

***Himantura hortlei* n. sp., a new species of whipray (Myliobatiformes: Dasyatidae) from Irian Jaya, Indonesia**

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Abstract

The Indo-Malay region, which is represented by at least 17 whiprays of the genus *Himantura*, has the richest dasyatid fauna of any region. *Himantura hortlei* n. sp. is described based on specimens from coastal marine and estuarine habitats in the Arafura Sea off Irian Jaya (southwestern New Guinea). The mature male holotype was caught in the estuary of the Minajerwi River. It is a moderately large ray that reaches at least 0.7 m disc width and 2.4 m total length. This species can be distinguished from most of its congeners by the combination of a relatively narrow, heart-shaped disc with a very long angular snout, very small eyes, a non-protrusible mouth, no deep circumoral grooves, larger and more slowly developing denticles, a less well-developed lateral prepelvic process, a yellowish ventral surface when fresh, denticles present along the upper anterior snout margin, and a denticle band ending well forward of the eyes in adults.

Key words: *Himantura hortlei*, Myliobatiformes, whipray, southwestern Irian Jaya, Indo-Pacific

Introduction

The Indo-Malay Archipelago has the richest dasyatid fauna of any major faunal region. At least 17 members of the genus *Himantura*, known as whiprays, occur along the continental shelves off Indonesia. A new whipray, belonging to the ‘uarnacoides’ species complex (Manjaji, 2004) was discovered off the southern coast of Irian Jaya (western New Guinea) on the basis of a photograph sent to one of the authors (i.e. Kailola) by Mr Kent Hortle, a biological consultant working at the Freeport mine, near Timika. At our request, Mr Hortle collected 6 fresh specimens over a period of 4 years beginning in 1997, from the estuaries of the Minajerwi (4°56’S, 137°3’E) and Ajkwa rivers (4°58’S, 136°50’E). He kindly sent