



THE SCIENTIFIC
CASE FOR A LARGE
NO-TAKE PARK

URGENT NEED FOR IMPROVED PROTECTION OF THE CORAL SEA

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Australia's leading tropical marine scientists strongly support the proposal to transform the Coral Sea into the world's largest no-take area, to protect its immense environmental and heritage values from the escalating threats of overfishing and climate change.

- The world's marine ecosystems have been degraded by overfishing, pollution and man-made global warming. Eleven percent of terrestrial habitats have been designated as parks to conserve their biodiversity and the ecosystem services they provide to people. In contrast, less than 0.1% of the world's oceans are fully protected.
- The Coral Sea provides critical habitats for many species, including critically endangered Hawksbill and endangered Green turtles, 25 species of whales and dolphins; and 27 species of seabird. At least 13 species of seabird breed on Coral Sea islands, including regionally important populations of the red-footed Booby, least frigate bird and greater frigate bird. The Coral Sea is one of the few places remaining on Earth where large pelagic fishes (tuna, billfish and sharks) have not yet been severely depleted.
- Fishing effort in the Coral Sea has grown rapidly in the past 20 years, and the catch per unit effort of yellowfin and bigeye tuna has already begun to decline. The unsustainable bycatch of turtles, sharks and birds in pelagic fisheries, and the rapid decline of large sharks from illegal finning are major concerns worldwide that warrant immediate intervention to prevent further long-term damage. Fishing activities in the Coral Sea contribute to significant declines of sharks, turtles and seabirds on the adjoining Great Barrier Reef. A single large no-take zone is the best approach for protecting these pelagic and migratory species because they cannot be protected inside small reserves.
- The rich coral fauna of the Coral Sea have already been damaged by coral bleaching, which is set to increase in frequency and scale due to global warming. Reefs in the Coral Sea are small and relatively isolated from each other, making them more reliant on large-scale dispersal of larvae than the highly interconnected Great Barrier Reef. A single large no-take area (encompassing Australia's Coral Sea jurisdiction) would ensure that the scale of management appropriately matches the biological scale of important ecosystem processes such as dispersal and migration.
- The Coral Sea is one of only a handful of places in the world where a very large oceanic no-take park could be created, monitored and supported by the overwhelming majority of citizens in a single national jurisdiction.
- The Coral Sea has acted as a vital reservoir for reef biodiversity during past periods of rapid change in climate and sea level. It is relatively free from the influence of land-based pollution that affects inshore and mid-shelf coral reefs in the Great Barrier Reef, and has much lower levels of fishing. The creation of the Coral Sea no-take area will ensure that this region remains globally significant for the protection of tropical marine biota.
- A very large no-take park immediately adjacent to the GBRMP and its network of highly protected areas would be by far the world's largest protected ocean ecosystem. It would:
 - Enhance Australia's reputation as a world leader in the stewardship of marine biodiversity;
 - Make an unparalleled contribution to global marine conservation by setting a new benchmark for large-scale protection;
 - Enhance the World Heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef by reducing human impacts in the adjoining Coral Sea; and
 - Foster the growth of sustainable tourism industries.

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