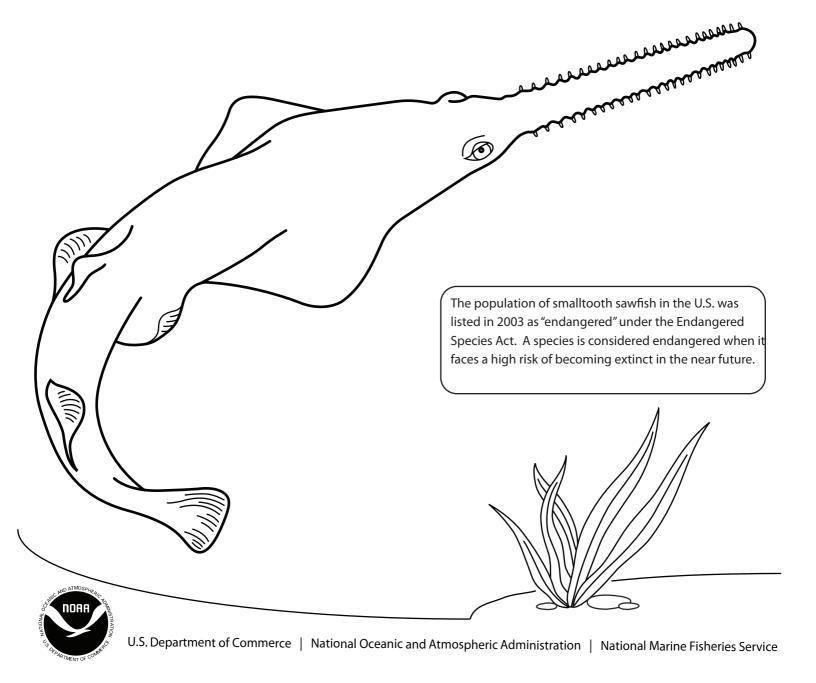
SMALLTOOTH SAWFISH Scientific Name: Pristis pectinata

Why Are They Called Sawfish?

They got their name from their long flat snout or "rostrum" which is edged with sharp teeth, giving it a "saw" like appearance. Sawfish use this saw-like rostrum to slash fish. They swing it from side to side to impale and stun fish and they also use it to stir up the sand to search for smaller marine animals like crabs, lobsters, and shrimp to eat.

What Makes Them Even More Unique?

Sawfish, like sharks, skates, and rays, belong to a group of fish called elasmobranchs, which means that their skeletons are made of cartilage (Humans have cartilage too. The flexible part of your nose and ears is cartilage). Although sawfish have shark-like bodies, they are actually part of a family of marine animals related to rays.



Smalltooth Sawfish Habitat

What Type of Habitat Do They Live In?

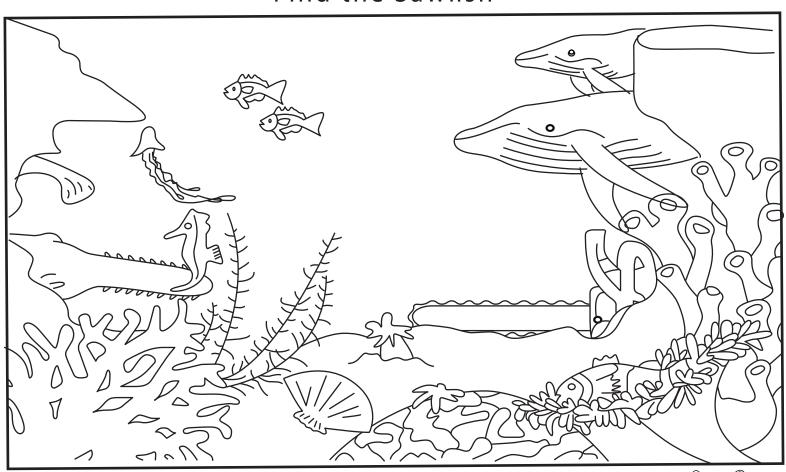
The U.S. population of smalltooth sawfish used to be found throughout the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico from New York to Texas, but now smalltooth sawfish can only be found regularly in Southwest Florida.

