

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

TOLLGATE ISLANDS ISRA

Australia and Southeast Indian Ocean Region

SUMMARY

Tollgate Islands is located on the south coast of New South Wales, Australia. The area is situated off Batemans Bay and consists of two main islets and a number of small rock stacks. The habitat is characterised by rocky reefs, caves, deep gutters, and drop offs. The area is influenced by seasonal fluctuations of the East Australian Current. The area overlaps with the 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

— AUSTRALIA —

— 0-25 metres —

— 3.83 km² —





DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT

Tollgate Islands is located on the south coast of New South Wales, Australia. The area is situated ~11 km from Batemans Bay and consists of two main islets and several small rock stacks (Carlile et al. 2015). There are two main dive sites in the area: 'Dragon Rock' and 'Shark Gutter' (Beneath the Bay 2025). The habitat is characterised by rocky reefs, caves, deep gutters, and drop offs (NSW DPIRD 2025).

Tollgate Islands 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

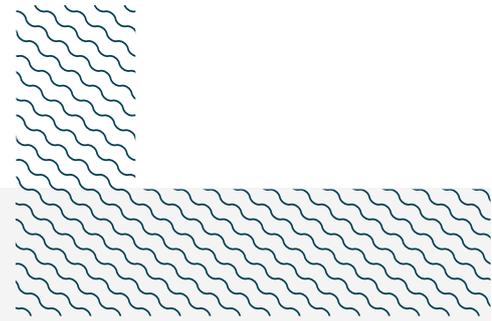
Tollgate Islands is an important resting area for one shark species.

There are multiple lines of evidence to support Sand Tiger Sharks regularly and predictably using Tollgate Islands for resting. Evidence includes scientific surveys and acoustic tracking conducted by the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (Bradford et al. 2025; Otway & Loudon 2025), anecdotal observations from the recreational dive industry, and submissions from a citizen science photo-identification database (Sharkbook 2025). Between 2011-2021, 10-year acoustic transmitters were used to track sharks and determine their preferred habitats based on residency rates (Otway & Loudon 2025), and this information was used to determine aggregation sites. Nineteen Sand Tiger Shark aggregation sites have been highlighted in eastern Australia (Bradford et al. 2025). These were defined as a site where five or more Sand Tiger Sharks are seen aggregating either continuously or on a predictable seasonal cycle, and all were classified as resting areas for the species based on behavioural observations and habitat use.

Sand Tiger Sharks were observed at Tollgate Islands year-round, however, only juveniles and adult females were recorded in the area. Between 2011-2021, six tagged individuals were detected at Tollgate Islands (474 detections; Bradford et al. 2025). Observed residence periods lasted up to four days. The sharks spent more time in the area during the daylight hours, exhibiting a diurnal usage pattern (Otway & Loudon 2025). Juveniles and presumed non-reproductively active females were prevalent during mid-winter to spring, with pregnant Sand Tiger Sharks also occupying the area at this time and likely pupping in the local vicinity (Bradford et al. 2025). Sand Tiger Sharks use the area as part of their annual southerly migration in late spring (Otway & Loudon 2025). Scientific surveys confirmed Sand Tiger Sharks were observed swimming close to the seabed in the area, typical resting

behaviour for this species, at a mean depth of 19.4 m. The diel patterns in behaviour that the sharks exhibit at these sites are 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).

Anecdotal reports from the recreational dive industry support observations of resting aggregations of Sand Tiger Sharks in this area. Throughout the peak summer season, large aggregations of Sand Tiger Sharks (50+ individuals) have been reported at the 'Shark Gutter' at Tollgate Islands (T Bellette pers. comm. 2025). Sharks were observed resting close to the sea floor or inside of caves, with occasional observations of pregnant females (with visible extended abdomen; T Bellette pers. comm. 2025). Between 2005–2025, 84 Sand Tiger Shark sightings were submitted from citizen scientists in the area (Spot a Shark unpubl. data 2025). From these sightings, 22 individuals were identified using photo-identification. Sightings of Sand Tiger Sharks were year-round at the Tollgate Islands, with seasonal peaks between January–March. There is low survey effort in the area due to a lack of dive shops and the relative difficulty in accessing the dive sites. Most citizen scientists are divers who use private boats to go to the area and as such there is less data availability. Still, scientific surveys confirmed up to 20 Sand Tiger Sharks were recorded on a single dive in this area (Bradford et al. 2025).



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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.

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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													
<i>Carcharias taurus</i>	Sand Tiger Shark (Grey Nurse Shark)	CR/CR*	0-232	X					X				

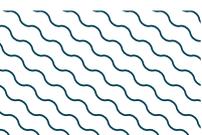
SUPPORTING SPECIES

Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Red List Category
SHARKS		
<i>Heterodontus portusjacksoni</i>	Port Jackson Shark	LC
<i>Orectolobus maculatus</i>	Spotted Wobbegong	LC
RAYS		
<i>Bathytoshia brevicaudata</i>	Smooth Stingray	LC
<i>Trygonorrhina fasciata</i>	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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