

# Responsible Reef Practices



We all love spending a day out of the Reef fishing and having a great time with our friends and family. To help us all ensure that we will be able to enjoy this for many years to come here are a few tips we can all adopt to keep the reef healthy and the fish plentiful.

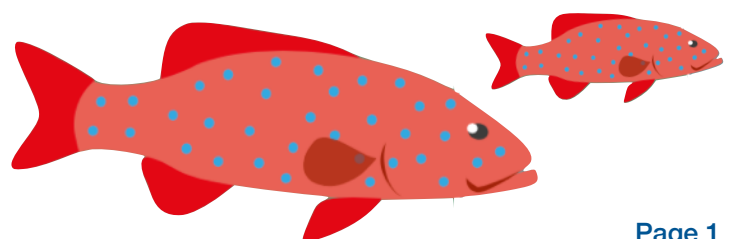
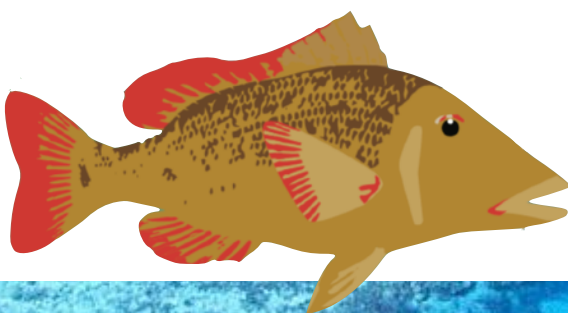
You can find all of the size and possession limits, protected species, seasonal closures, rules on tackle, bait nets and crab pots at the Queensland Government **Department of Agriculture and Fisheries** website by following this link <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/fisheries/recreational> or you can download the “Queensland Recreational Fishing and Boating Guide” onto your phone from the [Google play](#) and the [Apple App Store](#).

The **Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority** zoning plan determines where and how you can undertake different activities. Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning maps can be found at most tackle stores, caravan parks and service stations close to boat ramps. The “Eye on the Reef” app allows you to use your phone to access the zoning map and using your phones GPS help you locate where you are. This free App can be downloaded from the [Google play](#) and the [Apple App Store](#).

*Here are some great ideas to help ensure that the Great Barrier Reef continues to be one of the best spots on earth to fish.*

## When Fishing:

- Take only what you need
- Avoid anchoring on coral - find sand
- If you must anchor on coral to fish use a small anchor and a short length of light chain. Carry several anchor set ups and choose the lightest possible for the conditions
- Do not use pest or non-native fish for bait. Never release introduced species into the water
- Do not fish where fish feeding takes place, for example as part of a tourist program
- If you're unsure of the fish identity or size limit, release the fish immediately
- Return all undersized and unwanted fish quickly to minimise injury
- If you're keeping the fish, remove it from the hook or net immediately and kill it humanely
- Do not litter - clean up all fishing gear (such as discarded tackle and line, and bait bags) and take it back to shore to dispose of responsibly
- Have a fish measure tape on board your vessel



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## When Spearfishing:

- Always track down injured fish, do not let them swim off injured.
- Spear only what you need
- Do not pursue a fish if you are unsure of its identity or size
- Do not take big fish merely as trophies because these are important breeding stock
- Do not take plant-eating fish

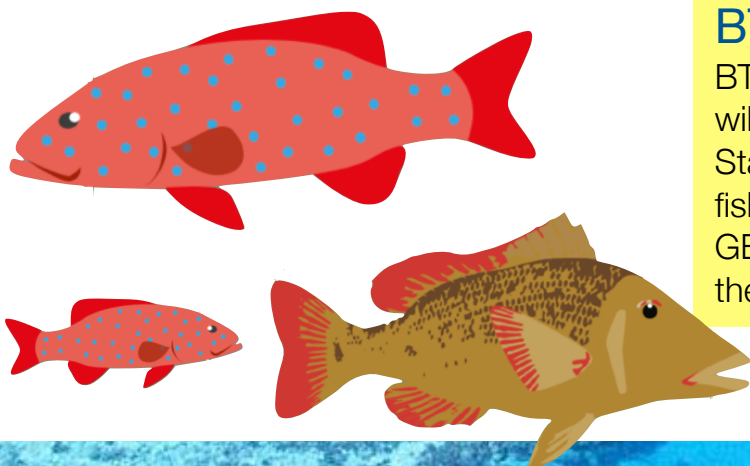
Plant-eating fish remove seaweed that can grow quickly after corals bleach - fishers and spearfishers should consider leaving these fish to help control seaweed and enable coral larvae to settle and create new colonies. Herbivores can help the Reef recover from coral bleaching. *(Please observe poster about herbivorous fish on page 4)*

