

IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group

2020 Report



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Number of members

176

Social networks

Facebook: IUCN Shark Specialist Group
Instagram: iucnshark
Twitter: @IUCNshark
Website: www.iucnssg.org/
YouTube: IUCN Shark Specialist Group



Mission statement

To secure the conservation, management and, where necessary, the recovery of the world's sharks, rays and chimaeras by mobilising global technical and scientific expertise to provide the knowledge that enables action.

Projected impact for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

By the end of 2020, we envision a substantial advance in reducing the extinction risk of the top three most threatened groups of chondrichthyans, namely the Sawfishes, Angel Sharks and Guitarfishes. Eight regional and two thematic workshops will be undertaken to inform updated Red List assessments for all remaining chondrichthyans (942 species), thereby informing conservation prioritisation beyond these most threatened groups moving forward.

Targets for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

Assess

Policy: develop a Living Planet Index for Chondrichthyans.

Red List: (1) complete nine hundred and forty-five assessments/reassessments through eight regional and two thematic workshops (all chondrichthyans not recently assessed); (2) develop a Global Red List Index for chondrichthyans; (3) predict the conservation status for all species assessed as Data Deficient.

Plan

Planning: (1) develop a conservation strategy for Wedgefishes and Guitarfishes; (2) organise a Mediterranean Angel Sharks: Regional Action Plan workshop for Angel Sharks; (3) develop a Wales Angel Shark Action Plan (Cynllun Gweithredu Maelgwn Cymru); (4) develop conservation planning for Angel Sharks in the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea.

Research activities: advance the shark and ray Marine Protected Area (MPA) project.

Act

Policy: (1) provide policy advice on the use of Red List Categories and Criteria in fisheries management to the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES); (2) provide policy advice on chondrichthyans to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS).

Research activities: (1) create EDGE (Evolutionarily Distinct and Globally Endangered) Sharks with the Zoological Society of London (ZSL); (2) begin funding and development of a Sawfish sightings database.

Technical advice: (1) provide advice on shark and ray conservation priorities to donors, including the Shark Conservation Fund; (2) provide advice on reintroduction to zoos and aquaria; (3) provide advice as part of progress reporting on implementation of the Protocol for Specially Protected Areas and Biodiversity Information on the reporting party; (4) advance national shark report card work.

Network

Synergy: create a collaborative network focused on Wedgefish and Guitarfish conservation.



Communicate

Communication: (1) launch the Sawfish Progress and Priorities report; (2) raise awareness about extinction risk in Sawfishes; (3) maintain an active and engaged Shark Specialist Group membership; (4) make contributions to the SSC e-Bulletin; (5) launch the International Angel Shark Day.

Technical advice: provide advice to Humane Society International.

Activities and results 2020

Assess

Policy

i. A Living Planet Index was produced and communicated for oceanic sharks and rays. Remaining Living Planet Indices will be produced in 2021. (KSR #11, 12)

Red List

i. Four-hundred and ninety (490) assessments were published in 2020. This brings the total number published since 2013 to 1,092. Two virtual workshops were held: Southeast Asia (to assess 124 species, involving 31 participants over 13 Zoom meetings spanning 15 April–28 May 2020) and West Africa (to assess 50 species, involving 37 participants over 10 Zoom meetings spanning 7 July–5 August 2020). (KSR #1)

ii. We produced three Red List Indices for: (1) Oceanic sharks and rays, (2) Wedgefishes and Giant Guitarfishes; and (3) Regional Red List Index of Northeast Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea. The remaining Red List Indices will be produced in 2021. (KSR #3)

iii. Publications: (1) Walls, R.H.L. and Dulvy, N.K. (2020). 'Predicting the conservation status of Europe's Data Deficient sharks and rays'. *bioRxiv* 614776. <https://doi.org/10.1101/614776>; (2) Kyne, P.M., et al. (2020). 'The thin edge of the wedge: Extremely high extinction risk in wedgefishes and giant guitarfishes'. *Aquatic Conservation: Marine and Freshwater Ecosystems* 30:1337–1361. <https://doi.org/10.1002/aqc.3331> (KSR #3)

iv. Prediction of status for species assessed as Data Deficient is complete for the Northeast Atlantic and Mediterranean: Walls, R.H.L. and Dulvy, N.K. (2020). 'Eliminating the dark matter of data deficiency by predicting the conservation status of Northeast Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea sharks and rays'. *Biological Conservation* 246: 108459. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2020.108459> (KSR #3)

Plan

Planning

i. A short-form conservation strategy for Wedgefishes and Guitarfishes was funded and due to be completed at the end of 2020 but has been delayed to late 2021 (due to COVID-19). (KSR #15)

ii. The Welsh Angel Shark Action Plan was completed and published: Barker, J., et al. (2020). *Wales Angelshark Action Plan (Cynllun Gweithredu Maelgwn Cymru)*. London, UK: Zoological Society of London. (KSR #15)

iii. Conservation planning for Angel Sharks in the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea was published as: Lawson, J.M., et al. (2020). 'Extinction risk and conservation of critically endangered angel sharks in the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea'. *ICES Journal of Marine Science* 77:12–29. <https://doi.org/10.1093/icesjms/fsz222> (KSR #15)

Research activities

i. The Shark and Ray MPA project was completed. (KSR #26, 32)

Act

Technical advice

i. Through science-based development of conservation strategies, we have driven the funding agenda of a major donor driving USD 1,004,670 into delivering on Angel Shark conservation strategies. The following projects were funded: (1) Mediterranean Angel Shark Project (USD 263,285): <https://www.sharkconservation-fund.org/project/angel-sharks-a-regional-action-plan-for-the-mediterranean/>; (2) 'Securing the long-term conservation of Angelsharks in



Vulnerable Northern River Shark, *Glyphis garricki*
Photo: Grant Johnson



Angel Shark
Photo: Tony Gilbert

their stronghold of the Canary Islands’ (USD 469,385): <https://www.sharkconservationfund.org/project/securing-the-long-term-conservation-of-angelsharks-in-their-stronghold-of-the-canary-islands/>; (3) ‘Strengthening Angel Shark Conservation Southern Aegean Sea’ (USD 22,000): <https://www.sharkconservationfund.org/project/strengthening-angel-shark-conservation-southern-aegean-sea/>; (4) ‘Conservation of Angel Sharks (*Squatina squatina*) in their last Stronghold’ (USD 25,000): <https://www.sharkconservationfund.org/project/conservation-of-angel-sharks-squatina-squatina-in-their-last-stronghold/>. (KSR #27)

Communicate

Communication

- i.** Eight membership newsletters were produced. (KSR #28, 29)
- ii.** SSC e-Bulletin: We had five entries in every IUCN Species e-Bulletin in 2020. (KSR #28, 29)
- iii.** We have continued engagement with International Sawfish Day. (KSR #28)
- iv.** We undertook considerable coordination and communication for the tweets and webinar around the hashtag #AngelsharkDay on 26 June 2020. (KSR #28)

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Summary of activities 2020

Components of Species Conservation Cycle: 4/5

Assess	5	
Plan	4	
Act	1	
Communicate	4	

Main KSRs addressed: 1, 3, 11, 12, 15, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32

Resolutions addressed: WCC-2016-Res-016

KSR: Key Species Result