

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

CÁDIZ RIDGE ISRA

European Atlantic Region

SUMMARY

Cádiz Ridge is located in the northeast Atlantic Ocean, offshore of Cádiz Province in Spain. The area encompasses part of the mid continental slope of the Iberian margin. It is characterised by a soft slope with fine sandy, silty, and muddy substrates. The area is influenced by the Mediterranean Outflow Water, creating a strong bottom current flowing towards the west and north-west above the North Atlantic Deep Water. The area overlaps with the Gulf of Cádiz Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Area. Within this area there are: **threatened species** (Velvet Belly Lanternshark *Etmopterus spinax*); **range-restricted species** (Atlantic Sawtail Catshark *Galeus atlanticus*); and **reproductive areas** (Velvet Belly Lanternshark).

CRITERIA

Criterion A - Vulnerability; Criterion B - Range Restricted; Sub-criterion C1 - Reproductive Areas

—	—
SPAIN	—
—	—
250–750 metres	—
—	—
909.3 km²	—
—	—





DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Cádiz Ridge is located in the northeast Atlantic Ocean, offshore of Cádiz Province in Spain. The area encompasses part of the mid continental slope of the Iberian margin. It is characterised by a soft slope with fine sands changing to silty and muddy contourite substrates in channels and submarine canyons (Delgado et al. 2013).

The area is influenced by the Mediterranean Outflow Water, which is relatively warm (12.5–14°C) and highly saline (36.2‰) creating a strong bottom current flowing towards the west and northwest above the North Atlantic Deep Water (Nelson et al. 1999; Delgado et al. 2013).

The area overlaps with the Gulf of Cádiz Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Area (EBSA; CBD 2025).

This Important Shark and Ray Area is benthic and pelagic, and subsurface and is delineated from 250–750 m based on the bathymetry and depth range of the Qualifying Species in 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 Vulnerable Velvet Belly Lanternshark (Finucci et al. 2021).

CRITERION B – RANGE RESTRICTED

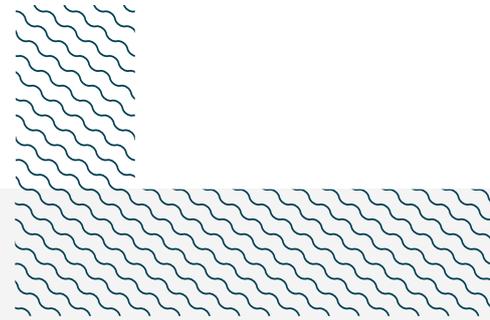
This area holds the regular presence of the Atlantic Sawtail Catshark as a range-restricted species. Catch data were collected annually between 2004–2024 (except 2021) through surveys conducted from November–March, excluding January (García-Ruiz et al. 2015; ICES 2025). This species was regularly encountered during benthic trawl surveys in the Gulf of Cádiz, using a Baka trawler with a horizontal opening ~21 m and a vertical opening of 1.8 m during daytime 1-h hauls with a towing speed of three knots (García-Ruiz et al. 2015; ICES 2025). This area hosts the highest density of Atlantic Sawtail Catshark captures in the Gulf of Cádiz, representing 43% of total catches (n = 1,621) recorded between 2007–2024 with individuals ranging between 9–63 cm total length (TL), of which 816 were females and 805 were males (ICES 2025). Individuals were caught between 326–719 m depth. This species occurs primarily in the Iberian Coast Large Marine Ecosystem (LME) and marginally in the Canary Current and Mediterranean Sea LMEs.

SUB-CRITERION C₁ – REPRODUCTIVE AREAS

Cádiz Ridge is an important reproductive area for one shark species.

Between 2018–2021, Velvet Belly Lanternshark neonates and young-of-the-year (YOY) were captured during two surveys in the Gulf of Cádiz. The first survey operated between 2004–2024, except 2021, through benthic trawl surveys conducted from November–March, excluding January using trawler during daytime (García-Ruiz et al. 2015; ICES 2025). The second survey operated from June–September 2021, surveying 21 hauls from commercial trawl fishing (Rodríguez-García et al. 2024). Catch data for both surveys included the number of individuals, size (TL), and sex (Rodríguez-García et al. 2024; ICES 2025).

Between 2018–2021, a total of 775 Velvet Belly Lanternsharks were caught in the area (ICES 2025). Of these, 36% (n = 291) were neonates/YOY measuring <18 cm TL (ICES 2025). The species has a size-at-birth of 8–14 cm TL (Ebert et al. 2021). Individuals in this size range were observed in 2018 (n = 131), 2019 (n = 71), and 2020 (n = 89). The surveys in this area were undertaken from November–March, excluding January, and therefore additional temporal data are required to confirm seasonality of reproductive behaviour (ICES 2025). Individuals were caught between 257–698 m depth. Additionally, a total of 330 Velvet Belly Lanternsharks were collected in the area in 2021 from commercial trawl fishing, ranging in size from 9.3–33.7 cm TL, indicating that some of these individuals were neonates and YOY (Rodríguez-García et al. 2024). Although there are records of neonates/YOY of Velvet Belly Lanternsharks in the rest of the Gulf of Cádiz, this area has the highest known catch records of Velvet Belly Lanternshark at this life history stage in the south of Spain.



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Ángel Rafael Domínguez-Bustos (Facultad de Ciencias del Mar y Ambientales Campus Río San Pedro, Universidad de Cádiz), Carlos Rodríguez García (Facultad de Ciencias del Mar y Ambientales, Campus Río San Pedro, Universidad de Cádiz; Instituto Universitario de Investigación Marina, Campus de Excelencia Internacional del Mar), José Belquior Gonçalves Neto (Facultad de Ciencias del Mar y Ambientales, Campus Río San Pedro, Universidad de Cádiz; Marine Vertebrate Evolution and Conservation Lab - Evolve, Universidade Federal Do Ceará), Remedios Cabrera Castro (Facultad de Ciencias del Mar y Ambientales, Campus Río San Pedro, Universidad de Cádiz; Instituto Universitario de Investigación Marina, Campus de Excelencia Internacional del Mar), and Marta D Palacios (IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group - ISRA Project) 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.

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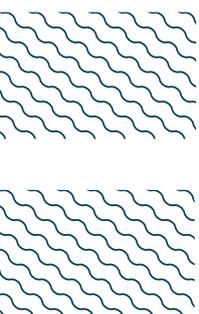
QUALIFYING SPECIES

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>Etmopterus spinax</i>	Velvet Belly Lanternshark	VU	70-2,000	X		X						
<i>Galeus atlanticus</i>	Atlantic Sawtail Catshark	NT	326-790		X							

SUPPORTING SPECIES

Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category
SHARKS		
<i>Deania profundorum</i>	Arrowhead Dogfish	NT
<i>Galeus melastomus</i>	Blackmouth Catshark	LC
RAYS		
<i>Leucoraja naevus</i>	Cuckoo Skate	NT
<i>Raja clavata</i>	Thornback Skate	NT
<i>Raja montagui</i>	Spotted Skate	LC
CHIMAERAS		
<i>Chimaera monstrosa</i>	Rabbitfish	VU

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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