

Whale Sharks

of Ningaloo Marine Park: World's best practice

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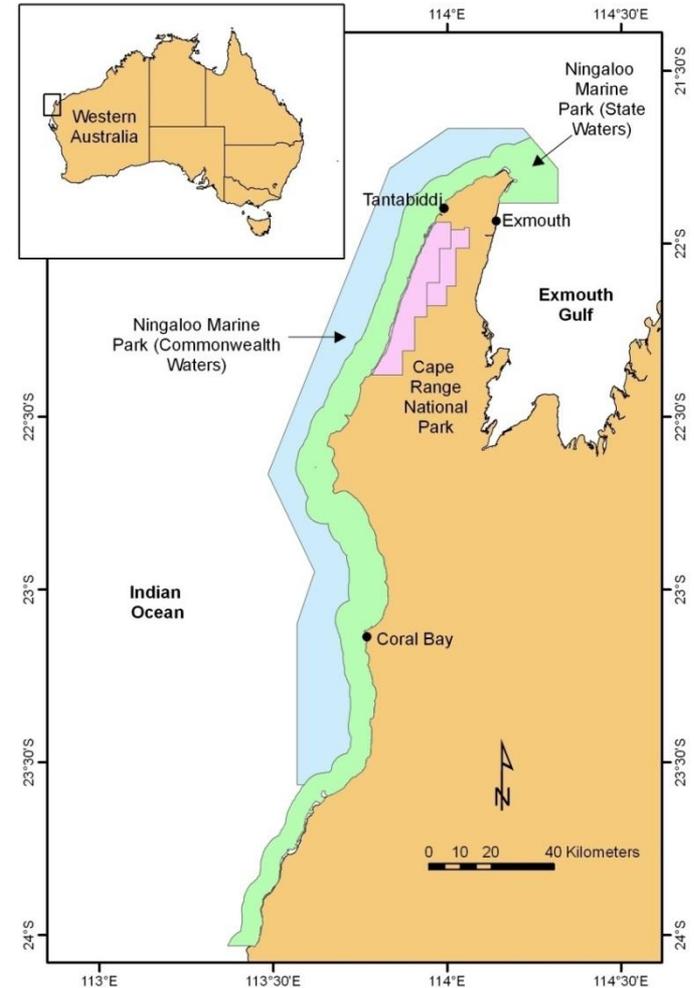


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Ningaloo Marine Park

- Located off the North West Cape of Western Australia, 1200km north of Perth
- Ningaloo reef stretches **260 kms** from North West Cape to Red Bluff, covers an area of 5076 km²
- Largest fringing coral reef in Australia
- WA's premier marine conservation icon, part of Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Area







History

- Tours began in 1989
- Licences and codes of conduct since 1993
- Wildlife management program since 1997
- Restricted licences introduced in 1997 – 15 in total
- New wildlife management program in 2013
- Evolving in partnership with operators
- Growth in tour and passenger numbers

