



COMMISSION
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BEST HANDLING PRACTICES FOR THE SAFE RELEASE OF MANTAS & MOBULIDS

At WCPFC13, the Commission designated six species of manta and mobulid rays as key shark species for assessment in December 2016 and called for the development of safe release guidelines for manta and mobulid rays during SC13.

The following are recommended non-binding guidelines of best handling practices of manta and mobulid rays for both purse seine and longline fisheries:

Purse Seine

Do's:

- Release rays while they are still free-swimming whenever possible (e.g. back down procedure, submerging corks, cutting net).
- It is preferable that larger rays (>60 kg), that are too large to be lifted safely by hand are brailed out of the net and released using a purpose built large-mesh cargo net or canvas sling or similar device as recommended in document SC08-EB-IP-12 (Poisson et al. 2012, Good practices to reduce the mortality of sharks and rays caught incidentally by the tropical tuna purse seiners). [Note: It is preferable that release nets or devices are prepared prior to each set.]
- It is preferable that small (< 30 kg) and medium rays (30-60 kg) are handled by 2 or 3 people and carried by the sides of its wings or preferably using a purpose-built cradle/stretchers while ensuring the safety of the crew.
- When entangled in netting, carefully cut the net away from the animal and release to the sea as quickly as possible while ensuring the safety of the crew.

Don'ts:

- Do not leave a ray on deck until hauling is finished before returning it to the sea.
- Do not punch holes through the bodies of rays (e.g. to pass a cable or line through for lifting the ray).
- Do not gaff, drag, carry, lift or pull a ray by its "cephalic lobes" or tail or by inserting hooks or hands into the gill slits or the spiracles.