

Welcome to Abaco

PLEASE VACATION
RESPONSIBLY



FRIENDS of the ENVIRONMENT
ABACO, BAHAMAS

Here in Abaco we are grateful for our beautiful environment which provides so much through food, recreation, livelihoods, and health. Friends of the Environment works to provide information and opportunities to the wider community to assist our mission of preserving Abaco's environment through education, conservation, and research facilitation.

Learn More

Friends of the Environment
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Marsh Harbour, Abaco

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BAHAMAS FISHING REGULATIONS

FISHING REGULATIONS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. FOR MOST UP-TO-DATE LEGISLATION AND A COMPLETE LIST OF REGULATIONS, CONTACT THE BAHAMAS DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES, OR GO TO WWW.FRIENDSOFTHEENVIRONMENT.ORG

THE FOLLOWING REGULATIONS APPLY TO CITIZENS, RESIDENTS, AND VISITORS OF THE BAHAMAS:

SCALE FISH

- The capture of bonefish by nets is prohibited
- Purchase or sale of bonefish is also prohibited
- No grouper or rockfish should be caught under 3lbs.
- Nassau grouper closed season is 1 December - 28 February.

TURTLES AND SHARKS

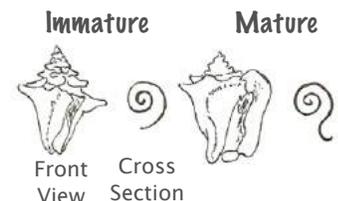
It is illegal to harass, harvest, purchase, or sell any species of turtle or shark or any by-product (e.g. eggs, shells, fins) found within the exclusive economic zone of The Bahamas. Report turtle nest activity or strandings to bahamasseaturtlenetwork@gmail.com

STONE CRAB

Closed season is June 1—October 15. Harvest of female crabs, or whole crabs is prohibited. Claw length must be 4 inches minimum to harvest.

CONCH

- Any conch collected must be mature with a fully-formed flared lip.
- Queen Conch is endangered in most countries except The Bahamas. Help us protect our local population!



CRAWFISH

- Closed Season is April 1—July 31
- Minimum size limit is 3 1/4 inches carapace length or 5 1/2 inches tail length. **Size Matters!**
- Possession of egg bearing females is prohibited, as is removing the eggs.



WHEN FISHING IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT:

It is illegal to fish or collect any marine resource while using SCUBA

Spear Guns and air compressors are prohibited (permits required for citizens to use compressors)
Spearfishing within 200 yards of any shoreline in the Family Islands is illegal (e.g. Abaco), as is spearfishing within 1 mile of New Providence or Grand Bahama.

THESE ADDITIONAL REGULATIONS APPLY TO VISITORS:

YOU MAY COLLECT NO MORE THAN:

- Six (6) conch per vessel at any time
- Ten (10) crawfish per vessel at any time
- 60 pounds or 20 scale fish
- 18 migratory fish total: any combination of kingfish, dolphin, tuna or wahoo. Others should be released alive.

Please note these bag limits are **per vessel** not per person.

WHEN FISHING:

- Use rod and reel or "hand line". No more than 6 lines in the water unless authorized specifically by permit.
- A sport-fishing licence is required unless fishing from a Bahamian-owned boat. A licence is still required if you have a Bahamian captain or guide on a foreign registered boat. Bag limits apply in all cases.
- Permits required for use of spears, fish traps, or nets (other than landing nets).

EXPORTING SEAFOOD

IF YOU WISH TO TRAVEL HOME WITH SEAFOOD FROM THE BAHAMAS, PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOU ARE FOLLOWING LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL REGULATIONS. GUIDELINES ARE LISTED BELOW, HOWEVER YOU SHOULD CONFIRM THEM AT TIME OF TRAVEL AS RULES MAY CHANGE.

