



New record of the smalleye stingray, *Dasyatis microps* (Myliobatiformes: Dasyatidae), from the western Indian Ocean

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Members of the Dasyatidae (stingrays) range in width from very small (<24 cm, e.g. the dwarf whipray *Himantura walga*) to very large size (>200 cm, e.g. the smooth stingray *Dasyatis brevicaudata*) (Last & Compagno, 1999; White & Dharmadi, 2007). The dasyatids are represented worldwide by more than 70 currently recognised extant species which occur in a variety of habitats, e.g. marine, estuarine and freshwater. They are typically demersal on insular and continental shelves, but one species (the pelagic stingray *Dasyatis violacea*) is pelagic in oceanic waters (Last & Compagno, 1999). In this paper we report the first occurrence of the smalleye stingray *Dasyatis microps* (Annandale) in the western Indian Ocean and provide information on the fresh colouration of this rare species.

Dasyatis microps (Annandale, 1908)

Trygon microps Annandale, 1908: 393; Annandale, 1909: 26.

Dasybatus microps: Garman, 1913: 381.

Dasyatis (Amphotistius) microps: Fowler, 1941: 431; Misra, 1947: 36.

Dasyatis (Himantura) microps: Misra, 1952: 124.

Dasyatis microps was first described by Annandale (1908) from a single, large specimen caught in the Bay of Bengal off Chittagong in Bangladesh. A further four large specimens were reported by Annandale (1909) off the Orissa coast in eastern India. Additional observations on this species in Indian waters were provided by Nair and Soundararajan (1976), which also extended its known range to the southern part of the east coast of India. Furthermore, Ishihara *et al.* (1998) recorded *D. microps* from the Ganges River Estuary. *Dasyatis microps* has also been recorded from the north Malé Atoll, Maldives (Adam, 1998), Gulf of Thailand (Last & Compagno, 1999), Malaysia (Mohsin & Ambak, 1996), Indonesia (White *et al.* 2006; White & Dharmadi, 2007) and the Arafura Sea off northern Australia (Last & Compagno, 1999). Although Fowler (1941) recorded *D. microps* from the Philippines and adjacent areas, Compagno *et al.* (2005) did not report this species as occurring in the Philippines.

Dasyatis microps is an extremely large dasyatid species, attaining widths of up to 222 cm (Garman, 1913). Nair and Soundararajan (1976) examined a pregnant female of 206 cm DW which contained a single, late-term male embryo of 33 cm DW. Mohsin and Ambak (1998) noted that most individuals of *D. microps* caught were 31–55 cm DW, and thus it is likely that the size at birth is around 31–33 cm DW. *Dasyatis microps* is a very distinctive dasyatid with the following combination of characters: disc very broad (width more than 1.4 times disc length); outer angles more than 90°; snout rounded, with tip projecting slightly; spiracles large; mouth large, with 5 papillae; disc with numerous stellate-based, enlarged denticles, mostly around snout; tail almost as long as disc, basal portion broad and flat, distal portion slender and round, tapering rapidly beyond sting; ventral cutaneous fold on tail thick and low, originating below spine base; base of tail with enlarged denticles; dorsal surface whitish brown, eyes dark; ventral surface pale (Garman, 1913; Nair & Soundararajan, 1976).

Several sightings of *D. microps* were made over reefs within 15 km of Tofo Beach, Mozambique (23°51'S, 35°32'E) between September 2004 and November 2007. Tofo Beach lies ca. 425 km north of the South African coastal border and 820 km east of the southern tip of Madagascar. Specimens were observed at depths between 15 m and 25 m in water tem-