

Blue lines indicate the area meeting the ISRA Criteria; dashed lines indicate the suggested buffer for use in the development of appropriate place-based conservation measures

HEARD ISLAND & McDONALD ISLANDS ISRA

Polar Waters Region

SUMMARY

Heard Island & McDonald Islands is located on the Kerguelen Plateau slope, 4,000 km southwest of mainland Australia in the Southern Ocean. The area is characterised by canyons, escarpments, ridges, and terraces. The area overlaps with the Australian Heard Island and McDonald Islands Marine Reserve and marginally with the French National Natural Reserve of the Terres australes françaises. Within this area there are: **threatened species** (Kerguelen Skate *Bathyraja irrasa*); and **range restricted species** (e.g., Murray's Skate *Bathyraja murrayi*).

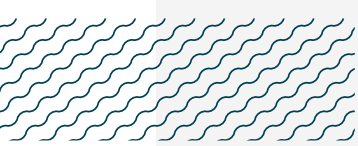
CRITERIA

Criterion A - Vulnerability; Criterion B - Range Restricted

— —
AUSTRALIA
FRANCE

— —
200-1,220 metres

— —
100,878 km²
 — —





DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Heard Island & McDonald Islands is located on the Kerguelen Plateau slope, 4,000 km southwest of mainland Australia in the Southern Ocean. The area encompasses waters around the Australian external territory of Heard Island & McDonald Islands and extends marginally into French waters of Kerguelen Islands (French Southern and Antarctic Lands; les Terres australes et antarctiques françaises; TAAF). The area is characterised by canyons, escarpments, ridges, and terraces along the slope.

The main oceanographic influence on the area is the Antarctic Circumpolar Current flowing eastward. It splits at the Kerguelen Plateau, with most of the flow deflected around the northern side, through the area (Park et al. 2008).

The area overlaps with the Australian Heard Island and McDonald Islands (HIMI) Marine Reserve (Commonwealth of Australia 2014) and marginally with the French National Natural Reserve of the Terres australes françaises.

This Important Shark and Ray Area is benthic and subsurface and is delineated from 200–1,220 m based on the depth range of Qualifying Species in the area.

ISRA CRITERIA

CRITERION A – VULNERABILITY

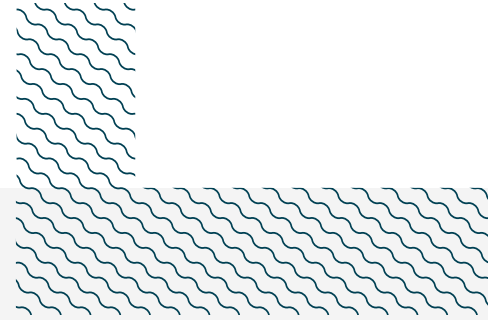
One Qualifying Species within the area is considered threatened with extinction according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Kerguelen Skate is assessed as Vulnerable (Dulvy et al. 2020).

CRITERION B – RANGE RESTRICTED

The area holds the regular presence of Kerguelen Skate and Murray's Skate as resident range-restricted species.

The regular presence of these species has been documented through fisheries bycatch monitoring (e.g., AFMA 2013; Nowara et al. 2017). Heard Island & McDonald Islands represent hotspots of skate capture. In commercial trawl data, Kerguelen Skate is most abundant (up to >100 skates km²) to the north and northwest of Heard Island at depths between 300–500 m (Nowara et al. 2017). Catches from commercial longlines also show Kerguelen Skate is abundant to the northwest of Heard Island (near the edge of the Australian exclusive economic zone), and in a few patches to the east and west of Heard Island (Nowara et al. 2017). Further, between 2006 and 2022, Kerguelen Skates (n = 307 in trawl; n = 20,417 in longline) were sampled in Australian commercial trawl and longline fisheries (J Faure unpubl. data 2024).

Murray's Skate is regularly reported, particularly the north, northwest, and northeast of Heard Island and is most abundant (up to >100/km²) in waters shallower than 300 m close to the northern side of Heard Island (Nowara et al. 2017). Murray's Skate and the Kerguelen Skate are endemic to, and therefore range restricted to, the wider Kerguelen Plateau and occur nowhere else in the Southern Ocean or globally (Stehmann & Bürkel 1990; Last et al. 2016).



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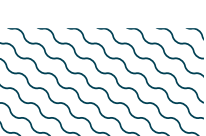
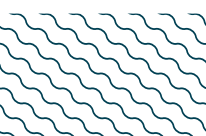
QUALIFYING SPECIES

Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category	Global Depth Range (m)	ISRA Criteria/Sub-criteria Met									
				A	B	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	D1	D2	
RAYS													
<i>Bathyraja irrasa</i>	Kerguelen Skate	VU	300-1,220	X	X								
<i>Bathyraja murrayi</i>	Murray's Skate	LC	20-800		X								

SUPPORTING SPECIES

Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category
RAYS		
<i>Bathyraja eatonii</i>	Eaton's Skate	LC

IUCN Red List of Threatened Species Categories are available by searching species names at www.iucnredlist.org Abbreviations refer to: CR, Critically Endangered; EN, Endangered; VU, Vulnerable; NT, Near Threatened; LC, Least Concern; DD, Data Deficient.





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