Bringing Fish Back to Florida From The Bahamas (by boat)

(info from <http://myfwc.com/fishing/saltwater/recreational/bahamas/>, sourced on 13 November 2018)

If you are considering fishing in the Bahamas and bringing fish back to the U.S. by water, here is what you need to know:

- Bahamian and U.S. fishing regulations are not always the same.
- When fishing in the Bahamas, follow [Bahamian Sportfishing Regulations](#)
- Follow the more restrictive bag and possession limit when traveling to and from the Bahamas. [South Atlantic federal regulations](#)
- Private vessel owners must visit Bahamian Customs and Immigration and have a stamped passport and valid Bahamian cruising and sportfishing permits. Visit [Bahamas.gov.bs](#) for more. [Sportfishing Permit Application](#)
- Check with Bahamian authorities for all legal requirements.
- Passengers must possess a valid government passport with current Bahamian stamps and travel dates.

Fish:

- **Reef fish** (managed as snapper grouper in the U.S.) as well as **dolphin and wahoo** may be brought back from The Bahamas as fillets.
- All other species must be brought back in the condition specified in U.S. federal rules (example: cobia, tuna, swordfish must be brought back in whole condition).

For fish brought back as fillets:

- Skin must remain on the entire fillet
- Two fillets, regardless of their size, count as one fish toward the bag limit
- Follow U.S. Atlantic federal bag and vessel limits, as well as seasons
- Fish brought into the U.S. cannot be sold
- Travel through U.S. federal and Florida state waters must be continuous and gear must remain stowed. (Terminal gear such as hooks, leaders, sinkers, etc. must be disconnected and stowed separately from rod and reel.)

Spiny Lobster:

- Bahamian rules allow you to possess whole and wrung (tailed) lobster; however, when returning to Florida, lobster must be in whole condition (head and tail intact).
- Can only be transported into U.S. waters during the Florida recreational season (Aug. 6 - March 31)
- Spiny lobster cannot be brought back into U.S. waters during the 2-day sport season (last consecutive Wednesday and Thursday of July) because, in The Bahamas, the season is closed during that time period.
- Lobster lawfully harvested by spear in The Bahamas can be returned to Florida.

Prohibited species:

- Species prohibited from harvest in U.S. (queen conch, Nassau/goliath grouper, etc.) cannot be transported through U.S. federal and Florida state waters by boat.

Contact the US Fish and Wildlife Service for regulations related to transporting fish or conch by air carrier back

Transporting seafood to Florida from The Bahamas (by Air)

Bahamas regulations allow persons to carry - 6 (in total)-kingfish, dolphin and wahoo OR ten pounds of conch OR crawfish OR twenty pounds of demersal fishery resources (stone crab, grouper, snappers etc.) (Bahamas Fishery Regulation 70(2)). Check US regulations before traveling. The most restrictive regulations will apply.

Different laws may apply if you are entering the US through another state.



HELP PROTECT OUR REEFS

USE MOORINGS WITH CARE:

Moorings have been placed at Fowl Cay, Mermaid and Sandy Cay Reefs. Moorings are maintained by volunteers with donations and support from the community.

- Short term moorings are provided for small boats only (28ft or less). There is a danger of moorings breaking if larger boats tie up
- If you can't attach to a buoy then anchor in the sand or grass away from the reef.
- Tie your bow line to the pick-up line of the mooring buoy and let out enough rope to give a horizontal pulling on the mooring.
- Ultimately, you are responsible for the safety of your vessel and passengers. It is always a good idea to dive the mooring and assess its condition.



HOW TO HELP REEFS AND SEAS WHILE ON VACATION:

Reduce Energy consumption - Adjust your thermostat, especially when you're not home. Turn off lights when you leave the room, use cold water for washing clothes, then line-dry them.

Buy less meat - and opt for sustainable sources when it comes to what you do purchase. By one estimate, consuming a pound of beef gives off more carbon than burning a gallon of gasoline.

Reduce use of single use plastics - such as bottled water. Bring your own bags when you shop. In general, driving up demand for plastic means doing the same for fossil fuels.

Use coral safe sunscreens - Sunscreens without oxybenzone. Oxybenzone is a chemical shown to damage coral reefs. Consider rash guards and UPF swimwear with built-in sun protection to limit the amount of sunscreen needed.

