

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

**NAJWAT BUL THAMAH ISRA**  
**Western Indian Ocean Region**

**SUMMARY**

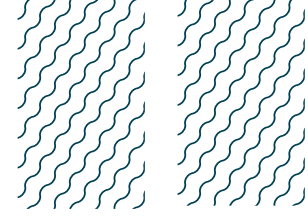
Najwat Bul Thamah is located in northeastern Bahrain. The area is characterised by coral reef habitats and is connected to Hayr Bul Thamah which is dominated by oyster beds. The area overlaps with a marine protected area, the Najwat Bul Thamah reserve. Within this area there are: **threatened species** and **undefined aggregations** (Whale Shark *Rhincodon typus*).

**CRITERIA**

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

—	—
<b>BAHRAIN</b>	—
—	—
<b>0-25 metres</b>	—
—	—
<b>56.05 km<sup>2</sup></b>	—
—	—





## DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Najwat Bul Thamah is located in northeastern Bahrain island. The area lies within the Persian/Arabian Gulf (hereafter 'Gulf'), a region characterised by high variation in environmental conditions (Sheppard et al. 2010). The area consists of coral reef habitat rich in marine biota such as algae, sponges, and anemones. The area has the highest diversity of living hard coral coverage in Bahrain with corals interspaced with oyster beds. The sea surface temperature in the area is subject to large seasonal variation (between 16–36°C; AlMealla et al. 2023).

Najwat Bul Thamah was designated as a Marine Protected Area in 2017, and a UNESCO World Heritage site since 2012.

This Important Shark and Ray Area is pelagic and is delineated from inshore and surface waters (0 m) to 25 m based on the depth use of Qualifying Species in the area.

## ISRA CRITERIA

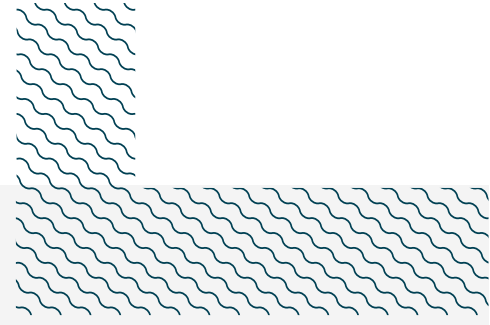
### CRITERION A - VULNERABILITY

The one Qualifying Species within the area is considered threatened with extinction according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™. The Whale Shark is assessed as Endangered (Pierce & Norman 2016).

### SUB-CRITERION C5 - UNDEFINED AGGREGATIONS

Najwat Bul Thamah is an important area for undefined aggregations of one shark species.

Aggregations of Whale Sharks have been observed every year between 2020 and 2023, generally in May and September (R AlMealla unpubl. data 2023). For example, in September 2021, over 30 Whale Sharks were observed in the area, and interviews with local fishers confirm this number of sharks is regularly observed. Sightings in May and September coincide with the beginning and end of the annual movement of Whale Sharks that feed in Qatari waters of Al Shaheen during the boreal summer (Robinson et al. 2013, 2017). Available video footage demonstrates surface feeding behaviour, however it is also possible that the Whale Sharks use this area as a stopover point during migration. More information is required to determine the nature and function of this aggregation.



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### **Acknowledgments**

Reem AlMealla (Nuwat for Environmental Research & Education) and Asia O. Armstrong (IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group - ISRA Project) contributed and consolidated information included in this factsheet. We thank all participants of the 2023 ISRA Region 7 - Western Indian Ocean workshop for their contributions to this process.

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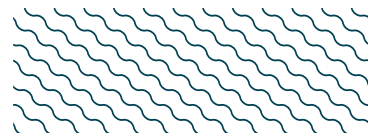
### **Suggested citation**

**IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group. 2023.** Najwat Bul Thamah ISRA Factsheet. Dubai: IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group.

## QUALIFYING SPECIES

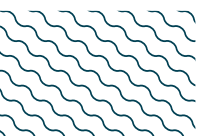
Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category	Global Depth Range (m)	ISRA Criteria/Sub-criteria Met									
				A	B	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	D1	D2	
<b>SHARKS</b>													
<i>Rhincodon typus</i>	Whale Shark	EN	0-1,928	X							X		

## SUPPORTING SPECIES



Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category
<b>SHARKS</b>		
<i>Carcharhinus dussumieri</i>	Whitecheek Shark	EN
<i>Carcharhinus limbatus</i>	Blacktip Shark	VU
<i>Carcharhinus macloti</i>	Hardnose Shark	NT
<i>Carcharhinus sorrah</i>	Spottail Shark	NT
<i>Chaenogaleus macrostoma</i>	Hooktooth Shark	VU
<i>Hemipristis elongata</i>	Snaggletooth Shark	VU
<i>Loxodon macrorhinus</i>	Sliteye Shark	NT
<i>Rhizoprionodon acutus</i>	Milk Shark	VU
<i>Rhizoprionodon oligolinx</i>	Grey Sharpnose Shark	NT
<i>Sphyrna mokarran</i>	Great Hammerhead	VU
<b>RAYS</b>		
<i>Aetobatus ocellatus</i>	Spotted Eagle Ray	EN
<i>Aetomylaeus wafickii</i>	Wafic's Eagle Ray	NE
<i>Glaucostegus halavi</i>	Halavi Guitarfish	CR
<i>Gymnura poecilura</i>	Longtail Butterfly Ray	VU
<i>Himantura uarnak</i>	Coach Whipray	EN
<i>Maculabatis randalli</i>	Arabian Banded Whipray	LC
<i>Pastinachus sephen</i>	Cowtail Ray	NT
<i>Rhinobatos punctifer</i>	Spotted Guitarfish	NT
<i>Rhynchobatus djiddensis</i>	Whitespotted Wedgefish	CR

*IUCN Red List of Threatened Species Categories are available by searching species names at [www.iucnredlist.org](http://www.iucnredlist.org). Abbreviations refer to: CR, Critically Endangered; EN, Endangered; VU, Vulnerable; NT, Near Threatened; LC, Least Concern; DD, Data Deficient; NE, Not Evaluated.*





## REFERENCES

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