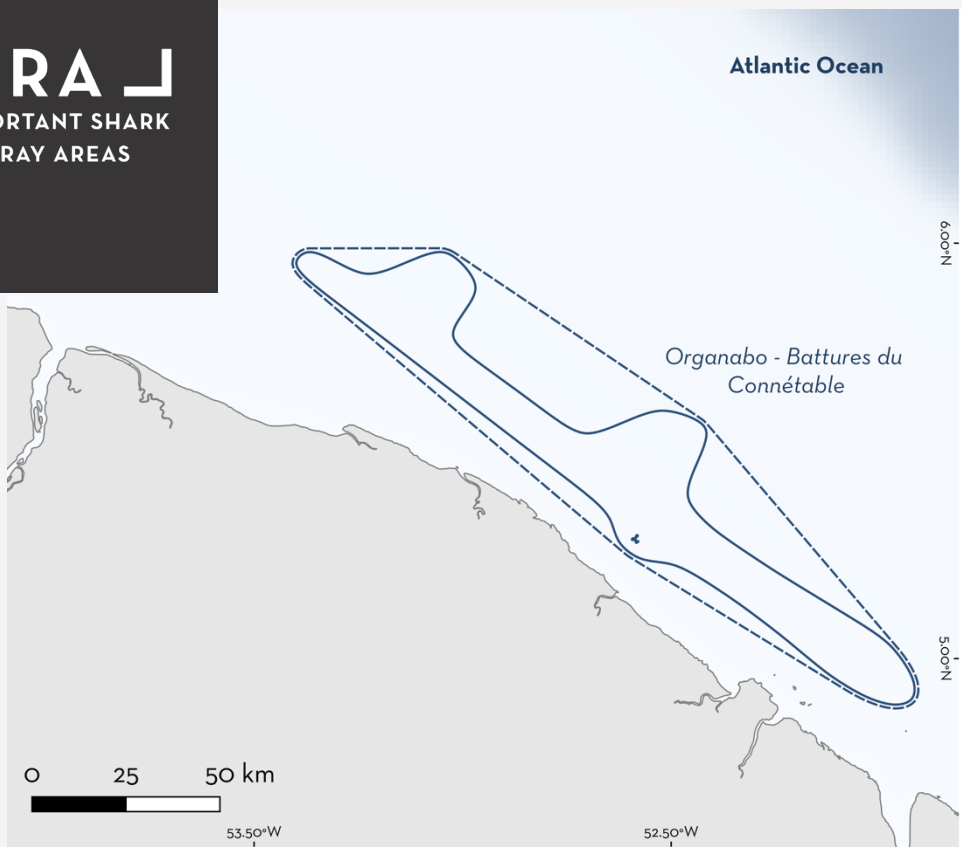
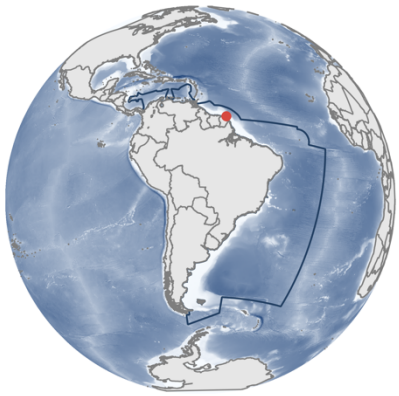
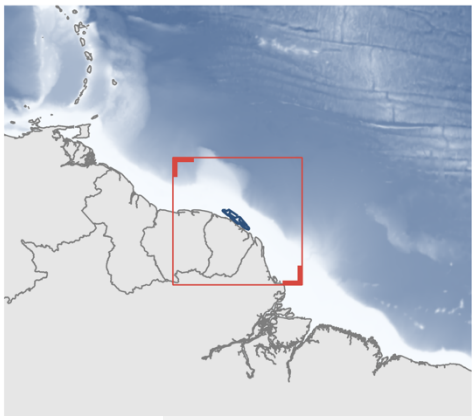
ISRA
IMPORTANT SHARK AND RAY AREAS







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

ORGANABO-BATTURES DU CONNÉTABLE ISRA

South American Atlantic Region

FRENCH GUIANA

0-40 metres

3,268.3 km²

SUMMARY

Organabo-Battures du Connétable is located off the coast of French Guiana. This shelf area includes a group of small islands and small rocky outcrops and is characterised by muddy and sandy substrates. It is located at the boundary zone between highly turbid, low salinity coastal waters and less turbid, highly productive offshore waters. The area is influenced by a northwestward coastal current bringing low salinity, highly turbid water from the Amazon River and other regional rivers. It overlaps with the Amazonian-Orinoco Influence Zone Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Area. Within this area there are: **threatened species** and **feeding areas** (Oceanic Manta Ray *Mobula birostris*).

