

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

VALLE DEL GRAN REY ISRA

European Atlantic Region

SUMMARY

Valle del Gran Rey is located on the southwest coast of La Gomera Island, Canary Islands, Spain. The area encompasses Las Vueltas, Las Arenas, and Las Salinas beaches. It is characterised by seagrass meadows, sandy substrates, underwater caves, steep walls, and reef structures. It is influenced by the Canary Current and the coastal upwelling system off northwest Africa. This area overlaps with the Oceanic Islands and Seamounts of the Canary Region Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Area and the Aguas de La Gomera - Teno Key Biodiversity Area. Within this area there are: **threatened species** and **undefined aggregations** (Spiny Butterfly Ray *Gymnura altavela*).

CRITERIA

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

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| — | — |
| SPAIN | — |
| — | — |
| 0-40 metres | — |
| — | — |
| 3.25 km² | — |
| — | — |





DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Valle del Gran Rey is located on the southwest coast of La Gomera Island, Canary Islands, Spain. It encompasses the Las Vueltas, Las Arenas, and Las Salinas beaches. The area is characterised by seagrass meadows (mainly *Cymodocea nodosa*), sandy substrates with Brown Garden Eel (*Heteroconger longissimus*) colonies, underwater caves, steep walls, and reef structures (MITECO 2025).

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 the 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) and the Aguas de La Gomera - Teno Key Biodiversity Area (KBA 2025).

This Important Shark and Ray Area is benthic and is delineated from inshore and surface waters (0 m) to 40 m based on the bathymetry of the area.

ISRA CRITERIA

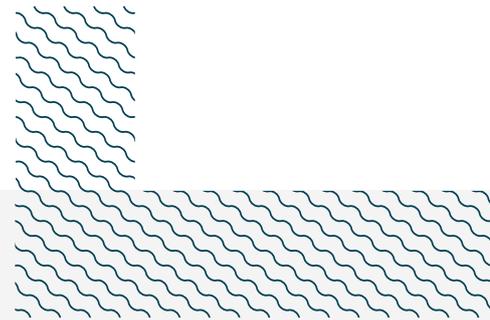
CRITERION A - VULNERABILITY

One Qualifying Species considered threatened with extinction according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species regularly occurs in the area. This is the Endangered Spiny Butterfly Ray (Dulvy et al. 2021).

SUB-CRITERION C5 - UNDEFINED AGGREGATIONS

Valle del Gran Rey is an important area for undefined aggregations of one ray species.

Valle del Gran Rey is known for hosting one of the largest aggregations of Spiny Butterfly Rays in the Canary Islands during March-April with a peak in aggregations during September-November. Between 2017-2025, large groups of adults of up to 134 individuals were recorded along the beach by both researchers and citizen scientists (Radio Televisión Canaria 2017, 2020; F Ravina, A Furundarena, & T Arteaga unpubl. data 2025). During television interviews, local residents reported aggregations of 40 individuals in 2017 and 134 in 2020 (Radio Televisión Canaria 2017, 2020). Additionally, between 2020-2025, annual scientific SCUBA surveys were conducted during September-November along a 110 m transect parallel to the shoreline, ~2 m above the seabed to investigate these observations. During the years 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023, >100 individuals, mainly adult females, were observed aggregating during each aggregation event in the area (F Ravina, A Furundarena, & T Arteaga unpubl. data 2025). Further information is required to understand the nature and function of these aggregations.



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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 |
| RAYS | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Gymnura altavela</i> | Spiny Butterfly Ray | EN | 0-150 | X | | | | | | X | | |

SUPPORTING SPECIES

| Scientific Name | Common Name | IUCN Red List Category |
|----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| SHARKS | | |
| <i>Mustelus mustelus</i> | Common Smoothhound | EN |
| <i>Squatina squatina</i> | Angelshark | CR |
| RAYS | | |
| <i>Aetomylaeus bovinus</i> | Duckbill 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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