

Press Release

Over half of the Arabian Seas Region's sharks, rays, and chimaeras are at risk of extinction

Abu Dhabi, 15 August 2017: **Results from the 2017 IUCN Regional Red List assessment of 153 species of chondrichthyan fishes (sharks, rays, and chimaeras) indicate the Arabian Sea and adjacent waters are home to some of the most threatened chondrichthyan populations in the world.**

The Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi (EAD), in collaboration with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Shark Specialist Group (SSG), held a workshop to evaluate the extinction risk status of sharks, rays, and chimaeras found in the Arabian Sea and its adjacent waters (Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Arabian Gulf) for the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, in February 2017.

The assessment highlights the need for urgent action to conserve populations and habitats, because more than half of the species (78) considered threatened with an elevated risk of extinction within the region. A further 27 were assessed as being close to entering a threatened category in the near future. Only 19 species were assessed as being in a healthy state. For 29 species, there was insufficient scientific information to evaluate their risk of extinction, highlighting the need for more work to understand the status of these species. Overfishing is the main cause of threat due to both targeted and incidental capture.

“This workshop was the first step in understanding the regional status of sharks and rays. The results are a call for action and highlight the urgent need for regional cooperation in research and policy efforts”, stated Dr. Shaikha Al Dhaheri, EAD's Executive Director, Terrestrial and Marine Biodiversity Sector, and IUCN Regional Councilor for West Asia.

“Sharks, rays and chimaeras tend to grow slowly and produce few young, which leaves them particularly vulnerable to overfishing”, added Dr. Peter Kyne, Senior Research Fellow at Charles Darwin University and Red List Authority for the IUCN SSG. Some of the families with the highest numbers of threatened species

include the sawfishes, hammerhead sharks, wedgefishes, guitarfishes, and eagle rays, have slow life histories least capable to withstanding fishing pressure.

'The rapid development and expansion of deepsea fishing operations in the southeastern Arabian Sea, are of concern. There is a need to monitor fisheries, and their catches, to better understand the species being caught, and their status', stated Dr. Nick Dulvy, Co-chair of the IUCN SSG and researcher at Simon Fraser University.

"The outcomes of these assessments should inform future research and government action in the region that address information gaps and enables population recovery", stated Prof. Colin Simpfendorfer, IUCN SSG Co-Chair and Director of the Centre for Sustainable Tropical Fisheries and Aquaculture at James Cook University.

"This regional assessment was developed in collaboration with scientists and experts from around the Arabian Seas Region. We are all concerned about the long-term survival of many species of sharks and rays in our region and these results provide an important baseline for monitoring their status. Relevant stakeholders across the region need to work closely together to ensure immediate actions are taken to halt and reverse these declines", added Dr. Rima Jabado, Fisheries Scientist at EAD and IUCN SSG Regional Co-Chair for the Indian Ocean.

The workshop and assessments were undertaken with the generous support of the Save Our Seas Foundation, the International Fund for Animal Welfare, and the Sharks MoU under the Convention of Migratory Species (CMS).

The resulting report summarizes the information available on chondrichthyans found in the Arabian Sea and its adjacent waters with the aim of promoting conservation actions for threatened species, and for all sharks, rays and chimaeras occurring in the region. The publication is available at the following link:

[IUCN Red List – Arabian Seas Region - 2017](#)

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About Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD)

Established in 1996, the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD) is committed to protecting and enhancing air quality, groundwater as well as the biodiversity of our desert and marine ecosystem. By partnering with other government entities, the private sector, NGOs and global environmental agencies,



we embrace international best practice, innovation and hard work to institute effective policy measures. We seek to raise environmental awareness, facilitate sustainable development and ensure environmental issues remain one of the top priorities of our national agenda.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

The IUCN is the world's oldest and largest global environmental network. It supports scientific research, manages field projects all over the world and brings governments, non-government organisations, United Nations agencies, companies and local communities together to develop and implement policy, laws and best practice. The IUCN is made up of more than 1,000 organisations, as well as 10,000 individual scientists and experts structured into six Commissions. **www.iucn.org**

The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species

The IUCN Red List is widely recognized as the most comprehensive source of information on the global conservation status of plant and animal species and, in the context of the Shark Specialist Group, can be used as a tool for measuring and monitoring changes in the status of chondrichthyan (sharks, rays and chimaeras) biodiversity and our knowledge of the taxa. Red Lists are among the most widely used tools available to conservationists worldwide for focusing attention on species of conservation concern. They are an essential basis to enable management priorities to be targeted and for monitoring the long-term success of management and conservation initiatives. The assessments evaluate the conservation status of individual species, identify threatening processes affecting them and, if necessary, propose recovery objectives for their populations. **www.iucnredlist.org**

IUCN Shark Specialist Group

The Shark Specialist Group (SSG) of IUCN's Species Survival Commission aims to promote the long-term conservation of the world's chondrichthyan fishes, effective management of their fisheries and habitats and, where necessary, the recovery of their populations. One of the roles central to the SSG's mission is the preparation of species assessments for the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™.

www.iucnssg.org

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