

Endangered sawfish no match for Aussie croc

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A rare photograph released by Murdoch University shows a young sawfish caught in the clutches of a freshwater crocodile's jaw

The sharpened teeth on the saw-like snout of the critically endangered Australian sawfish is proving little defence against its deadliest underwater predators, the crocodile and shark.

A rare photograph released by Murdoch University shows a young [sawfish](#) caught in the clutches of a freshwater crocodile's jaw.

It is a common occurrence for the struggling species which is also targeted by bull [sharks](#), researchers said, as young sawfish venture upriver for the first five years their life before returning to the ocean as an adult.

"For a fish that is pupped at around 800 millimetres (31 inches) total length with formidable weaponry, one would assume that rates of natural predation would be low," said the University's lead fisheries researcher David Morgan Thursday.

"But their upstream migrations are fraught with danger, and we suspect they don't always survive."

Examining 39 sawfish, which can grow up to six metres (20 feet), in Western Australia's Fitzroy River researchers found 60 percent had wounds received from crocodile or bull shark attacks, with their findings published in *The Scientific Naturalist*.

"These scars suggest that freshwater [crocodiles](#) attempt to capture and consume sawfish regularly, but are unsuccessful possibly due to the size, sensory capabilities and defences of their prey," Morgan added.



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Researchers are urging a rethink of management techniques for Australia's northern river systems to better protect the vulnerable fish.

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