

## 2021 Report

# IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group



#### CHAIR

**Rima Jabado**  
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#### RED LIST AUTHORITY COORDINATOR

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Australia

#### NUMBER OF MEMBERS

237

#### SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE

Facebook: @IUCNShark  
Instagram: @IUCNShark  
LinkedIn: IUCNShark  
Twitter: @IUCNshark  
Website: <https://www.iucnssg.org>  
Vimeo: @iucnshark  
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 2021–2025

In 2021, the Shark Specialist Group (SSG) completed the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species assessments of all sharks, rays, and chimaeras and now know that 37% of species are threatened with extinction. Although we will need to continue with assessments for newly described species, our aim is to ensure the most threatened species get attention by developing conservation strategies and action plans, guiding policy intervention by providing expert input into the decision making process (especially at high-level international treaty level such as the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES)), and communicating our work and results to a broad audience. We will develop new spatial planning tools to support delineation of

Important Shark and Ray Areas (ISRAs) across the world's ocean and ensure their uptake at various national, local and global levels. Finally, with increasing changes to the trade dynamics of shark and ray products, we will work to improve our understanding of global exports and imports of fins, meat, skins, liver oil and other products, to ensure sustainable use.

### Targets 2021–2025

#### ASSESS

- T-001** Complete global Red List assessments of all newly described species and changed taxonomic concepts by 2025.
- T-002** Complete Red List reassessments for current species assessments expiring in 2022–2024 by 2025.
- T-003** Complete Red List assessments and reassessments for South American and Southeast Asian freshwater stingrays by 2022.
- T-004** Publish Living Planet Index for chondrichthyans by 2022.
- T-005** Produce Global Red List Index for chondrichthyans as the first indices of the effects of threats by 2022.
- T-006** Publish results of the Global Shark Trends project in 2022.

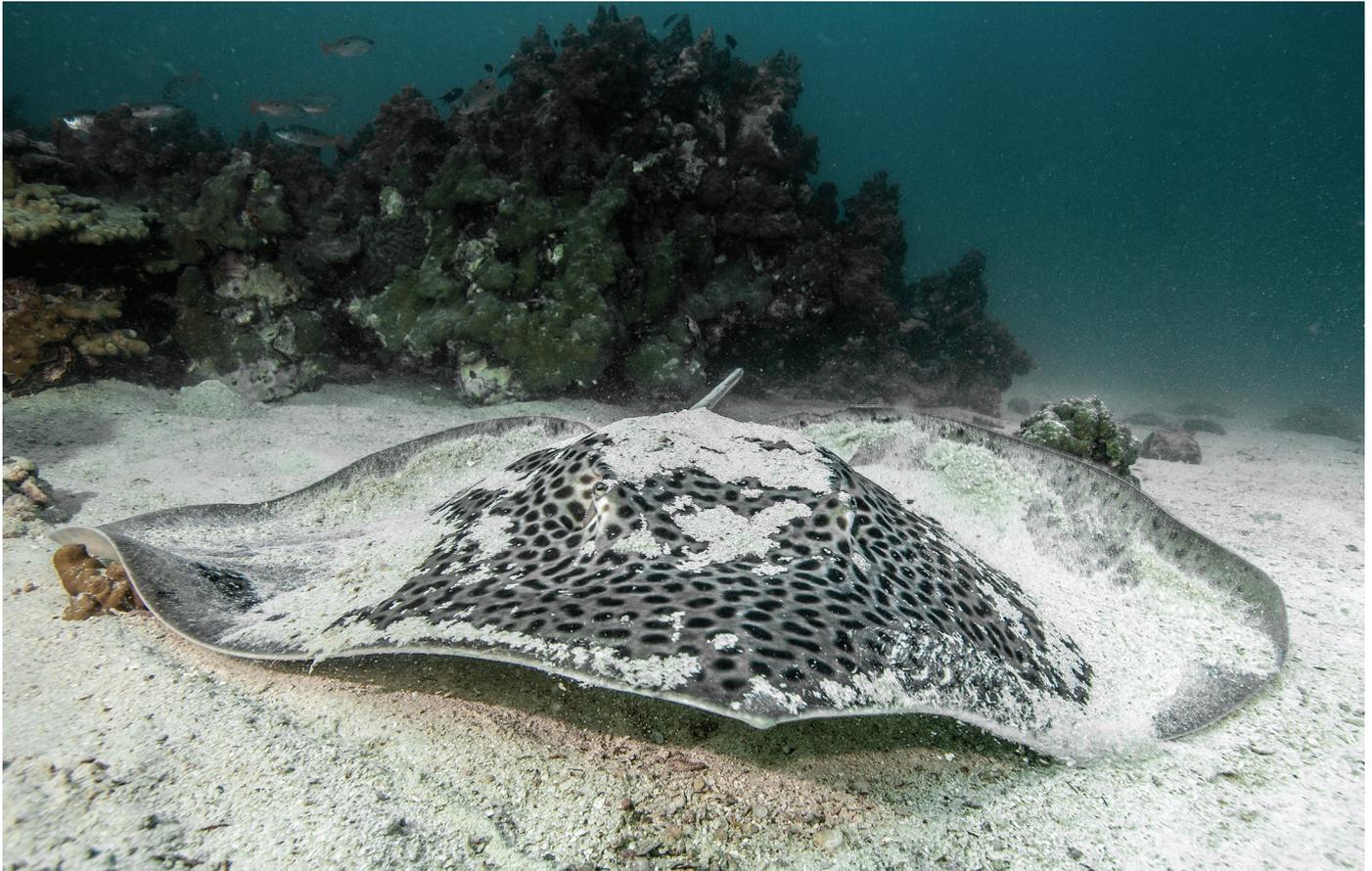
**T-008** Develop and publish regional status reports leading to papers on global and regional conservation priorities for chondrichthyans by 2024.

