

Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) in the Indian Ocean

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The IUCN Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force (MMPATF) was created by the International Committee on Marine Mammal Protected Areas (ICoMMPA), the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) Marine Vice Chair, and members of the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC). Since 2016, the MMPATF has been rolling out a tool to apply standardized criteria to identify region by region around the world the key habitat areas for 130 species of marine mammals. [Important Marine Mammal Areas \(IMMAs\)](#) are defined as discrete portions of habitat, important to marine mammal species, that have the potential to be delineated and managed for conservation. IMMAs are identified through an expert-driven biocentric process, and so far a series of workshops have been held in six marine regions. The IMMAs identified as a result of these workshops and subsequent independent review can be viewed on an IMMA [eAtlas](#). Within the IOTC area two workshops of relevance were held, the first in the [North East Indian Ocean and South East Asian Seas in March 2018](#) which identified 30 IMMAs and the second in the [Western Indian Ocean and Arabian Seas in March 2019](#) which preliminarily identified 54 candidate IMMAs (the expert review is ongoing and the final list of approved IMMAs will be available later in the year). IMMAs are considered to be a valuable tool for spatial planning and conservation prioritization that may be of use to IOTC in its bycatch mitigation work.