

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

SOUTHWESTERN LA PALMA ISRA

European Atlantic Region

SUMMARY

Southwestern La Palma is located on the southwest coast of La Palma Island, Canary Islands, Spain. The area encompasses a narrow coastal platform followed by a steep slope. It is characterised by reefs and rocky substrates with numerous caves and submarine valleys. It is influenced by the Canary Current and the coastal upwelling system off northwest Africa. 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 **undefined aggregations** (Sicklefin Devil Ray *Mobula tarapacana*).

CRITERIA

Criterion A - Vulnerability; Sub-criterion C5 - Undefined Aggregations

—	—
SPAIN	—
—	—
0-250 metres	—
—	—
32.05 km²	—
—	—





DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Southwestern La Palma is located on the southwest coast of La Palma Island, Canary Islands, Spain. The area encompasses a narrow coastal platform followed by a steep slope. It is characterised by lava-formed reefs, basaltic terraces, rocky pinnacles, vertical walls, sandy patches, and prominent submerged structures such as the Malpique volcanic feature. In addition, the area contains localised zones of thermal discharge formed by submarine vents where warmer water emerges.

This area is influenced by the Canary Current and the coastal upwelling system off northwest Africa, which inject cold, nutrient-rich waters seasonally, promoting elevated primary productivity, especially from boreal spring to autumn (Gómez-Letona et al. 2017).

This 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 pelagic and is delineated from inshore and surface waters (0 m) to 250 m based on the bathymetry of the area.

ISRA CRITERIA

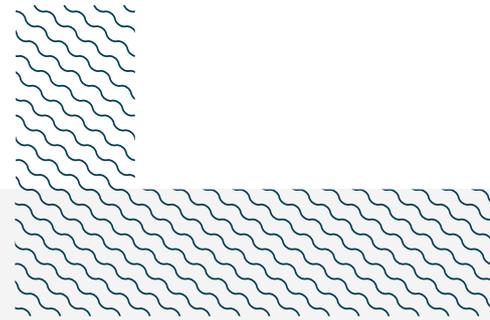
CRITERION A - VULNERABILITY

One Qualifying Species considered threatened with extinction according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species regularly occurs in the area. This is the Endangered Sicklefin Devil Ray (Marshall et al. 2022).

SUB-CRITERION C5 - UNDEFINED AGGREGATIONS

Southwestern La Palma is an important area for undefined aggregations of one ray species.

Between 2017–2023, citizen science and social media observations were collected across the Canary Islands (n = 403 *Mobula* spp. sightings with audiovisual material; A Rodríguez-Juncá unpubl. data 2025). Although diving activity in the area is less frequent compared to other regions of the Canary Islands (e.g., El Hierro where >20,000 dives are conducted per year; Meyers et al. 2017), Southwestern La Palma is the only location in the Canary Islands, aside from El Hierro, where regular aggregations of this species have been reported (A Rodríguez-Juncá unpubl. data 2025). Between 2017–2023, 13 of the 14 sightings of Sicklefin Devil Rays around La Palma Island were recorded in this area, of which five corresponded to aggregations (38% of the sightings within the area; range, 4–50 individuals; mean, 18) (RedPROMAR Gobierno de Canarias 2025; A Rodríguez-Juncá unpubl. data 2025). Aggregations were seasonal, with observations between May–November (A Rodríguez-Juncá unpubl. data 2025). Additionally, 40% of fishers interviewed in the guild Tazacorte (n = 10) reported frequent sightings of Sicklefin Devil Rays during their fishing trips (Rodríguez-Juncá et al. 2023; A Rodríguez-Juncá unpubl. data 2025). Globally, large aggregations for this species are rare and have only been observed at a few other locations in the world such as the Azores Archipelago off the coast of Portugal (Sobral & Afonso 2014) and the São Pedro and São Paulo Archipelago off the Brazilian mainland (Mendonça et al. 2018).



Acknowledgments

Alicia Rodríguez-Juncá (Universidad de la Laguna; Manta Catalog Canarias), Ana Filipa Sobral (Manta Catalog Azores), and Marta D Palacios (IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group - ISRA Project) contributed and consolidated information included in this factsheet. We thank all participants of the 2025 ISRA Region O2 - European Atlantic workshop for their contributions to this process.

This factsheet has undergone review by the ISRA Independent Review Panel prior to its publication.

This project was funded by the Shark Conservation Fund, a philanthropic collaborative pooling expertise and resources to meet the threats facing the world's sharks and rays. The Shark Conservation Fund is a project of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors.

Suggested citation

IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group. 2025. Southwestern La Palma ISRA Factsheet. Dubai: IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group.

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>Mobula tarapacana</i>	Sicklefin Devil Ray	EN	0-1,896	X						X		

SUPPORTING SPECIES

Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category
SHARKS		
<i>Squatina squatina</i>	Angelshark	CR
RAYS		
<i>Gymnura altavela</i>	Spiny Butterfly Ray	EN
<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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