

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

## UCHELBELUU REEF ISRA

### New Zealand & Pacific Islands Region

#### SUMMARY

Uchelbeluu Reef is located in Koror, Palau. The area is characterised by a habitat encompasses a shallow reef covered with large coral heads, a steep slope with crevices and canyons, and a vertical wall that goes down to 40 meters. Within this area there are: **threatened species** and **undefined aggregations** (Grey Reef Shark *Carcharhinus amblyrhynchos*).

#### CRITERIA

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

—	—
<b>PALAU</b>	—
—	—
<b>0-40 metres</b>	—
—	—
<b>6.01 km<sup>2</sup></b>	—
—	—





## DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Uchelbeluu Reef is located in Koror, Palau. A dive site, known locally as ‘Short Drop Off’, is located in the southern corner of the area (Harel-Bornovski & Bornovski 2015). The habitat encompasses a shallow reef (3–8 m) covered with large coral heads, a steep slope with crevices and canyons (8–30 m), and a vertical wall that descends to 40 m depth (Harel-Bornovski & Bornovski 2015). The current usually sweeps along the reef flowing from north to south during the outgoing tide (Colin 2009, Harel-Bornovski & Bornovski 2015).

This Important Shark and Ray Area is benthic and pelagic and is delineated from surface waters (0 m) to 40 m based on the bathymetry of the area.

## ISRA CRITERIA

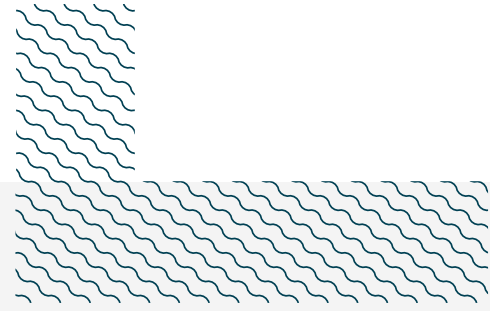
### CRITERION A – VULNERABILITY

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 C5 – UNDEFINED AGGREGATIONS

Uchelbeluu Reef is an important area for undefined aggregations of one shark species.

Grey Reef Sharks are regularly and predictably observed in the area. Recreational divers visit Uchelbeluu Reef year-round (~once a week), and aggregations of between 10–50 Grey Reef Sharks are observed on 80% of dives (T Harel-Bornovski pers. obs. 2009–2024). Most aggregations are observed at depths between 15–40 m. Shark counts were conducted by dive guides at 52 dive sites (n = 2,360 dives) in Palau from October 2007 to November 2012. The number of Grey Reef Sharks in Uchelbeluu Reef ranged from 3–150 (average = 11) and included all size classes (T Harel-Bornovski unpubl. data 2012). Records of Grey Reef Shark aggregations at the ‘Short Drop Off’ dive site within the area are also available on social media channels. The current usually sweeps along the reef in this area (Colin 2009), and the current strength in Palau has been positively correlated with the abundance of Grey Reef Sharks (Vianna et al. 2013). Between September and November, young-of-the-year (YOY) Grey Reef Sharks comprise most of the aggregations within this area. Visual estimates of their total length (TL) ranged between 60–80 cm TL (T Harel-Bornovski pers. obs. 2009–2024). The size-at-birth of this species is 45–60 cm TL (Ebert et al. 2021), indicating that most would classify as YOY. However, further information is required to understand the nature and function of this aggregation.



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Tova Harel-Bornovski (Micronesia Shark Foundation) and Vanessa Bettcher Brito (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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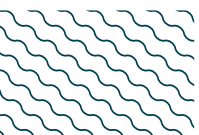
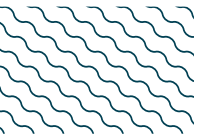
## QUALIFYING SPECIES

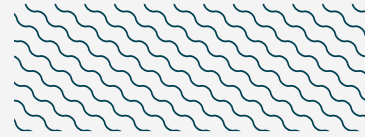
Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category	Global Depth Range (m)	ISRA Criteria/Sub-criteria Met									
				A	B	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	D1	D2	
<b>SHARKS</b>													
<i>Carcharhinus amblyrhynchos</i>	Grey Reef Shark	EN	0-280	X							X		

## SUPPORTING SPECIES

Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category
<b>SHARKS</b>		
<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](http://www.iucnredlist.org) Abbreviations refer to: CR, Critically Endangered; EN, Endangered; VU, Vulnerable; NT, Near Threatened; LC, Least Concern; DD, Data Deficient.*





## REFERENCES

Colin PL. 2009. *Marine Environments of Palau*. San Diego: Indo-Pacific Press.

Harel-Bornovski T, Bornovski N. 2015. *Palau Diving and Snorkeling guide*. Koror: Jeremy Devillier.

Simpfendorfer C, Fahmi, Bin Ali A, Dharmardi, 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>

Vianna GMS, Meekan MG, Meeuwig JJ, Speed CW. 2013. Environmental influences on patterns of vertical movement and site fidelity of grey reef sharks (*Carcharhinus amblyrhynchos*) at aggregation sites. *PLoS One* 8: e60331. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0060331>