



GREAT BARRIER REEF  
MARINE PARK AUTHORITY

# REEF BEAT

Townsville  
**Bulletin**  
THE NORTH'S OWN PAPER

## OUR GREAT BARRIER REEF

### Sustainable Practices on the Great Barrier Reef

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is vast and beautiful, and is enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of people every year. Unfortunately, human activities, such as careless waste disposal, are placing the Reef under pressure.

The good news is that this and other problems can be solved, provided we all play our part in keeping the Great Barrier Reef great. Most of the solutions are very simple, and involve little more than applying common sense.

Being aware of the effects of your actions on the environment and other people is the first step. For example, how you dispose of your waste at home or on the Reef, directly affects the health of the Reef.

At home, all wastes should be reduced, reused, recycled or disposed of carefully, to ensure that they don't enter the environment. Organic wastes such as fruit and vegetables, (though not fish waste), can be composted, and will help improve soil in the garden. Fish waste generates a powerful smell as it decomposes that will attract flies and vermin, and could make you very unpopular at home and with the neighbours, so it's better not to try to compost it.

Inorganic wastes such as glass and plastics should be reused or put out for recycling. This is important because lightweight plastic bags can easily blow out to sea where they may be mistaken for food by turtles and other sea creatures that can choke to death on them.

Chemical cleaners, waste oil, paint and other products can kill marine creatures, so it's important that they don't find their way into stormwater drains where they can wash onto the Reef.

One of the best things about living on the Queensland coast is having the chance to take a boat out to the Reef. But people in boats need to be very careful not to damage the Reef or the special animals and plants that live there.

If you're out in a boat, make sure all litter stays on board, and is taken home for recycling at the end of the trip. Remember the 'pack it in, pack it out' rule - if you take it out in the boat, you can take it home again at the end of the day.

Oil and fuel is poisonous to marine life, so it's important not to spill any when refuelling the boat.

Sea creatures, like turtles and dugongs, live in shallow water, and can easily come into contact with boats. Many of these rare and special animals are killed and injured in accidental collisions with boats every year on the Great Barrier Reef.

Humpback whales swim from Antarctica to have their babies in the warm waters of the Marine Park, and they too can be easily disturbed if boats get too close or move too quickly around them.

So the message to boat drivers is clear: In shallow water or close to marine mammals - Slow Down! You'll avoid hitting the animals by mistake, and by keeping quiet and a safe distance from them, you may see more.

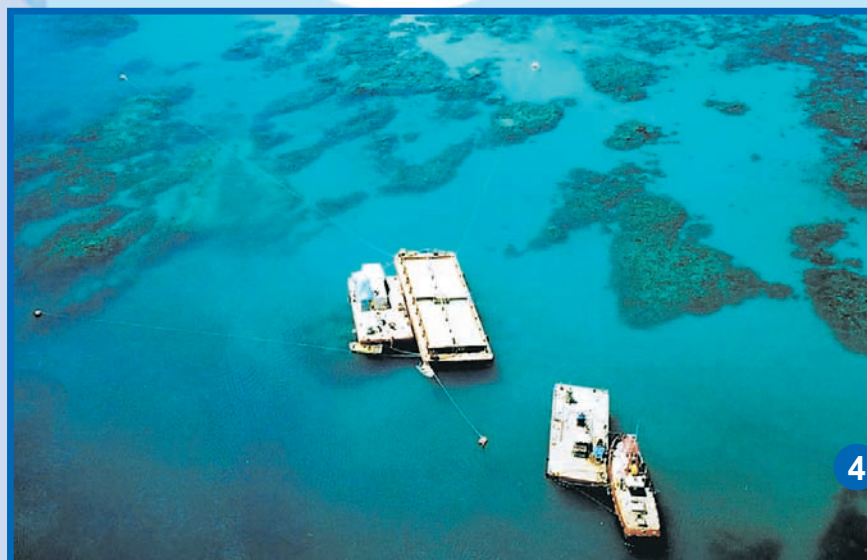
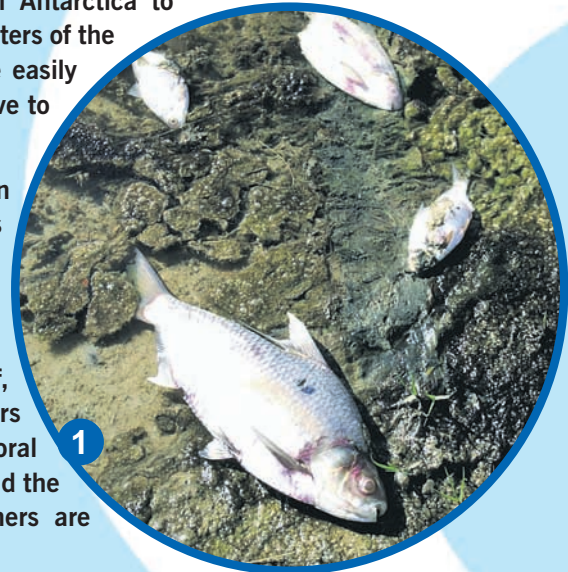
Anchoring on coral can severely damage the Reef, especially in places used by many boats, so skippers should anchor in sand or mud rather than on the coral itself. Special public moorings have been located around the Marine Park to help protect the coral, so boat owners are encouraged to use them.

Hundreds of thousands of seabirds, such as gulls, terns, noddies and mutton birds (a kind of shearwater), live and breed on the islands in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Bird watching can be a lot of fun, but when the birds are breeding, they can be easily spooked and may desert their eggs or chicks if harassed.

Visiting the islands of the Great Barrier Reef is popular with locals and tourists alike. But there are a few simple things that can be done to help preserve them.

For example, introduced plants can be a major problem for small islands, because they can take over from native species. To avoid accidentally introducing plants to islands, check your clothing and shoes to make sure that seeds like hook grass aren't hitching a ride.



Photos:

1. The sad reality of pollution harming the Great Barrier Reef - dead fish washed up on beaches.
- 2 & 3. Community and Environment groups do their part to keep the coastlines and beaches clean of rubbish.
4. A big operation: The cleaning up of a waste spill on the Great Barrier Reef.

You may need a permit to visit or camp on the island, and these can be obtained from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service who manage many of the islands in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Radios, generators and loud music can spoil the unique experience of visiting a remote island for other people and may frighten wildlife, so they're generally discouraged.

It may seem like there's lots of things you can't do on the Great Barrier Reef - but the rules are there to protect the Reef so that people will still be able to enjoy it hundreds or even thousands of years from now, just as you can today.

There are lots of truly amazing animals and plants on the Great Barrier Reef, many of which are found nowhere else in the world. But they are fragile and can be easily harmed through thoughtless action. Following these simple guidelines will ensure that the life of the Reef will be around for many generations to come.

To learn more about them, visit the GBR Explorer on [www.reefed.edu.au](http://www.reefed.edu.au)

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