



SAFE HANDLING AND RELEASE GUIDELINES

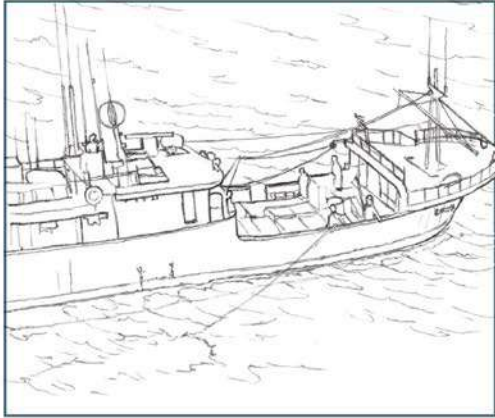
MANTA AND DEVIL RAYS



Illustrated by Marc Dando
August 2024

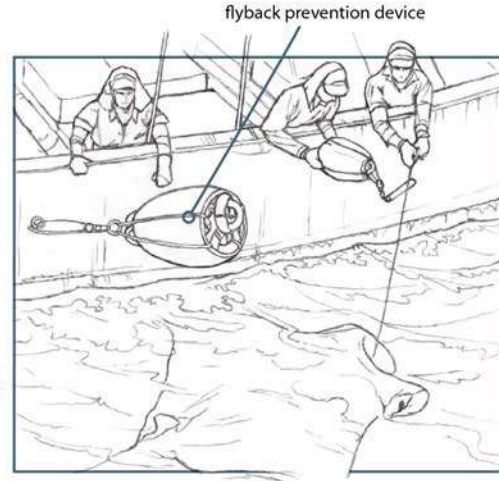
Longline and Hook and line fisheries

- 1 Always stop the vessel to safely remove gear and release large rays.

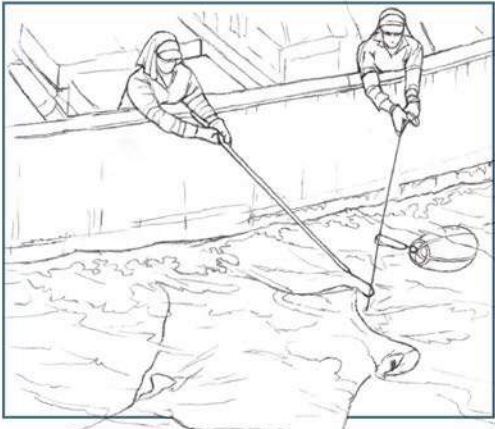


- 2 Bring the ray alongside the vessel, if possible. Always leave the animal submerged in the water so that its chance of post-release survival will be much higher.

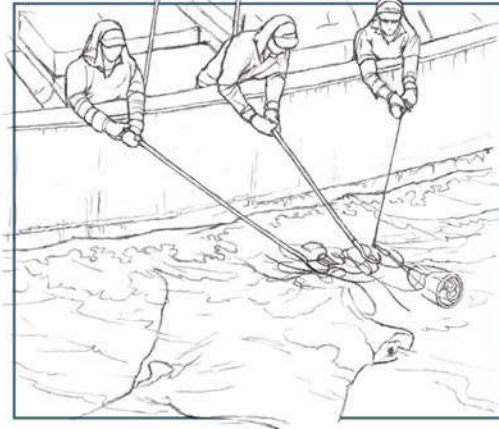
If the animal is not entangled and can be brought close to the boat, consider attaching a flyback prevention device to the branchline to reduce the risk of a lead (or hook) flyback accident.



- 3 For animals that are hooked or have swallowed the hook please use a long-handled line cutter, to cut the line as close to the hook as possible.



- 4 For animals that are entangled, secure any excess tangled line with the long-handled gaff, while another crew member uses a long-handled line cutter to remove as much tangled line as possible. Do not use the gaff on the animal.

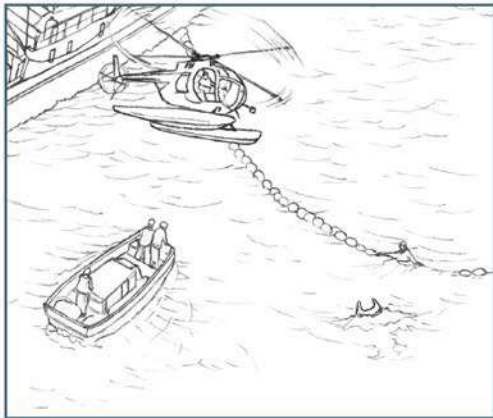


Purse seine fisheries

****If mobulid rays are detected from the helicopter or by crew this should be reported to the captain so they can avoid encirclement and inform the crew to have a purpose built cradle/stretcher or netting available and ready, to return the animals to the sea as rapidly as possible.****

- 1** Ideally rays should be released while they are still free-swimming (e.g. back down procedure, submerging corks, cutting net).

