

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

MARAVAGI ISRA

New Zealand & Pacific Islands Region

SUMMARY

Maravagi is located in the Solomon Islands in the southwestern Pacific Ocean. It is situated in the Florida Islands in the province of Central Islands. This area is a channel between two land masses that connect east Mangalonga Island and northwestern Mbokonimbeti Island. The northern side is characterised by coral reefs with a narrow sandy channel in between the reef. This channel funnels water to form strong currents. Within this area there are: **threatened species** and **feeding areas** (Reef Manta Ray *Mobula alfredi*).

CRITERIA

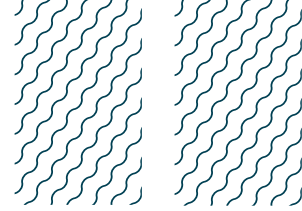
Criterion A - Vulnerability; Sub-criterion C2 - Feeding Areas

SOLOMON ISLANDS

0-30 metres

2.11 km²





DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Maravagi is located in the Solomon Islands in the southwestern Pacific Ocean. It is situated in the Florida Islands, also known as Nggela Islands, in the province of Central Islands. The Solomon Islands occupies a complex geologic juncture between the Indo-Australasian and Pacific Plates creating high marine biodiversity due to the diversity of habitats (Jupiter et al. 2019). Most of the Solomon Islands is located within the West Pacific Warm Pool and is influenced by the South Pacific Convergence Zone, Intertropical Convergence Zone, and the West Pacific Monsoon (Jupiter et al. 2019). Its oceanographic setting is dominated by prevailing southeasterly trade winds that drive major ocean currents to the northwest along the southern part of the chain and to the west in the northern part of the archipelago during austral winter months (June–August) (Salinger et al. 1995). During summer months (December–March), the directionality of ocean currents is more variable (Jupiter et al. 2019).

This area is a channel between two land masses that connects east Mangalonga Island and northwestern Mbokonimbeti Island. The northern side of the channel has a maximum depth of 25 m, and the southern side reaches a maximum depth of 200 m. The northern side is characterised by coral reefs with a narrow sandy channel (~160 m wide) in between the reef. This channel funnels water to form strong currents (Bilikiki 2018) and may act to concentrate productivity.

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

ISRA CRITERIA

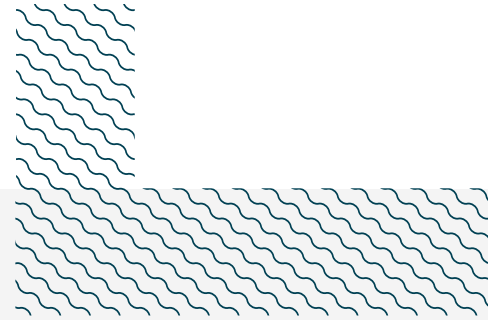
CRITERION A - VULNERABILITY

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 C2 - FEEDING AREAS

Maravagi is an important feeding area for one ray species.

This area is a well-known dive site for recreational divers in the Solomon Islands, recognised for regular and predictable interactions with Reef Manta Rays in aggregations of up to 12 individuals, and usually observed feeding in strong currents (Bilikiki 2018; Underwater Photography Guide 2018; Professional Association of Diving Instructors 2024; Scuba Diver Magazine 2024). Maravagi is also locally known as ‘Devil’s Highway’ because of the regular sightings of Reef Manta Rays, commonly observed feeding near or at the surface. Between 2008–2024, aggregations of between 1–12 individuals were recorded monthly (at least once a month) by recreational divers (S Leeson pers. comm. 2008–2024). On various social media channels, divers or snorkellers have posted photos and videos (n = 14) of Reef Manta Ray aggregations in the area (between 3–8 individuals observed, with an average of 4.4 individuals) showcasing feeding behaviour at the surface.



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Sam Leeson (Bilikiki Cruises), Vanessa Bettcher Brito (IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group - ISRA Project), and Adriana Gonzalez Pestana (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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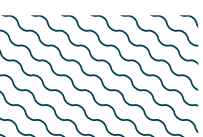
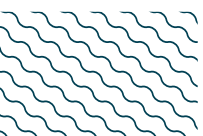
QUALIFYING SPECIES

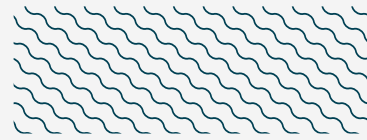
Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category	Global Depth Range (m)	ISRA Criteria/Sub-criteria Met									
				A	B	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	D1	D2	
RAYs													
<i>Mobula alfredi</i>	Reef Manta Ray	VU	0-711	X			X						

SUPPORTING SPECIES

Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category
RAYS		
<i>Mobula eregoodoo</i>	Longhorned Pygmy 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.





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