

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

BUTIAUR ISRA

New Zealand & Pacific Islands Region

SUMMARY

Butiaur is located southwest of Ulong Island in Palau. This area is characterised by vertical walls, moderate slopes, and canyons. The reef runs from east to west, then curves south to create a corner with a plateau on the top covered by large patches of lettuce coral. Within this area there are: **threatened species** (e.g., Bull Shark *Carcharhinus leucas*) and **feeding areas** (e.g., Blacktip Shark *Carcharhinus limbatus*).

CRITERIA

Criterion A - Vulnerability; Sub-criterion C2 - Feeding Areas

—	—
PALAU	—
—	—
0-50 metres	—
—	—
0.34 km²	—
—	—





DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Butiaur is located southwest of Ulong Island in Palau. The area encompasses the dive site locally known as ‘Shark City’ and is characterised by vertical walls, moderate slopes, and canyons. The reef runs from east to west, then curves south to create a corner with a plateau on the top covered by large patches of lettuce coral (Harel-Bornovski & Bornovski 2015). The walls and slopes drop down to 40–50 m before they merge with the sandy substrate. This site has strong and unpredictable currents (Harel-Bornovski & Bornovski 2015).

This Important Shark and Ray Area is benthic and pelagic and is delineated from surface waters (0 m) to 50 m based on the bathymetry of the area.

ISRA CRITERIA

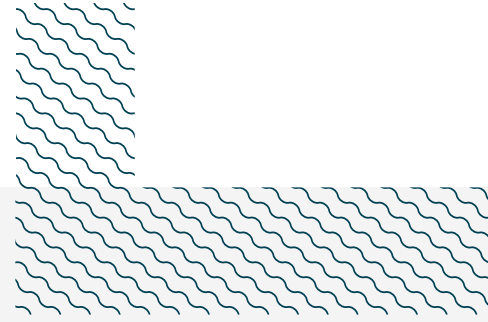
CRITERION A – VULNERABILITY

Two Qualifying Species considered threatened with extinction according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species regularly occur in the area. These are the Vulnerable Bull Shark (Rigby et al. 2021a) and Blacktip Shark (Rigby et al. 2021b).

SUB-CRITERION C2 – FEEDING AREAS

Butiaur is an important feeding area for two shark species.

Between 2013–2024, assemblages of Bull Sharks ($n = 2\text{--}8$ individuals, average = 5) and Blacktip Sharks ($n = 4\text{--}8$ individuals, average = 3) are reported feeding on the Two-spot Red Snapper *Lutjanus bohar* spawning aggregation in the area. Observations occur during 75% of monthly dives in the area during the spawning events (J Alpert pers. obs. 2013–2024). Two-spot Red Snapper spawning events occur every month year-round a few days before the full moon around dawn (Sakaue et al. 2016). Usually, the Blacktip Sharks actively hunt the fish, while the Bull Sharks are more opportunistic. Neither shark species are seen aggregating in similar numbers in this area during the rest of the month (J Alpert pers. obs. 2013–2024).



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Suggested citation

IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group. 2024. Butiaur ISRA Factsheet. Dubai: IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group.

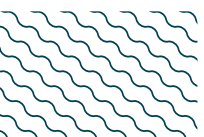
QUALIFYING SPECIES

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	
SHARKS													
<i>Carcharhinus leucas</i>	Bull Shark	VU	0-256	X			X						
<i>Carcharhinus limbatus</i>	Blacktip Shark	VU	0-140	X			X						

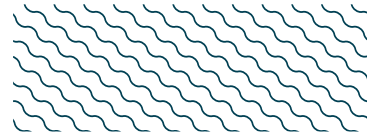
SUPPORTING SPECIES

Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category
SHARKS		
<i>Carcharhinus amblyrhynchos</i>	Grey Reef Shark	EN
RAYS		
<i>Aetobatus ocellatus</i>	Spotted Eagle Ray	EN

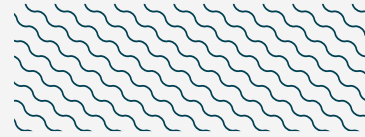
IUCN Red List of Threatened Species Categories are available by searching species names at www.iucnredlist.org Abbreviations refer to: CR, Critically Endangered; EN, Endangered; VU, Vulnerable; NT, Near Threatened; LC, Least Concern; DD, Data Deficient.



SUPPORTING INFORMATION



There are additional indications that Butiaur is an important area for undefined aggregations of one shark species. Between 2009-2024, this area was regularly visited by recreational divers (~3 times per month). Grey Reef Sharks were regularly and predictably observed (90% of the dives) forming aggregations of 4-14 individuals near the edge of the reef, year-round (T Harel-Bornowski unpubl. data 2024), mostly between 15-35 m (T Harel-Bornowski pers. obs. 2009-2024). Further information is required to understand the regularity and function of this aggregation.



REFERENCES

Harel-Bornovski T, Bornovski N. 2015. *Palau Diving and Snorkeling guide*. Koror: Jeremy Devillier.

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<https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2021-2.RLTS.T39372A2910670.en>

Rigby CL, Carlson J, Chin A, Derrick D, Dicken M, Pacoureau N. 2021b. *Carcharhinus limbatus*. *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* 2021: e.T3851A2870736.
<https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2021-2.RLTS.T3851A2870736.en>

Sakaue J, Akino H, Endo M, Ida H, Asahida T. 2016. Temporal and Spatial Site Sharing during Spawning in Snappers *Symphorichthys spilurus* and *Lutjanus bohar* (Pisces: Perciformes: Lutjanidae) in Waters around Peleliu Island, Palau. *Zoological Studies* 55: e44.
<https://doi.org/10.6620/zs.2016.55-44>