Don't anchor on the reef - Use mooring guidelines above. Dinghies and runabouts only under 28ft only.

Conserve water - The less water you use, the less runoff and waste water that finds its way back into the ocean.

When eating seafood make choices for healthy oceans - Only eat fish that is in season, and never buy / eat undersize catch. Regulations exist in The Bahamas for Nassau Grouper, Spiny Lobster/Crawfish, Queen Conch, Turtles, Stone Crab, Bonefish and Sharks.

Do not touch corals - Keep fins, gear and hands away from the coral, as contact will damage the coral. Take only pictures and leave only bubbles!

Do not remove living sea stars, sand dollars or sea urchins from the sea.



Help protect Abaco's dolphins, whales, and manatees

Twenty-five species of marine mammals have been recorded in The Bahamas, some are just visitors, while many make The Bahamas their year-round home. Marine mammals occupy a variety of habitats in The Bahamas from sand banks and nearshore waters to open ocean and deep-sea canyons. Their position at the top of the food chain means they are also very important indicators for the health of our marine ecosystem.

*They are protected by the Bahamian Marine Mammal Protection Act.
It is illegal to capture, harm, or harass any marine mammal in The Bahamas.*

Local populations are in decline as a result of increased human activities, such as boating.
Please help to keep them safe!

Responsible Dolphin Watching

Respect their space and stay at least 100 yards away, especially on jet skis.

Drive boats and jet skis at idle speed near dolphins and whales—never approach a group head-on or cross in front of a dolphin or whale but, instead, slowly move alongside and parallel at the same speed or slower. Remember to always give them the RIGHT OF WAY!



The deep scars on the back of this Abaco dolphin are from the blades of a boat propeller. Please follow the guidelines above to ensure that your dolphin-watching experience is fun and safe for everyone.

Mind Your Manatee Manners

Drive slowly, especially in harbors and channels, keeping an eye out for manatees.

Do not feed or give water to manatees, and never touch a manatee in The Bahamas. This habituates them to human interaction and puts them in danger of being hit by boats. They are wild animals and are safer and healthier if they remain wild!



If you are concerned about a manatee's health or body condition, please contact the Bahamas Marine Mammal Stranding Network immediately.



Please report sightings to The Bahamas Marine Mammal Research Organisation
info@bahamaswhales.org,
(242) 366-4155

Please report stranded, injured, or dead marine mammals to:
The Bahamas Marine Mammal Stranding Network
(242) 366-4155

MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

IN THE BAHAMAS, MARINE PROTECTED AREAS (NATIONAL PARKS, RESERVES) MAY BE MANAGED BY THE BAHAMAS NATIONAL TRUST OR THE BAHAMAS DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES. EACH AREA IS SUBJECT TO DIFFERENT RULES AND REGULATIONS. PLEASE MAKE YOURSELVES AWARE BEFORE VISITING.

BE INFORMED:

Abaco currently has 11 marine protected areas. Be sure you know their boundaries and regulations when you visit them.

Department of Marine Resources Marine

Reserves: Crab Cay and No Name Cay
<http://www.bahamas.gov.bs/marineresources/>

Bahamas National Trust Parks (no take):

Walkers's Cay National Park, Black Sound Cay National Reserve, Fowl Cays National Park, Tilloo Cay Preserve, Pelican Cays Land and Sea Park

Bahamas National Trust Parks (mixed use):

East Abaco Creeks National Park, The Marls National Park, South Abaco Blue Holes Conservation Area, & Cross Harbour National Park
www.bnt.bs



Sandy Cay Reef
Pelican Cays Land and Sea Park

Be Aware

ABOUT: Lionfish are a Pacific fish that was introduced to the Atlantic and became invasive. Characteristic of invasive species, lionfish reproduce abundantly, inhabit many different ecosystems, even tolerating environmental extremes (e.g. fresh water), and are voracious predators.

