



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

## FUERTEVENTURA-LANZAROTE-CHINIJO ISRA

### European Atlantic Region

#### SUMMARY

Fuerteventura-Lanzarote-Chinijo is located in the northeast Canary Islands. It includes the Chinijo Archipelago (composed of one island and four islets), Lanzarote Island, Lobos Islet, and Fuerteventura Island. The area is characterised by sandbanks, rocky reefs, patches of seagrass, sponge patches, and submarine canyons. The area overlaps with one Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Area, two Key Biodiversity Areas, and two marine protected areas. Within this area there are: **threatened species** (e.g., Common Eagle Ray *Myliobatis aquila*); **reproductive areas** (Angelshark *Squatina squatina*); **undefined aggregations** (e.g., Common Smoothhound *Mustelus mustelus*); and the area sustains a **high diversity of sharks** (16 species).

#### CRITERIA

**Criterion A - Vulnerability; Sub-criterion C1 - Reproductive Areas; Sub-criterion C5 - Undefined Aggregations; Sub-criterion D2 - Diversity**

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| —                             | — |
| <b>SPAIN</b>                  | — |
| —                             | — |
| <b>0-200 metres</b>           | — |
| —                             | — |
| <b>2,695.5 km<sup>2</sup></b> | — |
| —                             | — |





## DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Fuerteventura-Lanzarote-Chinijo is located in the northeast 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 area is delineated around the Chinijo Archipelago, composed of one island (La Graciosa) and four islets (Alegranza, Montaña Clara, Roque del Este, and Roque del Oeste); Lanzarote Island; Lobos Islet; and Fuerteventura Island. The shelf within this area is characterised by sandbanks, rocky reefs, patches of seagrass, sponge patches, and submerged caves. The slope in this area is characterised by submarine canyons (Almón et al. 2014).

The area is strongly influenced by the Eastern Boundary Upwelling System (EBUS), the Canary Current, and Calima events (Sahara Desert dust). The Azores High pressure system and trade winds drive complex patterns of seasonal upwelling, temperature fluctuation, and ocean stratification, leading to high productivity and nutrient richness along the West African continental shelf, which in turn influences environmental and biological conditions across the Canary Islands (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), the Chinijo Islets Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) and Estrecho de la Bocaina KBA (KBA 2025a, 2025b), and Archipiélago de Chinijo Natural Park and La Graciosa Marine Reserve (UNEP-WCMC & IUCN 2025).

This Important Shark and Ray Area is benthic and pelagic and is delineated from inshore and surface waters (0 m) to 200 m based on the bathymetry of the area.

## ISRA CRITERIA

### CRITERION A - VULNERABILITY

Sixteen Qualifying Species considered threatened with extinction according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species regularly occur in the area. Threatened sharks comprise two Critically Endangered species, two Endangered species, and three Vulnerable species; threatened rays comprise two Critically Endangered species, four Endangered species, and three Vulnerable species (IUCN 2025).

### SUB-CRITERION C<sub>1</sub> - REPRODUCTIVE AREAS

Fuerteventura-Lanzarote-Chinijo is an important reproductive area for one shark species.

Since 2015, the Angel Shark Project has conducted a combination of underwater visual census (UVC) surveys, tagging, and citizen science data collection in the Canary Islands. UVC 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. For Angelsharks six important reproductive areas were identified: La Graciosa, El Reducto, Playa Chica, Bocaina Lanzarote y Fuerteventura, El Jablito and Jandía

Within La Graciosa, nine survey campaigns (1-5 days each) were conducted between 2016-2023. These surveys recorded adult aggregations of 3-8 individuals in 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2023 (Mead et al. 2023; Angel Shark Project unpubl. data 2025). Individuals were measured during tagging and were classified as adults based on the reported size-at-maturity of >80 cm total length

