

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

CHRYSOCHOU BAY ISRA

Mediterranean and Black Seas Region

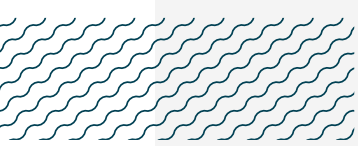
SUMMARY

Chrysochou Bay is located along the northwest coast of Cyprus within the Levantine Basin. The bay forms a semi-enclosed embayment with gently sloping sandy substrates, seagrass meadows, and patchy reef structures. The area overlaps with the Akamas and Chrysochou Bay Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Area. Within this area there are: **threatened species** and **reproductive areas** (Blackchin Guitarfish *Glaucostegus cemiculus*).

CRITERIA

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

—	—
CYPRUS	—
—	—
0-20 metres	—
—	—
79.76 km²	—
—	—





DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Chrysochou Bay is located along the northwest coast of Cyprus within the Levantine Basin. The bay forms a semi-enclosed embayment with gently sloping sandy substrates, seagrass meadows (Neptune Grass *Posidonia oceanica* and Slender Seagrass *Cymodocea nodosa*), and patchy reef structures (DFMR 2022; Makri et al. 2025).

The surrounding region is characterised by ultra-oligotrophic waters, high salinity, high sea surface temperatures, and circulation primarily driven by wind forcing and mesoscale eddies (Demetriou et al. 2022; DFMR 2024).

This area overlaps with the Akamas and Chrysochou Bay Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Area (EBSA; CBD 2026).

This Important Shark and Ray Area is benthic and is delineated from inshore and surface waters (0 m) to 20 m based on the bathymetry of 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 Critically Endangered Blackchin Guitarfish (Kyne & Jabado 2019).

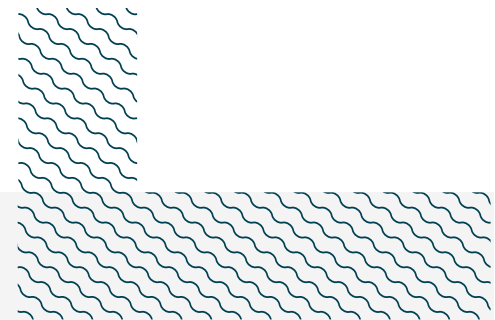
SUB-CRITERION C₁ - REPRODUCTIVE AREAS

Chrysochou Bay is an important reproductive area for one ray species.

Between December 2012 and December 2025, a total of 828 Blackchin Guitarfish were recorded across Cyprus from multiple data sources (The MECO project unpubl. data 2012-2025). These included citizen science observations collected from small-scale and recreational fishers, SCUBA divers, free divers, and beach users through the Mediterranean Elasmobranch Citizen Observations (MECO) project, as well as targeted scientific surveys and records from recreational fishing competitions (The MECO project unpubl. data 2012-2025). Blackchin Guitarfish records increased markedly after 2022, reflecting intensified research effort and the implementation of structured citizen science and research initiatives. Prior to this coordinated effort, available information was limited, and the species was widely regarded as rare in Cyprus, likely a consequence of underreporting and the absence of systematic monitoring.

Size-at-birth of the species is 20-35 cm total length (TL; Otero et al. 2019; Azrieli et al. 2024) and young-of-the-year (YOY) are ≤ 60 cm TL (Başusta et al. 2020). Most recorded individuals corresponded to early life-stages, comprising 59 neonates and 591 YOY. Spatially, these early life-stages were strongly concentrated within three coastal bays: Larnaca Bay (southeast coast; 38% of all early life-stages recorded), Chrysochou Bay (northwest coast; 24%), and Episkopi Bay (south coast; 13%). Two other bays (Limassol Bay and Morphou Bay) were also surveyed but recorded only very small numbers of Blackchin Guitarfish ($n = 18$ and $n = 1$, respectively), highlighting the importance of the three bays where the species were more commonly encountered.

Early life-stages were observed in Chrysochou Bay between 2022–2025, with a pronounced seasonal peak between August and December. Records were derived primarily from recreational fishers (shore-based angling and surf casting), with additional observations by other ocean users. Between October 2022 and October 2025, a total of 156 early life-stage individuals (4 neonates; 152 YOY; 84.8% of all Blackchin Guitarfish recorded in Chrysochou Bay) were recorded in the area, comprising 83 individuals in 2022, 41 in 2024, and 32 in 2025 (The MECO project unpubl. data 2012–2025). Notably, these individuals were documented across only 11 sampling dates with daily counts reaching up to 32 individuals in a single day (25 October 2025). Size ranged from 23–54 cm TL, corresponding to neonates and YOY. The dominance of early life-stages and their predictable seasonal occurrence across successive years provide strong evidence of recurrent use for reproductive purposes. In addition to neonates and YOY, 21 larger juveniles and subadults were recorded in the bay, alongside six adults, demonstrating that the area supports multiple life-stages, with neonates and YOY predominating.



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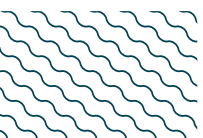
QUALIFYING SPECIES

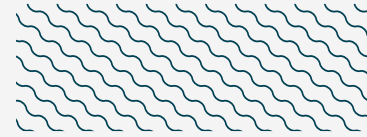
Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category	Global Depth Range (m)	ISRA Criteria/Sub-criteria Met									
				A	B	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	D1	D2	
RAYS													
<i>Glaucostegus cemiculus</i>	Blackchin Guitarfish	CR	0-100	X		X							

SUPPORTING SPECIES

Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category
SHARKS		
<i>Carcharhinus plumbeus</i>	Sandbar Shark	EN
RAYS		
<i>Aetomylaeus bovinus</i>	Duckbill Eagle Ray	CR
<i>Dasyatis marmorata</i>	Marbled Stingray	NT
<i>Dasyatis pastinaca</i>	Common Stingray	VU
<i>Gymnura altavela</i>	Spiny Butterfly Ray	EN

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.





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