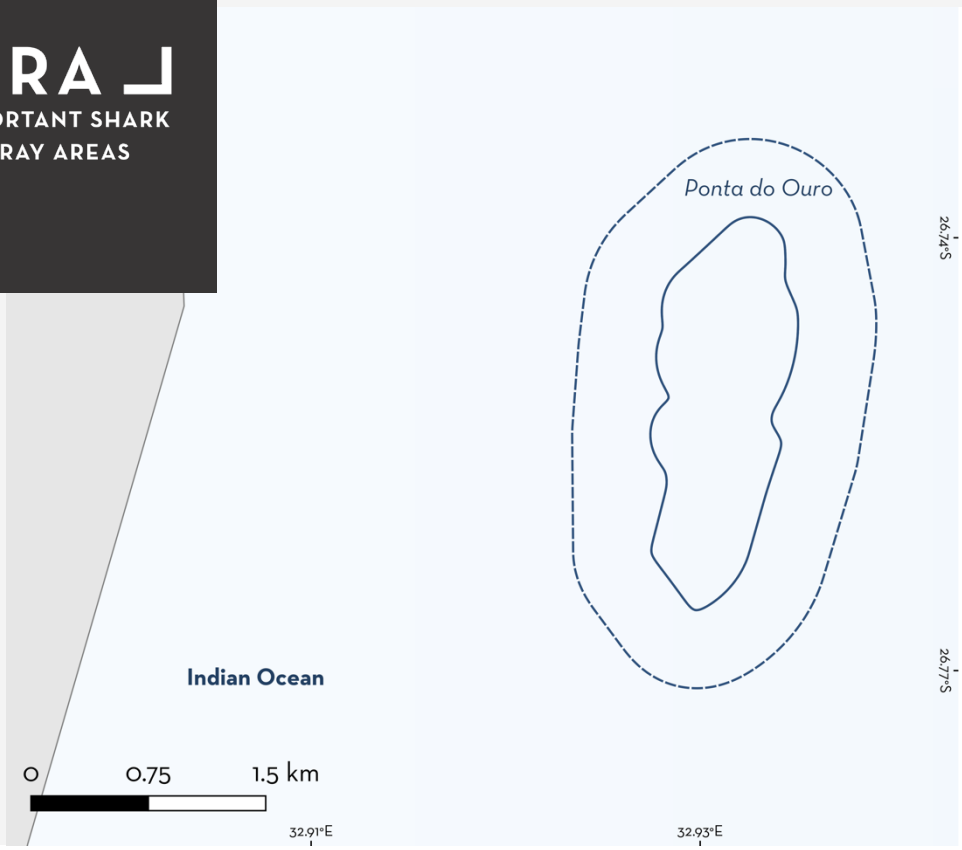
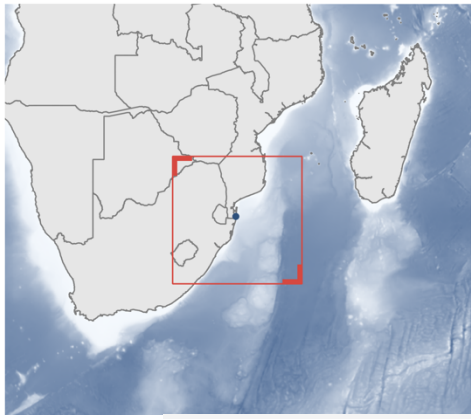
ISRA
IMPORTANT SHARK AND RAY AREAS





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

PONTA DO OURO ISRA

Western Indian Ocean Region

MOZAMBIQUE

0–45 metres

1.67 km²

SUMMARY

Ponta do Ouro is a coastal area in far southern Mozambique. The area lies in a biogeographic transitional area between the tropical coast of central Mozambique and the subtropical east coast of South Africa (Delagoa bioregion). It is characterised by a reef ridge at ~30 m depth that is surrounded by deeper water. The area overlaps with a Marine Protected Area, three Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas, and one Key Biodiversity Area. Within this area there are: **threatened species** (e.g., Scalloped Hammerhead *Sphyrna lewini*); **feeding areas** (Bull Shark *Carcharhinus leucas*); and **undefined aggregations** (e.g., Spotted Eagle Ray *Aetobatus ocellatus*).

