

Place attachment and visitors to Ningaloo Marine Park

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Presentation Overview

- Concept of place attachment
- Place attachment in MPAs
- Ningaloo Marine Park
- Methods
- Results
- Comparison to terrestrial studies



Place attachment

- Positive emotional or affective bond between a person and a place
- Used in natural resource management to aid understanding of visitors:
 - Setting preferences
 - Management preferences
 - Activity participation



Why study place attachment?

- Recreation settings exist in meaning-filled spatial settings
- Place meanings connected to visitors' expectations of:
 - Management of setting
 - Behaviour of themselves and others
- Knowledge can aid in better management decision making

Place attachment in MPAs

- Been acknowledged as important for MPA management
- Documented that it occurs



- Absence of studies exploring meanings behind place attachment in MPAs

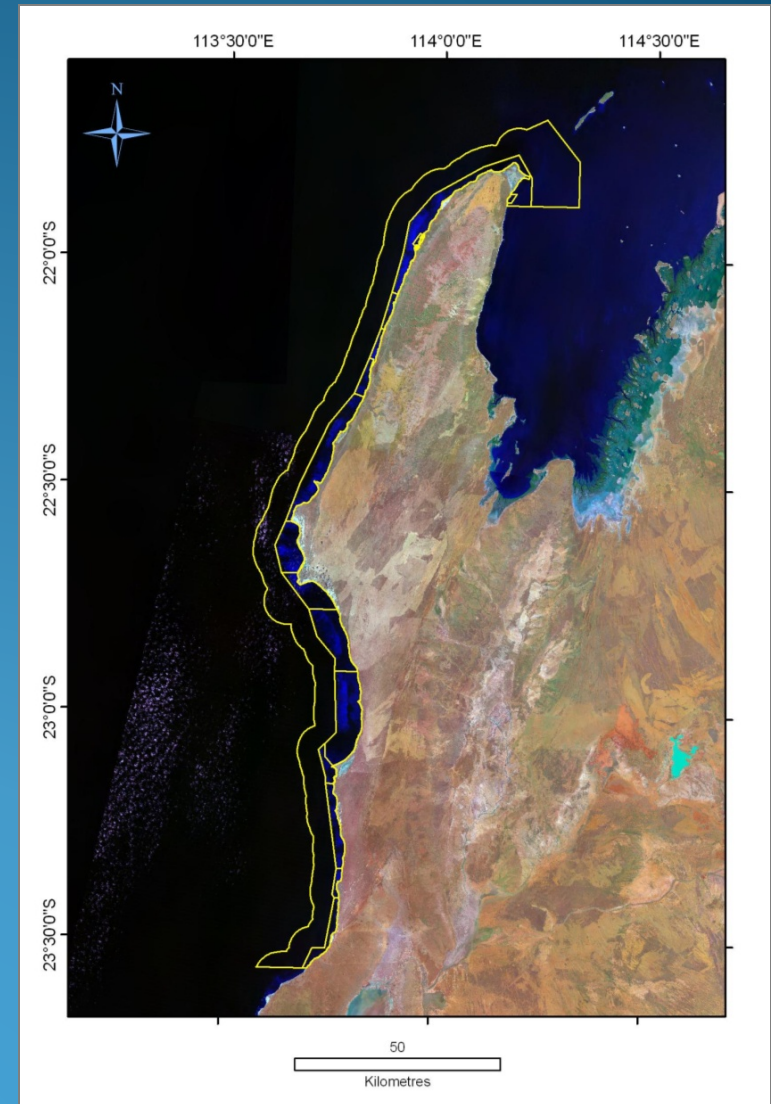
Ningaloo Marine Park

- Located 1,200km north of Perth in Western Australia
- Largest fringing coral reef in Aust – 300km long
- At closest point – 100m offshore
- Receives approx 200,000 visitors p/a
- Activities: snorkelling, coral viewing, fishing, scuba diving, relaxing on beach, camping, 4-wheel driving



Why focus on Ningaloo MP?

