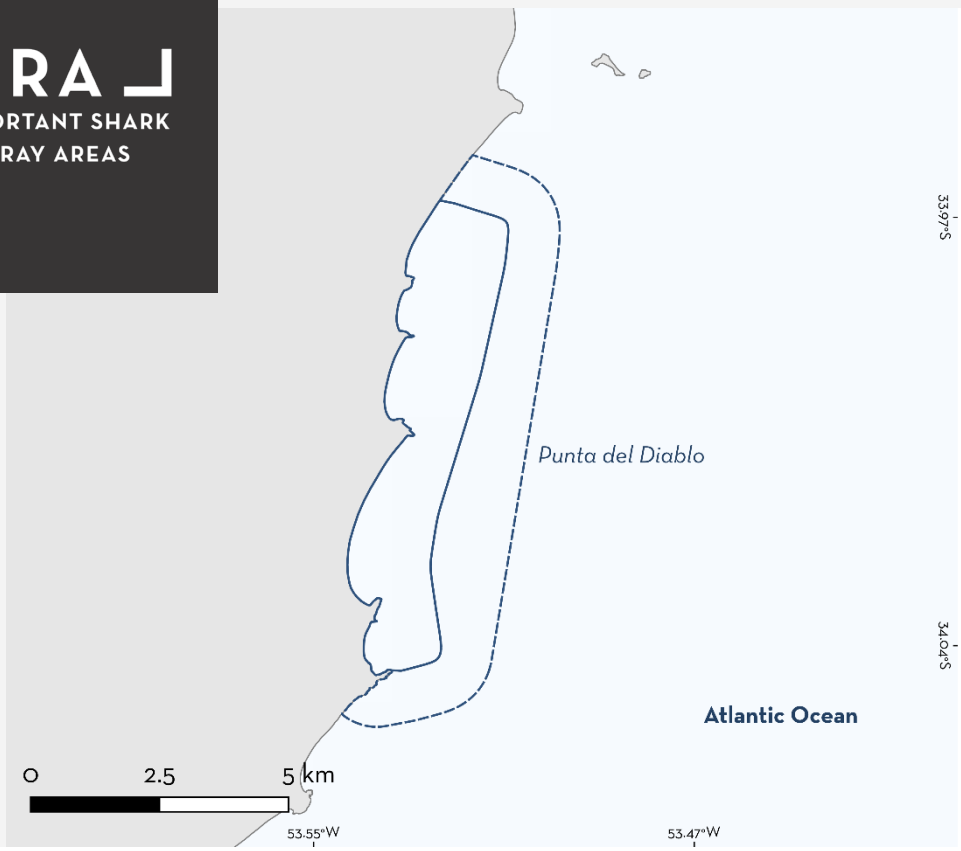
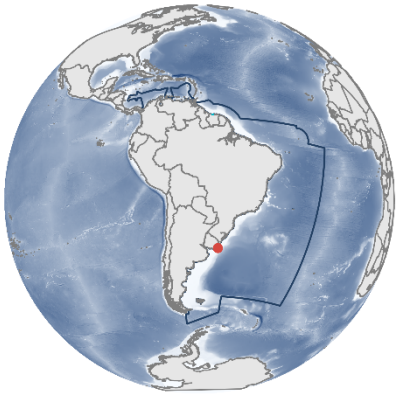
ISRA
IMPORTANT SHARK AND RAY AREAS





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

PUNTA DEL DIABLO ISRA

South American Atlantic Region

URUGUAY

0–20 metres

14.06 km²

SUMMARY

Punta del Diablo is located off the coast of Rocha Province in Uruguay. The area is situated on the continental shelf and encompasses the northern coast of Rocha and Punta del Diablo. It is characterised by sandy substrates with mud patches. The area is influenced by the cold Malvinas/Falkland Current and the Brazil Current. Within the area there are: **threatened species** (e.g., Bignose Fanskate *Sympterygia acuta*) and **reproductive areas** (e.g., Smallnose Fanskate *Sympterygia bonapartii*).

CRITERIA

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

DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Punta del Diablo is located off the coast of Rocha Province in Uruguay. The area is situated on the continental shelf in the southwest Atlantic and encompasses the northern coast of Rocha. It is characterised by sandy substrates with mud patches, with rocky outcrops and promontories (Pereyra 2017). The area is influenced by a seasonal regime, where the cold Malvinas/Falkland Current dominates in austral winter being displaced in summer by the Brazil Current (Trinchin et al. 2019).

This Important Shark and Ray Area is benthic and pelagic and is delineated from inshore and surface waters (0 m) to 20 m based on the bathymetry of the area.

ISRA CRITERIA

CRITERION A – VULNERABILITY

Two Qualifying Species considered threatened with extinction according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species regularly occur in the area. These are the Critically Endangered Sandtiger Shark (Rigby et al. 2021) and the Bignose Fanskate (Pollom et al. 2020).