CRITERIA

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

DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Organabo–Battures du Connétable is located off the coast of French Guiana. The area encompasses shelf waters between ~10–40 m depth and is situated ~10–50 km off the coast. It includes a group of small islands (Îles du Salut) and a small rocky reef (Battures du Connétable). Apart from those bathymetric features that are rare in the Guianas region, the area is characterised by muddy and sandy substrates and is located at the boundary zone between the highly turbid, low salinity inshore waters, called 'brown water' and the less turbid offshore shelf waters, called 'green water' (de Boer et al. 2015). The brown water zone is strongly influenced by outflows from the Amazon River and other regional rivers leading to high mud resuspension. The green water zone is highly productive due to high nutrient availability but lower turbidity (de Boer et al. 2015). The influence of the Amazon River outflow on coastal waters in French Guiana is particularly heightened during January–July, when the North Brazil Current and its extension, the Guianas Current, flow northwestward along the coast (Artigas et al. 2003). During the second half of the year, the North Brazil Current retroflection means that more saline and less turbid waters cover French Guiana's shelf (Artigas et al. 2003), leading to higher primary productivity (Girondot et al. 2015).

This area overlaps with the Amazonian-Orinoco Influence Zone Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Area (EBSA; CBD 2025).

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 Oceanic Manta Ray (Marshall et al. 2022).

SUB-CRITERION C2 – FEEDING AREAS

Organabo–Battures du Connétable is an important feeding area for one ray species.

Aerial surveys and citizen science observations collected through the OBSenMER database have shown that Oceanic Manta Rays regularly feed within this area (Girondot et al. 2015; Laran et al. 2019; Bordin & Vanhoucke 2021, 2022, 2023). Aerial surveys under the REMMOA project were conducted in September 2008 and 2017 and covered the whole exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of French Guiana (Mannocci et al. 2013; van Canneyt et al. 2018). Oceanic Manta Rays were sighted up to ~350 km off the coast, but most sightings were close to shore in ~10–40 m water depth, within this area. Of the 234 locations with Oceanic Manta Ray sightings recorded in the 2017 survey, 182 (78%) were inside the area and usually (94.5%) comprised one, but up to three individuals. Subsequent aerial surveys in October 2019, August and October 2021, and September and October 2023 flew zigzag transects focused on this coastal region. While the along-the-coast location of hotspots, where most sightings were made, varied among years, they were always concentrated in this area from ~10–50 km off the coast. Aerial surveys and boat-based citizen scientists reported 202 Oceanic Manta Ray observations inside the area in 2019 (94% of total sightings that year), 57 observations (56%) in 2021, and 41 observations (80%) in 2023. Again, most observations were of single individuals, although six aggregations of 10–80 individuals were recorded in 2019 (Bordin & Vanhoucke 2021, 2022, 2023).

Citizen scientist reports of the species in this area were mostly made between 2018–2022, with sporadic reports dating back to 2008 (Bordin & Vanhoucke unpubl. data 2025). Although behaviour is not regularly recorded in aerial surveys or citizen science reports, observations and photos indicate that Oceanic Manta Rays are often observed feeding at the surface (Bordin & Vanhoucke unpubl. data 2025). Additionally, Oceanic Manta Rays are concentrated at the boundary zone where highly turbid brown inshore waters meet less turbid, green offshore waters, suggesting good feeding potential (Lampert 2012). Additional aerial surveys (n = 117) from September 2009 to September 2011 covering the whole EEZ but focusing on the shelf break, outside the area, showed a peak in Oceanic Manta Ray sightings during July–December, which coincides with higher primary productivity (Girondot et al. 2015), further supporting that the species feeds in this area.

Acknowledgments

Margot Vanhoucke (EDEN-I), Marion Rous (Groupe d'Etude et de Protection des Oiseaux en Guyane), Amandine Bordin (EDEN-I), Sophie Laran (Observatoire Pelagis, La Rochelle University), and Christoph A Rohner (IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group – ISRA Project) contributed and consolidated information included in this factsheet. We thank all participants of the 2025 ISRA Region 05 – South American Atlantic workshop for their contributions to this process.

This factsheet has undergone review by the ISRA Independent Review Panel prior to its publication.

This project was funded by the Shark Conservation Fund, a philanthropic collaborative pooling expertise and resources to meet the threats facing the world's sharks and rays. The Shark Conservation Fund is a project of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors.

Suggested citation

IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group. 2025. Organabo–Battures du Connétable ISRA Factsheet. Dubai: IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group.