LOCAL CONCERNS: Lionfish are utilizing space and food resources that native fish need.

HOW YOU CAN HELP: Catch 'em, clean 'em, eat 'em! Target lionfish when spearfishing, support restaurants and fishermen selling lionfish and following sustainable fishery regulations.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW: Lionfish are venomous, not poisonous, which means they are safe to eat if cleaned and prepared properly (removal of venomous spines). If you get stung, place your hand in hot (not boiling) water - hot as you can stand - to deactivate the venom. It's a good idea to carry a thermos of hot water if you plan to fish for lionfish. You can also use the exhaust water from your engine.





Harmful Behavior Can Kill Coral

Coral reefs are important habitats for animals such as sea turtles, sharks, eels, and many colorful fish.



Never stand on, kick, or touch coral

Use small kicks and arm movements to avoid damaging corals or smothering them with sand. You'll see more the slower you go! Keep a safe distance from the reef. Snorkelers should stay horizontal, and SCUBA divers should maintain neutral buoyancy. Even light contact can cause permanent damage to coral.



Don't trash the reef

Never allow trash to go overboard. Trash can damage corals, and plastics can be fatal when ingested by fish or sea turtles.



Never anchor on a reef

Anchoring on the reef can damage corals, which may take hundreds of years to re-grow.

Coral Courtesy

What is Coral?

Corals are tiny animals related to sea anemones and jellyfish. Individual animals, known as polyps, live in colonies that make up a coral head. As polyps live and die their stony skeletons slowly contribute to the growth of the coral heads, creating a reef.



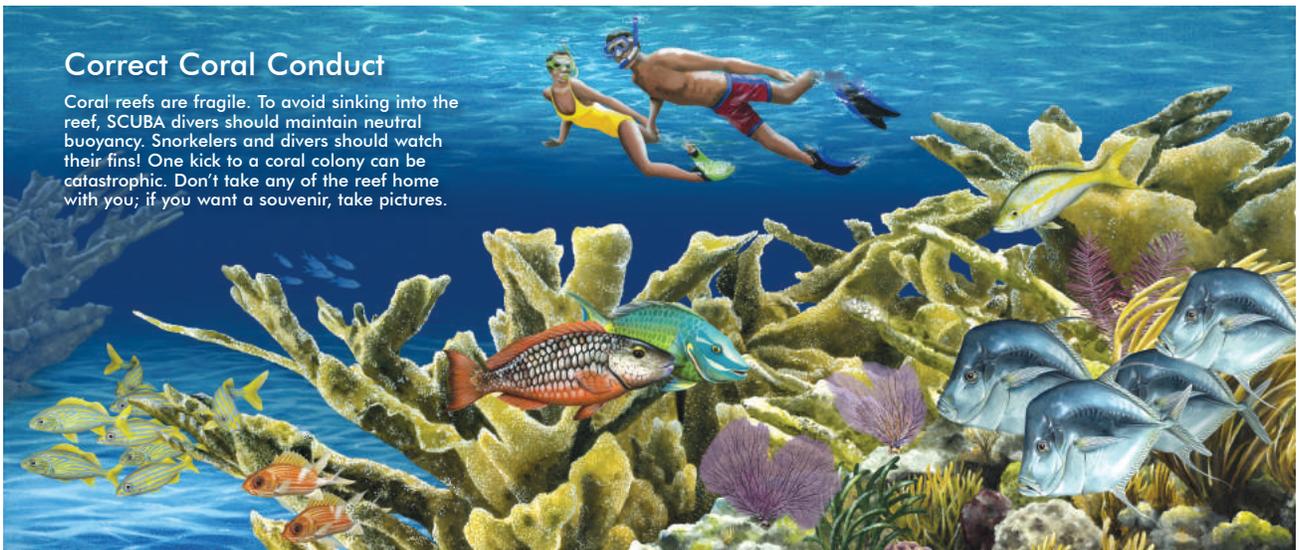
Staghorn coral
Acropora cervicornis

Brain coral
Diploria spp.

