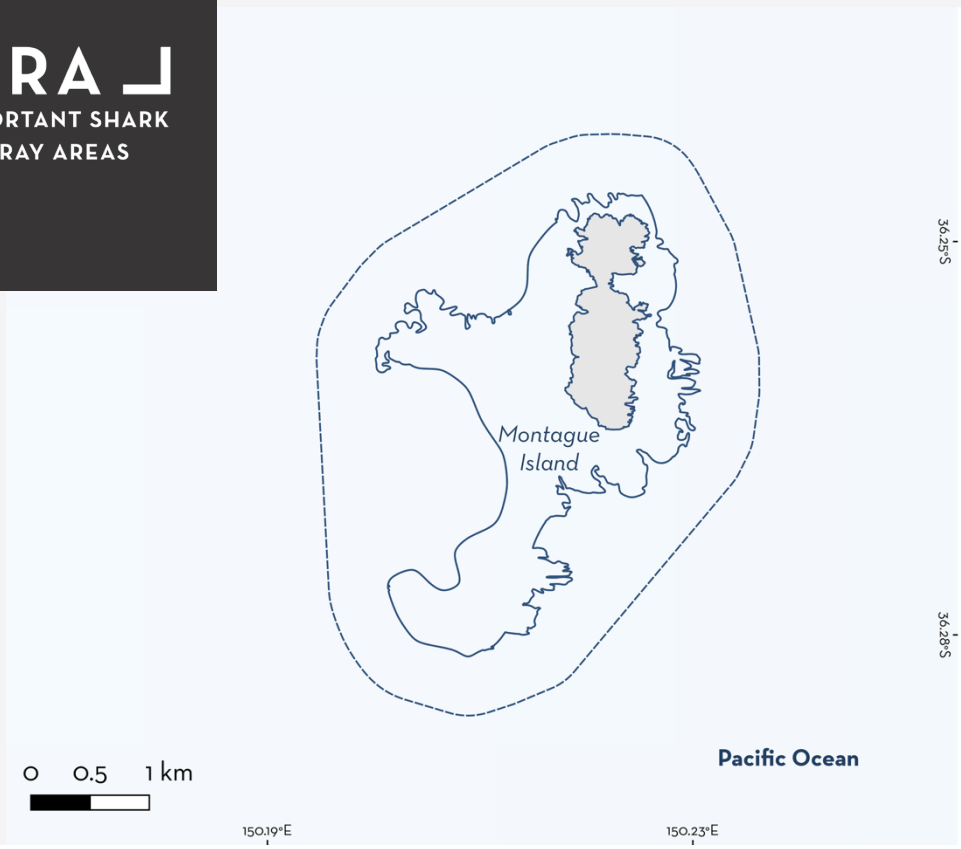
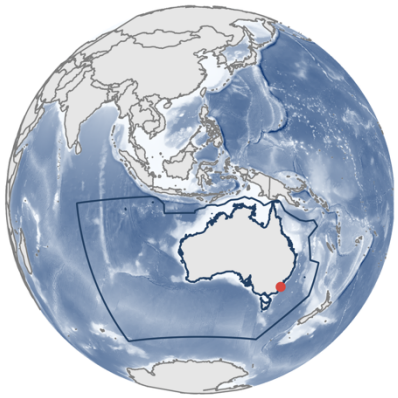
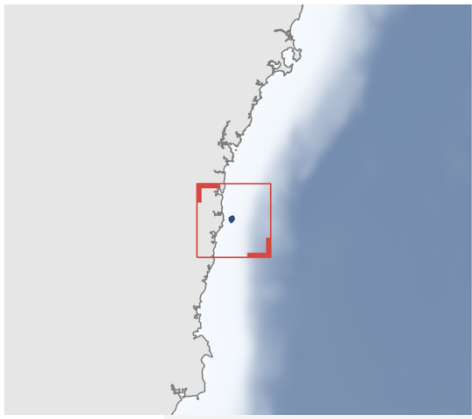
ISRA
IMPORTANT SHARK AND RAY AREAS







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

MONTAGUE ISLAND ISRA

Australia and Southeast Indian Ocean Region

AUSTRALIA

0–25 metres

4.09 km²

SUMMARY

Montague Island is located on the south coast of New South Wales, Australia. The area is characterised by clear waters and sheltered bays, with large boulders and kelp reefs dominating the habitat. The area is influenced by semi-diurnal tides and is influenced by seasonal fluctuations in the East Australian Current. This area overlaps with Batemans Marine Park. Within this area there are: **threatened species** and **resting areas** (Sand Tiger Shark *Carcharias taurus*).

CRITERIA

Criterion A – Vulnerability; Sub-criterion C3 – Resting Areas

DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Montague Island is located in southern New South Wales (NSW), Australia. The area is situated ~9 km offshore of the township of Narooma and surrounds the second largest island in this state. The habitat is characterised by shallow clear waters and sheltered bays, with water temperatures ranging between 16–24°C (Underwater Safaris 2025). The substrates are comprised of large boulders and kelp reefs.

