

Press Release – Immediate release



Angelsharks in the Canary Islands – the last hope for this Critically Endangered shark.

Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (23 June 2016): The last populations of the iconic Angelshark *Squatina squatina* can now only be seen in the Canary Islands. Once found along the coast of the Northeast Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea (from Scandinavia to northwest Africa), this species is now Critically Endangered (as assessed by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species) and has been lost from much of its previous distribution. A major step toward securing the future of the Angelshark was taken this week. A multi-faceted group of divers, scientists and conservation organisations are working together with the Canary Island Government, National Government, and local and international shark experts to identify and address the major threats to Angelshark conservation. A workshop, hosted by Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria this week, has harnessed the expertise of these participants and enabled the development of a comprehensive Conservation Action Plan for this species in the Canary Islands. The vision of this plan is that **Angelsharks in the Canary Islands are abundant and protected in their unique stronghold [Un futuro próspero para las poblaciones de Angelotes en su último bastión conocido de las Islas Canarias].**

“We know that at least one-quarter of the world’s sharks and rays are threatened,” Professor Nicholas Dulvy of the IUCN Shark Specialist Group, based at Simon Fraser University, Canada commented, “and angel sharks are one of the most threatened families of marine fishes.”

“These islands have a truly diverse fishing community” Ali Hood, Director of Conservation at the Shark Trust noted; adding that “the support of both commercial and recreational fishers will be key to reducing immediate pressures on the Angelshark.”

David Jiménez Alvarado, Project Officer of the Angel Shark Project remarked “It is vital to understand the critical habitats of this majestic and poorly known shark in this unique stronghold, and we encourage all divers to submit sightings to our online database (www.angelsharkproject.com).”

The angel shark family (Squatinidae) was identified as the second most threatened of all the world’s sharks and rays. By safeguarding a healthy population of the Angelshark in their last remaining stronghold of the Canary Islands, it may one day be possible for this species to be restored to its historic range.

The finalised Angelshark Action Plan for the Canary Islands will be distributed and publically available by the end of the year.

For more information visit www.angelsharkproject.com, www.sharktrust.org/angelsharks and www.iucnssg.org/conservation-strategies-angel-sharks.html

Editor's Note

Angel Shark Project is a collaboration between the Zoological Society of London, Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and Zoologisches Forschungsmuseum Alexander Koenig. We have been working in the Canary Islands for the last three years to collect ecological and population data, whilst engaging with local communities, researchers and government to raise awareness and deliver conservation action.

IUCN Species Survival Commission Shark Specialist Group (SSG) is a global network of experts in the biology, taxonomy, use, and conservation of sharks, rays, and chimaeras (cartilaginous fishes, Class Chondrichthyes). The SSG currently has more than 170 members from 55 countries collaborating to assess threat level, collate knowledge, highlight species at risk, and advise decision makers on effective, science-based policies for sustainable use, and long-term conservation.

The Shark Trust is a membership organisation, established to provide a voice for sharks and rays in the UK and provide representation to the public, industry and policy makers. Now part of a global collaborative movement in shark conservation, the Trust advocates for science-based conservation and sustainably managed fisheries while sitting at the centre of a growing network across the UK and internationally.

We are hugely grateful to all our funders, who are making this workshop possible: Disney Conservation Fund, Mohamed Bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, Fondation Ensemble, BIAZA National Aquarium Conference Fund and EcoAqua.

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