

## Stock Annex: Common skate (*Dipturus batis-complex*) in Subarea 8 and Division 9.a (Bay of Biscay and Atlantic Iberian waters)

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Stock specific documentation of standard assessment procedures used by ICES.

**Stock:** Common skate

**Working Group:** Working Group on Elasmobranch Fishes (WGEF)

**Created:**

**Authors:**

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### A. General

#### A.1. Stock definition

The species *Dipturus batis* was shown to be a mixture of two species, correctly identified in publication from 1837 to 1926 then combined into one single species for close to one century (Iglésias *et al.*, 2010). The stock unit is therefore a complex of two species *D. cf. flossada* and *D. cf. intermedia* with strong difference in life history trait, in particular maximum size, probably implying difference in the level of fishing mortality that these species are able to sustain.

The population structure of both species is unknown and the definition of a stock unique in Subarea 8 and Division 9.a, was made to ascribe an assessment unit to every species caught in the eco-region.

#### A.2. Fishery

Council Regulation (EU) 43/2014 stated that it shall be prohibited for Union vessels to fish for, to retain on board, to tranship or to land the common skate (*Dipturus batis*) complex (*Dipturus cf. flossada* and *Dipturus cf. intermedia*) in Union waters of ICES subareas 8.

#### A.3. Ecosystem aspects

The two species are present from the coast to about 700 meters depth but they mostly occur on the shelf. They occur on soft (sandy-muddy) bottom. *Dipturus cf. flossada* is currently mostly present in the Celtic sea off Scilly and *Dipturus cf. intermedia* is mostly present off Scotland (Griffiths *et al.*, 2010; Iglesias *et al.*, 2010).

## B. Data

### B.1. Commercial catch

Despite prohibition for Union vessels to land the common skate (*Dipturus batis*) complex, some individuals from area 8.a were very occasionally landed in French fish markets in 2014. Sampling in fish markets revealed that an adult female, 2 meters long of *Dipturus* cf. *intermedia* was caught and landed in 2014 (the southern record of the species in recent years) and a small individuals of *Dipturus* cf. *flossada* was landed coming from the Glénan archipelago (southern Brittany). As these species are now mostly extirpated from this area, fishermen generally do not identify them and occasionally land them as they don't know about their prohibition.

### B.2. Biological

The length at 50% maturity (L50) is estimated to be 115.0/122.9 cm (males/females) and 185.5/197.5 cm (males/females) for *Dipturus* cf. *flossada* and *Dipturus* cf. *intermedia*, respectively. The age at 50% maturity is tentatively suggested as 11 years and 19–20 years for *Dipturus* cf. *flossada* and *Dipturus* cf. *intermedia*, respectively. The maximum lengths and weight (eviscerated) observed in the present study for cf. *flossada* and *Dipturus* cf. *intermedia* were 143.2 cm, 15.2 kg and 228.8 cm, 78.0 kg respectively (Iglesias *et al.*, 2010)

Life history of the two distinct species are mostly unknown in the area as at a larger scale. The 2013-2015 French programme "Pocheteau" is focused on obtaining biological parameters for the two species useful for population dynamic analyses. It is mostly focused on biological tagging and release of individuals onboard French vessels for calibration of age reading (Iglésias pers. commun.). Electronic tagging programme on *Dipturus* cf. *intermedia* revealed the species exhibit pronounced site fidelity to highly localised areas and important vertical movements (Wearmouth and Sims, 2009).

### B.3. Surveys

The common skate (*Dipturus batis*) complex, was not observed in the ICES Divisions 8.a,b,d during the French EVHOE survey in 2013.

### B.4. Commercial Effort and CPUE

Ask to Alain Tétard the Obsmer data from 8.a and 8.g

### B.5. Other relevant data

A coastal fishermen from the Glénan archipelago (southern Brittany) caught and released several tens of individuals from the beginning of the year 2014 whereas he never observed the species there in the last 30 years.

**C. Assessment: data and method****D. Short-Term Projection****E. Medium-Term Projections****F. Long-Term Projections****G. Biological Reference Points****H. Other Issues****H.1. Historical overview of previous assessment methods****I. References**

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