## Returning Unwanted Fish and Treating Fish Humanely:

- Minimise the length of time a fish is out of the water - keep fish in the water as much as possible and have your equipment close at hand. Very large fish should not be removed from the water
- Do not leave fish on a hot, dry surface to thrash around
- Place fish on a wet towel and cover them, especially the gills and eyes. The fish should not dry out and direct sunlight can damage their eyes
- Handle fish gently - fully support its body, do not hold upright by the jaw, squeeze or kneel on the fish
- Use wet hands or wet cloth when handling fish to minimise damage to their protective mucous coating
- Remove the hook carefully and quickly using a pair of long-nose pliers or a de-hooker to minimise tissue tearing. If the hook is difficult to remove, cut the line instead
- Help fish recover before their release - gently release the fish headfirst into the water
- Use barbless hooks or those that are unlikely to become hooked in the gills or gut.

## Barotrauma:

When a fish is brought up from deep water the rapid change in pressure causes gases in the fish's body to expand. This results in a range of injuries that will most likely be fatal to the fish, and is known as **barotrauma**.



### BTTT's:

BTTT's (Barometric Trauma Treatment Tools) will be available for free from the Weigh In Station for use while fishing to ensure that all fish released have the best chance of survival. GBRMPA staff will be on hand to demonstrate the use of the BTTT Tool.

