

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

## BLASKET ISLANDS ISRA

### European Atlantic Region

#### SUMMARY

Blasket Islands is located at the western end of the Dingle Peninsula in County Kerry, Ireland. The area is situated on the continental shelf around southwest Ireland and encompasses a diversity of habitats, including headlands and a series of islands (the Blasket Islands), which likely serve to create small fronts and eddies that aggregate prey. This area overlaps with the Kerry National Marine Park (Páirc Náisiúnta na Mara, Ciarraí). Within this area there are: **threatened species** and **feeding areas** (Basking Shark *Cetorhinus maximus*).

#### CRITERIA

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

—	—
<b>IRELAND</b>	—
—	—
<b>0-100 metres</b>	—
—	—
<b>218.5 km<sup>2</sup></b>	—
—	—





## DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Blasket Islands is located at the western end of the Dingle Peninsula in County Kerry, Ireland. There are six main islands with associated rocky islets and sea stacks. The largest island, Great Blasket Island, is separated from the mainland by Blasket Sound and reaches 292 m above sea level. It, alongside the smallest island, Beginish, lie within 2 km of the mainland. The other four islands are located between 7-12 km from the mainland (NPWS 2014).

The area is situated on the Celtic Shelf of the Atlantic Ocean which is exposed to the prevailing Atlantic Ocean wind and swells. The area contains submarine rocky substrates and biogenic concretions as well as submerged or partially submerged sea caves at the base of many of the cliffs (EEA 2020). These likely serve to create small fronts and eddies that aggregate prey, such as dense patches of zooplankton which have been detected by echosounders (D Cade pers. comm. 2025).

This area overlaps with the Kerry National Marine Park (Páirc Náisiúnta na Mara, Ciarraí; NPWS 2025).

This Important Shark and Ray Area is delineated from inshore and surface waters (0 m) to a depth of 100 m based on the bathymetry of the area.

## ISRA CRITERIA

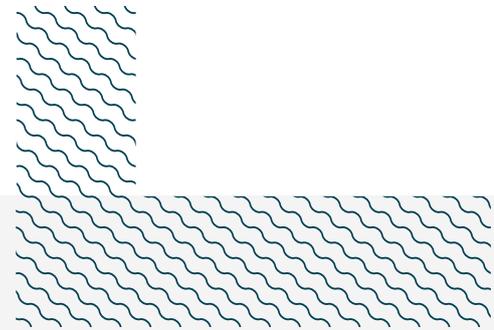
### CRITERION A - VULNERABILITY

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 Basking Shark (Rigby et al. 2021).

### SUB-CRITERION C2 - FEEDING AREAS

Blasket Islands is an important feeding area for one shark species.

Aggregations of Basking Sharks were regularly reported in this area from 2007-2024 (n = 124 aggregations, 1,516 individuals; mean = 7 aggregations/year, 10.4 individuals/year in each aggregation; range = 1-15 aggregations/year) via the Irish Basking Shark Group (IBSG) (Irish Basking Shark Group [IBSG]/Irish Whale and Dolphin Group [IWDG] unpubl. data 2025). Although these reports do not always document animal behaviour, these aggregations are frequently linked to feeding. Based on images reported to the IBSG directly from citizen scientists as well as social media pages of boat operators which operate in the area, feeding is the most commonly observed behaviour in this location (IBSG/IWDG unpubl. data 2025; AG McInturf & JR Bortoluzzi unpubl. data 2025). Aggregations are of notable size in the Blasket Islands, with 17 sightings of >20 individual sharks identified between 2010-2024. In 2011, 2023, and 2024, aggregations of 60 or more sharks were also reported in this area. The maximum number of sharks sighted at once was 65 individuals in 2024. The vast majority of aggregations fall between April-May (with one in March and three in September), with this trend most notable from 2010-2024. Furthermore, between 2022-2024, research using biologgers (n = 14 individuals) and boat-based echosounders documented feeding bouts of Basking Sharks (total percent of time feeding during videos: 48.4% or 36.8 hours; range among individuals: 12.2-100%) in response to micro-patches of zooplankton characteristic to this location (Chapple et al. 2024; D Cade pers. comm. 2025).



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### **Acknowledgments**

Jenny R Bortoluzzi (Irish Basking Shark Group), Emilie De Loose (Irish Basking Shark Group), Chelsea Gray (Irish Basking Shark Group), Alexandra G McInturf (Irish Basking Shark Group; Oregon State University, Big Fish Lab), Simon Berrow (Irish Basking Shark Group; Atlantic Technological University Galway), and Bríd O'Connor (IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group - ISRA Project; Marine Dimensions; University College Cork) contributed and consolidated information included in this factsheet. We thank all participants of the 2025 ISRA Region 02 - European Atlantic 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.** Blasket Islands 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>Cetorhinus maximus</i>	Basking Shark	EN	0-1,264	X			X						

## SUPPORTING SPECIES

Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category
<b>SHARKS</b>		
<i>Galeorhinus galeus</i>	Tope	CR
<i>Lamna nasus</i>	Porbeagle	VU
<i>Prionace glauca</i>	Blue Shark	NT
<i>Scyliorhinus stellaris</i>	Nursehound	VU
<i>Squalus acanthias</i>	Spiny Dogfish	CR
<b>RAYS</b>		
<i>Dasyatis pastinaca</i>	Common Stingray	VU
<i>Raja clavata</i>	Thornback Skate	NT
<i>Raja montagui</i>	Spotted Skate	LC

*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.*





## REFERENCES

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