

The Conservation Status of Northeast Atlantic Chondrichthyans

Report of the IUCN Shark Specialist Group
Northeast Atlantic Regional Red List Workshop
Peterborough, UK, 13–15 February 2006



Compiled and edited by
**Claudine Gibson, Sarah V. Valenti,
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This report describes the results of a regional Red List Workshop held at the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), Peterborough, UK, in 2006, as a contribution towards the IUCN Species Survival Commission's Shark Specialist Group's 'Global Shark Red List Assessment'. The purpose of the workshop was to assess the conservation status of the chondrichthyan fishes (sharks, rays and chimaeras) of the Northeast Atlantic region (FAO Major Fishery Area 27). This region is bordered by some of the largest and most important chondrichthyan fishing nations in the world, including Spain, France, the UK and Portugal. A regional overview of fisheries, utilisation, trade, management and conservation is also presented.

The Northeast Atlantic chondrichthyan fauna is moderately diverse, with an estimated 118 species (approximately 11% of total living chondrichthyans). These occur within a huge range of habitats, including the deep-sea, open oceans, and coastal waters from the Arctic to the Mediterranean.

During the workshop, experts collated information and prepared 74 global and 17 regional species assessments, thereby completing the Red Listing process for the described chondrichthyan fauna of the Northeast Atlantic (two undescribed species were not assessed). These assessments were agreed by consensus throughout the SSG network prior to their submission to IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™.

Results show that 26% of Northeast Atlantic chondrichthyans are threatened within the region (7% Critically Endangered, 7% Endangered, 12% Vulnerable). A further 20% are Near Threatened, 27% Least Concern and 27% are Data Deficient. This is a significantly higher level of threat than that for the whole taxonomic group, worldwide. Globally, of the 1,038 species of chondrichthyans assessed, 18% are threatened (3% CR, 4% EN, 11% VU), 13% are Near Threatened, 23% Least Concern and 46% Data Deficient.

Species accounts are presented for all known sharks, batoids and chimaeras of the Northeast Atlantic region. Each account provides the global and/or regional IUCN Red List Category and summarises the documentation supporting the Red List assessment.

The report's recommendations are intended to complement and enhance existing scientific advice regarding the conservation and management of Northeast Atlantic chondrichthyans. It is envisaged that the information contained within this report will facilitate the further development of research, conservation and management priorities for the region.

The IUCN Species Survival Commission Shark Specialist Group (SSG) was established in 1991 to promote the sustainable use, wise management and conservation of the world's chondrichthyan fishes. There are 180 SSG members from 90 countries distributed among 12 ocean-region subgroups, all of whom are actively involved in chondrichthyan research and fisheries management, marine conservation or policy development and implementation. The SSG has recently concluded its ten year Global Shark Red List Assessment programme by completing Red List assessments for every chondrichthyan species described in scientific literature before the end of 2007. This is the first complete assessment of all members of a major marine taxonomic group, and will provide an important baseline for monitoring the global health of marine species and ecosystems.