

Common skate complex (Blue skate (*Dipturus batis*) and flapper skate (*Dipturus intermedius*)) in Subarea 8 and Division 9.a (Bay of Biscay and Atlantic Iberian waters)

ICES advice on fishing opportunities

ICES has not been requested to provide advice on fishing opportunities for these stocks.

Stock development over time

There are no stock size indicators for the two species. Reported landings are low due to restrictive management measures and do not provide information on stock dynamics.

Stock and exploitation status

ICES cannot assess these stocks and their exploitation status relative to maximum sustainable yield (MSY) and precautionary approach (PA) reference points because the reference points are undefined.

Table 1 Blue skate and flapper skate Subarea 8 and Division 9.a. State of the stocks and fishery relative to reference points.

Blue skate and happer skate Subarea 3 and Division 3.a: State of the stocks and fishery relative to reference points.										
		Fishing pressure				Stock size				
		2015	2016	2017		2015	2016	2017		
Maximum sustainable yield	F_{MSY}	?	?	?	Unknown	$MSY B_{trigger}$?	?	?	Unknown
Precautionary approach	F_{pa}, F_{lim}	?	?	?	Unknown	B_{pa}, B_{lim}	?	?	?	Unknown
Management plan	F_{MGT}	—	—	—	Not applicable	B_{MGT}	—	—	—	Not applicable
Qualitative evaluation	-	?	?	?	Unknown	-	?	?	?	Unknown

Catch scenarios

ICES has been requested to provide information on stock status but has not been requested to provide advice on fishing opportunities for this stock.

Basis of the advice

ICES has not been requested to provide advice on fishing opportunities for this stock.

Table 3 Blue skate and flapper skate Subarea 8 and Division 9.a. The basis of the advice.

Advice basis	No advice requested
Management plan	ICES is not aware of any agreed precautionary management plan for blue skate and flapper skate in this area.

Quality of the assessment

There are no assessments for either blue skate or flapper skate in this area.

Issues relevant for the advice

Blue skate and flapper skate (also referred to as the common skate complex) have traditionally been important commercial species in northern European seas, taken in trawl and line fisheries. The geographical range of these species declined over the latter half of the 20th century. These species are currently a bycatch in trawl and tangle net fisheries on some parts of the continental shelf.

A taxonomic revision of these species has concluded that the smaller-bodied blue skate should retain the scientific name *Dipturus batis* and the larger-bodied flapper skate is now referred to as *Dipturus intermedius* (Last *et al.*, 2016). FAO have accepted the latter name, assigning it the ASFIS code DRJ. Flapper skate is reported predominantly from the northern North Sea and north-west Scotland and is occasionally found in the Celtic Sea. Blue skate is reported predominantly in the Celtic Sea, and its distribution extends northwards to Iceland. The southern limits of both species are uncertain.

The individual stock units are not reliably known; there is a likely connectivity between the Bay of Biscay and the Celtic Sea, where the smaller of the two species (blue skate) may be locally common (Bendall *et al.*, 2012). Both species occur in the northern parts of the Biscay-Iberian ecoregion, and long-nose skate (*D. oxyrinchus*) is the predominant species of the genus in Division 9.a.

Current EU regulations prohibit the common skate complex species from being fished, retained on board, transshipped, or landed. This prohibition applies to EU waters of ICES Division 2.a and subareas 3–4 and 6–10. The stock area covered by this advice sheet extends beyond EU waters.

Legal obligations to declare most demersal elasmobranchs to species level has led to a greater proportion of data being reported to this level.

Reference points

No reference points are defined for this stock.

Basis of the assessment

Table 4 Blue skate and flapper skate Subarea 8 and Division 9.a. The basis of the assessment.

ICES stock data category	6 (ICES, 2016a)
Assessment type	No assessment (ICES, 2018)
Input data	None
Discards and bycatch	Discarding is known to take place but has not been fully quantified.
Indicators	None
Other information	None
Working group	Working Group on Elasmobranch Fishes (WGEEF)

Information from stakeholders

There is no additional available information.

