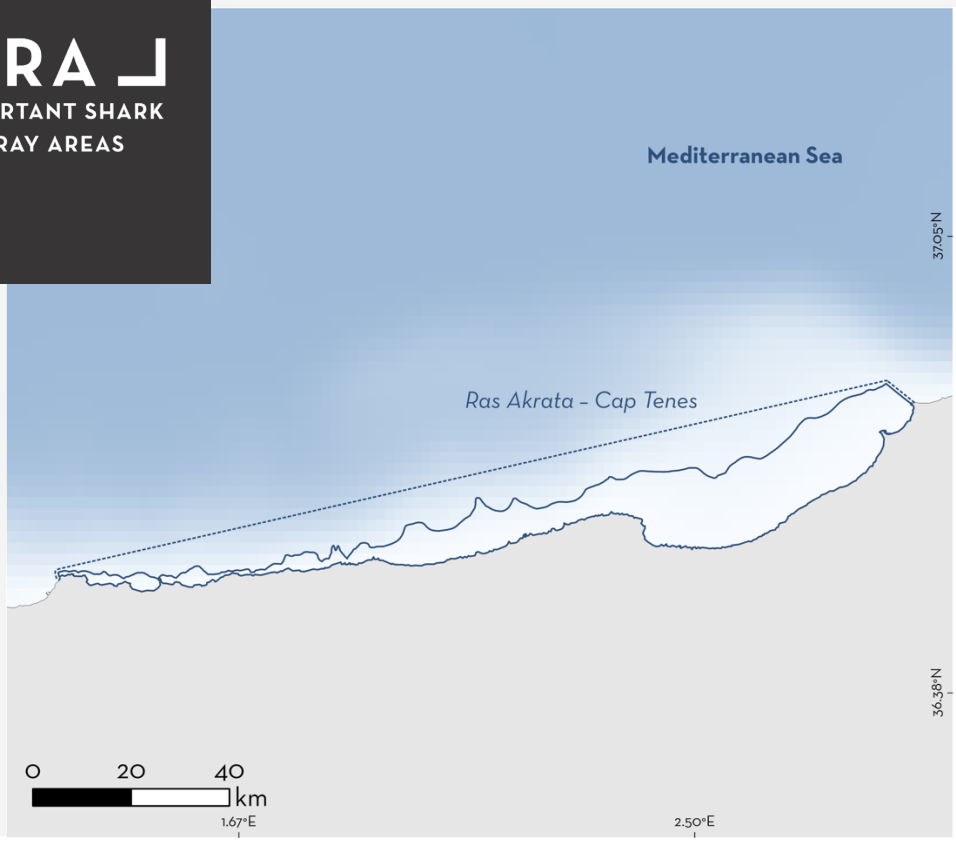
ISRA
IMPORTANT SHARK AND RAY AREAS



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

RAS AKRATA-CAP TENES ISRA

Mediterranean and Black Seas Region

ALGERIA

0–200 metres

856.52 km²

SUMMARY

Ras Akrata–Cap Tenes is spread over a 181 km coastal strip along the central basin of the Algerian coast. Located south of the western Mediterranean basin, in the Algerian current of the Modified Atlantic Water, it covers a narrow continental shelf to the south with a steep drop in its central part. This area is characterised by a highly productive ecosystem due to intense upwelling and nutrients supplied by coastal leaching and rivers. In this area there are: **threatened species** and **reproductive areas** (Blue Shark *Prionace glauca*).

CRITERIA

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

DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Ras Akrata-Cap Tenes is spread over a 181 km coastal strip along the central basin of the Algerian coast. Located south of the western Mediterranean basin, in the Algerian current of the Modified Atlantic Water, it covers a narrow continental shelf to the south (average width = 50 km; Bahbah [2021]) with a steep drop in its central part. The 200 m bathymetric curve is generally considered the limit of the Algerian continental margin and its average width is 24 km (maximum of 55 km in the bay of Bou-Ismail). The continental shelf, being very narrow, reaches a maximum distance of 13 km from shore at the level of Mount Chenoua and a minimum of 3 km between Sidi Fredj and Algiers (Houma 2009). It is characterised by a slope with a clear line of inflection around the 100 m isobath, with rocky outcrops located off Mazafran and Bousmail. On the west side of Mount Chenoua and up to Cap Tenes, the slope gradually increases to its maximum, where the shelf is one of the shortest in the Mediterranean Sea.