#### PLAN

- T-012** Develop a global conservation strategy and action plan for oceanic sharks and rays by 2023.
- T-013** Support the implementation of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Concerted Actions by 2023 (e.g. Rhino Rays).
- T-014** Develop overview, situational analysis, and regional conservation strategies and action plans for Rhino Rays by 2025.
- T-015** Develop a conservation strategy and action plan for the South American freshwater stingrays by 2025.

#### ACT

- T-022** Provide ongoing technical support and advice to the CMS Secretariat and Sharks MoU Advisory Committee.
- T-023** Respond to requests for advice and feedback to other IUCN bodies, specialist groups and organisations (e.g. FAO, TRAFFIC) as requested.
- T-024** Develop policy briefs/documents on existing and emerging trends in the trade of various shark and ray products for CITES Conference of the Parties by 2025.



**T-025** Create a synopsis of fisheries, use, trade, and other conservation issues related to chondrichthyans for donors, policy makers and the public to support conservation actions and engagement by 2023.

**T-026** Develop position statement on the reintroduction of sharks and rays through captive breeding programmes and disseminate to aquaria by 2025.

#### **NETWORK**

**T-007** Generate funds to support SSG activities including assessment, conservation planning and other key targets.

**T-016** Recruit at least 30 new members in 2021.

**T-017** Review current membership status to improve geographic diversity, gender and age representation, and technical expertise of the SSG group in 2021.

**T-018** Foster training of members in conservation planning by 2025.

**T-019** Foster training of members as Red List assessors (including the use of the IUCN Species Information Service, SIS) by 2023.

**T-021** Establish new formal partnerships that will provide financial and institutional support to the Specialist Group staff time by 2022.

#### **COMMUNICATE**

**T-009** Organise annual SSG events linked to major international conferences to communicate activities and progress to members and other interested individuals or organisations (e.g. American Elasmobranch Society yearly meeting, European Elasmobranch Association, Sharks International 2022).

**T-010** Publish annual Shark Specialist Group Newsletters with contributions from members.

**T-011** Update SSG website, improve social media presence and develop a communication strategy to better disseminate updates and ongoing activities by 2022.

