

NEWS ALERT

Convention on Migratory Species Acts to Protect Sharks and Rays

Samarkand, Uzbekistan, February 24, 2024 -- Significant progress was made towards conserving sharks and rays at the recently concluded 14th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). A wide range of issues related to sharks and rays were discussed, including ecological connectivity, bycatch, and deep sea mineral exploitation activities. Major conservation success stories include listing several new species of sharks and rays on the CMS Appendices, adopting a Single Species Action Plan for Angelshark, encouraging the use of Important Shark and Ray Areas in marine spatial planning, supporting Concerted Actions for priority species, and taking action to ensure effective implementation of CMS requirements for the threatened Oceanic Whitetip Shark.

“It is encouraging to see how decisions at CMS are paving the way for the conservation of migratory sharks and rays. Strong protection measures have been adopted and we look forward to working with our partners around the world to support implementation in the coming years”, said Melanie Virtue, Head of the Aquatic Species team at the CMS Secretariat, headquartered in Bonn, Germany.

Species added to the CMS Appendices

Migratory species can be included on either or both of the CMS Appendices. When a species is listed on Appendix I, Parties (member governments) are required to strictly protect them by prohibiting their take/removal from the wild, conserving them, and where appropriate restoring their habitats, and preventing, removing or mitigating obstacles to their migration and controlling other factors that might endanger them. When a species is listed on Appendix II, it requires Parties to conclude global or regional Agreements for the conservation and management of individual species or groups of related species. Fourteen species gained new protections at this meeting, including one shark and three ray species that are considered Critically Endangered according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

- The global population of Sand Tiger Shark *Carcharias taurus* (also called Grey Nurse Shark in Australia or Raggedtooth Shark in South Africa) was listed on Appendices I and II.

“We congratulate the CMS Parties for the consensus inclusion of the Sand Tiger Shark on CMS Appendices I and II. These oceanic top predators are assessed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List, due to pressure from artisanal, recreational, and commercial fisheries. With this CMS listing, their take is now prohibited for all 133 CMS Party Governments, and we are hopeful that the listing on Appendix II will help enhance international cooperation to both eliminate these threats and conserve their habitats”, noted Dr. Susan Lieberman, Vice President, International Policy with the Wildlife Conservation Society.

Learn more: [Proposal for the Inclusion of the Sand Tiger Shark \(*Carcharias taurus*\) in Appendix I and II of the Convention | CMS](#)

In addition, the global populations of the Blackfin Guitarfish *Glaucostegus cemiculus*, Lusitanian Cownose Ray *Rhinoptera marginata*, and Duckbill Eagle Ray (also known as Bull Ray) *Aetomylaeus bovinus*, were listed on Appendix II, with Mediterranean Sea populations of each species listed on Appendix I.

Learn more:

[Proposal for the Inclusion of the Blackchin Guitarfish \(*Glaucostegus cemiculus*\) in Appendix II and the Mediterranean Sea Population of this Species in Appendix I of the Convention | CMS](#)

[Proposal for the inclusion of the Lusitanian Cownose Ray \(*Rhinoptera marginata*\) in Appendix II and the Mediterranean Sea population of this species in Appendix I of the Convention | CMS](#)

[Proposal for the Inclusion of the Bull Ray \(*Aetomylaeus bovinus*\) in Appendix II and the Mediterranean Sea Population of this Species in Appendix I of the Convention | CMS](#)

Angelshark Single Species Action Plan

A Single Species Action Plan for the Angelshark *Squatina squatina* in the Mediterranean Sea was adopted. Angel sharks are one of the most threatened families of sharks and rays. The Angelshark is Critically Endangered according to the IUCN Red List and is listed on Appendix I and II of CMS. The overall aim of the action plan is promoting the long-term sustainability of Angelshark populations in the Mediterranean Sea and their habitats by reducing the negative effects of human activities through legislation and enforcement, fisheries management measures, research, awareness-raising and capacity-building.

