*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*

## CALOURA–VILA FRANCA ISRA

**European Atlantic Region**

## SUMMARY

Caloura-Vila Franca is located on the southern coast of São Miguel Island, Azores, Portugal. This area is situated on the island's narrow shelf and steep upper slope. The substrate is characterised by rugged slopes and rocky drop-offs, alternating with soft sediments, and black coral gardens. Within this area there are: **threatened species** and **reproductive areas** (Tope *Galeorhinus galeus*).

## CRITERIA

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

—       —

**PORTUGAL**

—       —

**0–200 metres**

—       —

**26.98 km²**

—       —

sharkrayareas.org

# DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Caloura-Vila Franca is located on the southern coast of São Miguel Island, Azores, Portugal. This area is situated on the island's narrow shelf and steep upper slope. The substrate is characterised by rugged slopes and rocky drop-offs, alternating with soft sediments, and black coral gardens below 40 m depth (Esteban et al. 2024).

Oceanic turbulence and local winds cause vertical mixing in winter, deepening the summer thermocline from 30–60 m to around 200 m. The surface seawater temperature varies annually between 15°C and 23°C (Esteban et al. 2024).

This Important Shark and Ray Area is benthic and pelagic and is delineated from surface waters (0 m) to 200 m based on the depth range of the habitat in the area.
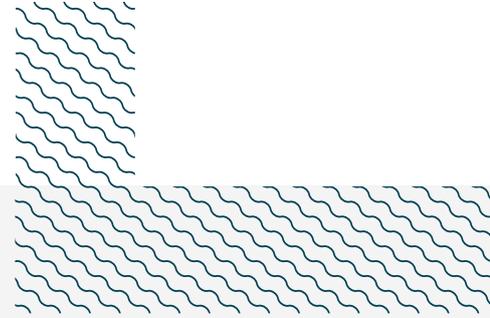
## ISRA CRITERIA

## 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 Critically Endangered Tope (Walker et al. 2020).

## SUB-CRITERION C1 – REPRODUCTIVE AREAS

Caloura–Vila Franca is an important reproductive area for one shark species.

Baited Remote Underwater Video Stations (BRUVS) and social media records demonstrate the importance of the area for neonate and young-of-the-year (YOY) Tope. Between 2018–2022, 589 benthic and pelagic stereo-BRUVS were deployed around nine islands of the Azores Archipelago at 5–60 m depth; P Afonso unpubl. data 2018–2022). Of these, 65 stereo-BRUVS were deployed around São Miguel Island (18 pelagic and 47 benthic) during August–September (48 within Caloura–Vila Franca; 10 pelagic and 38 benthic). Neonate and YOY (<70 cm TL) Tope were recorded only in benthic BRUVS (at 30–60 m depth), at São Miguel (n = 13 deployments) and Faial Island (n = 2 deployments), and the maximum number of neonates/YOY of a species observed in a single frame (MaxN) ranged between 1–13. Of the 13 deployments with neonates and YOY around São Miguel Island, eight were within Caloura–Vila Franca (21% of benthic deployments in the area), and included six with a MaxN of 5–13 (P Afonso unpubl. data 2018–2020). Size-at-birth for Tope is 30–40 cm total length (TL) (Ebert et al. 2021). Between July and August 2024, seven BRUVS were deployed across the area at 13–23 m depth (ElasmoAzores unpubl. data 2024). Neonate and YOY Tope (~30 cm TL visually estimated) were recorded in all deployments, and the MaxN ranged 1–7. In three deployments, MaxN was ≥3 sharks (Elasmobase Project unpubl. data 2024). A record of a neonate caught by line fishing in June 2021 is also available on a citizen science platform (iNaturalist 2024). BRUVS surveys occurred mostly in late summer–early autumn, but according to the biology of the species, juveniles remain in nursery grounds for up to two years and may move into deeper water in winter (Ebert et al. 2021).

## Suggested citation

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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 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| *Galeorhinus galeus* | Tope | CR | 0–826 | X | | X | | | | | | |

# SUPPORTING SPECIES

| Scientific Name | Common Name | IUCN Red List Category |
|---|---|---|
| **SHARKS** | | |
| *Sphyrna zygaena* | Smooth Hammerhead | VU |
| **RAYS** | | |
| *Bathytoshia lata* | Brown Stingray | VU |
| *Dasyatis pastinaca* | Common Stingray | VU |
| *Mobula tarapacana* | Sicklefin Devil Ray | EN |
| *Myliobatis aquila* | Common Eagle Ray | CR |

*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.*

# REFERENCES

**Ebert DA, Dando M, Fowler S. 2021.** *Sharks of the world: A complete guide.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

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**iNaturalist. 2024.** School Shark *Galeorhinus galeus.* Available at: https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/240024600 Accessed June 2025.

**Walker TI, Rigby CL, Pacoureau N, Ellis J, Kulka DW, Chiaramonte GE, Herman K. 2020.** *Galeorhinus galeus. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* 2020: e.T39352A2907336. https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2020-2.RLTS.T39352A2907336.en