

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

LA GRACIOSA ISRA

European Atlantic Region

SUMMARY

La Graciosa is located in the northeastern Canary Islands, Spain. The area encompasses La Graciosa Island and two islets. It is characterised by sandy and rocky substrates as well as patches of seagrass. The area overlaps with an Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Area, a Key Biodiversity Area, and a marine protected area. Within this area there are: **threatened species** and **reproductive areas** (Angelshark *Squatina squatina*).

CRITERIA

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

— SPAIN —

— 0-150 metres —

— 165.6 km² —





DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

La Graciosa is located in the northeastern 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. This area is found north of Lanzarote Island and encompasses La Graciosa Island and two islets: Montaña Clara and Roque del Oeste. Unlike the other islands of the archipelago, which are separated by deep ocean waters, Lanzarote, and the islands within La Graciosa are connected by a continuous shallow shelf. The marine environment of this area is predominantly shallow (<100 m) with nearshore benthic habitats dominated by open sand, rocky reef, and patches of seagrass. The deepest habitat occurs to the west of the area, which is characterised by seamounts and a steep bathymetric drop-off to ~150 m depth.

The area is strongly influenced by the complex and unique meteorological and oceanographic dynamics of the region, including the Eastern Boundary Upwelling System (EBUS), 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 Areas (EBSA; CBD 2025), the Lanzarote Islets Key Biodiversity Area (KBA 2025), and the Reserva Marina de la Isla Graciosa y de los Islotes del Norte de Lanzarote (UNEP-WCMC & IUCN 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 bathymetry of the area.

ISRA CRITERIA

CRITERION A – VULNERABILITY

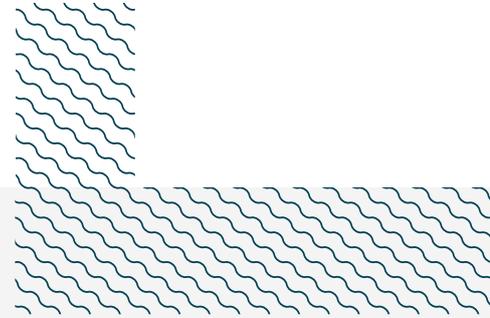
One Qualifying Species considered threatened with extinction according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species regularly occurs in the area. This is the Critically Endangered Angelshark (Morey et al. 2019).

SUB-CRITERION C₁ – REPRODUCTIVE AREAS

La Graciosa 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. Within this area, 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).



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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>Squatina squatina</i>	Angelshark	CR	0-150	X		X						

SUPPORTING SPECIES

Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category
SHARKS		
<i>Sphyrna zygaena</i>	Smooth Hammerhead	VU
RAYS		
<i>Aetomylaeus bovinus</i>	Duckbill Eagle Ray	CR
<i>Dasyatis pastinaca</i>	Common Stingray	VU
<i>Gymnura altavela</i>	Spiny Butterfly Ray	EN
<i>Myliobatis aquila</i>	Common Eagle Ray	CR
<i>Taeniurops grabatus</i>	Round Fantail Stingray	NT
<i>Torpedo marmorata</i>	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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