Elkhorn coral
Acropora palmata

Correct Coral Conduct

Coral reefs are fragile. To avoid sinking into the reef, SCUBA divers should maintain neutral buoyancy. Snorkelers and divers should watch their fins! One kick to a coral colony can be catastrophic. Don't take any of the reef home with you; if you want a souvenir, take pictures.



Your Good Habits Will Save Our Reefs

Coral reefs make up a small portion of the ocean environment but are home to more than 6000 different plants and animals.



Always use mooring buoys or anchor in sand away from the reef

Mooring buoys allow you to visit a reef without anchoring. Select boat operators that use permanent mooring buoys. If you must anchor, select a sandy area safely away from the reef and ensure that your anchor does not drag.



Always pick up debris

Debris is harmful to reef residents. A reef without debris is healthier and even more beautiful.



Always dispose of fishing and trap lines responsibly

Abandoned fishing and trap line entangles and kills corals, sea turtles, and other reef life. These lines are also a danger to divers and snorkelers.

Please help conserve this valuable ecosystem

Coral reefs around the world are threatened by pollution, overfishing, disease, and climate change.

- Learn about coral reefs and how to help by visiting this website: www.coralreef.noaa.gov
- Limit pesticides and fertilizers on lawns — Chemicals commonly used on lawns can be harmful to corals. Avoid their use and prevent over-watering, which creates run-off.
- Donate time or funding to organizations trying to save coral reefs — Contact non-profit groups who are working to raise awareness of coral conservation and learn how you might contribute to the effort.
- Be aware of the products you are purchasing — Illegally harvested corals are sometimes sold as souvenirs. Avoid buying products containing coral.

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Tomorrow's Oceans

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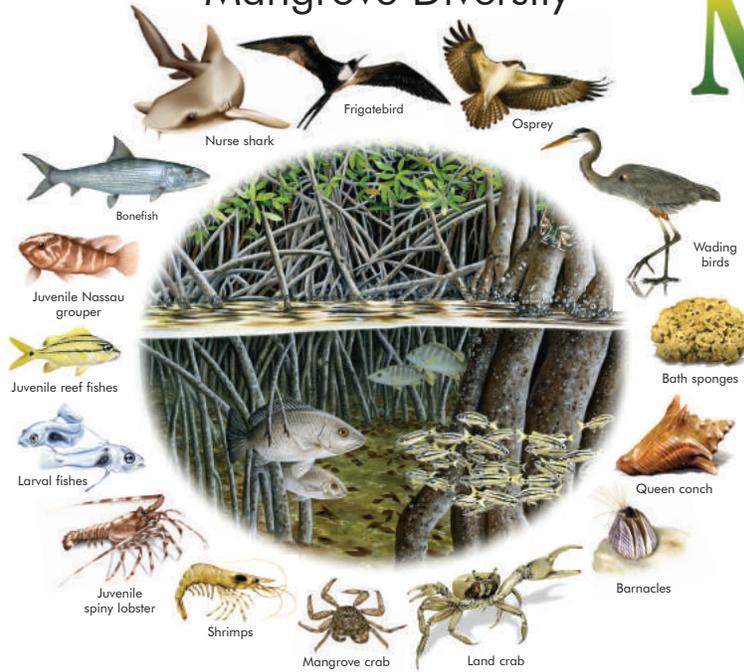
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SCIENCE
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Mangrove Diversity



- Most of the seafood we eat relies on mangroves at some stage in their lives.
- Mangrove roots provide a complex environment to help shelter juvenile fish from predators.
- Mangrove ecosystems support ecotourism activities such as catch-and-release fly fishing, snorkeling, birdwatching, and kayaking.
- Mangroves provide a buffer zone from heavy waves and storms which is important for juvenile fish.
- Mangroves make excellent roosting habitat for birds.
- Mangroves serve as sinks for carbon, reducing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.
- Mangroves filter run-off from the land, helping to keep our seas clean and clear.
- Mangroves and other native coastal plants reduce shoreline erosion and help protect upland property, lessening the effects of storms and hurricanes.