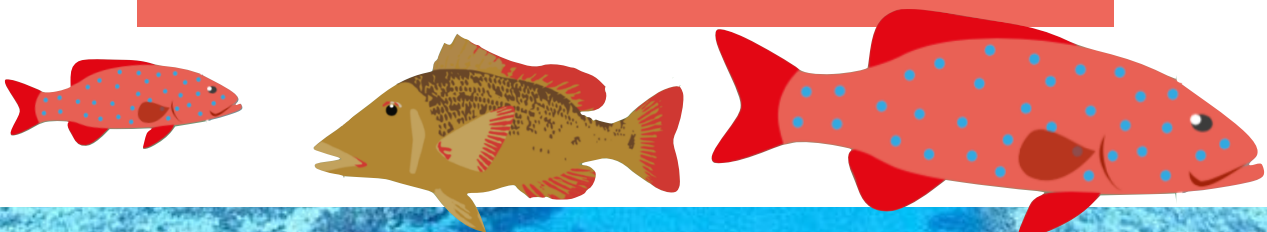
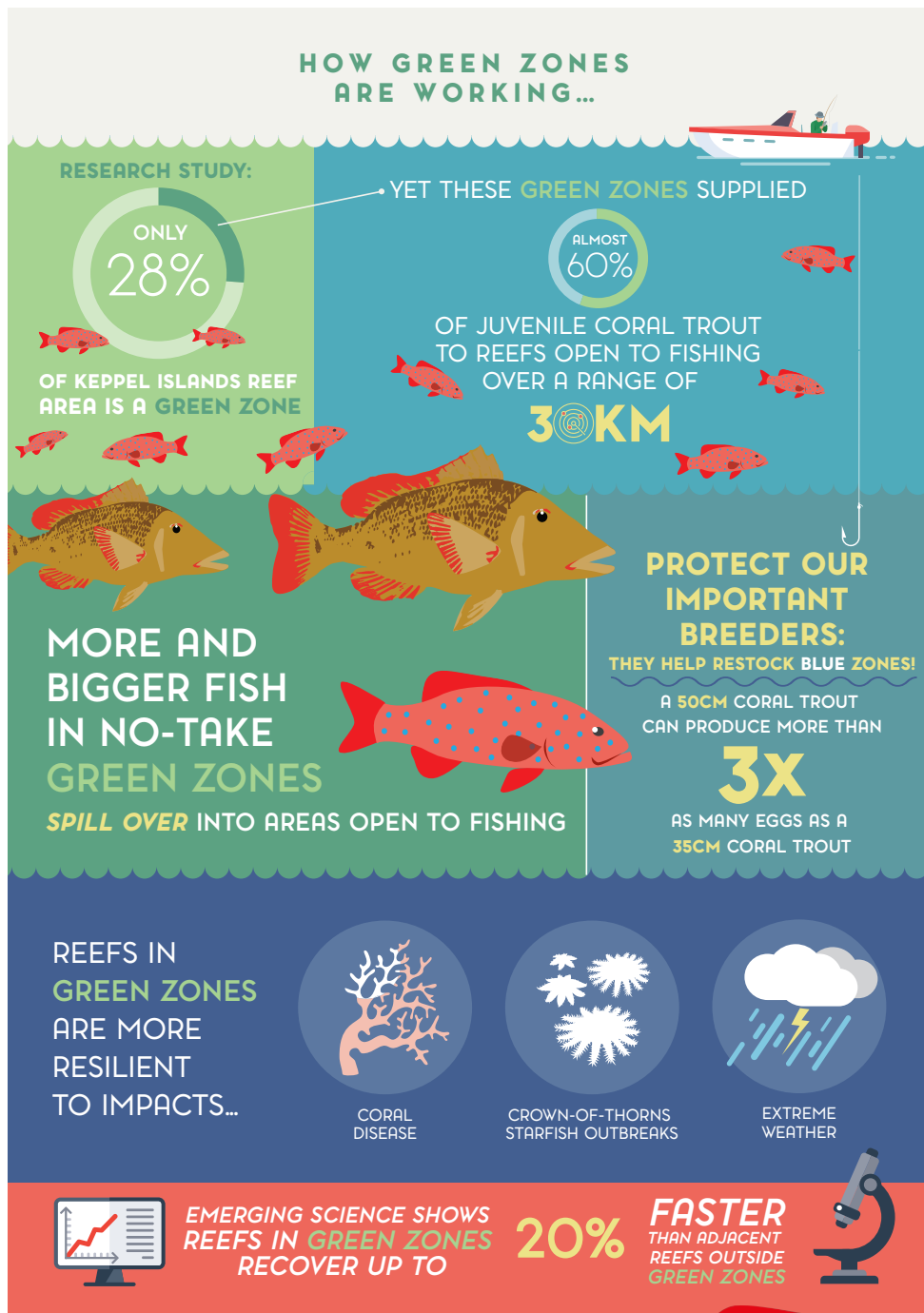
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## Zoning:

Zoning helps to manage and protect the values of the Marine Park that people enjoy. Each zone has different rules for the activities that are allowed, the activities that are prohibited, and the activities that require a permit. Zones may also place restrictions on how some activities are conducted.

Please visit [www.gbrmpa.gov.au](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au) for the latest information.





# CORAL REEF RECOVERY

## Please don't take these fish — the Reef needs them

Mass coral bleaching has occurred on the Great Barrier Reef due to above average ocean temperatures.