CRITERIA

Criterion A – Vulnerability; Sub-criterion C2 – Feeding Areas; Sub-criterion C5 – Undefined Aggregations

DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Ponta do Ouro is a coastal reef in far southern Mozambique. It is situated within a unique biogeographic transitional region between the tropical coast of central Mozambique and the subtropical east coast of South Africa (Turpie et al. 2000), referred to as the Delagoa bioregion (Sink et al. 2004). The Agulhas Current is the dominant oceanographic feature due to the relatively narrow continental shelf along this region of coast (Schumann 1988; Ramsay 1994; Lutjeharms 2006).

The reef, known locally as Pinnacles, is a shallow ridge (~30 m depth) surrounded by deeper water (>50 m) on the narrow continental shelf. The area contains some of the highest latitude shallow-water hard coral reefs in the world (Riegl et al. 1995). These hard coral communities are typically dominated by *Acropora* and *Montipora* species that form a veneer on top of existing substrate (Ramsay 1994).

The area overlaps with the Maputo National Park Marine Protected Area (MPA). It also overlaps with three Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs): the Delagoa Shelf Edge, Canyons and Slope, the Incomati River to Ponta do Ouro, and the Mozambique Channel (CBD 2023a, 2023b, 2023c), and with the Ponta do Ouro Marine Partial Reserve Key Biodiversity Area (KBA 2023).

This Important Shark and Ray Area is benthopelagic and is delineated from inshore and surface waters (0 m) to 45 m based on the bathymetry of the area.

ISRA CRITERIA

CRITERION A – VULNERABILITY

Three 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), the Endangered Spotted Eagle Ray (Finucci et al. submitted), and the Vulnerable Bull Shark (Rigby et al. 2021).

SUB-CRITERION C2 – FEEDING AREAS

Ponta do Ouro is an important feeding area for one shark species.

Bull Sharks are regularly reported during summer with multiple individuals feeding on fish spawning aggregations. The timing of their arrival coincides exactly with the arrival of spawning carangids in early summer (Daly et al. 2019; Lubitz et al. 2023). Stable isotope analysis confirmed that Bull Sharks sampled in this area have a broad diet that includes carangids that aggregate on a specific reef every year (Daly et al. 2013).

SUB-CRITERION C5 – UNDEFINED AGGREGATIONS

Ponta do Ouro is an important area for undefined aggregations of one shark and one ray species.

Scalloped Hammerheads predictably aggregate on Pinnacle Reef, where they have been observed every year for the past 14 years between September and March forming aggregations of 20–200 individuals (R Daly pers. obs. 2010–2023).

Spotted Eagle Rays form seasonal aggregations on Pinnacle Reef from December to March, where they were seen every year for the past 13 years (R Daly pers. obs. 2011–2023).

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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												
Carcharhinus leucas	Bull Shark	VU	0–256	X			X					
Sphyrna lewini	Scalloped Hammerhead	CR	0–1,043	X						X		
RAYS												
Aetobatus ocellatus	Spotted Eagle Ray	EN	0–40 m	X						X		

SUPPORTING SPECIES

Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category
SHARKS		
Alopias pelagicus	Pelagic Thresher	VU
Carcharhinus albimarginatus	Silvertip Shark	VU
Carcharhinus amboinensis	Pigeye Shark	VU
Carcharhinus brevipinna	Spinner Shark	VU
Carcharhinus plumbeus	Sandbar Shark	EN
Carcharias taurus	Sand Tiger Shark	CR
Carcharodon carcharias	White Shark	VU
Hemipristis elongata	Snaggletooth Shark	VU
Rhincodon typus	Whale Shark	EN
Sphyrna mokarran	Great Hammerhead	CR
Sphyrna zygaena	Smooth Hammerhead	VU
RAYS		
Aetomylaeus bovinus	Duckbill Eagle Ray	CR
Bathytoshia brevicaudata	Shorttail Stingray	LC
Dasyatis chrysonota	Blue Stingray	NT
Megatrygon microps	Smalleye Stingray	DD
Mobula kuhlii	Shorthorned Pygmy Devil Ray	EN
Neotrygon caeruleopunctata	Bluespotted Maskray	LC
Rhina ancylostomus	Bowmouth Guitarfish	CR
Taeniura lymma	Bluespotted Lagoon Ray	LC
Taeniurops meyeni	Blotched Fantail Ray	VU
Torpedo sinuspersici	Gulf Torpedo	DD

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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