



Soft coral, *Dendronephthya*, Great Barrier Reef



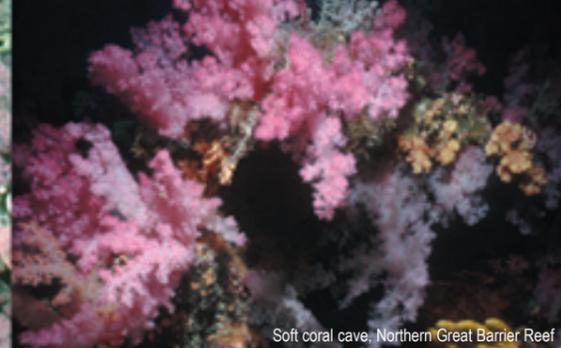
Overhanging corals, Osprey Reef Queensland, in the Coral Sea



Lagoon corals, Wistari Reef



Coral pool at low tide, Heron Island



Soft coral cave, Northern Great Barrier Reef



Manta Ray, *manta birostris*, Great Barrier Reef



Tourists at reef edge, Heron Island, Great Barrier Reef

Reef edge, Heron Island, Great Barrier Reef

Great Barrier Reef

When you think about the Great Barrier Reef, can you believe that only 4.6% is highly protected?

The Great Barrier Reef is under threat - numerous inshore reefs are dying and the numbers of many fish species are declining. The Reef is threatened by overfishing and seafloor trawling, coral bleaching caused by climate change and pollution run-off from the land.

World Heritage Area

The Great Barrier Reef was nominated as a World Heritage property in 1981. In 1995 the GBR Marine Park Act was amended to reflect the World Heritage listing of the Great Barrier Reef. Under s. 39Z 'the Authority in preparing management plans must have regard to the protection of world heritage values of the Marine Park'.

Threatened species management in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area derives from Australia's international obligation to ensure that the Reef is protected, conserved and transmitted to future generations. The long-term vision is that this World Heritage Area will maintain its diversity of species and habitats, and its ecological integrity and resilience. Management agencies therefore must be committed to paying special attention to ensure the recovery and continuing persistence of species whose existence is threatened.

Whilst there has been significant progress in implementing measures for the protection of dugong, turtle and seabird populations, major issues remain in terms of identifying and managing other threatened marine species in the World Heritage Area.

The natural values of the whole of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area must be protected, through the maintenance of its diversity of species and habitats, together with ecological integrity and resilience.

This objective can be achieved by identifying species which are threatened in the World Heritage Area and identifying threats to their survival; and developing and implementing appropriate management actions, which are coordinated with other government agencies, indigenous people, researchers and industry groups. We must ensure that reporting obligations for the World Heritage Commission are met by describing the biodiversity of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and identifying and protecting representative areas. Species conservation is essential, particularly the protection of threatened species such as dugongs, turtles, whales and dolphins.

Representative Areas Program

After intense lobbying by environmental groups, including our Society, a major initiative to ensure the protection of the Great Barrier Reef for future generations has been announced by the Federal Government, detailing a proposed six-fold increase of protected zones and marine sanctuaries within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park that will create the largest network of protected marine areas in the world.

Green zones or highly protected marine sanctuaries

This historic increase in protection for the Reef will help to ensure it remains a national and international icon and will also help to guarantee the lifestyles and livelihoods of the many thousands of Australians who depend on the reef for income or recreation. This initiative recognises that the Reef is made up of many unique ecosystems or bioregions and that each of these bioregions needs sufficient protection to ensure its ecological viability. By ensuring a reasonable amount of each of the 70 bioregions is in a protected zone (known locally as a Green Zone) we can retain for future generations the unique and iconic status of the Great Barrier Reef.

These 'Green Zones' and sanctuaries are proposed in the draft Zoning Plan for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park that will provide the largest network of protected marine areas in the world and is the largest marine protection plan in the history of the Great Barrier Reef.

The draft Zoning Plan proposes a network of new 'Green Zones' to provide greater protection for the Reef's unique and precious biodiversity by prohibiting extractive activity. These will complement existing protection measures in place for the Great Barrier Reef including World Heritage listing.

Only 4.6% of the Great Barrier Reef to date is protected from extractive practices such as fishing and collecting under current management arrangements. The weight of scientific evidence clearly indicates this is not enough.

The draft Zoning Plan will significantly increase Green Zone protection of the Reef to around 30% in close consultation with stakeholders and local communities.

Our Society believes that no-take zones must be the Green Zone and should be increased to at least be 50% total protection. There can be no room for any take of any kind in a Green Zone or marine sanctuary no-take zone.

The draft plans are part of a vigorous community consultation process. The public have until August 4 this year to send in submissions.

Please tell the Australian Government that 50% of the Great Barrier Reef should be protected and help preserve this national icon.

Make a submission to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, write to your local Federal Member of Parliament and Australia's Environment Minister, or join WWF by visiting their campaign website.

The final plans are expected to be released early next year. Any changes to regulations within the Marine Park will not come into effect until then.

(All Great Barrier Reef photos courtesy of Ron and Valerie Taylor)

Edge of Wistari Reef, Capricorn Bunker Group



Harlequin tuskfish (wrasse), *choerodon fasciatus*, in territorial dispute, Great Barrier Reef



Yellow striped goat fish, *mulloidichthys flavolineatus*, Great Barrier Reef



Reef drop off with excellent corals, Osprey Reef, Coral Sea



Reef scene, Northern Great Barrier Reef