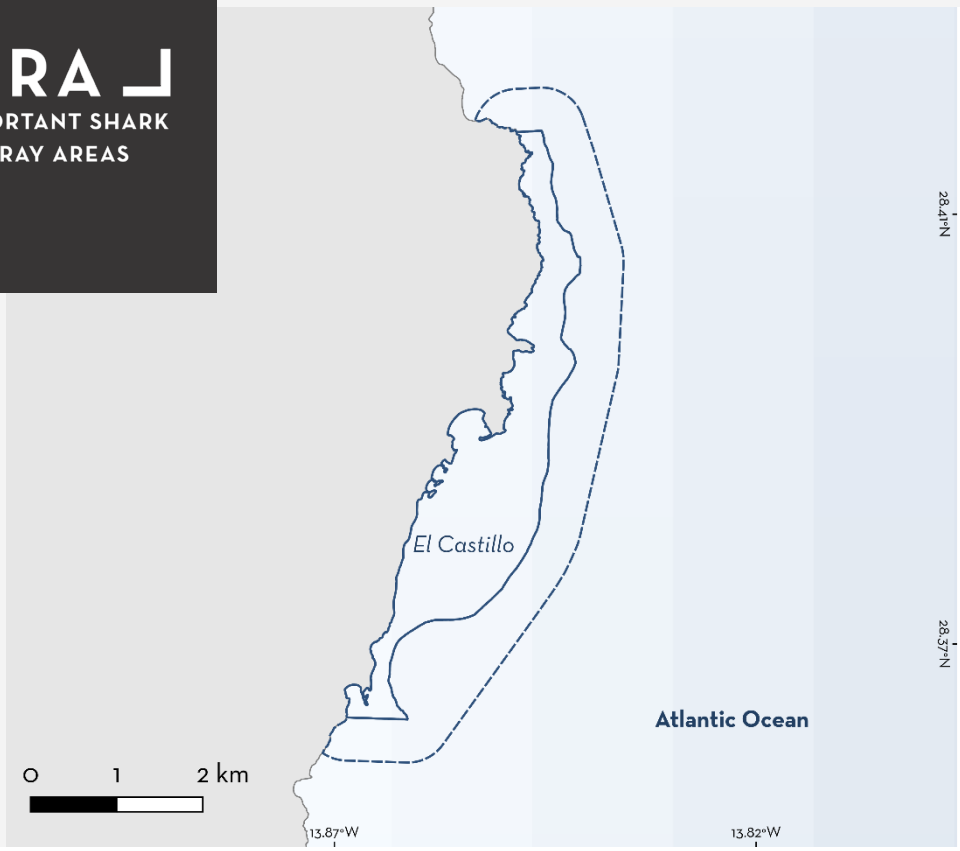
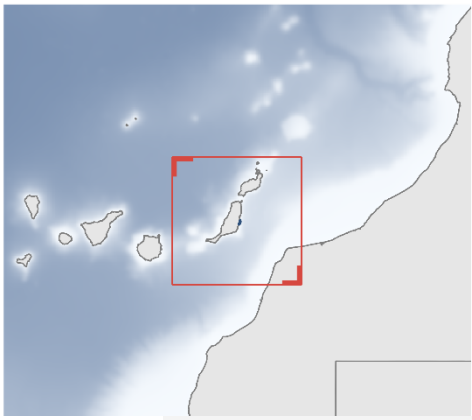
ISRA
IMPORTANT SHARK AND RAY AREAS





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

EL CASTILLO ISRA

European Atlantic Region

SPAIN

0–150 metres

4.85 km²

SUMMARY

El Castillo is located on the eastern coast of Fuerteventura Island in the Canary Islands. The area features nearshore and benthic habitats dominated by open sand and rocky reef. The area overlaps with the Oceanic Islands and Seamounts of the Canary Region Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Area. Within this area there are: **threatened species** and **reproductive areas** (Angelshark *Squatina squatina).*

CRITERIA

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

DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

El Castillo is located on the eastern coast of Fuerteventura Island in the Canary Islands. The Canary Islands are a Spanish archipelago in the northeast Atlantic, consisting of eight main islands and five islets, situated ~100 km from the northwest African coastline. The marine environment of this area is predominantly shallow with benthic habitats dominated by open sand and rocky reef substrates.

The area is strongly influenced by the complex and unique meteorological and oceanographic dynamics of the region, including the Eastern Boundary Upwelling System, Canary Current, and Calima events (Sahara Desert dust; Vázquez et al. 2024).

The area overlaps with the Oceanic Islands and Seamounts of the Canary Region Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Area (EBSA; CBD 2025).

This Important Shark and Ray Area is benthic and is delineated from inshore and surface waters (0 m) to 150 m based on the distribution 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 Critically Endangered Angelshark (Morey et al. 2019).

SUB-CRITERION C1 – REPRODUCTIVE AREAS

El Castillo is an important reproductive area for one shark species.

Since 2015, the Angel Shark Project has conducted a combination of underwater visual census (UVC), tagging, and citizen science data collection in the Canary Islands. Visual census and tagging surveys were conducted across the Canary Islands in high suitability areas (Meyers et al. 2017), potential nursery areas (Jiménez-Alvarado et al. 2020), and locations where Angelsharks are commonly observed. Within this area, 12 survey campaigns (1–3 days each) were conducted between 2016–2023. Of 56 sharks tagged in the area during 24 surveys, 11 (27%) were adults, 37 (66%) neonates, and 4 (7%) young-of-the-year (YOY; Jiménez-Alvarado et al. 2020; Angel Shark Project unpubl. data 2025). Individuals <40 cm total length (TL) were classified as neonate/YOY as their size is close to the reported size-at-birth (26–30 cm TL; Ebert et al. 2021). Additionally, four pregnant females were recorded between 2017–2019 and 2022 by dive operators, and mating was also reported (Angel Shark Project unpubl. data 2025). This area hosts a large proportion of early life-stages compared to surrounding areas that were surveyed and was assessed as a nursery area for the species (Jiménez-Alvarado et al. 2020).

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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												
Squatina squatina	Angelshark	CR	0–150	X		X						

SUPPORTING SPECIES

Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category
SHARKS		
Mustelus mustelus	Common Smoothhound	EN
RAYS		
Aetomylaeus bovinus	Duckbill Eagle Ray	CR
Dasyatis pastinaca	Common Stingray	VU
Gymnura altavela	Spiny Butterfly Ray	EN
Myliobatis aquila	Common Eagle Ray	CR
Taeniurops grabatus	Round Fantail Stingray	NT
Torpedo marmorata	Marbled Torpedo Ray	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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