(TL) for males and >126 cm TL for females (Ebert et al. 2021). Additionally, 127 adult Angelsharks (45 males, 82 females) were tagged with acoustic transmitters and monitored between 2018–2025 (Mead et al. 2023). Aggregations (individuals recorded the same day on the same receiver) of between 3–13 individuals were recorded in 125 days of the monitoring period with aggregations >7 individuals recorded exclusively in November and December (Angel Shark Project unpubl. data 2025). Females were detected in the area year-round, but males only occurred between November–February in all the monitored years. The rest of the year, males were recorded in locations with depths >80 m. The number of individuals detected per day regularly peaked in November and December which matches the mating season described for the species in the Canary Islands (Meyers et al. 2017). Further, during UVC surveys Angelsharks were observed mating ( $n = 4$ ) in this area across multiple years during this same season (November 2015, 2021, 2022, and 2025). At least three visibly pregnant females as well as females with mating scars were recorded during these surveys (Angel Shark Project unpubl. data 2025), confirming that the area is regularly used for reproductive purposes. Mating events of this cryptic shark are rare to observe, and La Graciosa is one of the few locations in the Canary Islands where it has been recorded over multiple years. Courtship was also recorded opportunistically in the area as well as the presence of neonate sharks ( $n = 6$ ), particularly in sheltered nearshore bays within the area. The regular and predictable nature of these aggregations and mating behaviour highlight the importance of this area compared to the surrounding areas that have been monitored, particularly within the genetic unit from La Graciosa (Meyers et al. 2024).

Within El Reducto, four survey campaigns were conducted between 2017–2021 with each campaign consisting of one night survey. Of the 33 Angelsharks recorded in the area, 30 were measured and tagged with 90% ( $n = 27$ ) classified as neonates, 7% ( $n = 2$ ) as young-of-the-year (YOY), and 3% ( $n = 1$ ) as adults (Angel Shark Project unpubl. data 2025). Individuals were classified as neonate/YOY as they measured <40 cm total length (TL), which is close to their reported size-at-birth (26–30 cm TL; Ebert et al. 2021). In addition, three neonate Angelsharks were reported by local dive centres during a single dive conducted in 2021. This is one of the three areas around Lanzarote Island with the highest number of neonate/YOY recorded among eight locations surveyed (Jiménez-Alvarado et al. 2020). The regular presence in high numbers of immature individuals in this area over multiple years suggests that it is potentially used as a nursery area.

In Playa Chica, monitoring campaigns ( $n = 12$ ) were undertaken annually and consisted of surveys with dives during 3–9 days (Angel Shark Project unpubl. data 2025). Between 2015–2022, adult and neonate/young-of-the-year (YOY) Angelsharks were recorded in the area. Of 50 Angelsharks tagged during surveys ( $n = 36$ ) conducted in the area, 68% ( $n = 34$ ) were adults and 32% ( $n = 16$ ) measured <30 cm total length (TL; Angel Shark Project unpubl. data 2025). These individuals were categorised as neonates based on the reported size ranges for this life stage (24–30 cm TL; Ebert et al. 2021). Three tagged sharks (two males and one female) were resighted up to two years after being tagged, suggesting site fidelity to this area and confirming that the area is used by sharks over multiple years (Angel Shark Project unpubl. data 2025). Angelsharks have been observed mating in this area on multiple occasions and at least 10 pregnant females (based on distended abdomens) were recorded during these surveys (Angel Shark Project unpubl. data 2025). Further, of the 280 reported sightings by dive operators between 2020–2024, nine pregnant females were recorded across three different years (Angel Shark Project unpubl. data 2025). Reports of females giving birth and mating scars on females were reported by dive operators as well as observations of sharks mating in the area (Angel Shark Project unpubl. data 2025). Playa Chica was highlighted as one of four sites across the archipelago with a high frequency of Angelshark sightings per grid cell (Meyers et al. 2017).

Within Bocaina Lanzarote y Fuerteventura, 42 UVCs were conducted between 2015–2025. Of 67 sharks tagged in the area during UVCs, 43 (64%) were classified as neonates and six (9%) as YOY (Angel Shark Project unpubl. data 2025). These individuals were classified as neonate/YOY as their

size (<40 cm TL) is close to their reported size-at-birth (26–30 cm total length [TL]; Ebert et al. 2021). Recaptures (n = 6) have revealed that neonates can stay in the area for over 12 months, demonstrating that, in addition to the regular presence of neonate and YOY individuals in the area, this species also uses the area for prolonged periods during early life stages (Jiménez-Alvarado et al. 2020; Angel Shark Project unpubl. data 2025). Of the 15 areas monitored in Lanzarote and Fuerteventura Islands for neonate/YOY presence, this area was identified as one of eight potential nursery areas for this species and ranks as the fourth highest number of juvenile sharks recorded from multiple sources (Jiménez-Alvarado et al. 2020).