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#### **Activities and results 2021**

##### **ASSESS**

##### **Red List**

**T-001** (KSR 6)

**Number of new global Red List assessments completed:** 47

**Result description:** A total of 47 new assessments were completed in 2021 (11 shark species and 36 ray species).

**T-002** (KSR 6)

**Number of global Red List reassessments completed:** 194

**Result description:** One hundred ninety-four (194) reassessments were published in 2021, including 94 shark species and 100 ray species. A series of four regional virtual workshops were held to work on the reassessment of the five species of sawfishes (Pristidae), involving over 70 SSG members and non-members.

**T-003** (KSR 6)

**Number of global Red List reassessments completed:** 19

**Result description:** Reassessments of the Asian freshwater stingrays have been completed and are now available on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species website. Reassessments of at least 15 South American freshwater stingrays are currently underway and ready for review and submission to the first 2022 Red List update.

**T-005** (KSR 7)

**Number of groups with comprehensive Red List reassessments published as a proportion of the number prioritised for the Red List Index:** 0

**Result description:** The analysis of the Global Red List Index for chondrichthyans is underway by Prof. Nick Dulvy. Some analyses at the regional level or the species-group level have been undertaken already and results published. The publications are: Walls, R.H.L. and Dulvy, N.K.

(2021). 'Tracking the rising extinction risk of sharks and rays in the Northeast Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea'. *Scientific Reports* 11:15397. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-021-94632-4> and

Pacoureaux, N., et al. (2021). 'Half a century of global decline in oceanic sharks and rays'. *Nature* 589:567–571. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-020-03173-9>.

#### **Research activities**

T-004 (KSR 5)

**Number of scientific publications about species research that acknowledge SSC affiliation:** 0

**Result description:** The analysis for the Living Planet Index for chondrichthyans is underway and being led by Prof. Nick Dulvy.

T-006 (KSR 5)

**Number of scientific publications about species research that acknowledge SSC affiliation:** 1

**Result description:** A peer-reviewed publication with details of results from the assessment of 1,199 species was published to highlight results from the Global Shark Trends Project: Dulvy, N.K., et al. (2021). 'Overfishing drives over one-third of all sharks and rays toward a global extinction crisis'. *Current Biology* 31:4773–4787. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2021.08.062>.

T-008 (KSR 5)

**Number of scientific publications about species research that acknowledge SSC affiliation:** Ongoing.

**Result description:** An update to the Fowler et al. 2005 report (Fowler, S.L., et al. (comp. and eds.) 2005. *Sharks, Rays and Chimaeras: The Status of the Chondrichthyan Fishes. Status Survey*. IUCN/SSC Shark Specialist Group. Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK: IUCN.) is in progress with the support of all the Regional Vice-Chairs.

#### **PLAN**

##### **Planning**

T-012 (KSR 8)

**Number of conservation plans/strategies developed:** 0

**Result description:** We have currently established a working team to plan this global conservation strategy and are working with the Conservation Planning Specialist Group to determine the best approach to tackle this diverse group of species.

T-013 (KSR 8)

**Number of conservation plans/strategies developed:** 0

**Result description:** Work with the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Secretariat has begun to ensure proposed activities within the Concerted Actions document can be implemented. A global review of bycatch of Rhino Rays is underway, a list of individuals working on Rhino Rays has been developed, and funding has been secured to run the first workshop to develop a regional conservation strategy and action plan.

#### **ACT**

##### **Policy**

T-026 (KSR 10)

**Number of position statements addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss:** 0

**Result description:** The SSG Aquarium Working Group, led by Paula Carlson and Lisa Hoopes, has been holding meetings with members to coordinate the development of guidelines and a position statement. Discussions are well underway to ensure this target can be achieved.

##### **Technical advice**

T-022 (KSR 10)

**Number of technical consultations provided to support conservation actions:** 1

**Result description:** The SSG continues to work closely with the CMS Secretariat and the Sharks MoU Advisory Committee through its members and Chair. Technical support is provided during a scheduled monthly call along with documents to review on the implementation of their programme of work in relation to the conservation of sharks and rays.

