/108, Type 360.

Description
Body depressed, thick, antero-lateral margin moderately convex; posterior and lateral apices of pectoral fins angular. Snout tip rudimentary, barely distinguishable from anterior profile. Head wide, distinguishable from disc. Snout profile in front of eyes moderately concave, becoming slightly convex to snout tip.

Tail stout, with two spears; profile gently tapered to base of second spear then thin and whiplike to extremity; anterior to spear base, smooth except for a two of 21 large and 10 small tubercles extending along mid dorsal surface; posterior to spear base is lacking any form of spination but irregular in cross section due to very fine longitudinal furrows; narrow cutaneous fold extending posteriorly along ventral surface from below origin of large spear to approximately 0.75 post-spinal length; dorsal surface without fold. Primary spear large, tapering; 2.3 times length of snout; dorsal surface slightly convex laterally, ventral surface elevated to form prominent ridge; lateral edges with paired rows of 93, 92 sharp serrations each directed anteriorly and imperfect proximally; very sharp distally. Secondary spear small; 0.17 in primary; partly sunken in a deep groove on the dorsal surface of the tail.

Disc smooth except for a row of 32 sharp tubercles extending from disc centre along dorsal midline to join those on tail. Large sensory pores concentrated around midline of snout then bifurcating to form U patterns around both eyes. Microscopic sensory pores scattered over disc and tail. Eyes small, lateral, raised above inter-orbital. Gill slits small, sigmoid. Spiracles oblique, slightly larger than eye. Internasal flap broad, subrectangular; slightly wider than mouth; marginally wider posteriorly than anteriorly; lateral edges smooth; posterior edge rather concave; frenum stout mesially. Mouth moderately proconvex. Upper lip imperfect. Lower lip plicate. Buccal structures indiscernible. Teeth arranged in pavement, quincuncially; occlusal surface slightly convex; more acute mesially; 61 visible in upper jaw, 78 visible in lower jaw (these values may be higher as posterior section of both jaws occluded). Nostrils ovoidal, less than eye diameter. Pectorals wide, anterior margin smooth and convex; acute at tip; posterior lateral margin sinuous, rectilinear; acute posteriorly then slightly convex to posterior base. Pelvic fins small, smooth, sinuous; rectilinear along anterolateral margin; convex distally; insertion forming deep notch with pectoral. Claspers stout, longer than snout.

Dimensions
As given in Table 1. Table 1 constitutes a summary of the dimensions of the holotype; the first measurement is absolute in millimetres, while the second is expressed as a proportion in millesimals of disc length. Hubbs and Ishihama (1968) define the disc length for rajids, as the greatest distance from snout tip to posterior margin of the pectoral fin. Although this length is included, the measurement represented by the distance from the snout tip to posterior margin of the anus was considered more reliable and herein deemed to be the disc length. All dimensions were taken as direct measurements.

Coloration
Dorsal surface uniform black, tubercles and posterior third of spear white. Ventral surface brownish black with a few lighter flecks. Whiplike section of tail and cutaneous fold black. Anus white. Teeth yellow.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Absolute dimensions (mm)</th>
<th>Relative dimensions (thousands of disc length)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disc</td>
<td>251</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>889</td>
<td>3 541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snout</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pelvic fin, right</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>199</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tail</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>2 542</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spear 1</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>562</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spear 2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snout tip to base of spear 1</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>1 410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snout tip to anterior border of anus</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snout tip to anterior apex of right pectoral fin.</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snout tip to posterior apex of right pectoral fin.</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>1 080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snout tip to apex of right pelvic fin</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>1 108</td>
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<tr>
<td>Snout tip to anterior border right spiracle.</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>303</td>
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<td>Snout tip to anterior border right nostril.</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>167</td>
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<td>Snout tip to middle of upper lip</td>
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<td>175</td>
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<tr>
<td>Snout tip to first right gill slit</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snout tip to last right gill slit</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anterior border of anus to apex of right clasper.</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between anterior and posterior apices of right pectoral fin.</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>665</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Width:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>1 386</td>
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<tr>
<td>Between posterior apices of pectoral fins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Between posterior apices of ventral fins</td>
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<td>163</td>
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<tr>
<td>Between spiracles</td>
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<td>251</td>
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<tr>
<td>Between nostrils</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>151</td>
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<tr>
<td>Between first gill pair</td>
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<tr>
<td>Between last gill pair</td>
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<td>243</td>
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<tr>
<td>Base of spear 1</td>
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<td>52</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Depth:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A New Species of Dasyatid Stingray

Nomenclature

This species is named in honour of the collector Dr. E.R. Guiler, who noticed the freshly stranded specimen on a Hobart beach.

Affinities

Of the Australian species D. guileri most superficially resembles D. fluviorum. Both species possess a characteristically long whiplike tail which is greater than twice the disc length. However the species are quite different in body coloration and disc shape; the former trait was used as a key character. The disc of D. guileri is uniquely angular at its lateral extremities and the antero-lateral profile moderately convex, while in other Australian dasyatids the profiles are rounded, and straight or only slightly convex, respectively. D. fluviorum also possesses a prominent tail fold on the dorsal surface posterior to the spear; this character is absent in D. guileri.

Two species of Dasyatis, D. thetidis and D. brevicaudatus, have been recorded from Tasmania; both attain huge sizes and are amongst the largest dasyatids in the world. Consequently the juveniles are similar in size to the holotype of D. guileri. Waite (1899) gave a short account of a juvenile D. thetidis and stated that the specimen was very similar to the adult except for a slightly more elongated tail. A small relative elongation of the tail was also observed by the author for juveniles of the stingaree Urolophus cruceatus (Lacépède). However D. guileri should be easily distinguishable from juveniles of the larger dasyatids by the disc shape and colour.

A Formosan species, tentatively identified and figured by Jordan and Richardson (1909) as D. bennettii (Müller and Henle), appears to be the most similar species to D. guileri. Fowler's (1941) description of D. bennettii portrayed a completely different species and he linked Jordan et al.'s specimen with D. navarrae (Steindachner). The Formosan species is similar to D. guileri, but differs by possessing a short dorsal fold and minute tubercles posterior to the spear. Undoubtedly the most diagnostic feature separating D. guileri from all other long tailed dasyatids is the relatively enormous spear; the length is greater than twice the snout length, barely once in other species.

DISCUSSION

Any person undertaking a literature search of the systematics of the Dasyatidae is immediately greeted with taxonomic confusion. Generic diagnoses and keys are permeated with characters that are either vague or variable. This problem has been compounded by the virtual absence of information on intraspecific and ontogenetic variation. Furthermore, the reliability of previous revisions has been influenced by the absence of representative material of each species. Stingrays generally are large animals and this poses obvious problems with storage. Consequently representation of the family tends to be poor or non-existent in museum collections. Such problems can only be overcome by improving storage facilities and more extensive collecting.

Clearly, a generic revision based solely on literature reviews would be unreliable. Consequently no attempt was made to alter generic definitions, so the classification proposed by Bigelow et al. and supported by the phylogenetic studies of Compagno (1973), was utilised as the basis for this account.

The isolation and recognition of entities at the specific level appears to be more reliable. Those species listed by Munro (1956) appear to be good species and along with Taeniura brocki and Dasyatis guileri, form the complement of Australian species.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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A New Species of Dasyatid Stingray