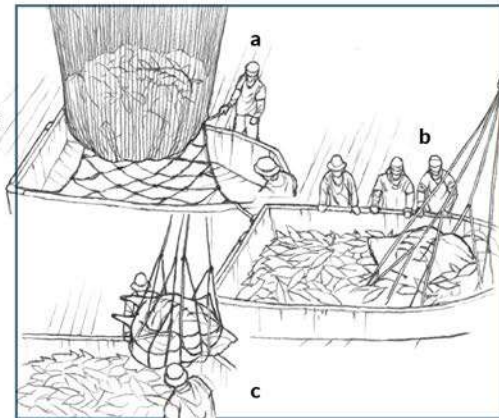
If captured, do not allow the ray to go through the loading chute to the lower deck. The ray should be released immediately from the upper deck.



- 3** Small (< 30 kg) and medium rays (30-60 kg) should be handled by 2 or 3 people and carried by the sides of its wings or preferably using a purpose-built cradle/stretcher while ensuring the safety of the crew.



- 2** Rays that are too large to be lifted safely by hand should be brailled out of the net and released using a purpose built large-mesh cargo net or canvas sling or similar device

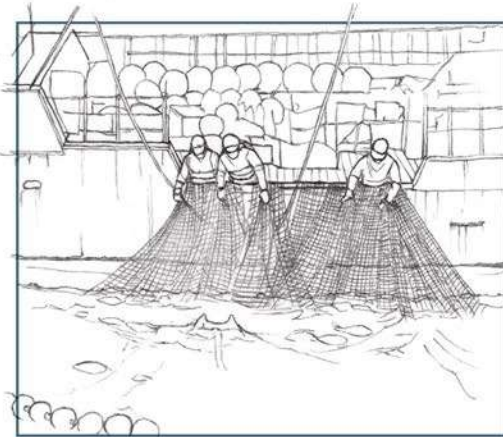


- 4** When entangled in netting, carefully cut the net away from the animal and release to the sea as quickly as possible while ensuring the safety of the crew.

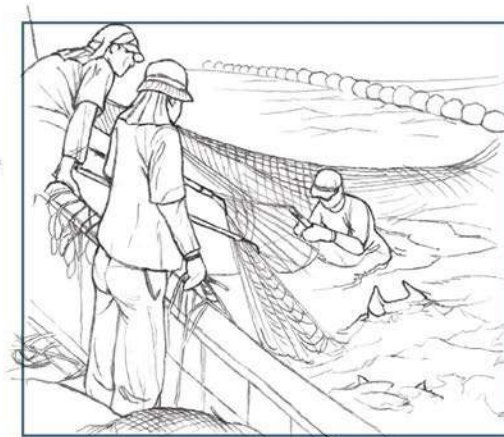


Gillnet fisheries

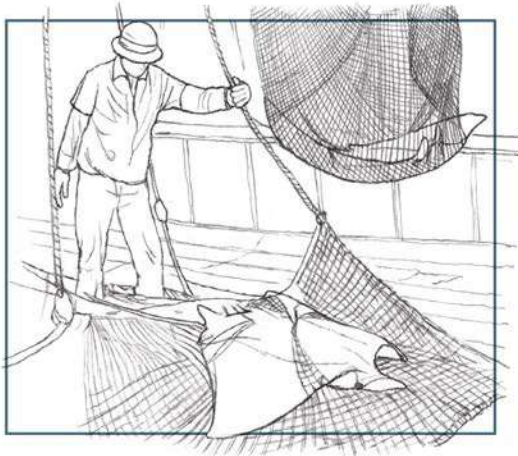
- 1 Avoid bringing the ray on deck and try to maintain the animal by the side of the boat in the water. Try to disentangle the ray using i.e. a longhanded line cutter.



- 2 Use the body of the net to manoeuvre the ray alongside the boat; care should be taken to minimise stress and/or injury to the ray.



- 3 If it is not possible to disentangle the ray while keeping it in the water, carefully bring the ray on board, making every attempt to support the ray's weight by at least two points (i.e., one point of contact being the midsection, the other being the bottom end of the body near the tail), or preferably have 2 or 3 people carry the ray by the sides of each wing; use crane/cargo net/grid if it's as large ray).



- 4 Disentangle the ray from the net - you may have to section some parts of the net if the ray is 'badly' entangled (care should be taken to prevent injury to the animal while doing so).