T-023 (KSR 10)

**Number of technical consultations provided to support conservation actions:** 4

**Result description:** The SSG has responded to several requests for advice and feedback including: (1) submitted official comments to the Government of Australia in relation to the consultation on species listing eligibility and conservation actions for the Scalloped Hammerhead (*Sphyrna lewini*); (2) provided feedback to the IUCN Secretariat and Total Energies in relation to a project on Whale Sharks (*Rhincodon typus*) in Qatar; (3) consulted with several SSC members wanting to establish a new specialist group; and (4) undertook review of documents prepared by TRAFFIC in relation to sharks and rays on CITES.

#### **NETWORK**

##### **Capacity building**

T-018 (KSR 2)

**Number of people trained in conservation planning:** 12

**Result description:** A total of 12 members from seven of the nine SSG regions have participated in the IUCN SSC Conservation Planning Specialist Group course on 'Facilitating Species Conservation Planning Workshops'.

T-019 (KSR 2)

**Number of people trained in assessment tools:** 21

**Result description:** The Red List Authority Coordinator worked with members to ensure that nine individuals completed the full Red List training course. An additional 12 members completed Modules 1–4 from the course and are able to support ongoing Red List assessments. In addition, two online Assess Working Group trainings were undertaken in September 2021.

#### **Membership**

T-016 (KSR 2)

**Number of SSC members recruited:** 129

**Result description:** The SSG invited a total of 129 new members in 2021 and renewed membership for 108 members.

T-017 (KSR 2)

**Number of SSC members recruited:** 65

**Result description:** Membership was reviewed to improve geographic diversity, gender and age representation, as well as technical expertise. Previously, the SSG had 172 members from 53 countries. Currently, we have 237 members from 82 countries, allowing us to have a much more diverse and inclusive group.

#### **Synergy**

T-007 (KSR 1)

**Number of in kind partnerships established and maintained:** 1

**Result description:** A new partnership with Atlantis, The Palm in Dubai has allowed the SSG to have a new part-time Programme Officer, who started working in December 2021.

T-007 (KSR 1)

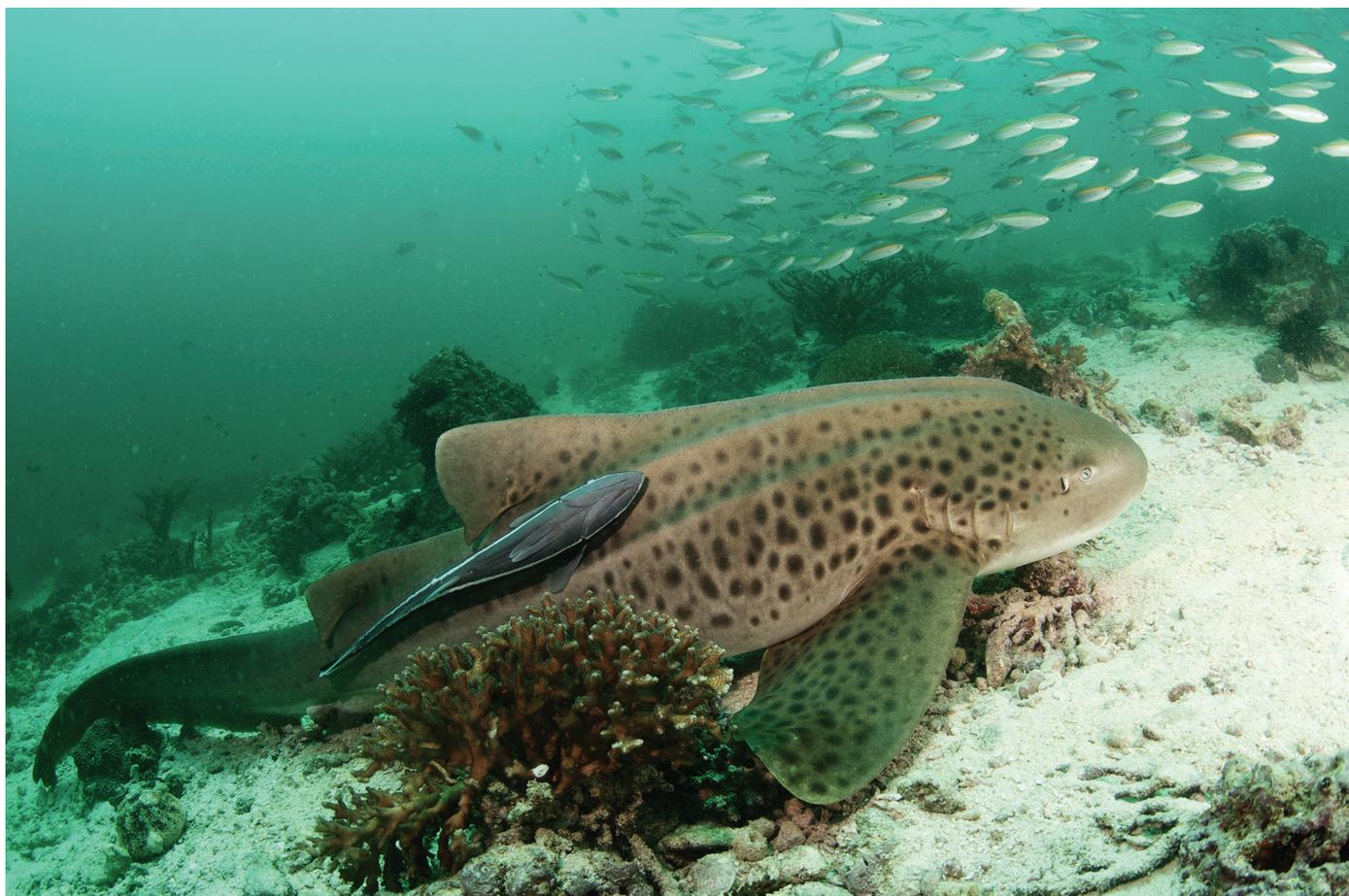
**Number of funding partners established and maintained:** 1

