

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

## MALATHU ARCHIPELAGO ISRA

### Western Indian Ocean Region

#### SUMMARY

Malathu Archipelago is a collection of coral islands and submerged reef platforms ~75 km off the Saudi Arabian Red Sea coast. It is characterised by large reef platforms interspersed with areas of deep water. Within this area there are: **threatened species** (e.g., Scalloped Hammerhead *Sphyrna lewini*) and **undefined aggregations** (e.g., Silky Shark *Carcharhinus falciformis*).

#### CRITERIA

**Criterion A - Vulnerability; Sub-criterion C5 - Undefined Aggregations**

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<b>SAUDI ARABIA</b>	
—	—
<b>0-250 metres</b>	
—	—
<b>109.38 km<sup>2</sup></b>	
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## DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Malathu Archipelago is located ~75 km off the Saudi Arabian Red Sea coast. This area is a collection of four off-shore islands (Malathu, Marmar, Dohra, and Al Jadir) and four large reef platforms interspersed by deep waters with bottom-depths ranging from 100 to 250 m. Each island is surrounded by a succession of reef flat, reef crest, and steep reef wall.

This Important Shark and Ray Area is benthopelagic and extends from inshore and surface waters (0 m) to 250 m based on the bathymetry of the area and the observations of the Qualifying Species.

## ISRA CRITERIA

### CRITERION A - VULNERABILITY

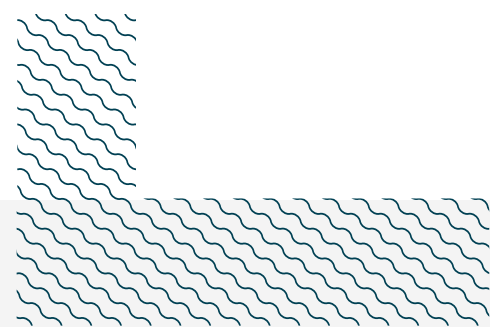
Two Qualifying Species considered threatened with extinction according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ regularly occur in the area. These are the Critically Endangered Scalloped Hammerhead (Rigby et al. 2019) and the Vulnerable Silky Shark (Rigby et al. 2021).

### SUB-CRITERION C5 - UNDEFINED AGGREGATIONS

Malathu Archipelago is an important aggregation area for two shark species.

Aggregations of up to 25 Scalloped Hammerheads have been recorded from dive surveys undertaken from 1997–2023. Most sightings occur in the first half of the year (January-June) (Spaet & Habis unpubl. data 2023). These records, along with those from the Seven Sisters Reefs, represent some of the largest aggregations of the species still regularly reported from Saudi Arabian waters.

Aggregations of up to 25 Silky Sharks have been recorded from dive surveys undertaken from 2003–2023. There is no apparent seasonality to these observations (Spaet & Habis unpubl. data 2023). Sightings sometimes occur in association with pods of False Killer Whales *Psuedorcinus crassidens*. Joint encounters between these species have been reported on three occasions in 2014 (June 18<sup>th</sup>, August 13<sup>th</sup>, and August 19<sup>th</sup>) (Röthig et al. 2016), and on May 21<sup>st</sup> 2022. This association has not been observed in other areas. The function of this aggregation is unknown but may be a feeding strategy for Silky Sharks intending to scavenge from successful False Killer Whale hunts.



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

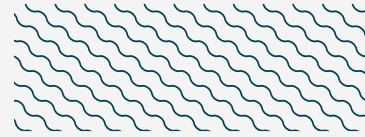
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### **Suggested citation**

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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	
<b>SHARKS</b>													
<i>Carcharhinus falciformis</i>	Silky Shark	VU	0-500	X							X		
<i>Sphyrna lewini</i>	Scalloped Hammerhead	CR	0-1,043	X							X		



## REFERENCES

**Rigby CL, Dulvy NK, Barreto R, Carlson J, Fernando D, Fordham S, Francis MP, Herman K, Jabado RW, Liu KM. 2019.** *Sphyrna lewini*. *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* 2019: e.T39385A2918526.

**Rigby CL, Sherman CS, Chin A, Simpfendorfer C. 2021.** *Carcharhinus falciformis* (amended version of 2017 assessment). *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* 2021: e.T39370A205782570. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2021-3.RLTS.T39370A205782570.en>

**Röthig T, Spaet JLY, Kattan A, Schulz IK, Roberts M, Roik A, Voolstra CR. 2016.** Repeated observations of cetaceans and carcharhiniformes associations in the Red Sea. *Marine Biodiversity* 46: 25-26. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12526-015-0356-2>