

Student

Fact Files



Australian Government

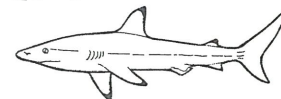
Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

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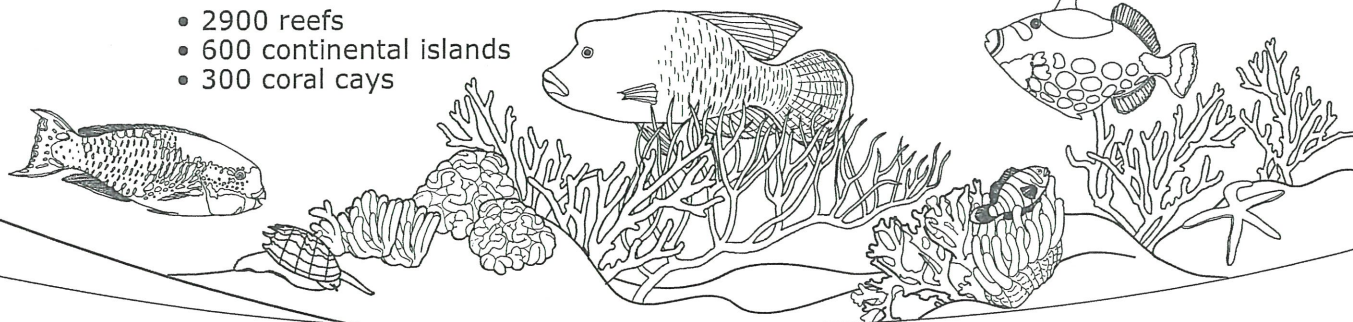


March 2005

The amazing Great Barrier Reef Marine Park



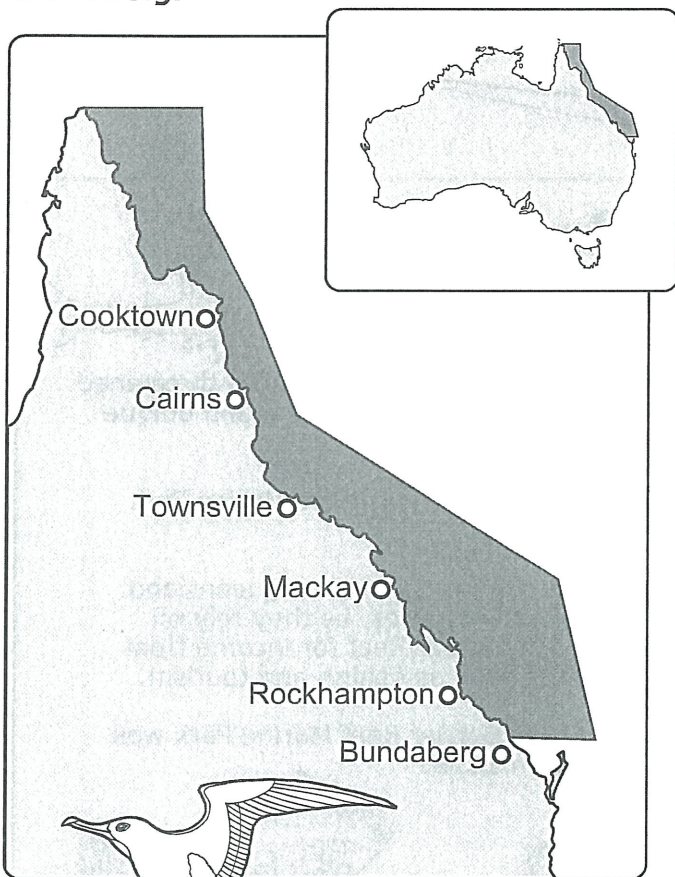
- The Great Barrier Reef is the largest natural feature on earth and can be seen from outer space. It is one of the greatest natural wonders of the world.
- The Marine Park covers an area of 345,400 square kilometers.
- It stretches 2300 kilometres along the Queensland coast.
- It is not one long continuous reef, but a complex system of various marine habitats with more than:
 - 2900 reefs
 - 600 continental islands
 - 300 coral cays
- The Marine Park is home to many threatened species such as the amazing and unique dugong.
- Millions of people visit the Marine Park every year.
- The Marine Park is vital to Queensland coastal communities, as they rely on the Great Barrier Reef for income from activities such as fishing and tourism.
- The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park was created in 1975.



our great barrier reef
let's keep it great

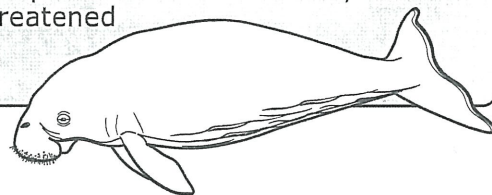


The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is one of the largest marine protected areas in the world. It stretches for thousands of kilometres along the northeast coast of Australia. The northern end begins at the tip of Australia in the waters of the Torres Strait and extends south to just north of Bundaberg.



The Marine Park is home to approximately:

- 1,500 species of fish
- 360 species of hard coral
- one third of the world's soft corals
- 4,000 species of molluscs (eg. shells)
- 800 species of echinoderm (eg. starfish, sea urchins etc)
- 24 species of seabirds that live and breed on the islands
- more than 30 species of marine mammals including whales, dolphins and dugongs
- 14,000 dugong (Australia's entire dugong population is about 100,000)
- and 6 species of marine turtles, all listed as threatened



There are many important habitats inside the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, including coral reefs, seagrasses, mangroves, sponge gardens and muddy seabed communities. These habitats all connect and support each other, which means they are all vital to the life of the Great Barrier Reef.

The Marine Park is also home to a number of threatened species. It has important habitat and breeding areas for marine turtles, dugong, seabirds, dolphins and whales. The relationship between these animals and their habitats makes the Great Barrier Reef one of the richest and most complex natural systems in the world!

Many commercial and recreational activities, some of which are very important to Australia's economy, take place within the Marine Park. The area is vital to Queensland coastal communities, as they rely on the Great Barrier Reef for income from activities such as fishing and tourism. Over two million people visit the Marine Park every year. Most go snorkeling, diving or fishing to experience the wonders of this unique area.

