

LOAITA BANK OVERALL

10°51'05.73"N, 114°33'44.19"E

Geographic area

Loaita Bank comprises a group of reef platforms that collectively form an elongated atoll with two lagoons. They are located in the northwest part of the Spratlys, 18NM southeast of Thitu Reefs and 15NM north of Tizard Bank. Loaita Bank stretches over 74km along its northeast-southwest axis. Along its northwest-southeast axis, it reaches 7km over the northern lagoon and 13km over the southern lagoon. Its aerial coverage is 504.06km². This atoll includes seven shallower platforms; six around the southern lagoon, Loaita Nan, Loaita Cay, Loaita Island, Unnamed Reef 1, Lankiam Cay, Kugui Reef North and one at the northern tip of the northern lagoon, Menzies Reef.

Land area above water

The only above-water area that is vegetated is Loaita Island. Small above-water sand banks are also visible on Loaita Cay, Menzies Reef, Lankiam Cay and Kugui Reef North. However, they all seem of a dynamic nature (under the combined effect of astronomic tides, storm surges and wind-waves), except possibly part of the main sand bank on Sand Cay.

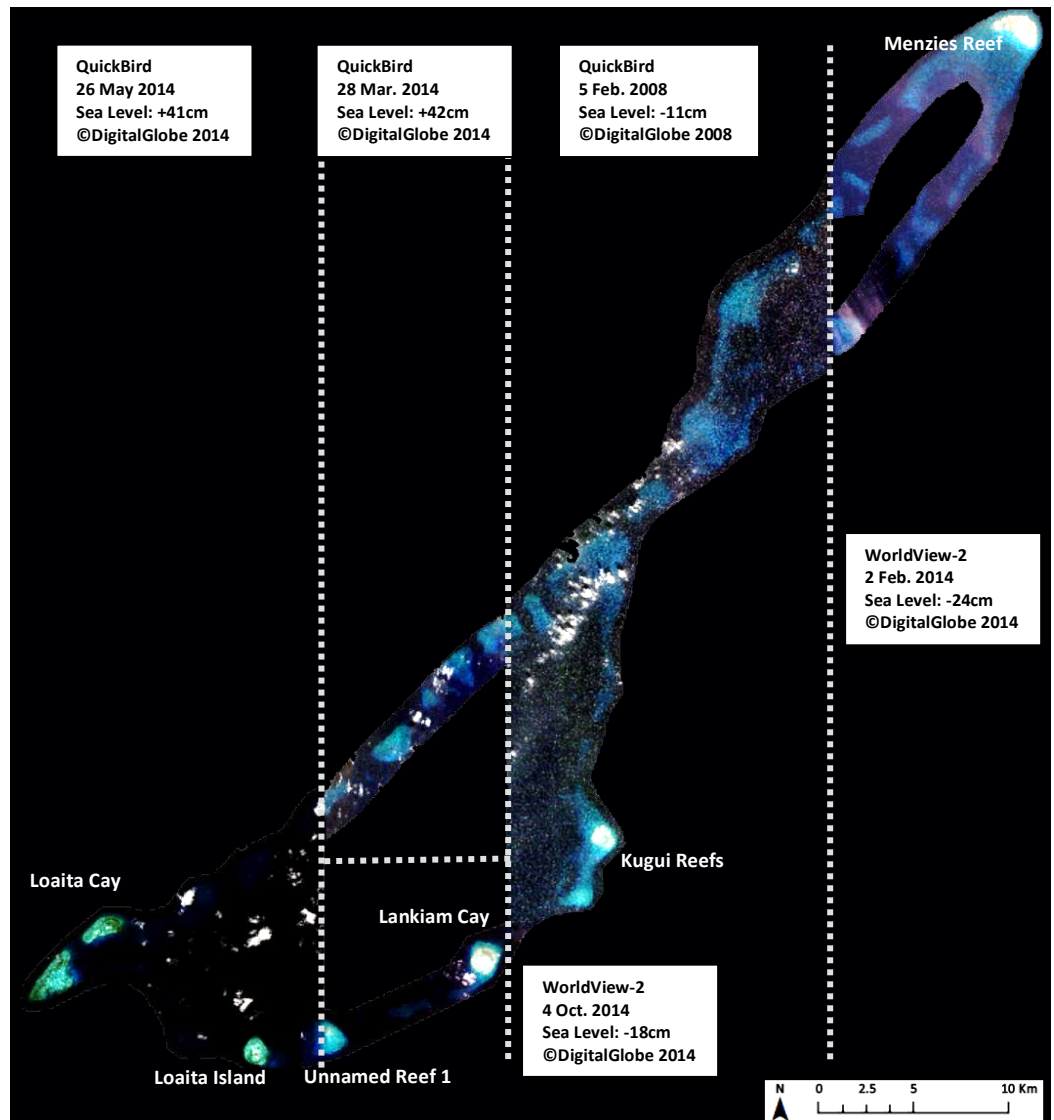
Human infrastructure

Man-made structures can be observed only on Loaita Island and Loaita Cay.

