

Solitary Islands Marine Park

FACTS

What is so special about the Solitary Islands Marine Park?

It's bathed by the warm waters of the East Australian Current from the north, as well as cooler currents from the south. The result is a "mixing zone" where both tropical and temperate marine species can co-exist.

To date, more than 550 species of reef fish have been observed throughout the marine park. North Solitary Island has the greatest number of fish species with about 75 different species of fish recorded on average during a 30-minute dive. Anemone Bay is particularly diverse. At the northern end of the Island, the bay is also noted as supporting the greatest cover of anemones on the seafloor and their host anemone fish world-wide. Coral diversity is also high at North Solitary Island, with more than 46 different types recorded out of 91 species recorded from the marine park in total.



Photo by D. Harasti

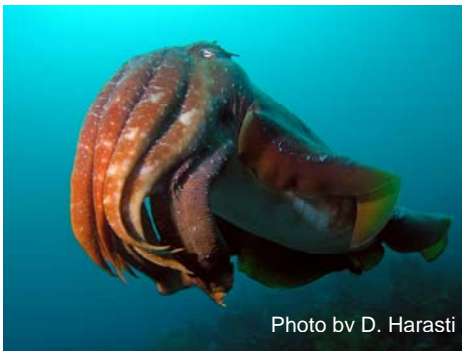


Photo by D. Harasti

At South Solitary Island large schools of blue and red morwong, tarwhine, snapper, and sea perch can be found there along with travelling, open ocean species like kingfish and amberjack, as well as a community of the protected black cod. South Solitary is also rich in shelled animals with many types of marine snails and slugs, especially on the western side. It is also a breeding site of the large and mobile giant cuttlefish.

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Pimpernel Rock in the Solitary Islands Marine Reserve, which is in Commonwealth waters, is an excellent example of a pinnacle reef. It has a chequered history, apparently having had the top of the peak blown off during World War II, but it still has a sharp peak rising to 10m below the surface, which is circled by a range of pelagic species due to the strong currents that can occur there. There is a large cave system at the base of Pimpernel Rock that is used by grey nurse sharks, black cod, red morwong and a range of other animals. Jewfish and teraglin sometimes school around the rock and a large Queensland groper has been recorded.

Estuaries within the marine park are reported as some of the most pristine (or untouched) in NSW, in particular the Sandon River, Woolli Woolli River and Salt-water Creek arm of the Corindi River. Estuaries are important “nurseries” for young fish and other marine species. A range of birds rely on estuaries for food, nesting and resting. Bird species you may find at an estuary include pied



oyster-catchers and waders such as red-capped plovers, whimbrels and curlews, and even the endangered Beach Stone Curlew, which has been recorded breeding in the Solitary Islands Marine Park.

A zoning scheme is in place to protect this valuable community asset and biologically important area.

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