In addition, three pregnant females were recorded in the area in 2019 (n = 1) and 2023 (n = 2) and one mating event was recorded in 2017 (Angel Shark Project unpubl. data 2025). Citizen science data reported by divers recorded 643 Angelsharks between 2017–2024. Most individuals observed were large adults. Sex was reported in 177 cases (27.5%), revealing 113 females and 64 males. Adult shark aggregations of 3–8 individuals were recorded over multiple years during the reported mating season in the boreal winter and spring (November–March) suggesting these aggregations may be related to reproductive process (Meyers et al. 2017; Mead et al. 2023).

Small aggregations (3–5 individuals) encompassing mature and neonate/young-of-the-year (YOY) Angelsharks have been regularly recorded in El Jablito. This location has also been recognised as a potential nursery area for Angelsharks (Jiménez-Alvarado et al. 2020). 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 transects 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 regularly observed. Within this area, two survey campaigns were conducted in 2016 and 2024 with each campaign consisting of one night survey.

In June 2016, 10 individuals <40 cm total length (TL) were recorded in the area during UVCs (Angel Shark Project unpubl. data 2025). These individuals were classified as neonate/YOY as their size is close to their reported size-at-birth (26–30 cm TL; Ebert et al. 2021). Neonate Angelsharks (n = 11) were also recorded by local dive centres between 2022–2024 (Angel Shark Project unpubl. data 2025). These individuals were recorded between May–October. Out of the 15 areas monitored in Lanzarote and Fuerteventura Islands for neonate/YOY presence, this area falls within the eight potential nursery areas identified for the species and ranks as the third highest number of neonate/YOY Angelsharks recorded (Jiménez-Alvarado et al. 2020). Further, pregnant females (n = 3; based on their distended abdomen) were recorded in 2019 and 2021, and mating events (n = 7) were also recorded in 2019 and 2020 by divers (Angel Shark Project unpubl. data 2025).

Within El Castillo, 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).

## SUB-CRITERION C5 - UNDEFINED AGGREGATIONS

Fuerteventura-Lanzarote-Chinijo is an important area for undefined aggregations of two shark species.

Since 2015, the Angel Shark Project has conducted a combination of underwater visual census (UVC) surveys, tagging, and citizen science data collection in the Canary Islands. Visual transects 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 Jandía, seven UVC campaigns (1-2 days each) were conducted between 2018-2025. Aggregations of 3-60 adults were recorded in five of the seven surveys (Angel Shark Project unpubl. data 2025). Two particularly large aggregations were recorded. In March 2019, 24 adult sharks were tagged during a single dive conducted in a ~400 m radius from an aggregation of >50 sharks observed over two days in the same location. Another large aggregation was recorded in 2025 with 60 sharks spotted in the same location with most of the individuals appearing to be females (Angel Shark Project unpubl. data 2025). These are the largest aggregations recorded globally for the species. In addition, citizen science data reported by local dive centres between 2019-2024 provided regular records of aggregations of 3-9 individuals every year in the area (Angel Shark Project unpubl. data 2025). Angelsharks are regularly seen individually and scattered almost year-round, but these aggregations have been recorded during the reported mating season in winter (November-March) for the Canary Islands (Meyers et al. 2017; Mead et al. 2023) and occasionally during other periods of the year. Mating events have been observed and recorded over multiple years, suggesting that this area may be used for reproductive purposes. Mating events are very rare to observe and Jandía is one of the few locations across the archipelago where they have been regularly recorded. Neonate individuals were also observed in the area (Jiménez-Alvarado et al. 2020) including one neonate (<30 cm total length) tagged in 2020. Additional information is needed to confirm the nature and function of these aggregations.

Aggregations of Common Smoothhound have been regularly recorded in Bocaina Lanzarote y Fuerteventura, inside this area. Recreational anglers, spearfishers, divers, diver operators, scientists, and photographers (n = 142) across the Canary Islands were interviewed to explore the population structure of Common Smoothhounds across the archipelago (Espino et al. 2022). All respondents had >20 years of experience and provided records of Common Smoothhounds between 1980-2020. Between 2013-2019, local divers reported aggregations of between 6-25 individuals on eight different occasions, mostly in spring and summer (Espino et al. 2022). Most of the individuals in the aggregations were classified as adults as their size was larger than the reported size-at-maturity for the species (>80 cm TL; Ebert et al. 2021) and aggregations were observed in sandy and rocky substrates at depths of <3 m. According to the respondents, this was the only location in Fuerteventura and Lanzarote islands where aggregations of Common Smoothhound were regularly observed over multiple years (Espino et al. 2022). Additional information is needed to understand the nature and function of these aggregations.

