

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

EMON BEACH ISRA

New Zealand & Pacific Islands Region

SUMMARY

Emon Beach is situated at the southern end of Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands. Kwajalein Atoll is the largest atoll on earth and contains nearly one hundred coral islets. The area falls within the lagoon of the atoll, on the southeast side. The area has a cleaning station characterised by scattered coral heads and sandy substrates. Within this area there are: **threatened species** and **undefined aggregations** (Reef Manta Ray *Mobula alfredi*).

CRITERIA

Criterion A - Vulnerability; Sub-criterion C - Undefined Aggregations

MARSHALL ISLANDS

0-30 metres

0.79 km²





DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Emon Beach is situated at the southern end of Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands. Kwajalein Atoll is the largest atoll on earth and contains nearly one hundred coral islets (Dvorak et al. 2018). The area falls within the lagoon of the atoll, on the southeast side. Within the area there is a cleaning station off Emon Beach, characterised by scattered coral heads and sandy substrates. The Marshall Islands are in line with the Equatorial Countercurrent and between the two westward-flowing Equatorial Currents (de Laubenfels 1950). Consequently, the surface currents flow eastward, directly intersecting the trade winds.

This Important Shark and Ray Area is benthic and pelagic and is delineated from inshore and surface waters (0 m) to 30 m based on the bathymetry of the area.

ISRA CRITERIA

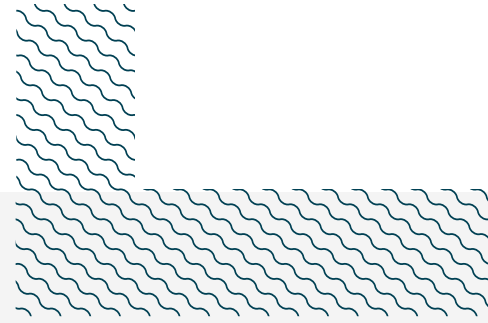
CRITERION A - VULNERABILITY

One Qualifying Species considered threatened with extinction according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species regularly occurs in the area. This is the Vulnerable Reef Manta Ray (Marshall et al. 2022).

SUB-CRITERION C5 - UNDEFINED AGGREGATIONS

Emon Beach is an important area for undefined aggregations of one ray species.

Between 2013–2017, Reef Manta Rays were regularly observed aggregating in Emon Beach (J Huwe pers. obs. 2024). Opportunistic snorkelling surveys have confirmed 50 sightings of Reef Manta Rays during this five-year period and identified 15 different individuals using photo identification (Huwe 2018). Most observations are of Reef Manta Rays attending the cleaning station in the area off Emon Beach, with an average of 1-2 animals observed at a time. Occasional sightings of Reef Manta Rays are observed outside this area, however, this is the only location around Kwajalein Atoll where this species is observed regularly and predictably. There is not enough information to determine seasonality of the species use of the area, however, anecdotal information suggests that there are more sightings in November (J Hartup pers. obs. 2024).



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Jason Huwe (Independent Researcher), Julie Hartup (Micronesian Conservation Coalition; Manta Trust), and Asia O Armstrong (IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group - ISRA Project) contributed and consolidated information included in this factsheet. We thank all participants of the 2024 ISRA Region 10 - New Zealand and Pacific Islands workshop for their contributions to this process.

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Suggested citation

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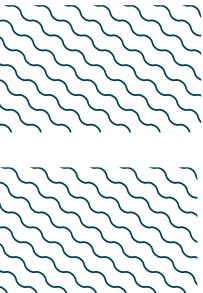
QUALIFYING SPECIES

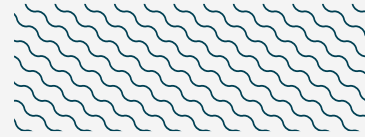
Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category	Global Depth Range (m)	ISRA Criteria/Sub-criteria Met								
				A	B	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	D1	D2
RAYS												
<i>Mobula alfredi</i>	Reef Manta Ray	VU	0-711	X						X		

SUPPORTING SPECIES

Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category
RAYS		
<i>Mobula birostris</i>	Oceanic Manta Ray	EN
<i>Mobula mobular</i>	Spinetail Devil 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.





REFERENCES

de Laubenfels MW. 1950. Ocean Currents in the Marshall Islands. *Geographical Review* 40(2): 254–259. <https://doi.org/10.2307/211283>

Dvorak G, Abinales PN, Wesley-Smith T. 2018. Coral and concrete: Remembering Kwajalein Atoll between Japan, America, and the Marshall Islands. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780824855246>

Luwe J. 2018. Searching for mantas on Kwajalein. Available at: <https://www.adventuresinaviators.com/post/searching-for-mantas-on-kwajalein> Accessed October 2024.

Marshall A, Barreto R, Carlson J, Fernando D, Fordham S, Francis MP, Herman K, Jabado RW, Liu KM, Pacoureaux N, et al. 2022. *Mobula alfredi* (amended version of 2019 assessment). *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* 2022: e.T195459A214395983. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2022-1.RLTS.T195459A214395983.en>