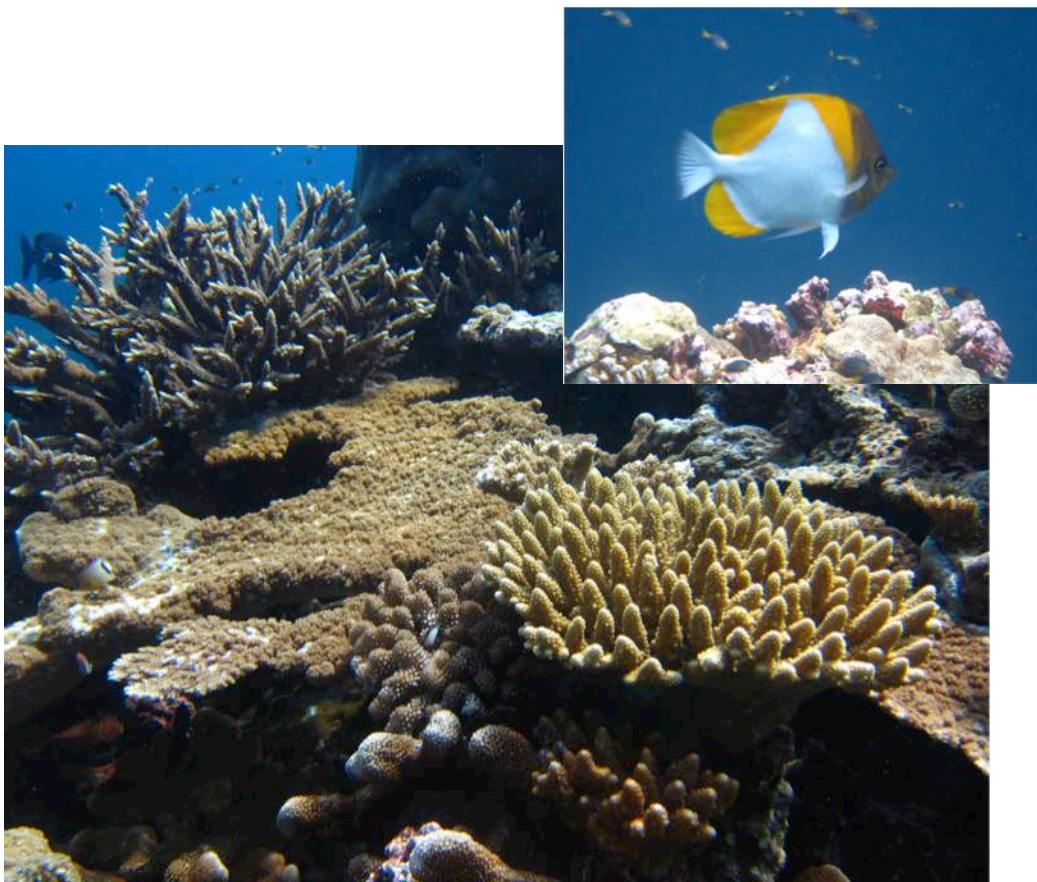


AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF MARINE RESEARCH AT CHRISTMAS ISLAND AND COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS

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Background

Australia's Indian Ocean Territory (IOT), comprising Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, is an important biodiversity hotspot representing a unique area of overlap between the major biogeographical provinces of the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean. Moreover, there are many important and iconic species (e.g., the Red Crab, *Gecarcoidea natalis*) that are endemic to the IOT. Despite the significant biodiversity and unique marine environments of the IOT there is a widely held concern that limited research on marine ecosystems and organisms has undermined local conservation efforts. The purpose of this annotated bibliography was to compile a comprehensive list of primary research papers (e.g., peer-reviewed journal articles) and other published reports based on research conducted at Christmas Island and/ or the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, or are directly relevant to marine ecosystems and organisms in this region. These papers were organised under broad headings to further highlight areas (mostly, taxonomically) of critical future research.

Summary of findings

At least 506 publications, including 337 peer-reviewed journal articles, have arisen based on research conducted at Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, or are directly relevant to marine ecosystems and organisms at these islands (Table 1). Much of the biological research of marine organisms (22.5% of publications) that has been undertaken at Christmas Island focuses on land crabs (e.g., *Gecarcoidea natalis*), which are an extremely important and iconic component of the island's fauna. Moreover, there are many more publications on the terrestrial biology and ecology of land crabs which has not been included within this annotated bibliography. Similarly, much of this research (96 publications: 25.1%) relates to sea birds. Approximately 200 publications are directly focussed on marine ecosystems or exclusively marine organisms (e.g., corals and fishes) at Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands is 200, most of which relate to teleost fishes (58 publications: 29.0%). This level of output is a small fraction of the research that has been undertaken at other similarly isolated Australian coral reef systems (e.g., Lord Howe Island). For example, there are only 16 papers about reef-building (Scleractinia) corals at Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands, and these are mostly limited to published species lists. In contrast, there have been 413 publications based on coral research at Lord Howe Island, describing

temporal changes in species composition, explored the local reproductive biology and settlement of dominant taxa, and also quantified growth, mortality and population dynamics.

