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Geographical range

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Species of the Day: Leaf-scaled Sea Snake

Although not currently listed on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™, the **Leaf-scaled Sea Snake**, *Aipysurus foliosquama*, qualifies as 'Critically Endangered' under IUCN criteria. This reef-associated snake, named for its unusually shaped scales, is known only from Ashmore and Hibernia Reefs, off the northwest coast of Australia.

The Leaf-scaled Sea Snake has undergone a severe population decline over the last 15 years. The causes of this decline are unknown, but may be associated with above-normal sea surface temperatures, which could have sublethal effects on this reef-flat specialist snake. This species may also be impacted by the general degradation of its coral reef habitat. This highly endangered marine reptile occupies a restricted range and probably has restricted dispersal, making it more vulnerable to extinction.

Ashmore Reef is a designated Marine Protected Area, and its protection is actively enforced. However, there are no specific conservation measures currently in place for the Leaf-scaled Sea Snake, and ongoing threats are likely to remain a problem, particularly in light of global climate change.



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