



**Reintroduction techniques and short-term post-release survivorship of captive reared
Freshwater Sawfish *Pristis microdon*: The sustainability and ethics of keeping sawfish in small
public aquaria**

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Freshwater Sawfish (*Pristis microdon*) are listed by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) as Critically Endangered; yet in the Northern Territory of Australia they are classified as Vulnerable and are harvested for the aquarium industry. Since 1992 the Territory Wildlife Park (TWP) public aquarium has displayed juvenile Freshwater Sawfish to raise awareness of sawfish conservation and biology. TWP cannot house adult sawfish, which grow to six meters, and release sawfish into their natal river system as they approach three meters. TWP wished to determine that removal of sawfish from the aquarium and reintroduction into the wild were sustainable and ethical.

Between 2009 and 2011 best practice techniques were determined by monitoring short-term survivorship of released sawfish. Two removal and reintroduction techniques were used at two separate locations, and fish were monitored for up to one month post release by acoustic tracking. Results indicated that various factors influence post-release survivorship. It is recommended that sawfish be moved without sedation and allowed time to recover from transportation in a river pool prior to release. The release site should be selected for low predator densities. Display of juvenile Freshwater Sawfish in small public aquaria is sustainable and ethical when best practice techniques are used.