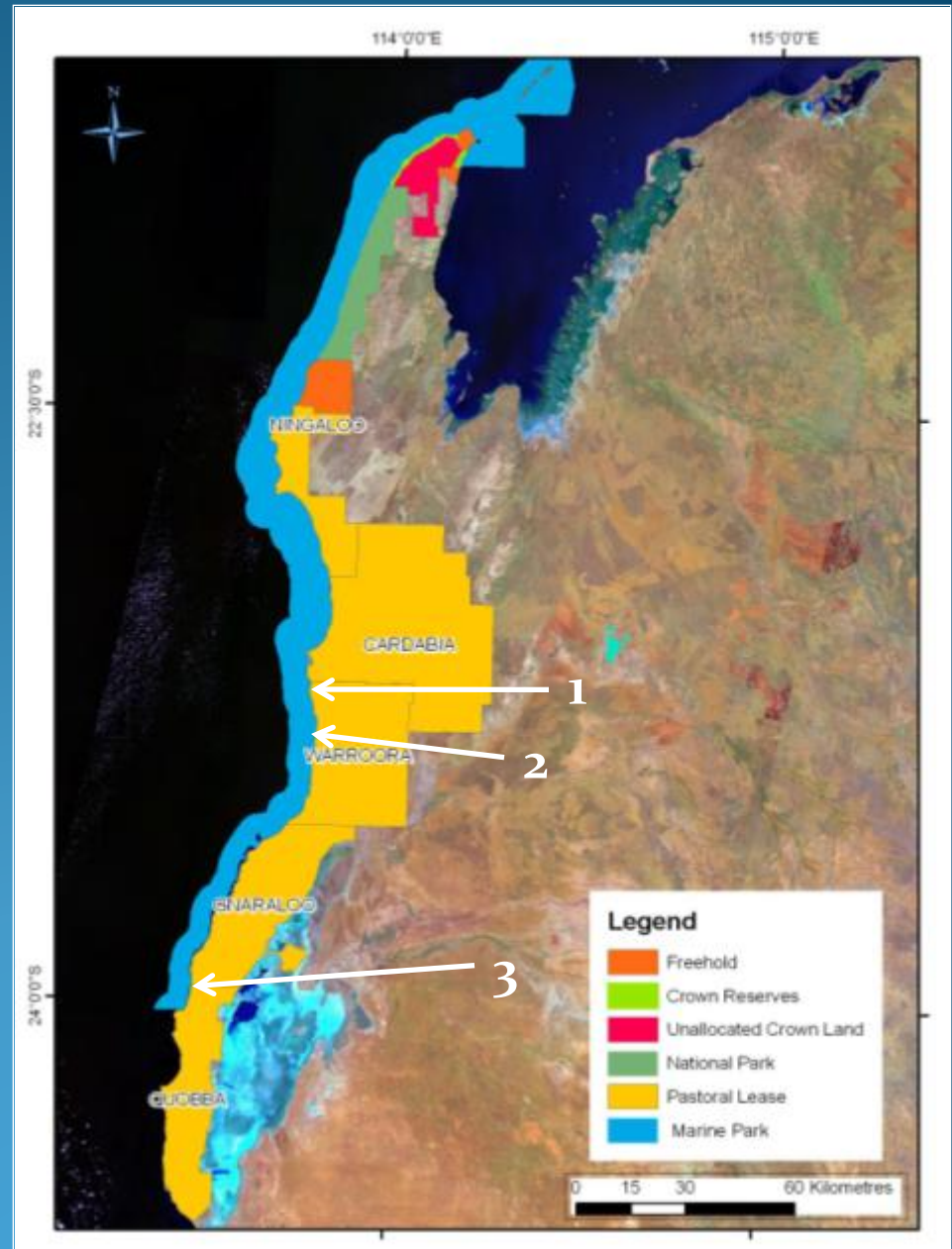
- Human-usage survey undertaken in 2008
- Intercept visitor surveys identified:
 - 55% had visited on previous occasion
 - Of these, 44% always stayed at some location
- High site fidelity – is place attachment a reason?



Study Sites

- 3 study sites in southern section:

1. Coral Bay
2. 14 Mile Campsite, Warroora Station
3. 3 Mile Campsite, Gnaraloo Station



Coral Bay

- Small coastal township
- Caters for tourists
- Campsites (powered and unpowered) to resort style hotel
- Popular with families



14 Mile Campsite, Warroora Station

- No power, no facilities provided
- Must be self-sufficient (food, water)
- Frequented by long-term campers (3-4 months at a time)



3 Mile Campsite, Gnaraloo Station

- Unpowered campsites with basic facilities – shower, toilets
- Attractions - nearby surf-breaks and sheltered lagoon
- Popular with people who surf or windsurf



Method: Photo-elicitation

Qualitative data collection technique

1. Participants provided with digital camera
2. Take photos of why they liked visiting, what made them come back
3. Interviews (semi-structured) arranged for 2-3 days later



Interview questions

- Description of photos taken – what were they trying to capture
- How important was that aspect to their experience
- Their perceptions of management actions:
 - Campsite
 - Ningaloo Marine Park
- Camp rules, on-site behaviours
- Use of probes to elicit further information