Montague Island is influenced by the East Australian Current, the poleward flowing western boundary current of the South Pacific Gyre (Suthers et al. 2011). The East Australian Current flow is strongest in the austral summer, and the formation of eddies along this coastline also fluctuate seasonally (Ridgway & Hill 2009).

This area overlaps with Batemans Marine Park (NSW DPIRD 2025).

This Important Shark and Ray Area is benthic and pelagic and is delineated from inshore and surface waters (0 m) to 25 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 Critically Endangered Sand Tiger Shark (Rigby et al. 2025).

SUB-CRITERION C3 – RESTING AREAS

Montague Island is an important resting area for one shark species.

There are multiple lines of evidence to support Sand Tiger Sharks regularly and predictably resting in this area. Evidence includes scientific surveys and acoustic tracking conducted by the New South Wales (NSW) Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (Bradford et al. 2025; Otway & Louden 2025), and submissions and observations from a citizen science photo-identification catalogue (Sharkbook 2025).

Between 2011–2021, 10-year acoustic transmitters were used to track Sand Tiger Sharks and determine their preferred habitats based on residency rates (Otway & Louden 2025), and this information was used alongside scientific dive surveys to determine aggregation sites. Nineteen Sand Tiger Shark aggregation sites were highlighted in eastern Australia (Bradford et al. 2025). These were defined as a site where five or more Sand Tiger Sharks were observed together at one time, continuously or seasonally. Sites were classified as resting areas for the species based on shark behaviour and habitat use at the sites. During this period, three of the 31 tagged individuals were detected in the area (38,088 detections; Bradford et al. 2025). Observed residence periods lasted up to 15 days (Otway & Louden 2025). This is the southernmost location of their migratory corridor on their east coast of Australia (Bradford et al. 2025).

Scientific dive surveys in the area confirmed Sand Tiger Sharks were observed at Montague Island year-round, but more prevalent from spring to winter. Juvenile females were the most prevalent age class, with no adult males observed in the area (Bradford et al. 2025). Up to eight Sand Tiger Sharks were recorded resting in the area on a single scientific dive survey (B Louden pers. comms. 2025),

highlighting the importance of this area for this species. Sand Tiger Sharks were observed swimming slowly close to the seabed, characteristic resting behaviour for the species (Bradford et al. 2025). They exhibited diurnal habitat use at this site, spending more time in the area during the day (Otway & Louden 2025).

The diel patterns in behaviour that the sharks exhibit at these sites is characteristic of Sand Tiger Sharks resting during the day and being active at night (presumably for foraging) (D Harasti pers. obs. 2025). Hovering and milling are also characteristic behaviours of resting Sand Tiger Sharks and comprise the majority of swimming behaviours observed at their main aggregation sites on Australia's east coast (Smith et al. 2015). When hovering, sharks face into the water current and their tail beats allow them to maintain a stationary position, whereas milling involves slow movements and directional changes generally confined to a particular area within a gutter (Smith et al. 2015).

Between 2004–2025, 644 Sand Tiger Shark sightings were submitted from recreational divers in the area (Spot a Shark unpubl. data 2025). From these sightings, 130 individuals were identified using photo-identification, with <40 individuals observed over multiple years. Sightings of Sand Tiger Sharks were year-round at Montague Island, with a seasonal peak between December and April. Most of the sharks were assessed as adult females (67%) (S Han-de-Beaux unpubl. data 2025). Sand Tiger Sharks are observed swimming slowly between the gullies and rocky structures in the area, characteristic resting behaviour for the species (S Han-de-Beaux pers. obs. 2025).

Acknowledgments

Sarah Han-de-Beaux (Spot a Shark Incorporated), David Harasti (New South Wales Department of Primary Industry and Regional Development), and Asia O Armstrong (IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group – ISRA Project) contributed and consolidated information included in this factsheet. We thank all participants of the 2025 ISRA Region 08 – Australia and Southeast Indian Ocean workshop for their contributions to this process.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognise the continuing connection to land, waters, and culture. We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging.

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

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QUALIFYING SPECIES

Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category/ EPBC Act	Global Depth Range (m)	ISRA Criteria/Sub-criteria Met								
				A	B	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	D1	D2
SHARKS												
Carcharias taurus	Sand Tiger Shark (Grey Nurse Shark)	CR/CR*	0–232	X				X				

SUPPORTING SPECIES

Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category
SHARKS		
Heterodontus portusjacksoni	Port Jackson Shark	LC
Orectolobus maculatus	Spotted Wobbegong	LC
RAYS		
Bathytoshia brevicaudata	Smooth Stingray	LC
Trygonorrhina fasciata	Eastern Fiddler Ray	LC

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.

Australian Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) categories are available at: https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/epbc/our-role/approved-lists Abbreviations refer to: CR, Critically Endangered; EN, Endangered; VU, Vulnerable; CD, Conservation Dependent.

**Status for east coast population.*

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