



**CONVENTION ON  
MIGRATORY  
SPECIES**

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Agenda Item 31.2.11

**REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONCERTED ACTION  
FOR THE  
COMMON GUITARFISH (*Rhinobatos rhinobatos*) AND  
THE BOTTLENOSE WEDGEFISH (*Rhynchobatus australiae*)\***

Summary:

The International Union for Conservation of Nature IUCN Species Survival Commission's Shark Specialist Group (IUCN SSC SSG) has submitted the attached report on the implementation of the Concerted Action for the Common Guitarfish (*Rhinobatos rhinobatos*) and the Bottlenose Wedgefish (*Rhynchobatus australiae*), UNEP/CMS/Concerted Action 13.9.

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**REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONCERTED ACTION  
FOR THE FOR THE COMMON GUITARFISH (*Rhinobatos rhinobatos*) AND  
THE BOTTLENOSE WEDGEFISH (*Rhynchobatus australiae*)**

UNEP/CMS/ CONCERTED ACTION 13.9

**CONCERTED ACTION**

Title: Concerted Action for the for the Common Guitarfish (*Rhinobatos rhinobatos*) and the Bottlenose Wedgefish (*Rhynchobatus australiae*)

Document number: UNEP/CMS/Concerted Action 13.9

Adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting (Gandhinagar, India, February 2020).

**REPORTING ORGANIZATION**

IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group

The IUCN SSC SSG has long been a trusted source of science-based information and advice on sharks and their relatives (Class Chondrichthyes: sharks, rays, and chimaeras) and provides leadership for the conservation of threatened species and populations of all chondrichthyan fishes. There are 237 SSG members from 82 countries distributed among nine ocean-region subgroups. The mission of the SSG is to secure the conservation, management and, where necessary, the recovery of the world's sharks, rays and chimaeras by mobilizing global technical and scientific expertise to provide the knowledge that enables action.

The IUCN and the CMS Secretariat signed a Memorandum of Cooperation in 2003, which mentions a number of joint activities, including to:

- provide scientific and technical advice on the status and conservation needs of particular migratory species;
- provide technical assistance to develop and implement action plans for migratory species that are, or are proposed to be, subjects of Agreements or Memoranda of Understanding between or among Range states;
- develop guidelines to assist the implementation of CMS and Agreements or MOUs concluded under its auspices; and
- assist or support in capacity-building, research, training and public awareness matters.

**TARGET SPECIES/POPULATION**

1. Class: Chondrichthyes  
Order: Rhinopristiformes  
Family: Rhinobatidae  
Species: *Rhinobatos rhinobatos* – Common Guitarfish

2. Class: Chondrichthyes  
 Order: Rhinopristiformes  
 Family: Rhinidae  
 Species: *Rhynchobatus australiae* – Bottlenose Wedgefish

As identification to the species level can be difficult, and threats and status are similar within the families Rhinobatidae (guitarfishes), Rhinidae (wedgefishes), and Glaucostegidae (giant guitarfishes), they are all included in this CMS Concerted Action.

“Rhino Ray” is a term used collectively for the five family-level groups of the Rhinopristiformes (Pristidae, Rhinobatidae, Rhinidae, Glaucostegidae, and Trygonorrhinidae). For the purposes of this document, the term Rhino Ray will be used to refer specifically to the three families Rhinobatidae, Rhinidae, and Glaucostegidae.

## **PROGRESS IN ACTIVITIES**

Since adoption in 2020, implementation of Concerted Action 13.9 has resulted in notable global coordination, awareness-raising, and data mobilisation for rhino rays.

### **Networking and Communication**

The IUCN SSC SSG established and maintained a global network of more than 100 researchers working on rhino rays. Regular communications through *Shark News* and partner channels facilitated collaboration, sharing of funding opportunities, and promotion of emerging research.

### **Research Mobilisation**

A Global Wedgefish and Guitarfish Symposium (2021) convened 280 participants from 37 countries. Subsequent scientific publications, including a special issue of *Endangered Species Research* (2024), provided the first comprehensive synthesis of rhino ray biology, distribution, and fisheries interactions.

### **Identification and Capacity Building**

Regional identification guides and posters were produced in English, French and Portuguese and distributed to fisheries officers and observers in West Africa. Additional global shark and ray identification materials—to cover all species listed on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) were developed in 2024 ([www.citesharks.org](http://www.citesharks.org)) and are currently being used globally in customs and enforcement as well as fisheries monitoring trainings.

### **Awareness and Outreach**

Awareness campaigns were launched across multiple platforms, including the “Beyond Jaws” podcast series and coordinated social media events such as Shark Awareness Day 2023. These efforts collectively increased public and stakeholder knowledge of rhino ray conservation issues.

### **Policy and Planning**

All wedgefishes and giant guitarfishes (37 species) were listed on CITES Appendix II in 2022, to improve international trade regulation and traceability. Rhino ray conservation was also

incorporated into the CMS Sharks MOU Programme of Work (2023–2025), linking this Concerted Action directly to ongoing activities under the CMS umbrella.

### **Conservation Planning**

The central outstanding activity—the development of regional conservation plans—did not proceed during the Concerted Action period due to funding limitations. However, planning is now underway under the CMS Sharks MOU, supported by the Government of Australia and facilitated by the CMS Secretariat in collaboration with the IUCN SSC SSG. The first regional workshop for the Indo-West Pacific region is anticipated in 2026.

### **CHANGES TO THE CONCERTED ACTION (IF ANY)**

No major changes to objectives occurred since COP14. However, due to delays and overlap with existing frameworks, activities related to conservation planning and capacity building have transitioned to the CMS Sharks MOU Programme of Work. The remaining elements of the Concerted Action—networking, research, and identification—have been mainstreamed into ongoing SSG and partner initiatives.

The Concerted Action demonstrated the importance of early coalition-building and clear coordination roles across instruments (e.g., CMS, Sharks MOU, CITES). Tangible shared outputs—such as symposia, identification guides, and joint publications—proved critical to sustain engagement. Involving regional experts from the outset ensured relevance and ownership, while maintaining virtual communication during travel restrictions helped broaden participation. Future large-scale efforts should focus on fewer, achievable priorities, embed activities within existing policy processes, and establish simple mechanisms for knowledge sharing and continuity.

### **REFERENCES (if any)**

### **ACTION**

Given that the remaining key activity—regional conservation planning—is now underway and will be completed within the next year under the Sharks MOU Programme of Work, the proponent recommends that **Concerted Action 13.9 be closed**.

All active components have been absorbed into other ongoing mechanisms, and continuation as a stand-alone Concerted Action is no longer necessary.

The Conference of the Parties is invited to take note of the progress achieved under Concerted Action 13.9 and to note that ongoing components have been included in the current Programme of Work of the Sharks MOU.