

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

ONETA ISRA

New Zealand & Pacific Islands Region

SUMMARY

Oneta is located on the east coast of Ono Island in the Kadavu region of Fiji. This shallow coastal area is influenced by daily tides with an amplitude of ~1.5 m, leading to a wide intertidal zone of up to ~300 m. The habitat is characterised by a sandy substrate with patches of seagrass, rocks, and coral reefs. This area overlaps with the Kadavu and the Southern Lau Region Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Area. Within this area there are: **threatened species** (Blacktip Reef Shark *Carcharhinus melanopterus*); **range-restricted species** (Oceania Fantail Ray *Taeniura lessoni*); and **reproductive areas** (Blacktip Reef Shark).

CRITERIA

Criterion A - Vulnerability; Criterion B - Range Restricted; Sub-criterion C1 - Reproductive Areas

FIJI

O-18 metres

1.64 km²



DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Oneta is located on the east coast of Ono Island in the Kadavu region of Fiji. This shallow coastal area is set between a sandy beach with small cliffs, and the fringing reef. A barrier reef that is part of the Great Astrolabe Reef is located ~3 km to the east and shelters the area from large waves. Much of the area is in the intertidal zone, which spans up to ~300 m in width. The tidal amplitude is ~1.5 m (AS Pannel & R Krebs pers. obs. 2024). The habitat is characterised by sand, patches of seagrass beds, rocks, and coral reef on the eastern edge.

This area overlaps with the Kadavu and the Southern Lau Region Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Area (EBSA; CBD 2024).

This Important Shark and Ray Area is benthic and pelagic and is delineated from surface waters (0 m) to 18 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 Blacktip Reef Shark (Simpfendorfer et al. 2020).

CRITERION B – RANGE RESTRICTED

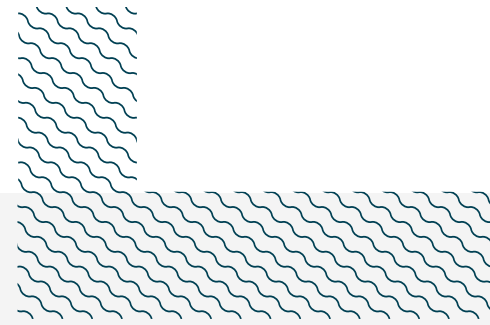
This area holds the regular presence of the Oceania Fantail Ray as a resident range-restricted species. The Oceania Fantail Ray is regularly observed in this area year-round, at least once a week and most times when observers specifically look for rays. An average of 5–6 individuals were seen on weekly beach walks conducted between November 2023 and September 2024 (AS Pannel & R Krebs pers. obs. 2024). The species has been regularly sighted since 2018 by long-term staff at the nearby hotel (AS Pannel & R Krebs pers. obs. 2024). This area is where the Oceania Fantail Ray is observed most often within the region of the Great Astrolabe Reef. Outside the area, the species is only seen on ~2% of dives in the region, with an average of 12 dives conducted per week (AS Pannel & R Krebs pers. obs. 2024), highlighting the area's importance for this range-restricted species. The species' range lies outside of Large Marine Ecosystems, but it is restricted to Melanesia, including Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and Fiji (Last et al. 2016a). Preliminary observations of small individuals indicate that this may be an important area for the early life stages of the species, but further information is needed to confirm this.

SUB-CRITERION C1 – REPRODUCTIVE AREAS

Oneta is an important reproductive area for one shark species.

Blacktip Reef Shark neonates and young-of-the-year (YOY) individuals are regularly seen in this area year-round (AS Pannel & R Krebs pers. obs. 2024). Small Blacktip Reef Sharks are seen on ~50% of beach walks, either resting in the shade close to shore at high tide or foraging in shallow water near the reef drop-off at low tide with their dorsal fins out of the water (AS Pannel & R Krebs pers. obs. 2024). Long-term observations since 2018 confirm that aggregations of small Blacktip Reef Sharks are regularly seen in this area, with 4–6 reports per month (A Daldin pers. comm. 2024). Visually

estimated sizes ranged from 35–55 cm total length (TL) and these were therefore classified as neonates and/or YOY individuals. The size-at-birth for the species is 30–52 cm TL (Ebert et al. 2021). The number of individuals observed varies from two to >30 (AS Pannel & R Krebs pers. obs. 2024).



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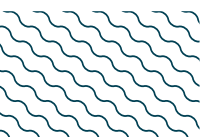
QUALIFYING SPECIES

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 melanopterus</i>	Blacktip Reef Shark	VU	0-100	X		X						
RAYS												
<i>Taeniura lessoni</i>	Oceania Fantail Ray	DD	0-18		X							

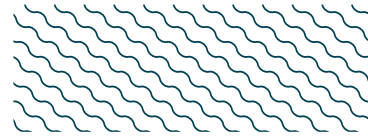
SUPPORTING SPECIES

Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category
SHARKS		
<i>Triaenodon obesus</i>	Whitetip Reef Shark	VU
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.

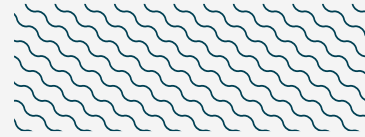


SUPPORTING INFORMATION



There are additional indications that Oneta may be an important area for reproductive purposes of two ray species.

Neonates or YOY Spotted Eagle Rays are seen in this area (AS Pannel & R Krebs pers. obs. 2024). Between April and August 2024, groups of 6–7 individuals were observed. They were seen on ~70% of beach walks, with weekly searches. Visually estimated size was 20–30 cm disc width (DW) and were thus classified as neonates or YOY individuals. The size-at-birth for the species is 18–50 cm DW (Last et al. 2016b). Long-term observations since 2018 confirm the regular presence of similarly small Spotted Eagle Rays in this area (AS Pannel & R Krebs pers. obs. 2024), highlighting the potential importance of this area for the early life stages of the species. Further evidence is needed to confirm the sizes and regular presence of neonate/YOY Spotted Eagle Rays in this area.



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