



A review of the Australian skate genus *Pavoraja* Whitley (Rajiformes: Arhynchobatidae)

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Abstract

The Australian endemic skate genus *Pavoraja* Whitley, which contains six species including two valid nominal species (*P. alleni* and *P. nitida*) and four new species (*P. arenaria* sp. nov., *P. mosaica* sp. nov., *P. pseudonitida* sp. nov. and *P. umbrosa* sp. nov.), is redefined based on additional material. Members of the group occur primarily on the outer continental shelf and upper slope in both temperate and tropical Australian seas. The species are strongly partitioned geographically with small- to medium-scale ranges. *Pavoraja arenaria* is known to have a broad southern distribution but none is widespread in the Australian region. Only two species pairs, *P. nitida* and *P. arenaria* (off southern Australia), and *P. mosaica* and *P. pseudonitida* (off northeastern Australia), are known to be sympatric. New information is provided for the two nominal taxa, and the four new species are formally described and figured. Skeletal characteristics are described and illustrated, and a key to species is provided. Members of the genus differ primarily in colour pattern, squamation, morphometrics, meristics, and anatomical structure. The relationships of the genus *Pavoraja* to other arhynchobatid skates are discussed briefly.

Key words: *Pavoraja*, Arhynchobatidae, softnose skates, new species, Australia