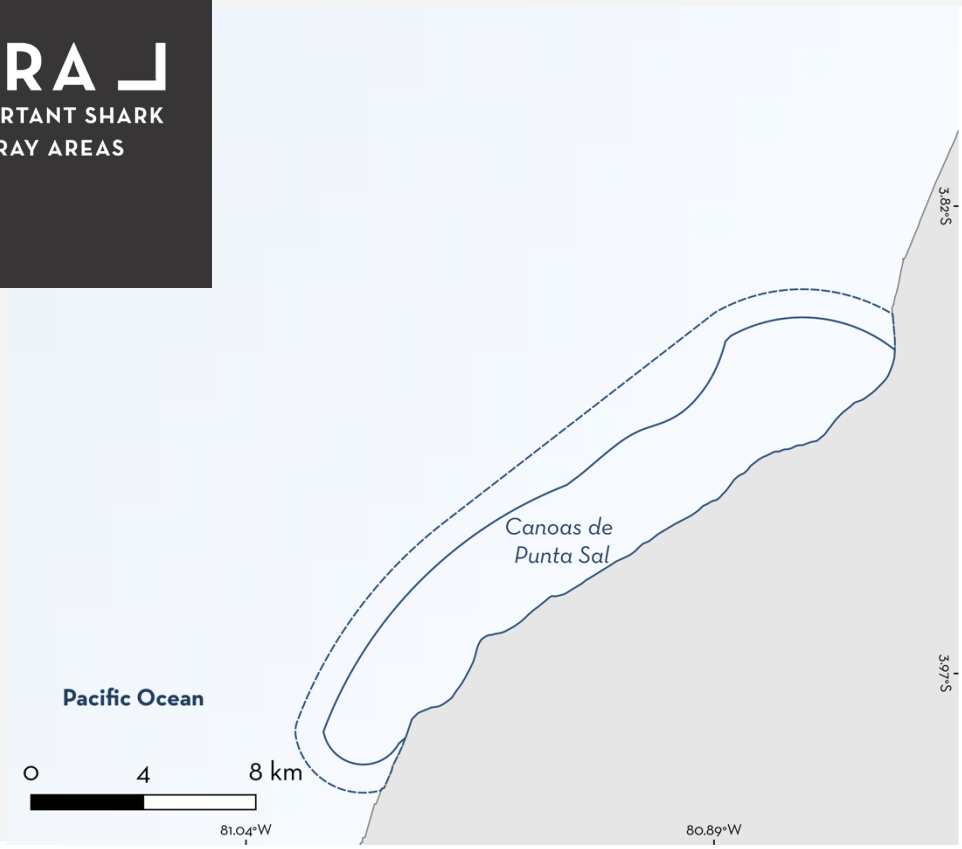
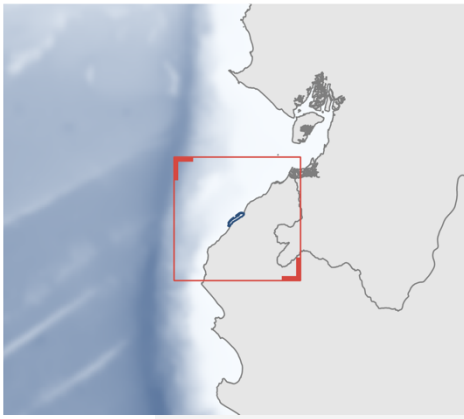
ISRA
IMPORTANT SHARK AND RAY AREAS





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

CANOAS DE PUNTA SAL ISRA

Central and South American Pacific Region

PERU

0–75 metres

81.77 km²

SUMMARY

Canoas de Punta Sal is located in northern Peru. This area sits in the Equatorial Front which is a transitional zone between two marine currents with high biological productivity and is influenced by the Gulf of Guayaquil which is the largest estuary on the southeast Pacific coast. The area overlaps with two Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas and one marine protected area. It contains unique oceanographic and bathymetric conditions resulting in high biodiversity and exceptionally high marine productivity. Within this area there are: **threatened species** and **feeding areas** (Whale Shark *Rhincodon typus*).

