

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

## THE GALT ISRA

### European Atlantic Region

#### SUMMARY

The Galt is located ~50 km from mainland Scotland, near the island of Shapinsay, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The habitat is characterised by maerl and coarse sands interspersed with areas of bedrock and boulders. It is influenced by moderate tidal exposure from tidal streams extending out from the nearby Stronsay Firth. Within this area there are: **threatened species** and **reproductive areas** (Flapper Skate *Dipturus intermedius*).

#### CRITERIA

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

— —  
**UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND**  
 — —

**0-40 metres**  
 — —

**10.48 km<sup>2</sup>**  
 — —





## DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

The Galt is located ~50 km from mainland Scotland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The area is situated ~11 km north of Kirkwall, near Shapinsay Island, in the Orkney Archipelago, which comprises over 70 islands, separated by bays and dynamic tidal channels (Neill et al. 2014). The habitat of this area is characterised by mobile sediments, including maerl and coarse sands, interspersed with areas of bedrock, boulders, and rough ground (D Wise pers. obs. 2025). The seafloor is at depths ranging from 19–35 m, with the seabed generally shoaling from west to east toward the island of Shapinsay and Galt Skerry, located north of Galt Ness.

The area is mainly influenced by moderate tidal exposure, primarily from tidal streams extending out from the nearby Stronsay Firth (Neill et al. 2014). Apart from the dominant tidal flow, the Fair Isle Current flows eastward, connecting the Atlantic Ocean with the North Sea (Turrell et al. 1990).

This Important Shark and Ray Area is benthic and pelagic and is delineated from surface waters (0 m) to 40 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 Flapper Skate (Ellis et al. 2024).

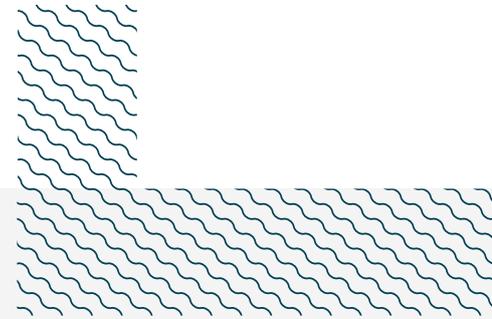
### SUB-CRITERION C<sub>1</sub> – REPRODUCTIVE AREAS

The Galt is an important reproductive area for one ray species.

Dive surveys and diving data submitted to the Orkney Skate Trust from commercial shellfish divers between 2005–2023 recorded the number and location of *in-situ* Flapper Skate egg cases as well as sightings of adults and juveniles (Orkney Skate Trust unpubl. data 2025). The total length (TL) of Flapper Skates was visually estimated. Observed egg cases were all intact containing embryos and were reported between February–August. The Galt was one of the two hotspots for *in-situ* egg cases, having been recorded regularly in contemporary data (2010–2021), including in 2011 (n = 3 dives with egg cases), 2012 (n = 3 dives), 2018 (n = 1 dive), 2019 (n = 5 dives), 2020 (n = 1 dive), and 2021 (n = 1 dive). Egg case numbers ranged from 1–10 with an average of 6.3 egg cases per dive. This area was also one of two hotspots within the Orkney region identified for Flapper Skates from diver observations and video surveys (Phillips et al. 2021). The preferred egg laying habitat for Flapper Skate is characterised by a water depth of >20 m, a medium current flow of ~0.15–1.50 m s<sup>-1</sup>, low sedimentation, and boulder or rocky substrates (Phillips et al. 2021), such as is available in this area.

The Galt was also the hotspot for in-water sightings of Flapper Skates, with 39 of 78 records (50%) from the Orkney region made in this area (Orkney Skate Trust unpubl. data 2025). Sightings in The Galt were reported between 2018–2023 and included five neonates of 14–25 cm TL, four young-of-the-year (YOY) of 30.5 cm TL, seven adult males of 193–274 cm TL, and two adult females of 198–214 cm TL. The other individuals were juveniles ranging between 40–183 cm TL. Neonates and YOY were found in July–September (Orkney Skate Trust unpubl. data 2025). The size-at-birth for the species is 29 cm TL and the size-at-maturity is 185 cm TL for males and 197 cm TL for females (Last et al. 2016). By comparison, elsewhere in the Orkney region mostly juveniles were found, with only one

YOY and five adult males recorded, highlighting the importance of The Galt for egg laying and the early life stages of Flapper Skates (Orkney Skate Trust unpubl. data 2025).



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Daniel Wise (Orkney Skate Trust), Karen Boswarva (Seasearch Scotland), and Christoph A Rohner (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.

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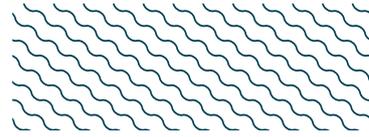
### **Suggested citation**

IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group. 2025. The Galt ISRA Factsheet. Dubai: IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group.

## QUALIFYING SPECIES

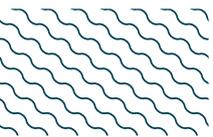
Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category	Global Depth Range (m)	ISRA Criteria/Sub-criteria Met								
				A	B	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	D1	D2
RAYS												
<i>Dipturus intermedius</i>	Flapper Skate	CR	0-1,500	X		X						

## SUPPORTING SPECIES



Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category
<b>SHARKS</b>		
<i>Scyliorhinus canicula</i>	Smallspotted Catshark	LC
<b>RAYS</b>		
<i>Raja clavata</i>	Thornback Skate	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.*





## REFERENCES

**Ellis JR, McCully-Phillips SR, Sims D, Walls RHL, Cheok J, Derrick D, Dulvy NK. 2024.** *Dipturus intermedius* (amended version of 2021 assessment). *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2024*: e.T18903491A256581177. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2024-1.RLTS.T18903491A256581177.en>

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