Mangrove Manners

Mangroves are bushes and trees that can live in saline waters. They form a crucial component of the coastal realm by supporting biodiversity, serving as a nursery for juveniles, and protecting shorelines from storm damage and erosion.

Mangrove Species



Red Mangrove – Most common mangrove in The Bahamas, found nearest to the coast. Identified by characteristic arching prop roots.



Black Mangrove – Found immediately inland of red mangroves. Roots extend outward underground and send up pneumatophores, which often stick out above the water like little snorkels.



White Mangrove – Common in high marshes, upland of red and black mangroves. Leaves are rounded at the base and tip. Two salt glands at the base of each leaf appear as small bumps.



Connections to Mangroves

Many juvenile fish and other sea life that grow up in mangroves move to seagrass beds and coral reefs as they mature. As such, mangroves and coral reefs are inextricably linked through the movements of animals. We must take care of mangroves to ensure fish populations remain healthy enough to support our food needs.

Your Good Habits Can Save Our Mangroves

Properly dispose of solid and liquid wastes

Solid waste, sewage, and fuel are damaging pollutants that should be properly disposed of at a local landfill or waste processing facility.

Support sustainable development

Build sustainably by choosing a location and style that will not interfere with sensitive wetland areas.

Prevent and report oil spills

Learn about local boating laws and methods for proper oil disposal.

Follow fishing regulations

Fishing regulations are in place to help ensure the sustainability of important species – don't break the law!

Remove derelict traps and lines

This good deed will help ensure that no fish are needlessly killed in "ghost" traps.

Remove fishing line from snagged baits

Fishing line left in the ocean can be mistaken for food by animals. Properly dispose of fishing line when you reach the shore.

If trimming mangroves, follow guidelines

Because mangroves grow below the high water mark they are regulated by The Government. Contact your local government for advice.

Participate in coastal clean-ups

Contact your local conservation group to find out how you can become involved in beach, shoreline, and underwater clean-ups.

Be a mangrove steward

Get involved with mangrove conservation projects such as planting and helping to protect seedlings. Tell your friends and family about the importance of mangroves.



Help your community and the environment by removing unsightly and damaging trash from your local mangrove wetland.



Parrotfish are Good for Our Coral Reefs

Grazing parrotfish promote healthy reefs, which protect our coasts, support our economy, and provide us food. Help parrotfish and our reefs by fishing and consuming responsibly.



Your Good Habits Can Save Our Parrotfish

Parrotfish are too valuable to spearfish.

Instead, target sustainable food fish like jacks and grunts.

If you accidentally catch a parrotfish, put it back!

Protect mangroves and seagrass beds.

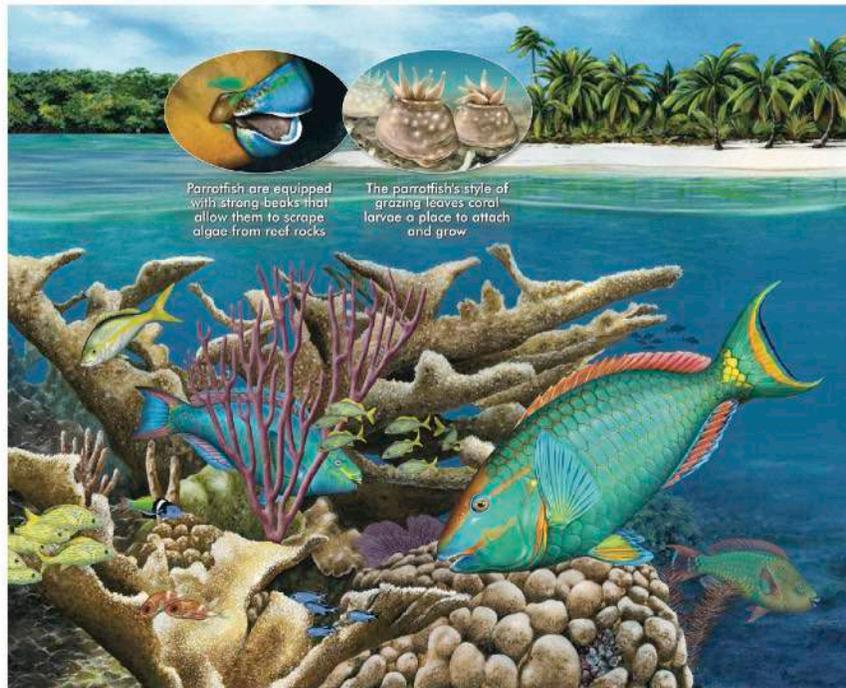
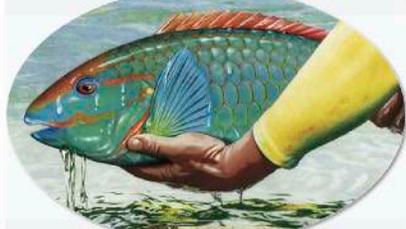
Mangroves and seagrasses are parrotfish nursery habitats.