Female smalltooth sawfish do not lay eggs, but instead give live birth to fully-developed newborn sawfish called "pups." A mother sawfish can have up to 20 pups per litter. Newborn sawfish are very small when compared to their larger mothers.

Adult sawfish live primarily in marine (ocean) waters, but can sometimes be found in estuaries (estuaries are the areas where rivers meet the ocean). Adults can be found in many habitat types (mangrove, coral reefs) and at many water depths.

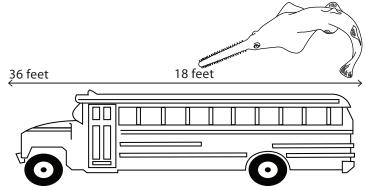
Estuaries have very important nursery habitats for young sawfish. Young sawfish use shallow waters with varying salinity (salinity refers to the level of "saltiness" in the water) and water temperatures as well as shorelines with red mangrove prop roots to hide from predators like bull sharks. Estuaries are also home to many small fish and invertebrates for sawfish to eat.

Find the Sawfish



How big do they get?

Adult smalltooth sawfish can grow to 18 feet long or greater; which is about half the size of a yellow school bus.



Threats

Entanglement in fishing gear

Smalltooth sawfish are often caught as bycatch. What is bycatch? Bycatch is a word that is used for a marine animal that is caught accidentally while fishing for something else.

Y Y Y Y Y Y

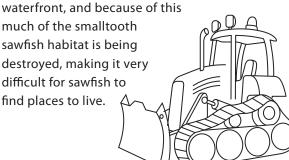
When sawfish get entangled in fishing nets or caught on a hook they can be injured or even killed.



Loss of Habitat

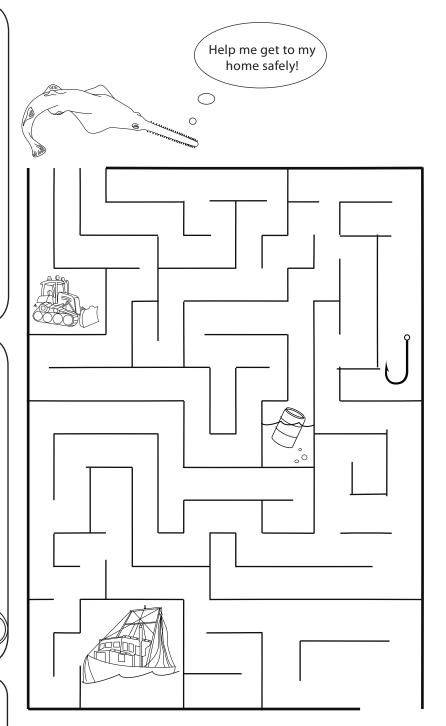
Young sawfish use shallow habitats and red mangroves as nursery areas. These types of areas are being lost due to waterfront development in Florida and other southeastern coastal states. Many people like to live and build houses by the

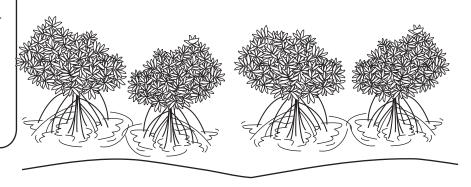
much of the smalltooth sawfish habitat is being destroyed, making it very difficult for sawfish to find places to live.



Marine Trash

Because smalltooth sawfish have so many teeth on their rostrum, they can get entangled in trash that finds its way into the ocean or estuary. Trash like old nets, fishing line, elastic bands, and many other types of plastic can become wrapped around the saw or body of the animal, which can lead to its injury or death.





Crossword Puzzle Down 1. Portions of the estuary used by young 2. Blade-like snout 3. Human created trash or garbage afloat in a lake, sea, or ocean 4. Federal law that aims to conserve and protect animals and their habitats 5. Partly enclosed coastal bodies of water where fresh water mixes with salt Across 1. Characterized by a cartilaginous skeleton and placoid scales 2. Environment where an animal or ecological community lives 3. Tropical trees that grow on the shoreline. They also provide shelter for young sawfish from predators. 4. An animal at risk of becoming extinct 5. Tough, elastic, fibrous connective

Crossword Glossary

6. A marine animal that is caught

tissue

accidentally

Red Mangroves: Are tropical trees of the genus *Rhizophora*, that have stilt-like roots that form dense thickets along tidal shores.