Intertidal and submerged area

The total aerial coverage of the reef flats is 10.18km²; of the lagoon is 390.54km²; of the reef slope and of other reef formations that border the lagoons is 103.23km². The reef flats are all of comparable size and depth with some areas below 1m and the rest being 1-2m deep (except Loaita Unnamed Reef 1 which is slightly deeper). The coral ring of the northwest- and southeast-facing sides of Loaita Bank is made of deeper coral reef platforms that are more than 10m deep and despite being visible, their depth could only be calculated in the shallowest parts. Although they look discontinuous, these platforms may connect through a deeper continuous ring.

Deep dredging marks are visible on all reef flats, except Loaita Unnamed Reef 1, which total an area of 4.1km² (i.e., 40% of the total reef flat area), whether due to coral rubble and sand being collected as building material or removed to prepare the area for later construction works, or dredged as a fisheries method. A dozen 5m-long dredgers in activity, accompanied by two 35m-long support vessels, can be observed on Menzies Reef in the 10 March 2013 satellite image. Fishing activities over the reef slope and deeper coral reef formations are also visible in several locations including over the deep coral reef formations of the centre of Loaita Bank (between the two lagoons) where two fleets of twelve 10m-long artisanal fishing vessels are grouped in a circle of 300-400m diameter. A 35m-long fishing vessel can also be observed within 500m of each fishing fleet whose likely purpose is to store the catch and provide logistical support.

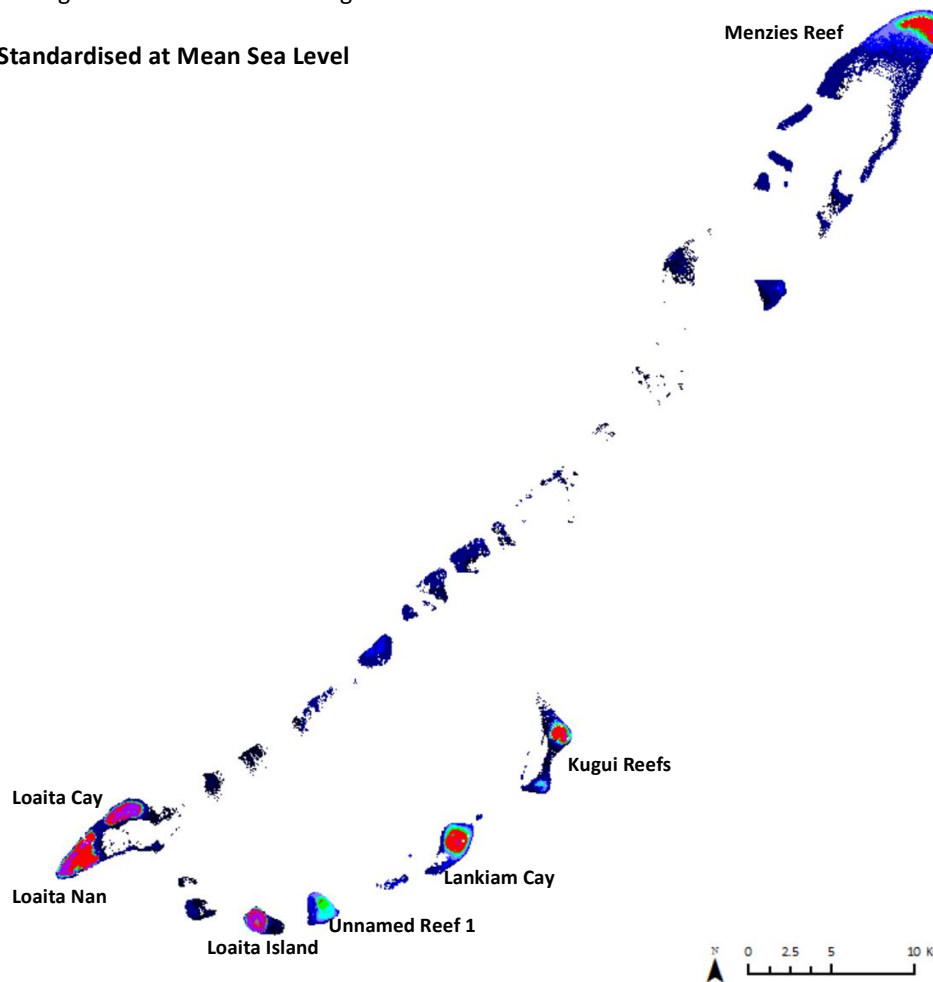


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Mosaic derived from high resolution satellite Images from 2008 to 2014

Bathymetry Map Standardised at Mean Sea Level



Habitat Classification and Land Cover Map

