



# REEF CHECK AUSTRALIA

CORAL TROUT SEARCH | PROJECT FACTSHEET

MAY 2009

By keeping track of coral trout on our reefs, we can make sure that we don't take too many when we go fishing and that we leave enough for our next trip to the reef and for our children. The information collected through this program can then be used to see how different types of coral trout change in number and size over time and gauge the health of their habitat in popular sites.

The program is designed to be highly accessible and involve a broad community of reef lovers. It is appropriate for a wide range of ages and does not require high levels of fitness. The methods are simple to follow and searches can be carried out on snorkel with minimal training. By following the Reef Check Australia recommended snorkel policy, the coral reef search can be a fun and safe way to get involved in meaningful coral reef research.

## Who can get involved?

Anyone who is:

- At least 10 years old
- able to swim/snorkel safely for 150 metres
- making a trip to the Great Barrier Reef or fringing reef

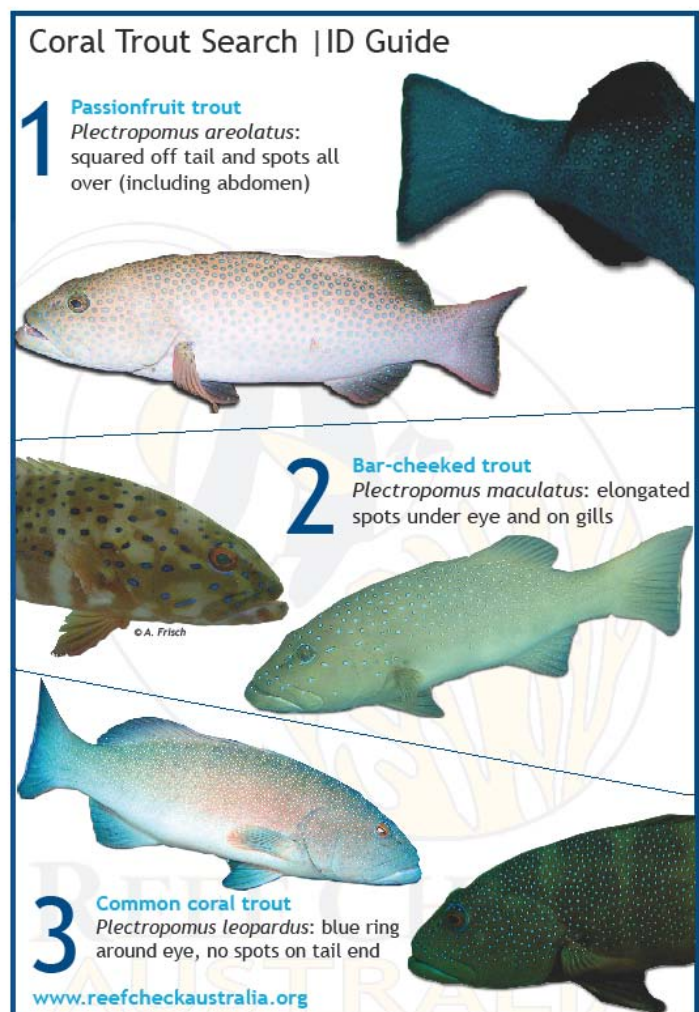
## How to take part:

FIRST:

Download the materials from our website and practise the methods before going out to the reef. The materials also feature a handy identification guide for coral trout species.

THEN:

Print a copy of the data sheet onto plastic paper (e.g. Xerox projector paper) so that it can be taken underwater. Many people don't know this but an ordinary pencil can be used to write underwater!



## NOW SEARCH:

Coral trout searches can be done by individuals out for a day's fishing or by families or groups of friends just enjoying a snorkel on the reef. Searches are completed in 50 metre sections according to our **methods**, with searchers counting and sizing the different fish as they go. Once back on dry land, the data can be entered directly into our user-friendly database and virtually instant results can be produced as a comparison with other searches done on the reef.

## How is the data used?

With many coral trout searches taking place throughout the Great Barrier Reef and Fringing Reefs, there is the potential to collect a huge range of data on coral trout trends. As long as all searchers carefully follow our search methods, we can be sure that the data they collect is reliable. A pilot study on Orpheus and Pelorus Islands in 2007 and subsequent protocol testing in the Keppels in 2008 has resulted in a consensus amongst the scientific community that the methods used for the coral trout searches will produce valuable data.

When the data is input into our new database, it can be processed and generated into reports for coral reef managers to analyse and see if resource management plans are working or need to change. The more information we collect, the more likely the resulting strategy is to provide a workable solution for everyone using the coral reefs, now and in future generations.

## Sponsors & supporters:

This program benefits from the following valuable funding and in-kind support:

Project development funded until July 2009 financial year by GBRMPA.

Aspects of project development funded by: George Alexander Foundation & Landcare's Post Office Grant.

In-kind support through CapReef and Australian Underwater Federation by use of their network to communicate project details to members.

Researchers from James Cook University have provided technical advice in the development of this project.

## And the future?

As more and more data is collected by community members, we will be able to develop the program further to include more training and widen the search protocol to extend to scuba monitoring. With more funding, we will be able to run additional workshops to train more coral trout searchers in the methods, leading to more valuable data sets for the future.