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												
Mobula birostris	Oceanic Manta Ray	EN	0–1,246	X			X					

SUPPORTING SPECIES

Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category
SHARKS		
Carcharhinus limbatus	Blacktip Shark	VU
Galeocerdo cuvier	Tiger Shark	NT
Ginglymostoma cirratum	Atlantic Nurse Shark	VU
Rhincodon typus	Whale Shark	EN
RAYS		
Aetobatus narinari	Whitespotted Eagle Ray	EN
Rhinoptera bonasus	American Cownose Ray	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.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

There are additional indications that Organabo-Battures du Connétable is an important area for undefined aggregations of several shark and ray species. French Guiana has the only rocky marine habitat in the region stretching from the Orinoco River Delta in Venezuela to the Amazon River Delta in Brazil, which makes it an extremely rare habitat on a regional scale and of significant ecological importance for many species. Elsewhere in the region, only muddy and sandy substrates exist, heavily influenced by river discharge from the Amazon River and other regional rivers (Artigas et al. 2003). Organabo-Battures du Connétable includes a rocky outcrop (Battures du Connétable) and small rocky islands (Iles du Salut). Battures du Connétable in particular hosts important assemblages of sharks and rays, likely because it is further offshore than the other rocky habitats and is thus less influenced by the highly turbid coastal waters. Although this rocky outcrop is very small, it comprises 43% of the shark and ray reports (n = 494) by sports fishers collected from French Guiana in the OBSenMER database (OBSenMER unpubl. data 2025). Among the most regularly observed species are Blacktip Shark, Tiger Shark, Atlantic Nurse Shark, and Whitespotted Eagle Ray. Fishers indicate that they can catch or observe several individuals of these species in a day (Union of Fishing Guides pers. comm. 2025). Although there are no in-water observations of aggregations (due to poor visibility), the extreme rarity of rocky habitat in the Guianas region and the regular captures of several shark and ray species at the Battures du Connétable (and to a lesser extent at Iles du Salut) suggest that these two locations within the area are likely to be important for their aggregations.

REFERENCES

Artigas LF, Vendeville P, Leopold M, Guiral D, Ternon J-F. 2003. Marine biodiversity in French Guiana: Estuarine, coastal, and shelf ecosystems under the influence of Amazonian waters. *Gayana* 67(2): 302–326. https://doi.org/10.4067/S0717-65382003000200013

Bordin A, Vanhoucke M. 2021. Rapport sur les campagnes aériennes CARI'MAM 2019, 2020, 2021 en Guyane française. Cayenne: Interreg Caraïbes.

Bordin A, Vanhoucke M. 2022. Rapport final du projet Manta'Yana en Guyane française. Partie II – Bilan et actions 2021-2022. Cayenne: Préfet de la region Guyane.

Bordin A, Vanhoucke M. 2023. Campagnes aériennes Manta'Yana II 2023 et analyses préliminaires sur la distribution et l'abondance des Raies manta en Guyane française. Rapport final du projet Manta'Yana II. Cayenne: Préfet de la region Guyane.

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). 2025. Amazonian-Orinoco Influence Zone. Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs). Available at: https://chm.cbd.int/database/record?documentID=20010 Accessed January 2025.

De Boer MN, Saulino JT, Lewis TP, Notarbartolo-Di-Sciara G. 2015. New records of whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*), giant manta ray (*Manta birostris*) and Chilean devil ray (*Mobula tarapacana*) for Suriname. *Marine Biodiversity Records* 8: e10. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755267214001432

Girondot M, Bédel S, Delmoitiez L, Russo M, Chevalier J, Guéry L, Ben Hassine S, Féon H, Jribi I. 2015. Spatio-temporal distribution of *Manta birostris* in French Guiana waters. *Journal of the Marine Biological Association of the United Kingdom* 95 (1): 153–160. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0025315414001398

Lampert L. 2012. Actualisation de connaissances du domaine marin en Guyane Française. Cayenne: IFREMER.

Laran S, Bassols N, Dorémus G, Authier M, Ridoux V, Van Canneyt O. 2019. Distribution et abondance de la mégafaune marine aux Petites Antilles et en Guyane française. Campagne REMMOA - II. La Rochelle : Observatoire Pelagis (UMS 3462, Université de La Rochelle / CNRS) & Agence française pour la Biodiversité.

Mannocci L, Monestiez P, Bolaños-Jiménez J, Dorémus G, Jeremie S, Laran S, Rinaldi R, Van Canneyt O, Ridoux V. 2013. Megavertebrate communities from two contrasting ecosystems in the western tropical Atlantic. *Journal of Marine Systems* 111–112: 208–22. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmarsys.2012.11.002

Marshall A, Barreto R, Carlson J, Fernando D, Fordham S, Francis MP, Derrick D, Herman K, Jabado RW, Liu KM, et al. 2022. *Mobula birostris* (amended version of 2020 assessment). *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* 2022: e.T198921A214397182. https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2022-1.RLTS.T198921A214397182.en

Van Canneyt O, Dorémus G, Laran S, Ridoux V, Watremez P. 2018. Distribution et abondance de la mégafaune marine aux Antilles et en Guyane - Rapport de campagne Remmoa II Antilles / Guyane. La Rochelle: Observatoire Pelagis (UMS 3462, Université de La Rochelle / CNRS) & Agence française pour la Biodiversité.