





AGUALASAL-CATATUMBO ISRA

South American Inland Waters Region

SUMMARY

Agualasal-Catatumbo is located in Colombia. It is situated in the middle section of the Catatumbo River sub-basin in Norte de Santander Department. This area is a tributary of the Catatumbo River, and is characterised by dark brown waters, heavily sedimented, and a riverbed composed of stones covered in mud. Within this area there are: **threatened species** and **range-restricted species** (Maracaibo Freshwater Stingray *Potamotrygon yepezi*).

CRITERIA

Criterion A - Vulnerability; Criterion B - Range Restricted

-	—
COLOMBIA	
-	-
0-2 metres	
-	-
0.4 km²	



DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Agualasal-Catatumbo is located in Colombia. It is situated in the middle section of the Catatumbo River sub-basin in Norte de Santander Department, near Zulia River. This area is a creek that becomes a tributary of the Catatumbo River.

The Catatumbo River sub-basin originates in Cerro Jurisdicciones in Colombia. The river is 520 km long up to its mouth in the Venezuelan Lake Maracaibo. This sub-basin is topographically complex, with high mountains, highland plains, canyons, foothills, and lowland alluvial zones (Graca et al. 2025). This area has characteristics unlike areas found in other regions of the Catatumbo River sub-basin. It is characterised by dark brown waters, heavily sedimented, and the riverbed is composed of stones covered in mud (A Ortega-Lara pers. obs. 2011). Precipitation is bimodal with maximum rainfall between April-May and September-November, and at its lowest between January-March, and June-August (Graca et al. 2025).

This Important Shark and Ray Area is benthic and is delineated from surface waters (O m) to 2 m based on the bathymetry of the area.

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. This is the Endangered Maracaibo Freshwater Stingray (Lasso-Alcalá et al. submitted).

CRITERION B - RANGE RESTRICTED

This area holds the regular presence of Maracaibo Freshwater Stingray as a resident range-restricted species (A Ortega-Lara pers. obs. 2011; Ortega-Lara et al. 2012).

In 2011, scientific surveys were conducted, using electric fishing, at several sites within the range distribution of this species: middle section of the Zulia River (El Zulia and Puerto Santander communities), the Catatumbo River (La Gabarra community), and the Agualazal Creek (Agualazal village) within this area (Ortega-Lara et al. 2012). The species was only found in this area with five individuals sampled (A Ortega-Lara pers. obs. 2011; Ortega-Lara et al. 2012). According to five fishers from El Zulia and Puerto Santander communities from adjacent zones inside the species distributional region, Maracaibo Freshwater Stingray is very common in this area and this location might function as reproductive site for neonates (A Ortega-Lara pers. obs. 2011). A pregnant female was also documented in this area, indicated by the presence of embryos (Lasso et al. 2013). This is the only known area with regular and predictable observations of Maracaibo Freshwater Stingray, and the area with the most contemporary records for this species.

The Maracaibo Freshwater Stingray is endemic to the Maracaibo Lake Basin, in northwest Venezuela (Zulia, Mérida, and Trujillo states) and northeast Colombia (Norte de Santander Department). In Colombia, this species has been recorded for the middle and lower parts of the Catatumbo River sub-basin (Lasso-Alcalá et al. submitted).

The historical records (Fernández-Yépez & Espinoza 1970; González-Bencomo & Borjas 2003; Casler et al. 2012; Lasso et al. 2013) throughout the Maracaibo River Basin indicate that this species is not commonly found and has an occasional distribution with a low population abundance (Lasso-Alcalá et al. submitted).

Acknowledgments

Armando Ortega-Lara (Fundación para la Investigación y el Desarrollo Sostenible – FUNINDES) and Adriana Gonzalez-Pestana (IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group – ISRA Project) contributed and consolidated information included in this factsheet. We thank all participants of the 2025 ISRA Region 13 – South American Inland Waters workshop for their contributions to this process.

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

This project was funded by the Shark Conservation Fund, a philanthropic collaborative pooling expertise and resources to meet the threats facing the world's sharks and rays. The Shark Conservation Fund is a project of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors.

Suggested citation

IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group. 2025. Agualasal-Catatumbo 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								
				Δ	В	Cı	C2	C3	C4	C5	Dı	D2
RAYS												
Potamotrygon yepezi	Maracaibo Freshwater Stingray	EN	0-2	Х	Х							

IUCN Red List of Threatened Species Categories are available by searching species names at <u>www.iucnredlist.org</u> Abbreviations refer to: CR, Critically Endangered; EN, Endangered; VU, Vulnerable; NT, Near Threatened; LC, Least Concern; DD, Data Deficient.



REFERENCES



Casler C, Bencomo EG, Romero M, Toledo J, Brito J. 2012. Inventario de la ictiofauna del río El Palmar y afluentes, Estado Zulia, Venezuela. *Boletín del Centro de Investigaciones Biológicas* 24(1): 1-50.

Fernández-Yépez A, Espinoza V. 1970. Observaciones en el peso y ancho del disco de la raya pintada Potamotrygon magdalenae (Dumeril). Acta Scientifica del Departamento de Zoología, Instituto Latinoamericano de Fisiología y Reproducción, Universidad del Salvador 8(3): 7-10.

Graca MAS, Callisto M, Teixeira de Mello F, Rodriguez-Olarte D. 2025. Rivers of South America, First Edition. Amsterdam, London, Cambridge: Elsevier.

González-Bencomo E, Borjas J. 2003. Inventario de la Ictiofauna de la Ensenada La Palmita, Estrecho del Lago de Maracaibo, Venezuela. Boletín del Centro de Investigaciones Biológicas 37(2): 83-102.

Lasso C, Lasso-Alcalá OM, Sánchez-Duarte P, Ortiz-Arroyave LM, Ortega-Lara A, da Silva JPC, Loboda T, Fontenelle JP. 2013. Catálogo de especies: Potamotrygon yepezi. In: Lasso CA, Rosa RS, Sánchez-Duarte P, Morales-Betancourt EMA, Agudelo-Córdoba E, eds. *IX. Rayas de agua dulce* (Potamotrygonidae) de Suramérica. Parte I. Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Perú, Brasil, Guyana, Surinam y Guayana Francesa: diversidad, bioecología, uso y conservación. Bogotá: Instituto de Investigación de los Recursos Biológicos Alexander von Humboldt, 267–278.

Lasso-Alcalá OM, Quintero-TE, Mikolji I, Lasso C, Andrade de Pasquier G, Fernando E, Charvet P, Torres YTP. Submitted. *Potamotrygon yepezi*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

Ortega-Lara A, Lasso-Alcalá OM, Lasso CA, de Pasquier GA, Bogotá-Gregory JD. 2012. Peces de la cuenca del río Catatumbo, cuenca del Lago de Maracaibo, Colombia y Venezuela. *Biota Colombiana* 13(1): 71–98.