

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

## ELPHINSTONE REEF ISRA

### Western Indian Ocean Region

#### SUMMARY

Elphinstone Reef is an isolated reef platform and seamount located ~30 km off the Egyptian mainland in the Red Sea. The area includes shallow flats, deep plateaus, reef walls, and open waters. It is characterised by staircase plateaus down to ~50 m followed by steep walls descending to 400 m. Within this area there are: **threatened species** and **undefined aggregations** (Oceanic Whitetip Shark *Carcharhinus longimanus*).

#### CRITERIA

**Criterion A - Vulnerability; Sub-criterion C5 - Undefined Aggregations**

—	—
<b>EGYPT</b>	—
—	—
<b>0-400 metres</b>	—
—	—
<b>5.19 km<sup>2</sup></b>	—
—	—





## DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Elphinstone Reef is an isolated pinnacle surrounded by deep water located ~30 km off the Egyptian mainland in the Red Sea. This area includes shallow flats, deeper plateaus, reef walls, and open waters (E Bojanowski pers. obs. 2023). The area is characterised by steep walls (extending to 400 m) and a wide plateau between 20 and 40 m depth. The reef walls are dominated by corals and fifteen species of sponges from the class Demospongiae (El-Bossery et al. 2017). The vertical reef walls at Elphinstone are exposed to strong currents (Riegl & Piller 1999).

This Important Shark and Ray Area is pelagic and extends from surface waters (0 m) to 400 m based on the bathymetry of the area and the observation of the Qualifying Species.

## ISRA CRITERIA

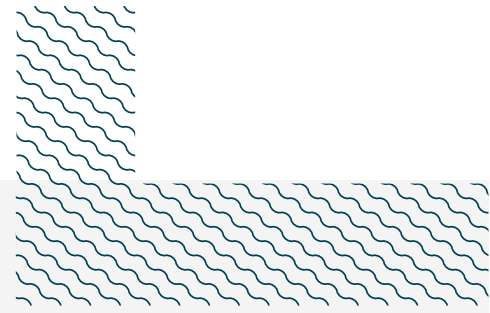
### CRITERION A – VULNERABILITY

The one Qualifying Species within the area is considered threatened with extinction according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™. The Oceanic Whitetip Shark is assessed as Critically Endangered (Rigby et al. 2019).

### SUB-CRITERION C5 – UNDEFINED AGGREGATIONS

Elphinstone Reef is an important aggregation area for one shark species.

Oceanic Whitetip Sharks are regularly and predictably observed in aggregations of up to 28 individuals around Elphinstone Reef. The mean aggregation size at Elphinstone Reef is 3.4 individuals although animals can also be seen alone at this site (Shawky & De Maddalena 2013; E Bojanowski unpubl. data 2023). Encounter rates peak in October and November (E Bojanowski unpubl. data 2023). These are the largest known aggregations of Oceanic Whitetip Sharks in the Red Sea and has become a popular site for dive operators (Shawky & De Maddalena 2013). The high abundance of Oceanic Whitetip Sharks at this and other Egyptian sites has been documented for more than 15 years (2004-2019) with 465 individuals (124 males, 256 females, and 85 individuals with sex undetermined) phot-identified at Elphinstone Reef (E Bojanowski unpubl. data 2023). The reason for these seasonal aggregations is not yet understood, and further information is needed to understand their function.



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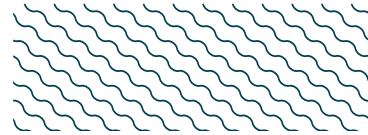
### **Suggested citation**

**IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group. 2023.** Elphinstone Reef ISRA Factsheet. Dubai: IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group.

## QUALIFYING SPECIES

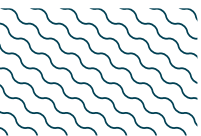
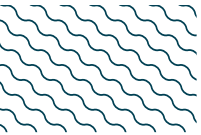
Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category	Global Depth Range (m)	ISRA Criteria/Sub-criteria Met									
				A	B	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	D1	D2	
<b>SHARKS</b>													
<i>Carcharhinus longimanus</i>	Oceanic Whitetip Shark	CR	0-1,082	X							X		

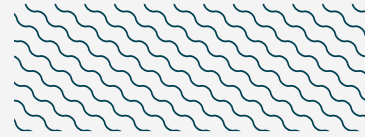
## SUPPORTING SPECIES



Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category
<b>SHARKS</b>		
<i>Carcharhinus amblyrhynchos</i>	Grey Reef Shark	EN
<i>Carcharhinus falciformis</i>	Silky Shark	VU
<i>Galeocerdo cuvier</i>	Tiger Shark	NT
<i>Sphyrna lewini</i>	Scalloped Hammerhead	CR
<b>RAYS</b>		
<i>Mobula birostris</i>	Oceanic Manta Ray	EN

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





## REFERENCES

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**Riegl B, Piller WE. 1999.** Coral frameworks revisited—reefs and coral carpets in the northern Red Sea. *Coral Reefs* 18: 241-253.

**Rigby CL, Barreto R, Carlson J, Fernando D, Fordham S, Francis MP, Herman K, Jabado RW, Liu KM, Marshall A, et al. 2019.** *Carcharhinus longimanus*. *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* 2019: e.T39374A2911619. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2019-3.RLTS.T39374A2911619.en>

**Shawky AM, De Maddalena A. 2013.** Human impacts on the presence of sharks at diving sites of the southern Red Sea, Egypt. *Bollettino del Museo di Storia Naturale di Venezia* 64: 51-62.