

# Coral Sea Heritage Park



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Australia's enormous and biologically rich Coral Sea covers more than 1 million square kilometers immediately east of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

## CONSERVING THE SPECIAL PLACES IN THE SEA

Australia's Coral Sea is an ecological treasure. More than 25 spectacular coral reefs sit atop shallow ocean plateaus or underwater mountains rising thousands of meters from the seafloor. These reefs are especially important habitat for large schools of sharks, tuna, swordfish, marlin, barracuda and trevallies. The region is one of the few places where large pelagic fish are still abundant. This is in sharp contrast to a global decline of these fish by more than 90 percent in the past 50 years.

The Coral Sea supports a wealth of other marine life, including manta rays, ancient nautilus and more than 600 other species of fish. The islets and cays provide nesting areas for seabirds and important feeding and breed-

ing sites for turtles. An estimated 25 species of whales and dolphins live in its waters.

In addition to its ecological importance, the Coral Sea has a rich maritime history. It was the site of a historic naval engagement in May 1942 that turned the tide of World War II. Over time, many commercial vessels ran aground on its shallow reefs, resulting in significant loss of life—along with a few great tales of survival. Today, a growing dive tourism industry is seeking better protection of this rich area.

Considering the environmental and historic importance of the Coral Sea, the Australian government has an unparalleled opportunity

to protect, within its exclusive economic zone, one of the world's premier oceanic ecosystems.

The Coral Sea Heritage Park initiative is a part of Global Ocean Legacy, collaboration of Lyda Hill, the Oak Foundation, The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Robertson Foundation and the Sandler Foundation. They are working with Australian environment groups, including the Australian Conservation Foundation, Australian Marine Conservation Society and the Cairns and Far North Environment Centre to protect some of the world's largest and most spectacular marine habitats.