**Result description:** The SSG has generated various funds to support ongoing activities related to conservation planning and capacity building. Activities are now being planned so they can be implemented in 2022.

T-021 (KSR 1)

**Number of in kind partnerships established and maintained:** 1

**Result description:** With the support of Atlantis, The Palm in Dubai, a part-time Programme Officer was hired in December



Endangered Leopard Shark (*Stegostoma tigrinum*)  
Photo: Simone Caprodossi

2021 to support the implementation of ongoing IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group activities.

**COMMUNICATE**  
**Communication**

T-009 (KSR 13)

**Number of SSC members' presentations developed in relation to specific taxonomic groups: 2**

**Result description:** Members have been engaged at the regional level through online meetings that Regional Vice-Chairs are organising quarterly for each of the nine SSG regions. This has been the best alternative considering the current COVID-related travel restrictions. A first in-person meeting is currently being organised linked to Sharks International 2022 in Valencia, Spain, in October 2022, where members can finally get together and plan activities.

T-010 (KSR 12)

**Number of Species e-bulletin, Save Our Species newsletter, SSC Groups' newsletter editions produced: 3**

**Result description:** We have relaunched our official Shark Specialist Group Newsletter, *Shark News*, and are now publishing quarterly issues with contributions from members and non-members working on shark,

ray and chimaera conservation issues around the world. All issues can be downloaded on our website (<https://www.iucnssg.org/shark-news.html>) or viewed online (April 2021 | [bit.ly/3fIC4nG](https://bit.ly/3fIC4nG); July 2021 | [bit.ly/31T0jqs](https://bit.ly/31T0jqs); October 2021 | [bit.ly/33cPvDN](https://bit.ly/33cPvDN))

T-011 (KSR 13)

**Number of digital communication outputs developed in relation to specific taxonomic groups: 4**

**Result description:** The SSG website design (<https://www.iucnssg.org>) has been changed with the structure of the website and its content fully updated (February–March 2021). Our social network presence now includes Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube and Vimeo, all of which have content that is consistently being created and/or updated. This is an ongoing process.

**Acknowledgements**

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**Summary of achievements**

**Total number of targets 2021–2025: 26**

**Geographic regions: 24 Global, 2 America**

**Actions during 2021:**

Assess: 7 (KSR 5, 6, 7)

Plan: 2 (KSR 8)

Act: 3 (KSR 10)

Network: 7 (KSR 1, 2)

Communicate: 3 (KSR 12, 13)

**Overall achievement 2021–2025:**

