

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

NORTHWEST IRISH SEA ISRA

European Atlantic Region

SUMMARY

Northwest Irish Sea is located between Ireland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the Isle of Man. The area is characterised by sandy and muddy substrates. It is influenced by frontal systems and eddies. Within this area there are: **threatened species** and **reproductive areas** (Spiny Dogfish *Squalus acanthias*).

CRITERIA

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

IRELAND,
 ISLE OF MAN,
 UNITED
 KINGDOM OF
 GREAT
 BRITAIN AND
 NORTHERN
 IRELAND

40-110 metres

2,476.2 km²





DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Northwest Irish Sea is located between Ireland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the Isle of Man. The area is characterised by fine sediment, including muddy-sandy substrates.

This area is influenced by a range of oceanographic features, including frontal systems and eddies, that result in it being an area of relatively high productivity (Holt et al. 2004; Gowen & Stewart 2005). The main currents move northwards from the Celtic Sea through St George's Channel, through to this area, and then to the North Channel.

This Important Shark and Ray Area is benthic, pelagic, and subsurface and is delineated from 40-110 m based on observations of the Qualifying Species and the bathymetry of the area.

ISRA CRITERIA

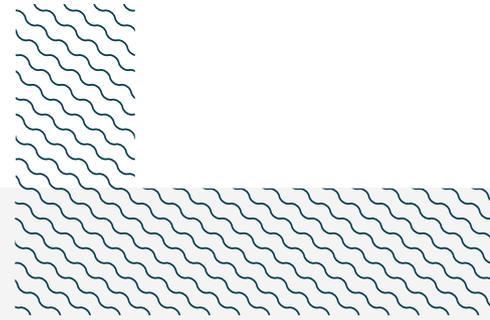
CRITERION A – VULNERABILITY

One Qualifying Species considered threatened with extinction according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species regularly occurs in the area. This is the Vulnerable Spiny Dogfish (Finucci et al. 2020).

SUB-CRITERION C₁ – REPRODUCTIVE AREAS

Northwest Irish Sea is an important reproductive area for one shark species.

Early life stages of Spiny Dogfish are regularly and predictably observed, year-to-year, in this area, in larger numbers compared to adjacent areas (ICES 2025). Data from the Northern Irish Groundfish Survey (2010-2024), operating inside and outside of this area were analysed. The data indicate that Spiny Dogfish were caught in January-March and October-December. Overall, 739 neonate/young-of-the-year (YOY) Spiny Dogfish were caught inside and outside of this area. These measured ≤ 29 cm total length (TL), and the size-at-birth for this species is 18-33 cm TL (Ebert et al. 2021). The vast majority of the neonate/YOY Spiny Dogfish (n = 731; 99%) were caught within this area. The animals were caught in most survey years: 2010 (n = 33), 2011 (n = 112), 2012 (n = 9), 2014 (n = 4), 2015 (n = 67), 2016 (n = 17), 2017 (n = 69), 2018 (n = 5), 2019 (n = 109), 2020 (n = 97), 2021 (n = 46), 2022 (n = 144), 2023 (n = 8), and 2024 (n = 11). This area has one of the highest and most regular and predictable known numbers of this species at these life stages within Irish and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland waters.



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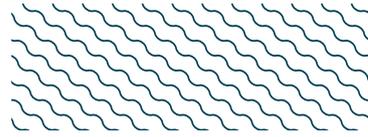
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QUALIFYING SPECIES

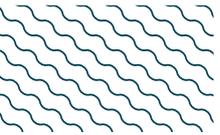
Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category	Global Depth Range (m)	ISRA Criteria/Sub-criteria Met									
				A	B	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	D1	D2	
SHARKS													
<i>Squalus acanthias</i>	Spiny Dogfish	VU	0-1,978	X		X							

SUPPORTING SPECIES



Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category
SHARKS		
<i>Galeorhinus galeus</i>	Tope	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.





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