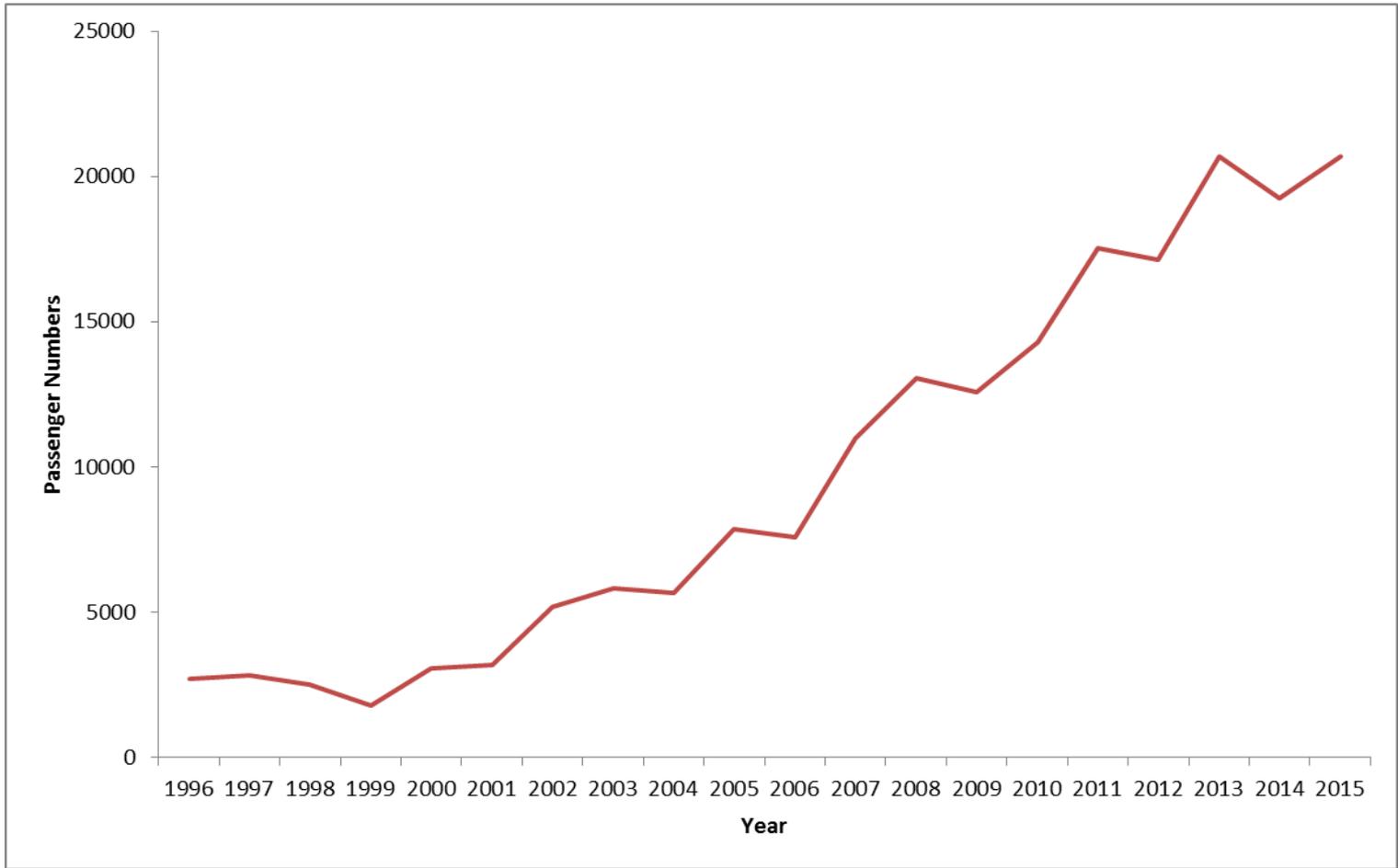




Whale Sharks

Giants of Ningaloo

Last 20 years....



Ningaloo whale shark industry

- Widely regarded as the #1 whale shark ecotourism location in the world
- Known in scientific and tourism circles as having “World’s best practice”
- Other countries have adopted aspects of our management including India, Mozambique, Seychelles, Philippines, Indonesia, most recently St Helena
- The WS industry at Ningaloo is bringing huge economic and community benefits to small towns – estimated at \$2.4 to \$4.6 million direct in 2006.



Wildlife management program

Strategic Objectives – the primary aims of management

- **CONSERVATION**
 - To improve our understanding of whale shark ecology and ensure it is included in whale shark conservation and interaction management
 - To raise public awareness and appreciation of whale sharks and use their iconic status to promote broader marine conservation issues
- **SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**
 - To ensure whale shark interaction tours are undertaken in a sustainable manner
 - To ensure and further promote the status of whale shark as one of the iconic species found within NMP and NCWHA in order to support a world-class ecotourism industry into the future.



So what makes the Ningaloo WS Industry sustainable?

- Working together to implement the WS management program— navigating for success
- A key emphasis on sustainability



Parks and Wildlife & WS Tourism Industry

- Management of the industry – full-time WS Officer
- Pre and post-season meetings
- Interacting with Whale Sharks Training Course
- Codes of conduct
- Collection of data from tours



Scientific community & WS Tourism Industry

- Answering the big questions
- Photo identification
- Tagging research – where do they go?



Sustainability licence conditions

1. Sustainable equipment
2. Environmental impact
3. Cultural and social impacts
4. Safety and risk management
5. Interpretation and education
6. Quality of service
7. Visitor satisfaction
8. Contribution to park management
9. Responsible marketing



Challenges to overcome

- How do we stay world's best practice?
- Are we making the most of our opportunities?
- Are we using our point of difference to ensure economic sustainability?
- How do we compete against whale shark tourism in other countries?
- Where should we focus our research moving forward?

Working together and supporting each other in answering these questions is the key to success in the future



Thank you!



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