Choose sustainable seafood while shopping and eating out.

There are many good choices at the Seafood Watch app and website.

Don't leave your gear behind.

Properly dispose of old lines and traps, which can continue to entangle and kill sea life.



Parrotfish are equipped with strong beaks that allow them to scrape algae from reef rocks.



The parrotfish's style of grazing leaves coral larvae a place to attach and grow.

Protect our Parrotfish

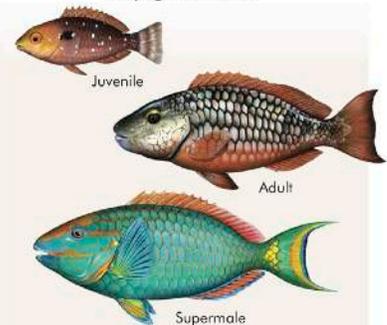
Why Protect Parrotfish?

Each type of fish on the reef has a specific job to do. Parrotfish help keep the reef clean by feeding on algae. This ensures that corals are not smothered by seaweed, and that open spaces are left for new coral larvae to settle. In this way, parrotfish help coral reefs to grow, providing more habitat for numerous other fish and invertebrates. As they graze, parrotfish also consume rock and dead coral, which is ground down in their gut and excreted as sand. A large parrotfish can produce hundreds of pounds of sand per year!

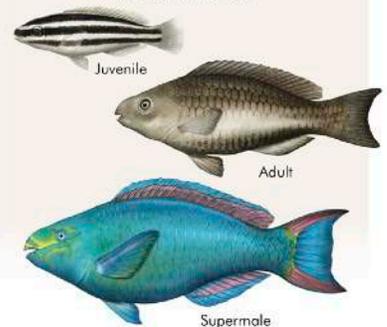
Common Parrotfish and Their Color Phases

Parrotfish are a diverse group of fish that spend most of their lives on coral reefs. Their name comes from their beaklike teeth and the bright colours displayed by adult males.

Stoplight Parrotfish



Queen Parrotfish



Eleven species of parrotfish are commonly found on Bahamian reefs. Some of the largest parrotfish species can grow to over 5 feet long, while some may only grow to 5-7 inches long.



Follow coral courtesies.

Never stand on, kick, or touch coral. Use moorings or anchor in the sand away from reefs. Limit pesticides and fertilizers on lawns. Parrotfish rely on healthy coral reef habitats.



Keep the environment clean.

Pitch in by picking up litter on land and in the water. Solid waste, sewage, and fuel are damaging pollutants that should be properly disposed of at a local landfill or waste processing facility.

Support sustainable development.

Build sustainably by choosing a location and style that will not interfere with sensitive wetland areas. Avoid dredging.

Follow fishing regulations.

Fishing regulations are in place to help ensure the sustainability of important species—don't break the law!

Learn about and support The Bahamas Marine Protected Area Network.

Respect the rules while visiting protected areas. Protected areas benefit the entire marine environment by promoting healthy ecosystems and species. That means fish for the future!



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