Table 1. Distribution of marine research across major taxonomic groups and topics.

Topic	Journal Articles	All publications	Years
MARINE GEOLOGY	50	66	1900-2008
NATURAL HISTORY	38	57	1832-2011
MARINE VEGETATION	2	2	1984-1988
CORALS & SPONGES	16	21	1887-2011
IMPACTS & MANAGEMENT	8	36	1831-2011
FISHERIES	1	16	1949-2010
TELEOST FISHES	49	61	1954-2013
CHONDRICHTHYAN FISHES	3	5	2004-2013
ECHINODERMS	5	6	1947-2011
MARINE MAMMALS	6	8	1887-2007
TURTLES	2	13	1887-2010
SEA BIRDS	55	96	1841-2009
MARINE MOLLUSCS	15	18	1887-2000
LAND CRABS	67	86	1900-2012
OTHER CRUSTACEA	21	22	1887-2012
PLANKTON	2	3	1911-2010
TOTAL	340	518	1831-2013

Despite the limited marine research that has been conducted at Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, what is reassuring is the recent increase in the rate of publications (Figure 1). Most notably, the number of journal articles has increased from <20 per decade up until the 1960s, to >60 in the 1990s and 2000s. Further, the projected number of journal articles (based on the number of papers published up until mid-2013) is expected to be at least 100. Recent increases in research publications (from 2000-2013) are attributable to increased research on teleost fishes, chondrichthyan fishes (sharks) and also impacts to and management of the unique marine biodiversity at Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands; 41% of publications since 2010 related to teleost fishes, and particularly biographic studies of community composition and genetic structure.

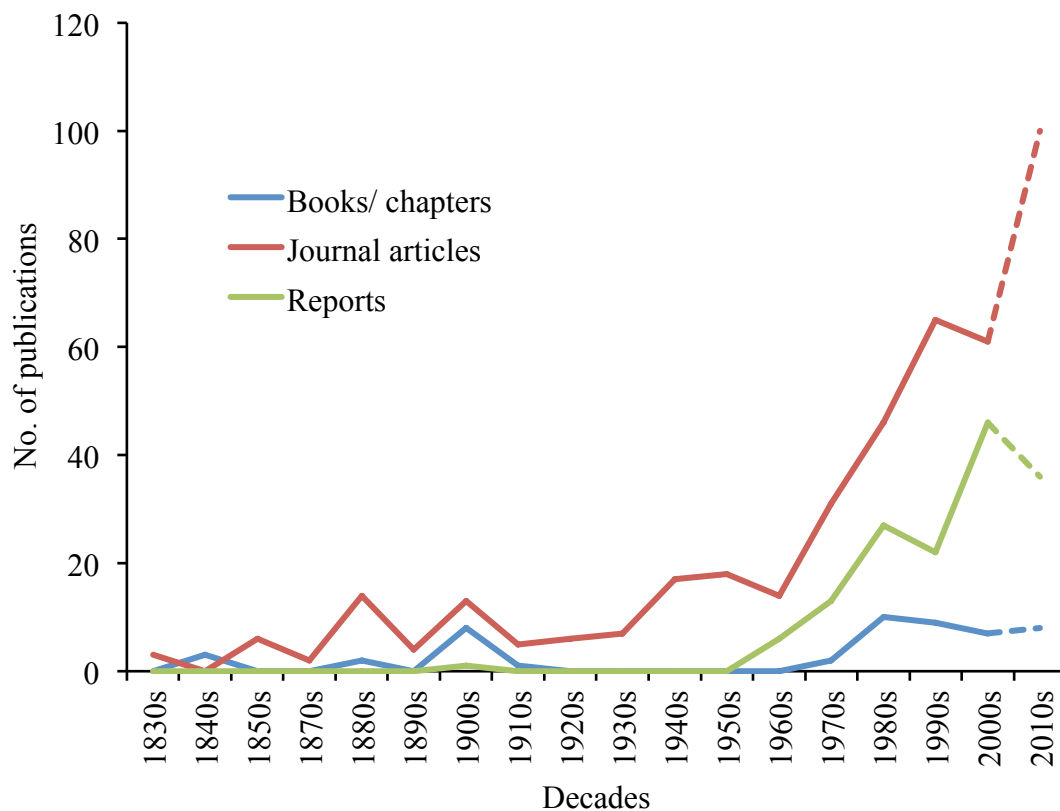


Figure 1. Chronology of published research conducted at Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands that is directly relevant to marine ecosystems and organisms. Total publications for the 2010s are projected based on the number of publications up until mid-2013.

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