

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

MBONEGE ISRA

New Zealand & Pacific Islands Region

SUMMARY

Mbonege is located on the north coast of Guadalcanal province in the Solomon Islands. The habitat is characterised by boulders, sand, and dead corals. The area is influenced by low ocean currents, rock deposition from the Savo Volcano, and freshwater influx from the Bonegi River. Within this area there are **range-restricted species** (Kuhl's Maskray *Neotrygon kuhlii*).

CRITERIA

Criterion B - Range Restricted

SOLOMON ISLANDS

0-70 metres

18.72 km²



DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

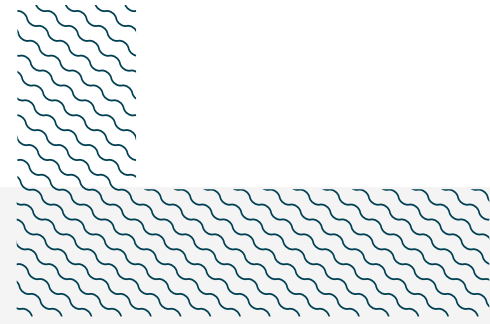
Mbonege is located on the north coast of Guadalcanal province of the Solomon Islands. The area is characterised by a substrate comprised mostly of boulders, sand, and dead corals (Posala & Mosese 2021). This area had the highest record (88.5%) of non-living covered substrate among 64 sites in the Solomon Islands (Green et al. 2006). This is largely due to the low ocean currents impacting the area, rock deposition from the Savo Volcano, and freshwater influx from the Bonegi River (Pollard et al. 2021).

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 B – RANGE RESTRICTED

This area holds the regular presence of the Kuhl's Maskray as a resident range-restricted species. Kuhl's Maskrays are regularly observed year-round in this area. Between 2006-2024, 20 recreational dives per year were conducted in this area. Dives are conducted during a liveaboard that conducts a similar number of dives in ~15 dive sites. Kuhl's Maskrays were always observed solitary, in pairs, or aggregations of up to six individuals in this area (average of three individuals per dive) (S Lesson pers. obs. 2024). This area is where Kuhl's Maskray is observed most often and in the highest numbers within the Solomon Islands (S Lesson pers. obs. 2024), highlighting its importance for this range-restricted species. Additional citizen science records available on social media channels support the occurrence of this species in 2007 (aggregation of at least six individuals resting together), in 2012 (January, August, and December), and two in 1994 (iNaturalist 2024). Considering the species' behaviour (buried in sandy substrates), the only individuals seen are the ones near wrecks found in the area. However, as one of the areas with the highest non-living substrate in the Solomon Islands (Green et al. 2006), this area might shelter a larger number of individuals on the sandy substrates distant by a few metres from the wrecks. The species' range is outside Large Marine Ecosystems but is restricted to the Solomon Islands (Last et al. 2016).



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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>Neotrygon kuhlii</i> | Kuhl's Maskray | DD | 0-50 | | X | | | | | | | |

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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