

Common Name: **Largetooth Sawfish**



Scientific Name: *Pristis perotteti*

Area of Concern: Western Atlantic; Texas, Florida

Year First Listed as a “Species of Concern”: 1991 (removed in 1997, added again in 1999)

Species Description:

Sawfish are characterized by a toothy snout projecting well forward of the head which is used to both locate and slash at prey. They are a batoid fish which are distinguished from the other elasmobranchs by their moderately flattened and laterally expanded body with pectoral fins connected to the sides of the head and trunk to form a disc. The largetooth sawfish is distinguished from the smalltooth sawfish (*P. pectinata*) by the ventral lobe of the caudal fin (distinct in *P. perotteri*) and number of paired teeth in the rostrum (*P. perotteri* has 20 or fewer pairs). Maximum size is 610 cm TL and over 500 kg. Sawfish are generally long lived (30 years), slow growing, and late-maturing, and they produce a small number of young, resulting in a very low intrinsic rate of population growth for these species. Sawfish are sluggish bottom-dwellers living in coastal, estuarine and marine waters. Prey items include benthic invertebrates and fish.

Rationale for “Species of Concern” Listing:

Demographic and Diversity Concerns:

Largetooth sawfish historically inhabited warm-temperate to tropical marine waters in the Atlantic and eastern Pacific, possibly in the eastern Mediterranean, and freshwater habitats in Central and South America and Africa. Historical occurrences of largetooth sawfish in North America were much more limited than those of the related smalltooth sawfish and were strictly confined to shallow (<10 m), near-shore, warm-temperate and tropical waters (>18 -30°C), estuarine localities, partly enclosed lagoons, and similar situations. In the United States, largetooth sawfish were reported mainly along the Texas coast and east into Florida waters, but reported occurrences of this species in U.S. waters are rare. It has been noted that all specimens reported from the coast of Texas have been large, in contrast with the abundance of smaller individuals farther south – suggesting that young are confined to southern regions where water temperature is warmer. It is likely that U.S. waters represent the northernmost limit of the largetooth sawfish's historic range.

Factors for decline:

Incidental commercial catch was likely the most significant factor in the decline of sawfish populations in U.S. waters. Sawfish are extremely vulnerable to overexploitation due to their exceptional propensity for entanglement in net gear, their restricted habitat, and their low intrinsic rate of increase. Habitat degradation likely impacts the species given their inshore distribution.

*For further information on this Species of Concern, or on the Species of Concern Program in general, please contact Ms. Marta Nammack, NMFS, Office of Protected Resources, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910, (301)713-1401, [Marta.Nammack@noaa.gov](mailto:Marta.Nammack@noaa.gov); or Shelley Norton, NMFS, Southeast Region, Protected Resources Division, 9721 Executive Center Drive N., St. Petersburg, FL 33702, (727)570-5312, [Shelley.Norton@noaa.gov](mailto:Shelley.Norton@noaa.gov).*

Status Reviews/Research Completed or Underway:

In 2000, NMFS denied a petition to list the largemouth sawfish as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act (65 FR 12959; March 10, 2000) because there was insufficient information presented in the petition and in NMFS files to indicate that a listing might be warranted.

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References:

FAO Species Identification Guide for Fishery Purposes. 2002. Pp. 524-526 *In:* K.E. Carpenter (ed). Volume 1: Introduction, molluscs, crustaceans, hagfishes, sharks, batoid fishes and chimeras. Rome, FAO.

Thorson, T.B. 1982. Life history implications of a tagging study of the largemouth sawfish *Pristis perotteti* in the lake Nicaragua- Rio San Juan System. *Env. Bio. Fish.* 7: 207-228.

Photograph by Maria Luiza Delgado Assad at [www.fishbase.org](http://www.fishbase.org)

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