History of the advice, catch, and management

Table 5 Blue skate and flapper skate Subarea 8 and Division 9.a. History of ICES advice*, reported landings of common skate complex and ICES estimates of combined landings of *Dipturus* spp., excluding *D. oxyrinchus* from Portugal. All weights are in tonnes.

Year	ICES advice	Landings corresp. to advice	Reported landings **	ICES landings ***
2009	No targeted fishery	0	0.5	0.5
2010	No new advice, same as for 2009	0	0.05	0.05
2011	Zero TAC	0	0.09	0.09
2012	No new advice, same as 2011	0	0.08	0.08
2013	No targeted fishery, minimize bycatch	0	0.01	0.01
2014	No new advice, same as 2013	0	0.06	0.2
2015	No targeted fishery, minimize bycatch	0	0.09	13
2016	No new advice, same as 2015	0	0.01	15
2017	Precautionary approach	0	0.00	0.00
2018	Precautionary approach (same value as advised catches for 2017)	0		
2019	No catch advice requested	-		
2020	No catch advice requested	-		

* There is no specific TAC for this stock. Fishing opportunities are managed through an overall TAC by management unit, which includes all species of skates and rays.

** Reported landings of common skate complex (*Dipturus batis* and *D. intermedius*)

***These data combine landings for all *Dipturus* spp. occurring in the region, as data are confounded because of species misidentification and misreporting, except for Portuguese landings estimates for *D. oxyrinchus* (included in stock raj.27.89a).

History of the catch and landings

The stock area includes part of the NEAFC regulatory area but the distribution of the stocks does not extend into that area.

Table 6 Blue skate and flapper skate Subarea 8 and Division 9.a. Catch distribution (for combined landings of *Dipturus* spp., excluding *D. oxyrinchus*) by fleet in 2016 (last year with non-zero landings) as estimated by ICES.

Excluding <i>B. oxyrinchus</i> by fleet in 2010 (last year with non-zero landings) as estimated by ICES.						
Catch				Landings		Discards
Unknown	otter trawl	longlines	fixed nets	Seines	unspecified gears	Unquantified
	77%	2%	15%	1%	5%	
	15 tonnes					

Table 7 Blue skate and flapper skate Subarea 8 and Division 9.a. ICES estimates of landings by country (by tonnes). Data revised in 2016 (ICES, 2016b). These data combine reported landings of *Dipturus* spp., excluding *D. oxyrinchus* from Portugal.

Year	Spain	France	UK	Ireland	Total
2009		0.5			0.5
2010		0			0
2011		0.1			0.1
2012		0.1			0.1
2013		0			0
2014		0.1	0.1		0.2
2015	3	0.1		13	16.1
2016		0		15	15
2017		0			0

Summary of the assessment

There is no assessment for the common skate complex.

Sources and references

- Bendall, V. A., Heterington, S. J., Ellis, J. R., Smith, S. F., Ives, M. J., Gregson, J., and Riley, A. A. (2012). Spurdog, porbeagle and common skate bycatch and discard reduction. Fisheries Science Partnership 2011–2012, Final Report. 88 pp.
- ICES. 2016a. Advice basis. *In* Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2016. ICES Advice 2016, Book 1, Section 1.2.
- ICES. 2016b. Report of the Workshop to compile and refine catch and landings of elasmobranchs (WKSHARK2), 19–22 January 2016, Lisbon, Portugal. ICES CM 2016/ACOM:40. 69 pp.
- ICES. 2018. Report of the Working Group on Elasmobranch Fishes (WGEF), 19–28 June 2018, Lisbon, Portugal. ICES CM 2018/ACOM:16.
- Last, P., Naylor, G., Séret, B., White, W., de Carvalho, M., and Stehmann, M. eds., 2016. Rays of the World. CSIRO Publishing.