CRITERIA

Criterion A – Vulnerability; Sub-criterion C2 – Feeding Areas

DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Canoas de Punta Sal is located in northern Peru. This area sits in the Equatorial Front which is a transitional zone between two marine currents with high biological productivity. This area at a larger scale is influenced by the Gulf of Guayaquil which is the largest estuary on the southeast Pacific coast (Stevenson 1981). It contains high biological productivity due to the oceanographic conditions associated with the development of the Equatorial Front, coastal outcrops, and interaction of various types of water masses (i.e., oceanic and fresh water transporting organic materials from the estuary's interior). In the gulf, 23 hydrographic basins are discharged in which the Guayas River Basin constitutes the most important fluvial system of the entire western slope of the Andes. The dry season is from June to November and the rainy season from January to April, coinciding with greatest river discharge. At the local level, this area is influenced by two of the most important rivers of northern Peru (Zarumilla and Tumbes). Their riverine discharge influences primary productivity of estuarine and adjacent coastal waters (Paerl 2006).

This area has strong inter-annual variability due to the natural cycle of the ocean–atmosphere system called the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) (Fiedler 2002). These regime shifts are caused by periods of warm (El Niño) and cold (La Niña) temperature anomalies that can drastically change the oceanographic conditions and consequently cause changes in food availability and modify habitats (Fiedler 2002).

This area overlaps with the marine protected area Mar Tropical de Grau (UNEP-WCMC & IUCN 2026).

This Important Shark and Ray Area is delineated from the surface (0 m) to 75 m based on the global depth range of the Qualifying Species.

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. The Whale Shark is assessed as Endangered (Pierce & Norman 2016).

SUB-CRITERION C2 – FEEDING AREAS

Canoas de Punta Sal is an important feeding area for one shark species.

Northern Peru has been identified as one of the 25 global Whale Shark aggregations (Araujo et al. 2022). Juvenile Whale Sharks (2–10 m total length) use this area seasonally (austral spring and summer) for feeding purposes. Between 2014–2018, in Tumbes (northern coastal Peru), most of the 191 juvenile Whale Sharks, predominately males, were recorded feeding (Maguiño et al. 2016, 2019). Furthermore, 185 interviews with fishers, on-board observers, captains, and diving companies provided information on 272 Whale Shark observations where most individuals were reportedly observed feeding (Maguiño et al. 2016). The probability of Whale Shark presence in northern Peru increases at high chlorophyll-a (4–6 mg/m^3) and high sea surface temperature values (25–28°C). Whale Sharks appear to aggregate seasonally potentially exploiting rich foraging grounds when biological productivity is highest (Gonzalez-Pestana et al. 2020).

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Alejandra Mendoza (ecOceanica), Rossana Maguiño (ecOceanica), and Adriana González-Pestana (IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group - ISRA Project) contributed and consolidated information included in this factsheet. We thank the participants of the 2022 ISRA Region 12 – Central and South American Pacific workshop for their contributions to this process.

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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												
Rhincodon typus	Whale Shark	EN	0–1,928	X			X					

SUPPORTING SPECIES

Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category
SHARKS		
Mustelus whitneyi	Humpback Smoothhound	CR
Sphyrna zygaena	Smooth Hammerhead	VU
Squatina armata	Chilean Angelshark	VU
RAYS		
Aetobatus laticeps	Pacific Eagle Ray	VU
Hypanus dipterurus	Diamond Stingray	VU
Hypanus longus	Longtail Stingray	VU
Mobula mobular	Spinetail Devil Ray	EN
Narcine entemedor	Cortez Numbfish	VU
Pseudobatos planiceps	Pacific Guitarfish	VU
Rostroraja velezi	Rasptail Skate	VU
Urobatis tumbesensis	Tumbes Round Ray	VU
Zapteryx xyster	Southern Banded Guitarfish	VU

IUCN Red List categories: *CR, Critically Endangered; EN, Endangered; VU, Vulnerable; NT, Near Threatened; LC, Least Concern; DD, Data Deficient.*

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

There are additional indications that Canoas de Punta Sal is an important area for reproductive, feeding, and resting purposes of one ray species.

Female and male Tumbes Round Rays are commonly observed and have been recorded through videos and photographs in Canoas de Punta Sal, Tumbes region, northern Peru. This species has been observed swimming, resting in groups under crevices, and feeding (A Gonzalez-Pestana pers. obs. 2022). Some females were also observed with extended abdomens on the dorsal surface which suggests that this area might be important for the reproduction of this species.

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