

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

CELTIC SEA ISRA

European Atlantic Region

SUMMARY

Celtic Sea is located off the southwest coast of England, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It is characterised by muddy, sandy, and coarse sediments. The area is influenced by shelf tidal fronts, variations in phytoplankton biomass, and mixing of different currents. Within the area there are: **threatened species** and **reproductive areas** (Common Blue Skate *Dipturus batis*).

CRITERIA

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

— —
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
 — —

30-160 metres
 — —

2,476.1 km²
 — —





DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Celtic Sea is located within the waters of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The area is situated southwest of the Isles of Scilly. The area is characterised by muddy, sandy, and coarse sediments (Hernvann et al. 2020). It is influenced by shelf tidal fronts, variations in phytoplankton biomass, mixing of different currents (Pingree et al. 1982), and seasonal eddies (Holt & James 2006).

This Important Shark and Ray Area is benthic, pelagic, and subsurface and is delineated from 30-160 m based on the depth range of Qualifying Species in the area.

ISRA CRITERIA

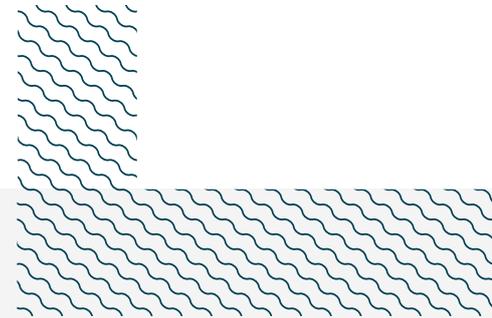
CRITERION A - VULNERABILITY

One Qualifying Species considered threatened with extinction according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species regularly occurs in the area. This is the Critically Endangered Common Blue Skate (Ellis et al. 2024).

SUB-CRITERION C1 - REPRODUCTIVE AREAS

Celtic Sea is an important reproductive area for one ray species.

Early life stage Common Blue Skates are regularly and predictably observed in this area, in larger numbers compared to adjacent areas (ICES 2025). Data from the International Beam Trawl Survey (IBTS) (2010-2025), operating inside and outside of this area (in the broader Celtic and Irish seas) were analysed. The data indicate that Common Blue Skates were caught in February, March, April, and September. Overall, 247 neonate/young-of-the-year (YOY) Common Blue Skates were caught inside and outside of this area. These measured ≤ 38 cm total length (TL), with the size-at-birth for this species reported at 21 cm TL (Last et al. 2016). Nearly one quarter of the neonate/YOY Common Blue Skates (n = 58; 23.5%) were caught within this area. The animals were caught in 2014 (n = 1), 2016 (n = 2), 2018 (n = 18), 2019 (n = 4), 2021 (n = 7), 2022 (n = 5), 2024 (n = 13), and 2025 (n = 8). Within this area, 24 neonate Common Blue Skates measuring ≤ 21 cm TL were caught in 2018 (n = 2), 2019 (n = 2), 2021 (n = 4), 2022 (n = 12), and 2025 (n = 4). This area is nationally important as it is one of only two remaining hotspots where early life stages of the species are observed regularly and predictably. This area has the highest and most regular and predictable known numbers of this species at these life stages within the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.



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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	
RAYS													
<i>Dipturus batis</i>	Common Blue Skate	CR	10-896	X		X							

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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