SUB-CRITERION C1 – REPRODUCTIVE AREAS

Punta del Diablo is an important reproductive area for one shark and two ray species.

Between 2020–2025, pregnant Sandtiger Shark and young-of-the-year (YOY) were recorded from opportunistic reports from artisanal fishers using gillnets in the area. A total of three documented reports of pregnant females (with distended abdomens) in November 2020 and October 2022, and two YOY (estimated based on size) in December 2023 and January 2025 were recorded in Punta del Diablo measuring <1 m total length (TL; AC Milessi unpubl. data 2025). Size-at-birth for the species is 85–105 cm TL (Ebert et al. 2021). Additionally, between 2022–2024, a total of 45 formal interviews were conducted with artisanal fishers using gillnets and longlines in the area and adjacent waters (La Paloma) (AC Milessi unpubl. data 2025). Of these, 23 fishers reported capturing pregnant Sandtiger Sharks during October–December each year, a pattern they have observed since the fishery began in the mid-1940s. Pregnant females represent approximately 30% of the captures during the months when they were present (AC Milessi unpubl. data 2025). On average, neonates and YOY account for approximately 10% of the total annual catch of the species between December–March (AC Milessi unpubl. data 2025). Santiger Shark pregnant females, neonates, and YOY have been reported along the Uruguayan coast around rocky areas (Silveira et al. 2018; Mayer et al. 2025), however, Punta del Diablo and La Paloma areas have been consistently reported during consecutive years as areas where pregnant females are captured between October–November and YOY are captured during summer months (Mayer et al. 2025).

Between August 2006 and November 2013, scientific surveys onboard the artisanal shrimp fishery were carried out to sample species incidentally captured (Pereyra 2017). Fishing sets (n = 207) were carried out randomly in the area year-round across the surveyed years. Sampling was conducted with a bottom trawl with a 9 m horizontal mouth and mesh size of 25 mm (Pereyra 2017). Each trawl was 15 minutes long (seabed time), with an average trawl speed of 1.6 knots (Pereyra 2017). Skate catches were identified to species level, weighed, measured (TL), sexed, and maturity status was determined based on macroscopic evaluation of the reproductive systems (Pereyra 2017).

A total of 1,397 Bignose Fanskates (748 males and 649 females) were captured, with 1,312 individuals measuring between 8.7–57 cm TL (Pereyra 2017). Among them, 32 neonates (2.4%) measured 9–11 cm TL, and 146 YOY (11.1%) measured 12–23 cm TL (Pereyra 2017). The size-at-birth for the species in the region is 4.9–10.9 cm TL (Oddone & Vooren 2004). Juveniles, ranging from 24–45 cm TL, made up the majority with 1,043 individuals (79.5%) (Pereyra 2017). Neonates were present year-round except during winter (Pereyra 2017). A winter spawning season was proposed for the area, based on the presence of neonates in spring and the incubation period of the species (four months) (Pereyra 2017). Adult males and females were more frequent in the area between spring and summer, however, they were captured in low numbers, which may indicate that copulation occurs in deeper areas (>15 m) (Pereyra 2017).

During these same surveys, a total of 231 (91 males, 140 females) Smallnose Fanskates were captured, with 222 individuals measuring between 8.9–77 cm TL (Pereyra 2017). Among them, 58 neonates (26.1%) measured 9–19 cm TL, and 59 YOY (26.6%) measured 20–30 cm TL (Pereyra 2017). The size-at-birth for the species in the region is 8–20 cm TL (Jañez & Sueiro 2007). Overall, 59 individuals (26.6%) were considered juveniles measuring 31–57 cm TL (Pereyra 2017). Neonates were present throughout spring and summer (Pereyra 2017). A late autumn until early spring spawning season was proposed for the area, based on the presence of neonates and the incubation period of the species (four months) (Pereyra 2017). This spawning season coincides with the presence of adult males and females in the area (Pereyra 2017).

Acknowledgments

Agustín Loureiro (Facultad de Ciencias, Universidad de la República), Rodrigo Gurdek (Facultad de Ciencias, Universidad de la República), Andres C Milessi (Mar Azul Uruguayo Initiative), Rodolfo Vögler (Centro Universitario Regional del Este, Universidad de la República), 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 05 – South American 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. Punta del Diablo 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
SHARKS												
Carcharias taurus	Sandtiger Shark	CR	0–232	X		X						
RAYS												
Sympterygia acuta	Bignose Fanskate	CR	0–188	X		X						
Sympterygia bonapartii	Smallnose Fanskate	NT	0–500			X						

SUPPORTING SPECIES

Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category
SHARKS		
Carcharhinus brachyurus	Copper Shark	VU
Galeorhinus galeus	Tope	CR
Mustelus schmitti	Narrownose Smoothhound	CR
Squatina guggenheim	Angular Angelshark	EN
RAYS		
Myliobatis goodei	Southern Eagle 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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