

Mapping human use of the Ningaloo Marine Park

Researchers have gathered information about human use of the Ningaloo Marine Park. This is a fundamental requirement for planning, managing and monitoring of marine parks as well as assessing options for infrastructure development along the adjacent coast.

The human seasons of Ningaloo Marine Park

The use of Ningaloo Marine Park (NMP) is strongly seasonal, with greater numbers of people using the area for recreational activities during the period from April to October. As there are more people during this time, more areas of the NMP are also visited and utilised. In the off-season, from November to March, fewer people use the park and they are largely concentrated at Coral Bay and around North West Cape.



The project and findings

Intense surveys were conducted at Ningaloo over 12 months. The surveys included regular aerial and shore-based surveys of people and vessels between Exmouth and Red Bluff as well as interviews with people engaged in recreational activities in the park. The project also identified indicators of use such as the number of boat-trailers at boat ramps and the number of vehicles adjacent to the park.

The project has found that:

- relaxing on the beach, walking, snorkelling, fishing and swimming are the dominant activities along the shores of the marine park
- wildlife interaction, fishing and diving are the activities mainly associated with boats
- snorkelling and diving are generally associated with coral reef habitats and sanctuary zones
- fishing is mainly conducted in general use and recreation zones.



Photos courtesy of Lynnaeth Beckley

The demographics of people in the park were found to differ according to:

- the type of access (sealed road, 4WD track etc.)
- accommodation opportunities
- tenure of the land adjacent to the park.

In general, users of the marine park were highly concentrated around access points.

Applying the findings

This project has provided benchmark data on the recreational activities and distribution patterns of visitors to Ningaloo Marine Park under the provisions of the 2005-2015 Management Plan.

The data from this project are appropriate for management and monitoring, and are well-suited for use in conservation planning for the next iteration of the management plan.

Contact

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