

Predatory fish

remote, rare and remarkable

"People travel from corners of the globe to test their skills and fitness against the apex predators of the Coral Sea."

Peter Sayres,
Bianca Charters

Photographer: Aliyazza

In the vast oceanic wilderness of the Coral Sea, huge predatory fish rule the marine food chain. The Coral Sea Marine Park provides vital habitat for these important species.

A magnet for sharks, black marlin, tuna, billfishes, trevally and more, it's a dream destination for divers and game fishers.

Did you know?



130 km per hour

is the speed at which black marlin can swim — faster than cheetahs can run.



707 kg

is the reported weight of what may be the biggest non-shark saltwater fish ever caught — a black Marlin near Peru in 1953.



Not 100% of sharks are predators

The largest of them, whale sharks, are filter feeders that eat plankton.



Image: www.boyceimage.com
Photographer: Bill Boyce



Photographer: Andy Murch



Photographer: Matt Guest

Meet the predators

biggest, fastest, fiercest

Giant hunters like marlin, swordfish, tuna and sharks search the Coral Sea for prey. Most are migratory, travelling between the western Pacific and eastern Australia and between the tropical Coral Sea and the cooler Tasman Sea.



Super hunters

Black marlin are enormous — some more than 4.5 m and 700 kg — but it's their amazing speed that makes them the ocean's supreme hunters. One of the fastest fish on the planet, they can run down other speedy predators like tuna, trevally and swordfish, slashing prey with their sharp bills.

Their territory extends throughout the Coral Sea. From Australia some travel as far as Hawaii, the Philippines and the eastern Pacific.

Black marlin mostly hunt alone, but from September to December they gather in the Coral Sea, near the Great Barrier Reef, to spawn. This is the only known spawning area for black marlin in the world.

Shark paradise

Recent scientific surveys found more sharks at Coral Sea reefs than almost any other survey site in the world. Many sharks stay at the same reef for life. Others — like a grey reef shark tracked over 134 km between Osprey Reef and the Great Barrier Reef — are more adventurous.

Coral Sea residents include white-tip, grey and silver-tip reef sharks. Visitors include tiger sharks, great white sharks, scalloped hammerhead and Galapagos sharks. Osprey Reef and Lihou Reef attract especially high densities of shark species.

'Blue outback' fishing

Some of the world's best and most remote fishing spots are in the Coral Sea. A live-aboard expedition around its reefs and cays is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see unique places and catch and release some of the ocean's biggest fish species.

The best time to go is between September and December, depending on your destination.

Some areas in National Park zones in the Coral Sea Marine Park don't allow fishing, so be sure to check the details of the reefs before you visit. Queensland recreational fishing rules and bag limits also apply.

Sharks with fitness trackers

In 2016, James Cook University researchers found a novel way to study sharks. Scuba-diving scientists lured the sharks towards cages filled with tuna heads, lassoed them on the tail, and attached microcomputers to their fins. A few weeks later they re-caught the sharks and removed the devices. The collected data is answering key questions about sharks' activity and eating patterns.



Image: © Mike Ball Dive Expeditions
Photographer: Julia Sumerling



Photographer: Allyazza



Photographer: Matt Guest

Learn more

About the Coral Sea Marine Park: parksaustralia.gov.au/coralsea

About fishing charters from Cairns and Port Douglas:

tropicalnorthqueensland.org.au

The Coral Sea Marine Park is managed by Parks Australia.



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