

We have monitored the seasonal abundance and distribution of whale sharks (*Rhincodon typus*) and oceanic manta rays (*Mobula birostris*) around the island of Boavista, Cabo Verde, since 2015.

Fisher and boat-based surveys with traditional artisanal fishers have revealed the SW quadrant to be the seasonal focus of mega-planktivores between June and October. Trained in-water observers collect identification images and deploy towed SPOT tags (Smart Position Only Tracking satellite tags) to add to an expanding catalogue of the visiting populations and a growing understanding of the spatial ecology of whale sharks and manta rays in the tropical Atlantic Ocean.



8 Fishers & students trained in monitoring methods



78

Individuals observed

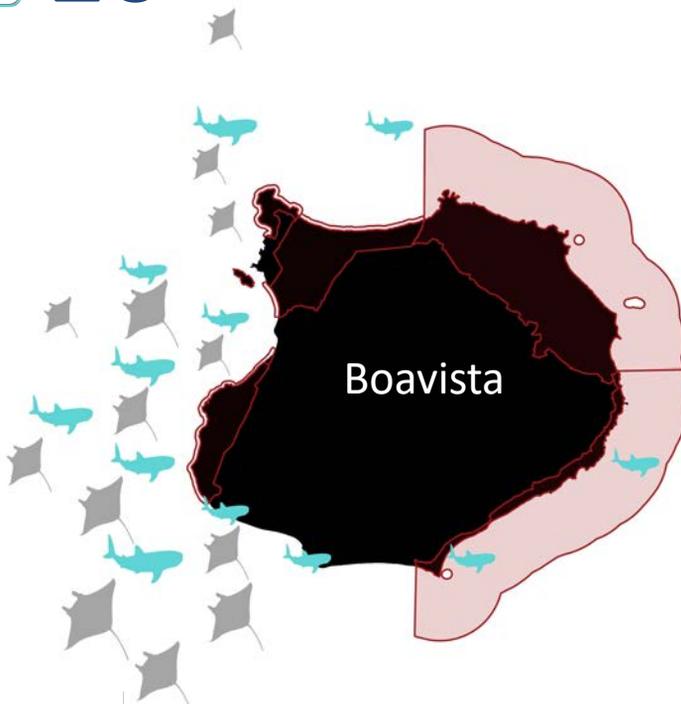


20 SPOT satellite tags deployed

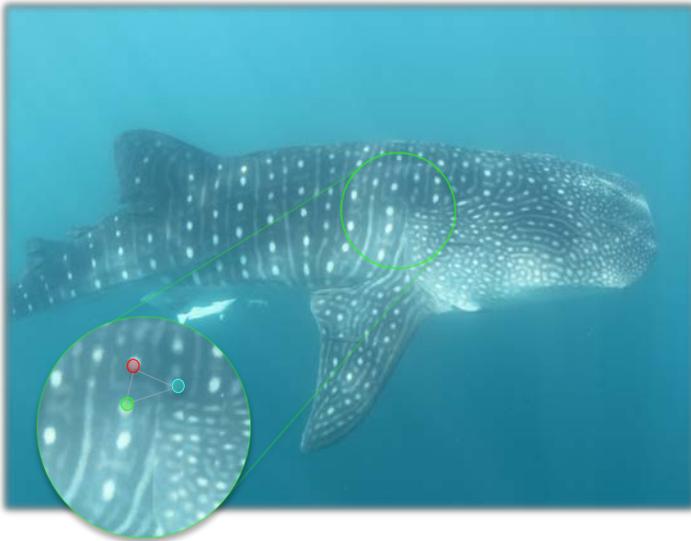


4

Species encountered



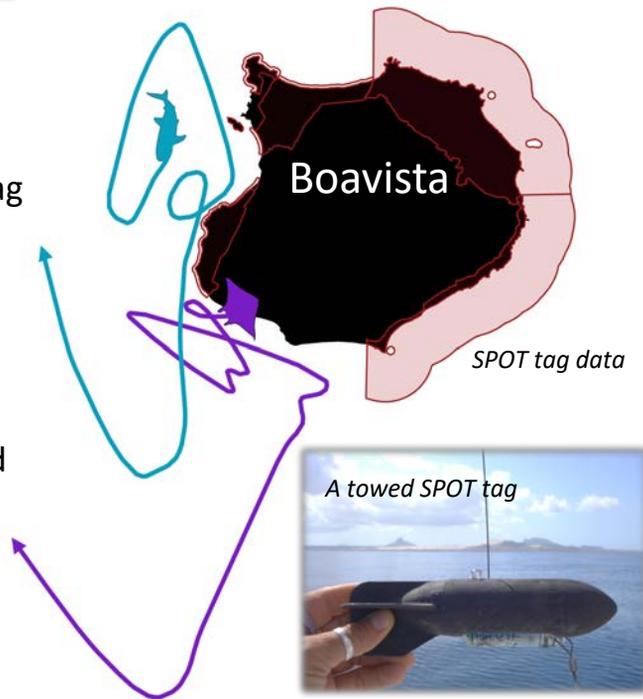
< Distribution of observations of whale sharks and manta rays during monitoring conducted between **2015-2018**. Larger icons indicate higher relative abundance of each species. Red areas represent the current **protected areas** with a marine component.



< Whale sharks and manta rays have unique spot patterns, which do not change as they develop. These allow us to be able to distinguish different individuals using photographs. By collecting photographic Identification of the spot pattern on both sides between the 1st dorsal and 1st gill slit for whale sharks, and the ventral side of manta rays, we are building a catalogue of the population. This can then be used to compare with observations from other sites.

SPOT (smart position only tracking) satellite tags allow us to see accurate, near real time location data every time the animal and its tag are at the surface.

Data from SPOTs and photo ID will improve our understanding of the little known populations in the Eastern Central Atlantic (ECA) and reveal critical foraging habitats and connectivity with other sites. All these data underpin hoped for science-based management & conservation in the region.



Conservation Status

Whale sharks and mantas have similar feeding ecology of food types and surface feeding and are impacted by targeted and non-targeted fisheries. Whale sharks are classified as 'Endangered' (IUCN) and are protected in Cabo Verde¹ while manta rays are listed as 'Vulnerable' and lack the same level of national protection. We hope that through increased understanding of these animals movements in the region will improve the management of threats to both species.

¹ in accordance with Resolução N°. 29/2016 linha 3.h & 5.d



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