“With this action plan countries have an opportunity to implement concrete conservation action to ensure that this threatened shark is safeguarded in one of its last remaining strongholds, the Mediterranean Sea“, said Eva Meyers, co-founder of the Angel Shark Project and partner of the Angel Shark Conservation Network (ASCN).

Learn more: [Single Species Action Plan for the Angelshark \(*Squatina squatina*\) in the Mediterranean Sea | CMS](#)

Important Shark and Ray Areas (ISRA)

A resolution in support of the Important Shark and Ray Areas (ISRA) project was adopted. ISRAs are ‘discrete, three-dimensional portions of habitat, important for shark species, that are delineated to be managed for conservation’ (www.sharkrayareas.org). The resolution recommends that relevant Parties (including national international and regional management organizations) support the identification of ISRAs and consider areas delineated when working towards conserving migratory species and their habitats, including through their National

Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) that should be developed under the framework of the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#) (GBF).

“We welcome the recognition of ISRAs as an expert-driven approach to identifying areas that are critical for the survival of migratory sharks and rays. With this decision, governments further showed their commitments to implementing the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#) by supporting the consideration of ISRAs in marine spatial planning. It’s only by working together and using all the conservation tools available that we will be able to reduce the mortality of sharks and rays and ensure their recovery’, added Dr Rima Jabado, Deputy Chair of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and Chair of the IUCN Species Survival Commission Shark Specialist Group which is leading the Important Shark and Ray Areas project.

Learn more: <https://www.cms.int/en/document/important-shark-and-ray-areas-1>

Other key decisions

Parties also recognized the dire state of global populations of the Oceanic Whitetip Shark *Carcharhinus longimanus*, a Critically Endangered species listed on CMS Appendix I. A decision was adopted requesting Parties to report back on national and regional management measures that have been put in place to meet their obligations under CMS and other regional fisheries bodies that have banned the retention of the species.

Learn more: [Implementation of the CMS Appendix I-Listing for the Oceanic Whitetip Shark \(*Carcharhinus longimanus*\) | CMS](#)

Finally, the Conference of the Parties agreed to a series of Concerted Actions focused on rhino rays (sawfishes [Pristidae], wedgefishes [Rhinidae], and guitarfishes [Glaucostegidae and Rhinobatidae]), the most imperiled group of sharks and rays, and the Blue Shark *Prionace glauca*. These priority measures have the goal of improving the conservation status of species by targeting key intervention points.

What next?

Now that the COP has concluded, preparations for the implementation of agreed activities in the upcoming triennium will begin. To obtain tangible results, Parties, with support from the Secretariat and Scientific Council, will identify priority activities and facilitate the necessary resources. For instance, Parties can now consider using delineated ISRAs when designing or establishing marine protected areas or in other area-based management approaches. In the case of the Single Species Action Plan for the Angelshark in the Mediterranean Sea, an International Working Group, composed of governments, national experts, and stakeholder representatives will be in charge of implementing and tracking the progress of activities and objectives. Parties will also need to update national regulations to protect species listed on Appendix I. In addition, Parties are encouraged to consider migratory species and CMS implementation, in the development of their CBD NBSAPs, which must be submitted before the

CBD Conference of the Parties in October 2024; this provides an opportunity to further highlight the conservation needs of migratory sharks and rays.

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ABOUT US/ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION

The IUCN Species Survival Commission Shark Specialist Group

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is the world's largest global environmental network composed of both government and civil society organizations. It is a membership union with more than 1,400 member organizations and over 17,000 volunteer scientists in more than 160 countries. This diversity and vast expertise makes IUCN the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it. The Species Survival Commission (SSC) is a science-based network of over 9,000 experts from almost every country of the world, all working towards achieving the vision of: 'A just world that values and conserves nature through positive action to reduce the loss of diversity of life on earth'. The IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group (SSG) was established by the SSC in 1991 in response to growing awareness and concern of the severe impact of fisheries on shark, ray, and chimaera populations around the world. It is a global network of experts in the biology, taxonomy, use, and conservation of sharks, rays, and chimaeras. The SSG currently has more than 230 members from 82 countries collaborating to assess the status of all known species, collate knowledge, highlight species at risk, develop conservation plans, inform policy, and advise policy-makers on effective, science-based policies for sustainable use, and long-term conservation [IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group - Home \(iucnssg.org\)](http://iucnssg.org)