Try to minimise handling time and release ASAP, if possible, get someone to pour water over the animal while you are handling it.

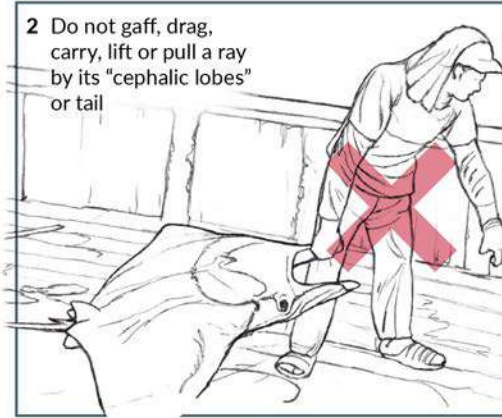


What not to do

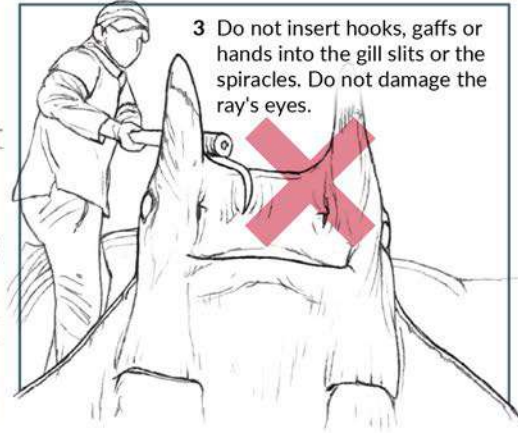
- 1** Please do not leave a ray on deck until hauling is finished before returning it to the sea (release ASAP)



- 2** Do not gaff, drag, carry, lift or pull a ray by its "cephalic lobes" or tail

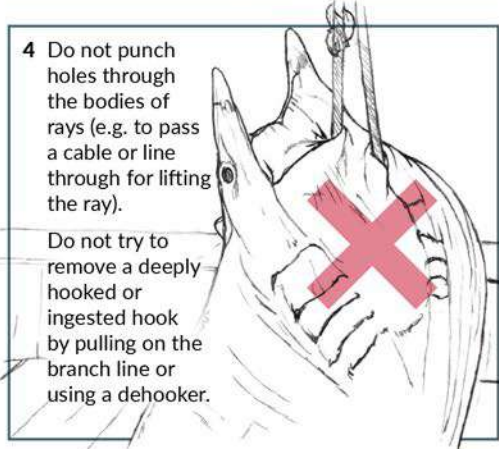


- 3** Do not insert hooks, gaffs or hands into the gill slits or the spiracles. Do not damage the ray's eyes.

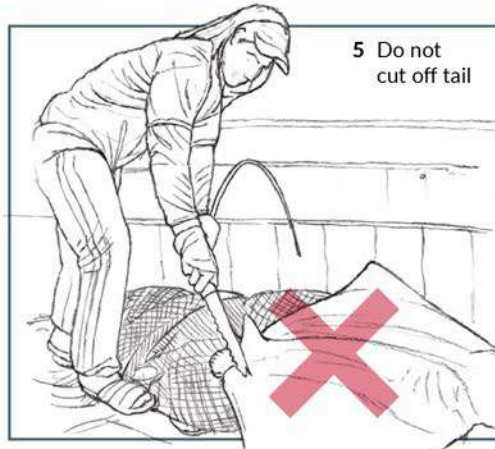


- 4** Do not punch holes through the bodies of rays (e.g. to pass a cable or line through for lifting the ray).

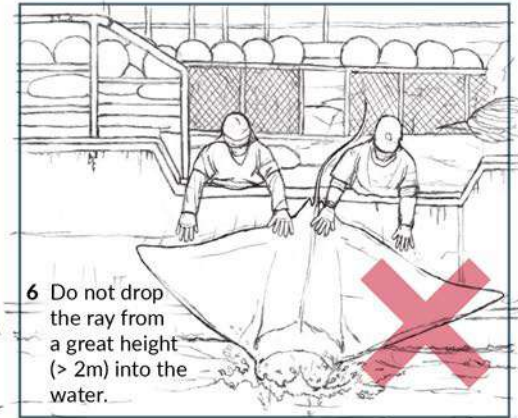
Do not try to remove a deeply hooked or ingested hook by pulling on the branch line or using a dehooker.



- 5** Do not cut off tail



- 6** Do not drop the ray from a great height (> 2m) into the water.



We would like to thank all of the researchers and fishers who contributed their expertise to aid the development of these guidelines.

This is a draft document pending final image workup, published in August 2024.
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