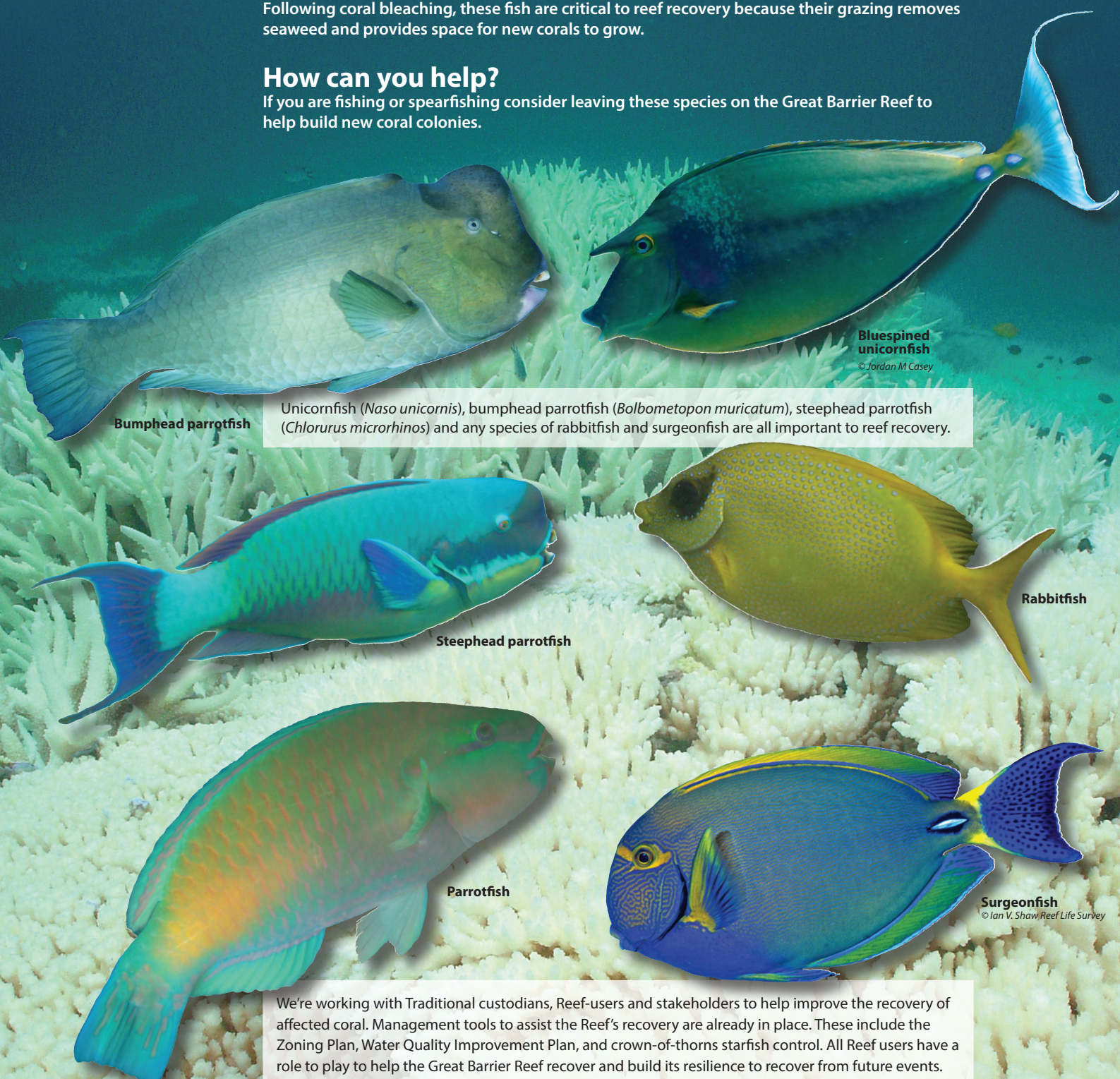
If left to grow, seaweed can quickly dominate reefs and stop coral larvae settling and starting the next generation of coral colonies.

Plant-eating fish, or herbivores, remove seaweed from reefs. In normal conditions, these fish act as nature's lawnmowers and keep seaweed levels under control by grazing close to the bottom of the reef.

Following coral bleaching, these fish are critical to reef recovery because their grazing removes seaweed and provides space for new corals to grow.

### How can you help?

If you are fishing or spearfishing consider leaving these species on the Great Barrier Reef to help build new coral colonies.



Bumphead parrotfish

Bluespined unicornfish  
© Jordan M Casey

Unicornfish (*Naso unicornis*), bumphead parrotfish (*Bolbometopon muricatum*), steephead parrotfish (*Chlorurus microrhinos*) and any species of rabbitfish and surgeonfish are all important to reef recovery.

Steephead parrotfish

Rabbitfish

Parrotfish

Surgeonfish  
© Ian V. Shaw, Reef Life Survey

We're working with Traditional custodians, Reef-users and stakeholders to help improve the recovery of affected coral. Management tools to assist the Reef's recovery are already in place. These include the Zoning Plan, Water Quality Improvement Plan, and crown-of-thorns starfish control. All Reef users have a role to play to help the Great Barrier Reef recover and build its resilience to recover from future events.