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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **National award-winning project showcases fishers' collaboration to aid research on endangered species**

The Northern Territory Seafood Council (NTSC) is proud to announce the successful conclusion of its innovative project titled "*Professional Fishers' Knowledge to Inform Research and Management of Sawfish and River Sharks*," which produced a 13-minute mini-documentary, part of which was aired on yesterday's ABC Landline program. This project, received national recognition by winning the award for Research, Development, and Extension at this year's National Seafood Industry Awards, it marks a major step forward in protecting and understanding Sawfish and River Shark populations in fishing grounds of Northern Australia in and adjacent to Marine Parks.

During two field trips aboard a chartered commercial Barramundi fishing vessel, the Australian Institute of Marine Sciences (AIMS) research team and crew successfully tagged and safely released six adult Sawfish, and collected DNA from juvenile sawfish in Buckingham, Arnhem, and Anson Bays.

'The success of this initiative can be attributed to the significant and valuable knowledge contributed by professional fishers, whose insights into the seasonal presence and long-term movements of these endangered species have proven crucial for the research,' said Chief Executive Officer, Mr Daniel Capps.

Professor Natasha Stacey, Marine Social Scientist, Charles Darwin University, Research Institute for the Environment and Livelihoods, said 'Traditional fisheries stock assessment methods and fishery independent surveys are costly and time consuming exercises. Fishers hold valuable and important knowledge that can complement or supplement more traditional fisheries research methods.'

'This project was a way to building relationships, between professional fishers, researchers, industry and fishery managers,' Professor Stacey went on to say.

'Scientists and professional fishers both acquire knowledge of threatened species behaviour as part of their professions. Documenting the collective knowledge acquired by fishers on sawfish occurrence over the duration of their fishing career (up to 30 years), will benefit further research to improve management,' said Dr Claire Stretten, AIMS Research Program Director, Sustainable Coastal Ecosystems and Industries.

The timing of this announcement is particularly meaningful, as it coincides with International Sawfish Day on 17 October. This global day of awareness highlights the importance of conserving sawfish, one of the world's most endangered species. Northern Australia remains one of the last strongholds for sawfish populations, and collaborative projects like this are essential for ensuring their survival.

This project is a partnership involving Northern Territory Seafood Council (NTSC), Australian Institute of Marine Sciences (AIMS), the Research Institute for the Environment and Livelihoods, Charles Darwin University (CDU).

This project is supported by the Australian Government through Our Marine Parks program Marine Parks Grant funding.

The Professional Fishers' Knowledge to Inform Research and Management of Sawfish and River Sharks mini documentary can be view by visiting [www.ntsc.com.au](http://www.ntsc.com.au).

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