Ras Akrata-Cap Tenes can be separated into two distinct zones though the fishing fleet which captures the Qualifying Species operate in both. The first zone corresponds to the eastern sector with the bay of Bou-Ismail, characterised by sandy beaches interspersed with rocky flats. The second zone refers to the western sector (Mont Chenoua – Cap Tenes) characterised by cliffs, rocky coves, and sandy beaches. This area is partly characterised by intense coastal upwelling (Millot 1989) and is recognised as a highly productive ecosystem, with most of its biological production seemingly limited to a very narrow strip of the continental shelf. This high productivity is explained by a significant supply of nutrients due to coastal leaching and rivers present in the location (Oued Damous, Oued Messelmoune, Oued Hachem).

This Important Shark and Ray Area is pelagic and is delineated from inshore and surface waters (0 m) to 200 m based on the bathymetry of the area.

ISRA CRITERIA

CRITERION A – VULNERABILITY

The one Qualifying Species within this area is considered threatened with extinction according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™. The Blue Shark is assessed as Near Threatened globally (Rigby et al. 2019) but Critically Endangered in the Mediterranean Sea (Sims et al. 2016).

SUB-CRITERION C1 – REPRODUCTIVE AREAS

Ras Akrata-Cape Tenes is an important reproductive area for one shark species. Along the Algerian coast, Blue Shark has amongst the highest yield of sharks captured from longline fisheries targeting large pelagic species, with 55–75% of animals being juveniles (Mendil unpubl. data 2023).

Blue Shark neonates and young-of-the-year are reported using observational and size frequency data (Bouaziz 2017). Captured young-of-the-year include animals measuring ~80 cm total length (TL). Between 2001–2022, 587 Blue Sharks (68% juveniles) were sampled, measuring 148.2 cm TL on average. Six young-of-the-year were recorded in 2022 (Mendil & Hemida unpubl. data 2023), and 11 were recorded in 2017 (Bouaziz 2017) based on a size-at-birth of 35–50 cm TL. Between 2021–2022, pregnant individuals were also caught in the area.

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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
SHARKS												
Prionace glauca	Blue Shark	CR*	0–900	X		X						

SUPPORTING SPECIES

Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category
SHARKS		
Alopias vulpinus	Common Thresher	VU
Centrophorus uyato	Little Gulper Shark	EN
Heptranchias perlo	Sharpnose Sevengill Shark	NT
Hexanchus griseus	Bluntnose Sixgill Shark	NT
Isurus oxyrinchus	Shortfin Mako	EN

*Considered CR in a Mediterranean Sea regional assessment but considered NT globally.

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.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

There are additional indications that Ras Akrata-Cap Tenes is an important reproductive area for Shortfin Makos. Neonates and young-of-the-year have been reported using observational and size frequency data. Between 2001–2022, 73 Shortfin Mako (88% juveniles) were sampled (Mendil & Hemida, unpubl. data). There was a strong seasonality in the sex ratio of these catches with more females during the boreal spring, especially for April and May. Animals recorded measured 139.6 cm TL on average. Additionally, historical surveys support the presence of immature Shortfin Mako in fisheries in areas adjacent to this one. Between November 1996 and 2001, most individuals sampled were considered immature based on their size, with some considered neonates (Hemida 2005). In 2022, two individuals caught measuring 89 cm and 93 cm TL are considered young-of-the-year based on a size-at-birth of 60–70 cm TL (Mendil & Hemida unpubl. data). More information is required to demonstrate the importance of this area for reproductive purposes, and the regularity and predictability of such observations.

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