

Blue lines indicate the area meeting the ISRA Criteria; dashed lines indicate the suggested buffer for use in the development of appropriate place-based conservation measures

HELGELAND ARCHIPELAGO ISRA

Polar Waters Region

SUMMARY

Helgeland Archipelago is located off western Norway. This area surrounds the municipality of Dønna and includes adjacent waters around numerous surrounding islands. The area is influenced by freshwater and North Atlantic water currents which bring an influx of nutrient rich water. Within this area there are: **threatened species** and **reproductive areas** (Rabbitfish *Chimaera monstrosa*).

CRITERIA

Criterion A - Vulnerability; Sub-criterion C1 - Reproductive Areas

— —
NORWAY
 — —
120-375 metres
 — —
837.1 km²
 — —





DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Helgeland Archipelago is located off west Helgeland, Norway. It encompasses the fjord system around the island of Dønna and includes waters adjacent to several smaller surrounding islands. To the northeast lay Løkta and Tomma islands, to the west lay Vandve and Åsvær islands, and to the south lay Herøy and Alsta islands.

The area is influenced by North Atlantic water current which runs northwards (Berglund et al. 2018). The deeper areas around fjords in the Helgeland region are influenced by a high velocity, barotropic current (Ellingsen 2004).

This Important Shark and Ray Area is subsurface and benthopelagic and is delineated from 120 m to 375 m based on the depth range of the Qualifying Species in the area.

ISRA CRITERIA

CRITERION A – VULNERABILITY

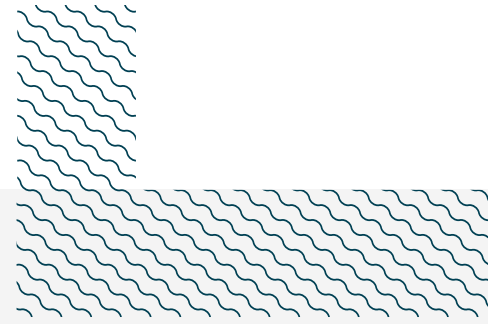
One Qualifying Species considered threatened with extinction according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species regularly occurs in the area. This is the Vulnerable Rabbitfish (Finucci 2020).

SUB-CRITERION C1 – REPRODUCTIVE AREAS

Helgeland Archipelago is an important reproductive area for one chimaera species.

Between 2019–2021, 462 Rabbitfish were caught from trawl fisheries operating in and around this area (Jac et al. 2022; Jac et al. unpubl. data. 2024). Of these, 29% (n = 134) were determined to be neonates/young-of-the-year (YOY), measuring <20 cm total length (TL), and the species has an estimated size-at-birth of ~15 cm TL (R Jac unpubl. data 2024). Individuals in this size range were observed in every survey year: 2019 (n = 11), 2020 (n = 120), and 2021 (n = 3), demonstrating regular occurrence of early life-stages.

Within Helgeland Archipelago, 128 Rabbitfish were captured. Of these, 94.5% (n = 121) were neonates/YOY (Jac et al. unpubl. data 2024). Individuals in this size range were observed in three survey years: 2019 (n = 11), 2020 (n = 107), and 2021 (n = 3). Surveys were undertaken between September and October, but these individuals were only captured in September (Jac et al. unpubl. data. 2024). Surveying across other months would be required to confirm any seasonality of reproduction in this area. This area is a particularly important fjord system as other areas of high density captures of this lifecycle stage in Norway are outside of fjords (Jac et al. unpubl. data. 2024). Additional temporal data are required to confirm seasonality in reproductive behaviour. This area has national importance as it has one of the highest catch records of Rabbitfish at this life-stage (R Jac pers. obs. 2024).



Acknowledgments

Romarc Jac (Institute of Marine Research, Norway) and Ryan Charles (IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group - ISRA Project) contributed and consolidated information included in this factsheet. We thank all participants of the 2024 ISRA Region 1 - Polar Waters workshop for their contributions to this process.

This factsheet has undergone review by the ISRA Independent Review Panel prior to its publication.

This project was funded by the Shark Conservation Fund, a philanthropic collaborative pooling expertise and resources to meet the threats facing the world's sharks and rays. The Shark Conservation Fund is a project of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors.

Suggested citation

IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group. 2024. Helgeland Archipelago ISRA Factsheet. Dubai: IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group.

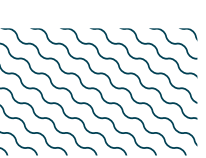
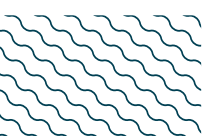
QUALIFYING SPECIES

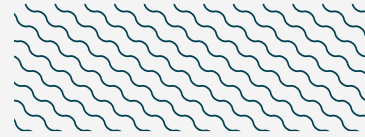
Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category	Global Depth Range (m)	ISRA Criteria/Sub-criteria Met								
				A	B	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	D1	D2
CHIMAERAS												
<i>Chimaera monstrosa</i>	Rabbitfish	VU	120-1,663	X		X						

SUPPORTING SPECIES

Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category
SHARKS		
<i>Etmopterus spinax</i>	Velvet Belly Lanternshark	VU
<i>Galeus melastomus</i>	Blackmouth Catshark	LC
<i>Squalus acanthias</i>	Spiny Dogfish	VU

IUCN Red List of Threatened Species Categories are available by searching species names at www.iucnredlist.org Abbreviations refer to: CR, Critically Endangered; EN, Endangered; VU, Vulnerable; NT, Near Threatened; LC, Least Concern; DD, Data Deficient.





REFERENCES

Berglund J, Boström J, Clausen P, Gamfeldt L, Gundersen H, Hancke K, Hansen JLS, Häggblom M, Højgård Petersen A, Ilvessalo-Lax H, et al. 2018. *Biodiversity and ecosystem services in Nordic coastal ecosystem*. Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers.

Ellingsen I. 2004. Internal tides and the spread of river plumes in the Trondheim Fjord. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Faculty of Engineering Science and Technology, Department of Civil and Transport Engineering, Ålesund.

Finucci B. 2020. *Chimaera monstrosa*. *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2020*: e.T63114A124459382. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2020-2.RLTS.T63114A124459382.en>

Jac R, Höffle H, Albretsen J, Jakobsdóttir K, Staby A, Søvik G, Junge C. 2022. Of three sharks and one chimaera: varied habitat preferences across a latitudinal range revealed by coastal and offshore surveys. *Journal of Fish Biology* 100: 660–674. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jfb.14979>