Estuaries: Partly enclosed coastal bodies of water where fresh water mixes with seawater.

Endangered: An "endangered" species can be a plant or animal that exists in such small numbers that it is in danger of becoming extinct.

Endangered Species Act: The U.S. Endangered Species Act (ESA) is a Federal law that aims to conserve endangered and threatened species and the ecosystems upon which the depend.

Rostrum: Sawfish are highly modified and elongated rays having a shark-like body and a blade-like snout, called a rostrum.

Cartilage: A tough, elastic, fibrous connective tissue found in various parts of the body, such as the joints and the outer ear. Unlike people who have very little cartilage, sawfish skeletons are made entirely of cartilage.

Habitat: Is an ecological or environmental area that is inhabited by a particular species of animal or plant. **Bycatch:** Bycatch is a word that is used for a marine animal that is caught accidentally while fishing for something else.

Marine Trash (also called marine debris): Is human-created waste that has deliberately or accidentally become afloat in a lake, sea, ocean, or waterway.

Elasmobranch: Are fish of the class Chondrichthyes, characterized by a cartilaginous skeleton and placoid scales, which includes sharks, rays, skates, and sawfish.

Nursery Habitat: Nursery habitat fulfills the early life requirements of young marine species by providing food, shelter, and protection from predators. For young sawfish, nursery habitat is shallow water in the estuaries of Southwest Florida.

How You Can Help

There Are Many Ways You Can Help Prevent The Future Decline of Smalltooth Sawfish:

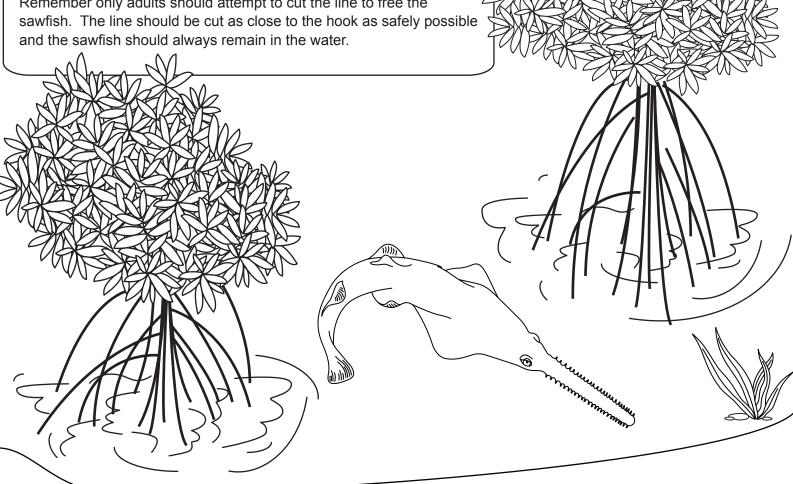
1) Help restore coastal habitats by participating in mangrove planting and local habitat restoration projects

For more information on smalltooth sawfish and sawfish conservation please visit: http://sero.nmfs.gov/pr/pr.htm

2) Help keep our ocean clean by participating in coastal clean-ups and always properly dispose of trash and fishing line

3) Tell others about the threats that smalltooth sawfish face and how they can help

4) Release and Report: If you or an adult ever catch a sawfish while fishing, have an adult report the sawfish by calling (352) 391-2360 or at the following website http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fish/sharks/sawfish. Remember only adults should attempt to cut the line to free the sawfish. The line should be cut as close to the hook as safely possible and the sawfish should always remain in the water.



About the National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office We are dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources through scientific research, fisheries management, enforcement, and habitat conservation.

For an electronic copy of this document, please contact Calusa. Horn@noaa.gov
For more information about smalltooth sawfish conservation visit http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pr.htm

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