

## **Press Release**

# **First IUCN Red Listing Assessment of Sharks, Rays and Chimaeras in the Arabian Region**

**Abu Dhabi, 12 February 2017:** The Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi (EAD), in collaboration with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Shark Specialist Group, organized a Red Listing Assessment workshop from February 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> in Abu Dhabi to evaluate the conservation status of sharks, rays, and chimaeras found in the Arabian Sea and the adjacent waters.

Twenty-two participants attended the workshop from a number of countries including the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Oman, India and Pakistan as well as experts from the US, Canada, the UK and Australia, and observers from national competent authorities. The workshop outcome contributed to the UAE National Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks, which will be published as a joint document between EAD and the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment imminently.

Sharks, rays, and chimaeras are one of the world's oldest and most ecologically-diverse groups of animals. Yet, according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™, a quarter of the world's species are threatened with an elevated risk of extinction; ray species are found to be at an even higher risk than sharks. Overexploitation, from targeted as well as incidental take (or bycatch), is the main threat causing declines in species worldwide. Results from scientific studies undertaken in the UAE and the broader region also suggest that several species of sharks and rays face high levels of exploitation with declines in population numbers over the last decade.

An assessment of the status of sharks, rays, and chimaeras in the region has not been previously undertaken. Globally the IUCN Red Listing Assessments is the model commonly used for evaluating the conservation status of animal, plant and fungi species, over 870,000 species have been assessed so far.

This workshop was the first step in understanding the regional status of species. Participants will assess approximately 160 species occurring in the Arabian Gulf, Sea of Oman, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Red Sea using the IUCN Red List approach.

Commenting on the Red Listing Assessment workshop, Dr. Shaikha Al Dhaheri, EAD's Executive Director, Terrestrial and Marine Biodiversity Sector, and IUCN Regional Councilor for West Asia, stated: *"While there have been significant regional policy efforts over the last five years, effective conservation requires a better understanding of the threats species face in our region and their conservation status. We are pleased to be leading the way in enhancing our understanding of the status of sharks and rays in the region and look forward to engaging with leading shark scientists and fisheries managers to assess the vulnerability of species occurring in these waters which will establish an important baseline for monitoring them moving forward"*.

Dr. Nick Dulvy, IUCN SSG Co-Chair and Canada Research Chair at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, says, *"Sharks and rays are facing an elevated risk of extinction worldwide and we are concerned about the long-term survival of these species. Most species tend to grow slowly and produce few young, leaving them particularly vulnerable to overfishing."*

*"This workshop is an excellent opportunity for local experts to be involved in developing Red List Assessments that will help inform the management and conservation of this important group of ocean predators within the region"* stated Dr. Colin Simpfendorfer, IUCN SSG Co-Chair and Director of the Centre for Sustainable Tropical Fisheries and Aquaculture at James Cook University in Queensland, Australia.

The workshop was hosted by EAD and has been generously sponsored by the "Save Our Seas Foundation" with additional support from the International Fund for Animal Welfare and Sharks MoU under the Convention of Migratory Species (CMS). The outcome from the workshop is a regional report that include status assessments identifying species most at risk as well as recommendations for conservation actions, a first for the UAE and the broader region. These assessments will form a baseline for future work in the region, some of which is urgent.

**-ENDS-**



## **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](http://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](http://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](http://www.iucnssg.org)

**For media enquiries, please contact:**

**EAD Press Office:**  
**Environment Agency- Abu Dhabi**  
**Tel:** +9712 693-4637  
**Mobile:** +97150 442-5096  
**Email:** [pressoffice@ead.ae](mailto:pressoffice@ead.ae)  
**Website:** [www.ead.ae](http://www.ead.ae)

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