## SUB-CRITERION D2 - DIVERSITY

Fuerteventura-Lanzarote-Chinijo sustains a high diversity of Qualifying Species (16 species). This exceeds the regional diversity threshold (13 species) for the European Atlantic region. The regular presence of Qualifying Species has been documented through underwater visual census (UVC) surveys targeting Angelsharks, citizen science reports (mostly since 2015), local ecological knowledge, and catch data from longliners recorded between 2011-2025 (Meyers et al. 2017; Dippenar et al. 2021; Espino et al. 2022; RedPROMAR Gobierno de Canarias 2025; Angel Shark Project unpubl. data 2025; A Rodríguez-Juncá et al. unpubl. data 2025). While the monitoring effort

for Angelsharks has been high (every year), for other species it has been minimal. Most of the records for coastal species come from diving and citizen scientist reports. For pelagic species that are not commonly observed during diving operations (e.g., Smooth Hammerhead *Sphyrna zygaena*), records are lower and come mostly from opportunistic observations that have confirmed the regular occurrence of the species. Fuerteventura Island, Lanzarote Island, and Chinijo Archipelago are connected by a continuous shallow shelf and for Angelsharks high connectivity has been reported within this region which is distinct from the west islands of the Canary Archipelago that are separated by deep waters (Meyers et al. 2024).

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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 |   |
| <b>SHARKS</b>                |                    |                        |                        |                                |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |
| <i>Alopias superciliosus</i> | Bigeye Thresher    | VU                     | 0-955                  | X                              |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | X |
| <i>Alopias vulpinus</i>      | Common Thresher    | VU                     | 0-650                  | X                              |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |
| <i>Galeorhinus galeus</i>    | Tope               | CR                     | 0-826                  | X                              |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |
| <i>Isurus oxyrinchus</i>     | Shortfin Mako      | EN                     | 0-1,888                | X                              |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |
| <i>Mustelus mustelus</i>     | Common Smoothhound | EN                     | 5-800                  | X                              |   |    |    |    |    | X  |    |    |   |
| <i>Sphyrna zygaena</i>       | Smooth Hammerhead  | VU                     | 0-200                  | X                              |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |
| <i>Squatina squatina</i>     | Angelshark         | CR                     | 0-150                  | X                              |   | X  |    |    |    | X  |    |    |   |
| <b>RAYS</b>                  |                    |                        |                        |                                |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |
| <i>Aetomylaeus bovinus</i>   | Duckbill Eagle Ray | CR                     | 0-150                  | X                              |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | X |
| <i>Bathytoshia lata</i>      | Brown Stingray     | VU                     | 0-800                  | X                              |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |
| <i>Dasyatis pastinaca</i>    | Common Stingray    | VU                     | 0-200                  | X                              |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |

|                          |                     |    |         |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |   |
|--------------------------|---------------------|----|---------|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|---|
| <i>Gymnura altavela</i>  | Spiny Butterfly Ray | EN | 0-150   | X |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | X |
| <i>Mobula birostris</i>  | Oceanic Manta Ray   | EN | 0-1,246 | X |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |   |
| <i>Mobula tarapacana</i> | Sicklefin Devil Ray | EN | 0-1,896 | X |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |   |
| <i>Myliobatis aquila</i> | Common Eagle Ray    | CR | 0-537   | X |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |   |
| <i>Torpedo marmorata</i> | Marbled Torpedo Ray | VU | 0-1,480 | X |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |   |
| <i>Rostroraja alba</i>   | White Skate         | EN | 0-750   | X |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |   |

## SUPPORTING SPECIES

| Scientific Name            | Common Name            | IUCN Red List Category |
|----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>SHARKS</b>              |                        |                        |
| <i>Taeniurops grabatus</i> | Round Fantail Stingray | NT                     |

*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.*





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