Data analysis

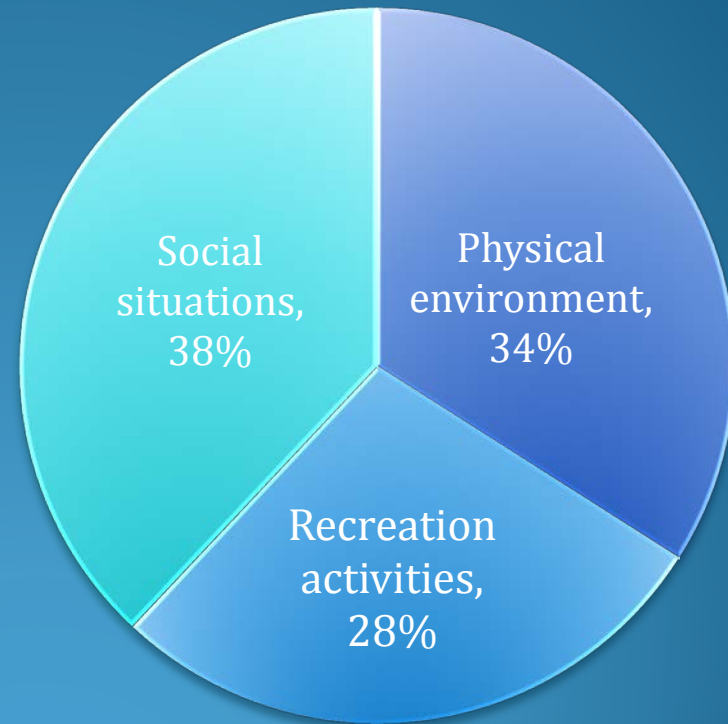
- Photographs:
 - Categorisation by the researcher
 - Classified according to content
- Interviews:
 - Coding of transcribed interviews
 - N'Vivo software



e.g. – physical environment

Results - Photos

- 30 participants – 207 photos
- Mean = 6.9 photos
- Range = 3 – 16
- 3 imposed categories
- 55% had marine component



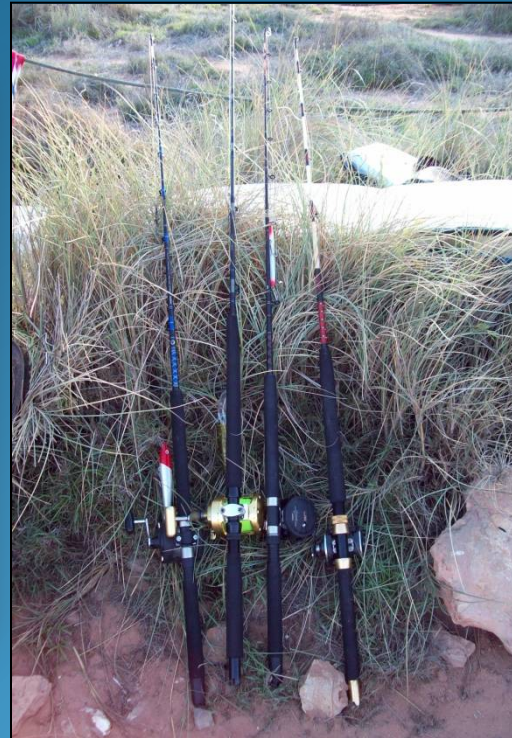
Tonge, J., Moore, S.A., Beckley, L.E. and Ryan, M. (2010) The place attachment of visitors to Ningaloo Marine Park, north-western Australia.
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Physical environment



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Recreation activities



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Social situations



Results - Interviews

- 4 emergent themes:

Physical environment

- Ningaloo Reef
- Being isolated in nature
- Coastal vistas
- Warm climate

Recreation activities

- Number of activities in 1 location
- Particular activities at particular sites

Social ties

- Maintaining family bonds
- Establishing and maintaining friendships

Emotional connection

- Everybody's happy
- Work for the experience
- Exclusive use – free from tourists
- Enjoy it while it lasts

Physical environment – Ningaloo Reef

- Opportunity to see marine-life up close
- Different to “everyday”

“Yeah and turtles, turtles are a highlight for me, turtles and things, more exotic stuff like cuttlefish, and stuff you can’t see in Perth”



Recreation activities - Multiple activities

- Number of activities in 1 setting
- Something for everyone

“I really like Gnaraloo for camping because it has got everything – it has snorkelling, surfing, fishing, it has got everything”



Social ties – Maintaining family bonds

- Reconnecting as a family unit
- Strengthening bonds through teaching

“There is a lot of bonding with the kids and teaching them as well, like boat handling, how to catch fish, how to clean fish”



Emotional connection – Everybody's happy

- Something for everybody to do
- Convenient – 1 location



“So this place really has it all and everybody is happy. Mum is happy with the beach, the kids are happy with the beach and the surfing is just around the point, and that is pretty important for our family”

Comparison to terrestrial studies

Similar:

- Physical environment – aesthetic appreciation, views, scenery, water
- Social ties – importance of family, friends



Comparison to terrestrial studies

Different:

- Recreation activities – no reliance on single activity
- Emotional connection - differs to “feelings” aspects from terrestrial studies



Comparison to terrestrial studies

Marine influence:

- Enjoy undertaking marine-based activities in marine environments

BUT...

- Rely on adjacent hinterland to foster social ties and emotional connection

Important to note visitors value both marine and terrestrial aspects

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