

# Solitary Islands Marine Park

## History and Management of the Solitary Islands Marine Park

The Solitary Islands are a major feature off the coast of Coffs Harbour. There are five major islands: North Solitary Island, North West Solitary Island, South Solitary Island, South West Solitary Island and Split Solitary Island. None other than Captain James Cook named the islands back in May 1770 on his voyage along the east coast of Australia in *HM Bark Endeavour*.

The Solitary Island's marine animals and plants were the first to receive protection within a marine protected area in NSW. On 11 May 1991 the area from Muttonbird Island (Coffs Harbour), north to Plover Island (Sandon) were included in the Solitary Islands Marine Reserve. It incorporated islands, reefs, creeks and rivers and a zoning plan was introduced to protect the special values of the area.



On 2 January 1998 the Solitary Islands Marine Reserve became a Marine Park and the zoning scheme was revised to protect the full range of habitats such as estuaries, beaches, reefs, sea floor, rocky shores and open ocean. The zoning scheme came into place in 2002 following extensive consultation with the community. The NSW Marine Parks Authority manages the Solitary Islands Marine Park.

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The Solitary Islands Marine Park is now well established, with many visitors to the area. A research and monitoring program is under way to further understand the range of marine plants and animals that occur in the park and their interactions.

Marine Park officers regularly patrol the waters of the Marine Park to talk to visitors about the zones in place. Signs and brochures are widely available to the public to inform people about the management of the Marine Park.



Areas within the Marine Park are important to local Aboriginal people from the Gumbaynggirr Nation. They have fished the waters and collected from the headlands and beaches for thousands of years. Local Elders assist with the management of special areas such as ancient stone fish traps and middens.

Much of the coast next to the Solitary Islands Marine Park is within a National Park, Nature Reserve or Coffs Coast Regional Park. The Marine Parks Authority works closely with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and local government to manage the foreshores together. The Authority also works closely with the Department of Primary Industries in the management of offshore waters and use by fishermen.



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