

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

KEHPARA ISRA

New Zealand & Pacific Islands Region

SUMMARY

Kehpara is located within the Kitti Municipality of Pohnpei Island in the Federated States of Micronesia. The area encompasses a seaward facing promontory along a barrier reef system on the southwest corner of Pohnpei Island. The area is characterised by a reef flat which extends from the reef crest and transitions to a reef wall. The area overlaps the Kehpara Marine Sanctuary. Within this area there are: **threatened species** and **feeding areas** (Grey Reef Shark *Carcharhinus amblyrhynchos*).

CRITERIA

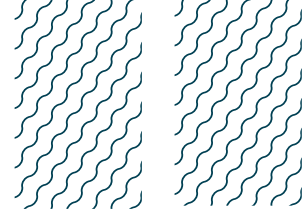
Criterion A - Vulnerability; Sub-criterion C2 - Feeding Areas

FEDERATED
 STATES OF
 MICRONESIA

0-70 metres

0.69 km²





DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Kehpara is located in the southwest of Pohnpei Island in the Federated States of Micronesia. The area falls within the Kitti Municipality. The area encompasses a seaward-facing promontory along a barrier reef system on the southwest corner of Pohnpei. The area is characterised by a reef flat extending from the reef crest to a reef wall at varying distances (tens of m) from the crest. The wall varies in depth from ~15–50 m where it transitions into a reef slope that extends for 100+ m to a second drop off outside the area (Rhodes & Sadovy 2002). The flat, wall, and slope are comprised of living and dead scleractinian corals with high rugosity (K Rhodes pers. obs. 2024). The slope has numerous sand channels running perpendicular to the wall. South of the area lies Kehpara Channel, a narrow (~20 m), shallow (1–10 m) channel between Kehpara and Black Coral Island. There is a deep channel (>1,100 m) that runs between the area in Pohnpei and nearby Ahnd Atoll 10.5 km to the west. Currents flow predominantly to the south, with occasional vortices forming in front of the inflection of the promontory in the area (K Rhodes pers. obs. 2024).

The area overlaps with the Kehpara Marine Sanctuary (Rhodes & Sadovy 2002).

This Important Shark and Ray Area is benthic and pelagic and is delineated from inshore and surface waters (0 m) to 70 m based on the bathymetry of the area.

ISRA CRITERIA

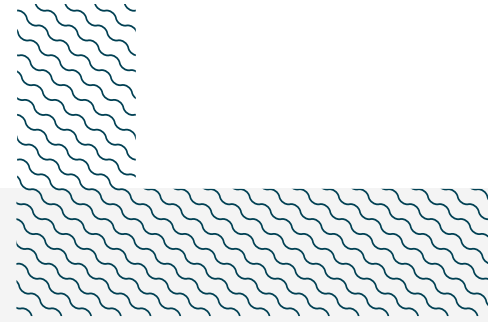
CRITERION A – VULNERABILITY

One Qualifying Species considered threatened with extinction according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species regularly occurs in the area. This is the Endangered Grey Reef Shark (Simpfendorfer et al. 2020).

SUB-CRITERION C2 – FEEDING AREAS

Kehpara is an important feeding area for one shark species.

Between 1998–2024, aggregations of Grey Reef Sharks were regularly observed in the area (K Rhodes pers. obs. 2024). Fish spawning aggregation (FSA) monitoring of Brown-marbled Grouper *Epinephelus fuscoguttatus*, Camouflage Grouper *Epinephelus polyphekadion*, and Squaretail Coral grouper *Plectropomus areolatus* occurred annually from January–May in the area (2001–2024), starting 10–14 days prior to full moon (n = 25 dive surveys/year) (Rhodes et al. 2014). Aggregations of Grey Reef Sharks were present during all dives, varying in number from 5–15 individuals (average = 7; K Rhodes unpubl. data 2024). Grey Reef Sharks patrol the area adjacent to the wall and above the slope throughout the year, however, their numbers and residency increase during FSA periods. Between January 2010–October 2013, acoustic tracking of 21 Grey Reef Sharks revealed their activity space concentrates around the FSA during spawning times and expands well beyond the area during non-spawning months (Rhodes et al. 2019). Predation has not been directly observed, however, surveys in the area were only conducted during daylight hours and Grey Reef Shark activity space is confirmed as most concentrated during peak aggregation periods for spawning groupers. In French Polynesia, surveys of Grey Reef Shark aggregations in relation to Camouflage Grouper spawning were conducted at nighttime when observations of predation on spawning fish aggregations were highest (Mourier et al. 2016).



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Kevin Rhodes (Pacific Marine Science and Conservation), Julie Hartup (Micronesia 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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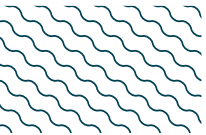
QUALIFYING SPECIES

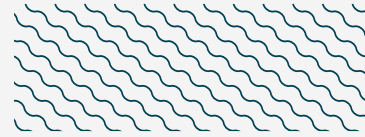
Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category	Global Depth Range (m)	ISRA Criteria/Sub-criteria Met									
				A	B	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	D1	D2	
SHARKS													
<i>Carcharhinus amblyrhynchos</i>	Grey Reef Shark	EN	0-280	X			X						

SUPPORTING SPECIES

Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category
SHARKS		
<i>Carcharhinus albimarginatus</i>	Silvertip Shark	VU
<i>Carcharhinus falciformis</i>	Silky Shark	VU
<i>Carcharhinus melanopterus</i>	Blacktip Reef Shark	VU
<i>Triaenodon obesus</i>	Whitetip Reef Shark	VU
RAYS		
<i>Mobula alfredi</i>	Reef Manta Ray	VU

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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