

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

TROY'S CORAL HEAD ISRA

New Zealand & Pacific Islands Region

SUMMARY

Troy's Coral Head is located in the Republic of the Marshall Islands in the central Pacific Ocean. It is situated on the southwest side of the lagoon in Kwajalein Atoll. This area encompasses a large coral head. The top of the coral head is ~5 m and the sandy seafloor reaches a depth of ~50 m. Within this area there are: **threatened species** and **undefined aggregations** (Grey Reef Shark *Carcharhinus amblyrhynchos*).

MARSHALL ISLANDS

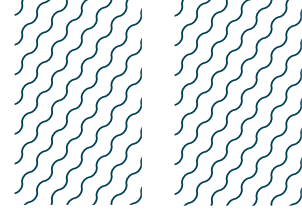
0-50 metres

0.75 km²

CRITERIA

Criterion A - Vulnerability; Sub-criterion C5 - Undefined Aggregations





DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Troy's Coral Head is located in the Republic of the Marshall Islands in the central Pacific Ocean. It is situated on the southwest side of the lagoon in Kwajalein Atoll. This atoll is one of the largest in the Pacific Ocean with a lagoon that has an area of 2,174 km². The lagoon has a maximum depth of ~100 m, and an average depth between 25–50 m with sporadic coral heads. The area is situated around a large coral head on the southwest side of the lagoon. The top of the coral head is ~5 m and the sandy seafloor reaches a depth of ~50 m (Kwajalein Dive Center 2024). Often large bait balls of Bigeye Scad *Selar crumenophthalmus*, Red Snapper *Lutjanus campechanus*, amberjacks *Seriola spp.*, and occasionally tuna (family Scombridae) are observed circling the coral head (E Gill pers. obs. 2024).

This Important Shark and Ray Area is benthopelagic and is delineated from inshore and surface waters (0 m) to 50 m based on the bathymetry of the area and occurrence of the Qualifying Species.

ISRA CRITERIA

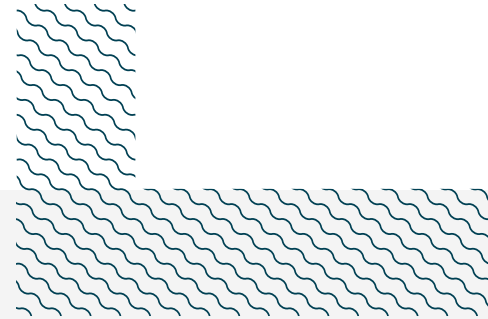
CRITERION A - VULNERABILITY

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 C5 - UNDEFINED AGGREGATIONS

Troy's Coral Head is an important area for undefined aggregations of one shark species.

This area is a well-known dive site on the Kwajalein Atoll and is recognised for the regular and predictable interactions with large numbers of sharks that are chasing school of fishes (Kwajalein Dive Center 2024; UW360 2016). Since at least 2015, recreational divers that visit this site regularly (at least twice a month) year-around have observed aggregations of Grey Reef Sharks on all dives. Sharks are usually in groups of 20–30 animals on average, with a minimum of 7–10 individuals, but aggregations of up to 50 individuals have been observed. Grey Reef Sharks are usually recorded chasing or feeding on schools of fishes (Bigeye Scad, amberjacks, Red Snapper, and sometimes tuna with occasional feeding frenzy behaviour (E Gill & J Spaeth pers. obs. 2024). Sharks were visually estimated to measure ~100 cm total length (TL) (E Gill pers. obs. 2024). Considering the size-at-maturity (120–142 cm TL for females, 130–145 cm TL for males), and the size-at-birth (45–64 cm TL) for this species, most individuals were juveniles. This area might function as a feeding area; however further information is needed to confirm whether Grey Reef Sharks are only opportunistically feeding here because of high prey abundance.



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Evan Gill (Digi Gill Photo), Julie Spaeth (US Army Garrison), 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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Suggested citation

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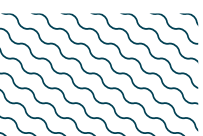
QUALIFYING SPECIES

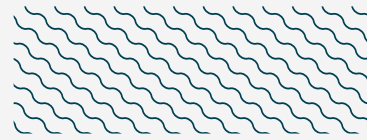
Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category	Global Depth Range (m)	ISRA Criteria/Sub-criteria Met									
				A	B	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	D1	D2	
SHARKS													
<i>Carcharhinus amblyrhynchos</i>	Grey Reef Shark	EN	0-280	X							X		

SUPPORTING SPECIES

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





REFERENCES

Ebert DA, Dando M, Fowler S. 2021. *Sharks of the world: A complete guide*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kwajalein Dive Center. 2024. Diving the Reefs. Available at: <https://www.kwajdivecenter.com/reefs> Accessed September 2024.

UW360. 2016. Kwajalein: The Most Exciting Place You've Never Heard Of. Available at: <https://www.uw360.asia/most-exciting-place-never-heard-of/> Accessed September 2024.

Simpfendorfer C, Fahmi, Bin Ali A, Dharmadi, Utzurrum JAT, Seyha L, Maung A, Bineesh KK, Yuneni RR, Sianipar A, et al. 2020. *Carcharhinus amblyrhynchos*. *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* 2020: e.T39365A173433550. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2020-3.RLTS.T39365A173433550.en>