

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

LOS CÓBANOS-ACAJUTLA ISRA

Central and South American Pacific Region

SUMMARY

Los Cóbános-Acajutla is located in El Salvador, adjacent to the villages of Acajutla and Los Cóbános. This area includes the coastal Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar site) Complejo los Cobános. The area is unique to the region as the only patch of coastal coral reef habitat from Costa Rica to Baja California. The area is also characterised by other habitats including volcanic beaches, mangroves, and estuaries. Within this area there are: **threatened species** and **reproductive areas** (Scalloped Hammerhead *Sphyrna lewini*).

CRITERIA

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

— —
EL SALVADOR
 — —
0-60 metres
 — —
424 km²
 — —



DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Los Cóbános-Acajutla is located in the Acajutla and Sonsonate municipalities of El Salvador, adjacent to the villages of Acajutla and Los Cóbános. This area encompasses the Complejo Los Cóbános Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar site) on the southwest part of El Salvador and the Acajutla area to the westward part. Situated within the Pacific Central-American Coastal Large Marine Ecosystem, there are two rivers, Sensunapan and Banderas, that merge with the Pacific Ocean on the northwest and east sides of the area. Both rivers discharge large loads of sediment and organic matter, and many small estuaries are associated with this zone. Littoral fringes include rocky and sandy shores while subtidal habitats include boulders as well as sandy and muddy patches (Arrivillaga 2009). Subtidal coral colonies exist from 0.5-3 m, where the dominant species is Lobe Coral *Porites lobata*. There are also small colonies of *Psammocora* spp. that cover an area of 0.5-1 km². In deeper waters, there is abundant coverage of soft corals including *Carijoa* spp. as well as more than ten gorgonid species.

This Important Shark and Ray Area is delineated taking into consideration the extent of the Complejo Los Cobános Ramsar site, along with the reach of artisanal fisheries from Acajutla harbour (9 km from the harbour and 5.5 to 9 km from the coast, i.e., the area of most productivity; González Leiva et al. 2017). The area is delineated from inshore and surface waters (0 m) to the maximum depth of the area at 60 m.

ISRA CRITERIA

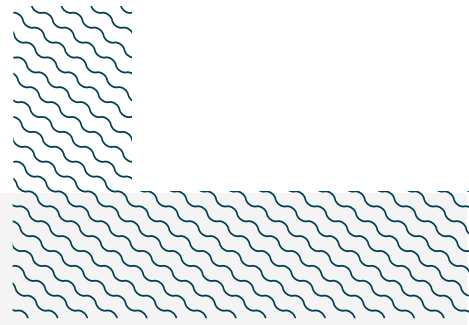
CRITERION A - VULNERABILITY

One Qualifying Species considered threatened with extinction according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ regularly occurs in the area, the Critically Endangered Scalloped Hammerhead (Rigby et al. 2020)

SUB-CRITERION C1 - REPRODUCTIVE AREAS

Los Cóbános-Acajutla is an important reproductive area for one shark species.

Landing surveys at three artisanal harbours between September 2015 and August 2016 recorded 578 Scalloped Hammerhead ranging from 30 to 330 cm total length (TL). However, 94% of individuals were <100 cm TL and assessment of sexual maturity revealed 97% of Scalloped Hammerhead were immature, with ~80% classed as neonates. While catch was pooled among harbours, Puerto de Acajutla is reported as the most important landing site of those surveyed (González Leiva et al. 2017).



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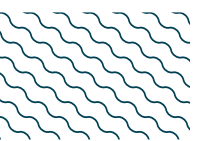
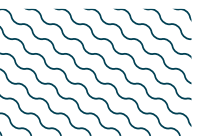
QUALIFYING SPECIES

| 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 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Sphyrna lewini</i> | Scalloped Hammerhead | CR | 0-1,043 m | X | | X | | | | | | |

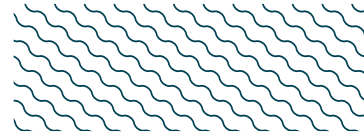
SUPPORTING SPECIES

| Scientific Name | Common Name | IUCN Red List Category |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| SHARKS | | |
| <i>Carcharhinus falciformis</i> | Silky Shark | VU |
| RAYS | | |
| <i>Aetobatus laticeps</i> | Pacific Eagle Ray | VU |
| <i>Hypanus dipterus</i> | Diamond Stingray | VU |
| <i>Hypanus longus</i> | Longtail Stingray | VU |
| <i>Mobula mobular</i> | Spinetail Devil Ray | EN |
| <i>Narcine vermiculata</i> | Vermiculate Numbfish | LC |
| <i>Pseudobatos leucorhynchus</i> | Whitesnout Guitarfish | VU |
| <i>Rhinoptera steindachneri</i> | Pacific Cownose Ray | NT |
| <i>Styracura pacifica</i> | Pacific Chupare | VU |
| <i>Urotrygon chilensis</i> | Blotched Round Ray | NT |
| <i>Urotrygon rogersi</i> | Roger's Round Ray | NT |

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 Los C6banos-Acajutla is an important reproductive area for Diamond Stingray and Longtail Stingray. Data on landings from the artisanal fishing harbour of Acajutla collected over 56 survey days from March 2012 to March 2013, recorded 110 individuals of the Longtail Stingray. Of the 40 individuals identified as female, all those with >90 cm disc width (DW) (43%) were pregnant, with 58% of individuals with ovaries containing oocytes. Similarly, of 106 recorded Diamond Stingrays, 40% of the 45 females recorded were pregnant, with 60% of individuals with ovaries containing oocytes. Pregnant females of both species were only recorded between November and March (Galdamez 2014). However, further evidence is needed to confirm regular presence and use of the habitat for reproductive purposes.



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