The Important Shark and Ray Areas project

Initiated in late 2021, the ISRA project is based on similar efforts to identify key habitats for birds and marine mammals. Areas are delineated through a consultative process and during regional workshops that bring together local experts who are familiar with the species and waters in their region. The Important Shark and Ray Areas (ISRAs) is an initiative led by the IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group. ISRAs are "discrete, three-dimensional portions of habitat, important for one or more shark, ray, and chimaera species, that are delineated and have the potential to be managed for conservation". The identification of ISRAs is an evidence-driven, purely biocentric process based on the application of ad hoc scientific criteria supported by the best available science. Any relevant management implication can only be subsequent to, and detached from, the ISRA identification process. The ISRA Criteria have been designed to capture important aspects of shark biology, ecology, and population structure and to encompass multiple aspects of species vulnerability, distribution, abundance, and key life cycle activities, as well as areas of high diversity. The ISRAs' main purpose is to attract the attention of policy- and decision-makers on the need of maintaining the favourable conservation status of sharks, rays, and chimaeras in specific areas through the implementation of the most appropriate management measures, and this can include a protected area designation. [What are ISRAs \(Important Shark and Ray Areas\) \(sharkrayareas.org\)](http://sharkrayareas.org)

The Convention on Migratory Species (Bonn Convention)

An environmental treaty of the United Nations, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable

use of migratory animals and their habitats. This unique treaty brings governments and wildlife experts together to address the conservation needs of terrestrial, aquatic, and avian migratory species and their habitats around the world. Since the Convention's entry into force in 1979, its membership has grown to include 133 Parties from Africa, Central and South America, Asia, Europe and Oceania.

[CMS | Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals](#)

The Wildlife Conservation Society

MISSION: WCS saves wildlife and wild places worldwide through science, conservation action, education, and inspiring people to value nature. To achieve our mission, WCS, based at the Bronx Zoo, harnesses the power of its Global Conservation Program in nearly 60 nations and in all the world's oceans and its five wildlife parks in New York City, visited by 4 million people annually. WCS combines its expertise in the field, zoos, and aquarium to achieve its conservation mission. Visit: newsroom.wcs.org Follow: [@WCSNewsroom](#). For more information: 347-840-1242. [Sharks, Skates, and Rays - WCS.org](#)

The Angel Shark Project

The ASP is a multidisciplinary collaboration that collects ecological data whilst engaging with local communities, researchers, and governments to deliver conservation action for angel sharks. Across the wider range, the ASP has grown organically and worked in partnership to identify areas where the angel shark species occur; co-developed regional action plans to minimise threats; established the Angel Shark Conservation Network; and shared techniques to support new angel shark initiatives. With partners the ASP launched seven regional projects in the Canary Islands, Corsica, Croatia, Greece, Ireland, Libya and Wales. [Home - Angel Shark Project \(angelsharkproject.com\)](#)

The Angel Shark Conservation Network

The Angel Shark Conservation Network is a collaboration led by IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group, Leibniz Institute for the Analysis of Biodiversity Change, Shark Trust, Submon, Universidad Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, and ZSL. . [Home - Angel Shark Conservation Network \(angelsharknetwork.com\)](#)

For media queries, contact:

Dr David Shiffman, IUCN SSC SSG communications officer david.shiffman@gmail.com

Dr Rima Jabado, IUCN SSC SSG chair – rimajabado@hotmail.com

Eva Meyers, Angel Shark Conservation Network - angelshark2014@gmail.com