Why Report a Sawfish Encounter?
Sawfish are listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Populations of this species are in decline, making all information about the species invaluable. Sawfish sightings reports are very important for the evaluation of the species abundance, habitat, and range and consequently for the success of the Smalltooth Sawfish Recovery Plan.

Please Report Any Sawfish Encounter!

National Sawfish Encounter Database
The National Sawfish Encounter Database (NSED) was established as a sawfish tracking database to assist in sawfish research and conservation efforts. Your report can greatly help conservation efforts by providing the following information:
- Your name, phone number, and email address
- Date, time, and location of the encounter
- Number, size, and behavior of the sawfish
- Your activity at time of encounter
- Any tags, scars, or distinguishing marks
- No records are too old - historic reports welcome!

You can learn more about sawfish by visiting our website: www.flnmh.ufl.edu/sawfish

Where to Report an Encounter
Report a Sawfish Encounter Online:
www.flnmh.ufl.edu/sawfish/summary.html
Report by email: sawfish@flnmh.ufl.edu
Report by phone: (352) 392-2360
Or, contact the National Sawfish Encounter Database:
George H. Burgess
National Sawfish Encounter Database
Florida Program for Shark Research
Florida Museum of Natural History
Dickinson Hall
Museum Road / PO Box 117930
Gainesville, FL 32611-7930

Smalltooth Sawfish Biology
Sawfish, like sharks, skates, and rays, belong to a class of fish called elasmobranchs, whose skeletons are made of cartilage. Sawfish are actually modified rays with a shark-like body, and gill slits on their ventral side. Early sawfish arose around 100 million years ago, but these first sawfish were actually distant cousins to the modern day sawfishes, which first appeared around 55 million years ago. Sawfish get their name from their “saw”-shaped and flat snouts edged with pairs of teeth that are used to locate, stun, and kill prey. Their diet includes mostly fish but also some crustaceans.

The smalltooth sawfish (Pristis pectinata) is one of two species of sawfish that inhabit U.S. waters. Smalltooth sawfish commonly reach 18 ft (5.5 m) in length, and may grow to 25 ft (7 m). Little is known about the life history of these animals, but they may live up to 30-60 years and mature after about 30 years. Like many elasmobranchs, smalltooth sawfish are ovoviviparous, meaning the mother holds the eggs inside of her until the young are ready to be born, usually in litters of 1 to 13 pups.

Dangers to Sawfish
Sawfish are extremely vulnerable to overexploitation due to overfishing and have a propensity for entanglement in marine debris (presence of saw), their restricted habitat, and slow capacity of recovery from population collapse because of their low rate of population growth.

Conservation and Range Reduction
Habitat destruction and overfishing have succeeded in eradicating the smalltooth sawfish from the majority of its former range. Consequently, it survives in small pockets throughout its current range. The last remaining population in U.S. waters is off south Florida, and remains of a population that once ranged from New York to Texas. On April 11, 2003 the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service placed the smalltooth sawfish on the Endangered Species List, making it the first marine fish species to receive protection under the Endangered Species Act. The World Conservation Union (IUCN) has also listed P. pectinata as "Critically Endangered" throughout its range.

Sawfish Are Endangered
Sawfish are listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act, which makes it illegal to harm, harass, or handle them or any part in any way. It is illegal to hunt or net one, except with a permit. Accidental catchers do occur while fishing for other species; if a sawfish is hooked or netted, it should be released immediately. Remove as much fish gear as safely as possible, while keeping the sawfish in the water at all times.

Sawfish Safe Release Guidelines
WARNING: Sawfish are large powerful animals that can cause serious injury. For your safety, and the safety of the sawfish, we caution you do hook or net one of these animals.

If hooked:
- Keep sawfish in the water at all times.
- If it can be done safely, entangle the line it is wrapped around the saw and remove as much of the line as possible.
- Cut the line as close to the hook as possible.
- Do not handle the animal or attempt to remove any hooks or the saw unless you have a long handled tool.

If tangled in a net:
- Make every effort to free the animal from the net with minimal additional stress or injury.
- Keep sawfish, especially the gills, in the water as much as possible.
- Try to remove all the netting and release the animal quickly.
- DO NOT REMOVE THE SAW!