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UK International Development
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A MANAGEMENT REVIEW OF

PIGEON ISLAND NATIONAL PARK

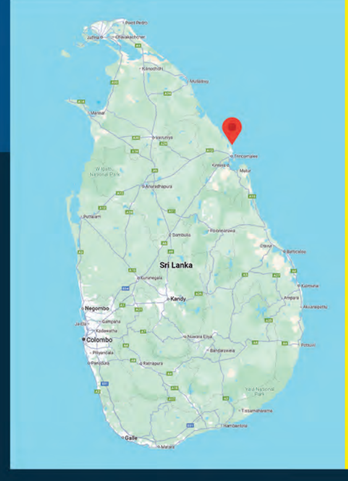
Trincomalee, East coast

Designated as a Marine Sanctuary in June 1963.

Then a National Park in 2003. Both under the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance (Chapter 469).

Size: 4.714 km²

What does it protect?



The National Park encompasses two islands (Pigeon Island and Crow Island) and a shallow coral reef. The coral reef ecosystem is amongst the healthiest in Sri Lanka and hosts a variety of marine life including over 300 species of fish, 3 species of turtle and blacktip reef sharks.

Small patches of mangrove can also be found around Pigeon Island as well as the endangered blue rock pigeon, from which the island gets its name.

The National Park is a significant tourist destination for the east coast of Sri Lanka and provides livelihood opportunities for the local community.

Identified threats

- Ornamental fish trade
- Climate change
- Tourism
- Pollution
- Abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear
- Illegal fishing
- Invasive algae

Key successes

1. The National Park is legally designated under the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance.
2. Active measures in place to manage tourism and protect the coral reef, including permit access, marker buoys, and a colour marking system for different vessel types.
3. Illegal fishing inside The National Park has significantly declined due to presence of DWC Rangers.
4. Local tour operators are happy with their involvement in management and are supportive of increased awareness programmes.
5. The National Park is a significant tourist attraction for the region and provides benefits to the wider community, enhancing livelihoods.
6. Coral reef and reef fish populations are believed to be healthy and stable with overall coral cover of 46% which is higher than most reefs in Sri Lanka.

Review of Protected Area Management Effectiveness

Once a protected area has been designated, it is important to understand how well it is being managed. Various methods can be used to evaluate management effectiveness. One of the most common methods used is the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT-4). This involves answering 38 questions based around five management themes:

PLANNING — Assessment of protected area legislation, design and planning.

INPUTS — Assessment of resources: staff, budget, equipment, and facilities.

PROCESS — Assessment of the way in which management is conducted.

OUTPUTS — Assessment of the implementation of management actions; delivery of products/services.

OUTCOMES — Assessment of the outcomes and the extent to which they achieved the protected areas objectives.

What we did

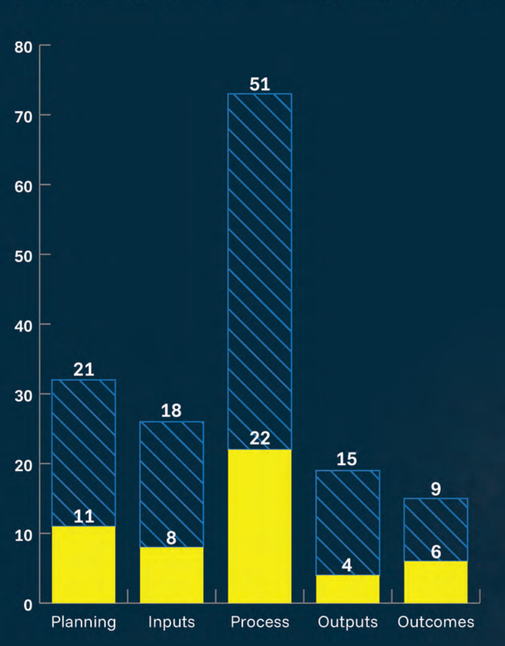
The Ocean Country Partnership Programme and Department of Wildlife Conservation assessed the management of Pigeon Island National Park by reviewing available evidence and engaging with 23 local stakeholders through meetings and a workshop facilitated by Blue Resources Trust on 26 January 2024. We have identified what is working well and key actions that could help to improve management.

Stakeholders

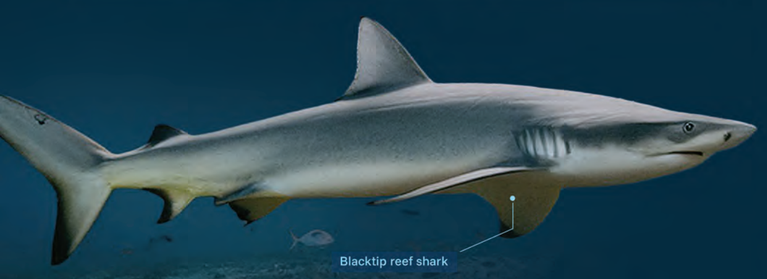
Sectors involved in the review:

Government · NGOs · Tour Operators · Fishers · Local Community

METT score per management element

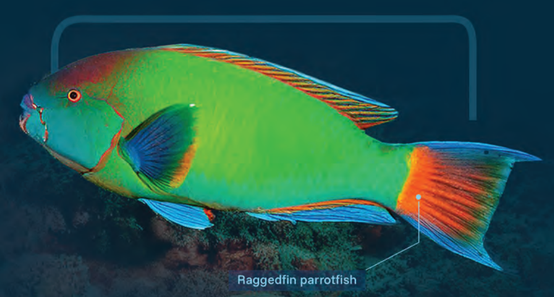


Habitat / Species	Condition	Trend
Coral reef	Good	Stable
Reef fishes	Good	Stable
Reef sharks	Good	Improving
Rock pigeons	Not assessed	Not assessed



Next Steps

The Department of Wildlife Conservation will use the results of this evaluation to determine priorities for the future.



Key actions to improve management

- Develop a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound) Management Plan that outlines key management actions for the next five years and provides opportunities for stakeholder input.
- Develop a Research and Monitoring Plan that meets the needs of the National Park.
- Review the allocation of tourist fee revenue to ensure a sufficient amount is fed back into supporting the management of the National Park.
- Improve infrastructure within the National Park and at Nilaveli beach (e.g., sanitation facilities, increase in garbage bins, access to drinking water, more information boards).
- Build upon existing education and outreach programmes for both tourists and the local community to improve awareness of the National Park and environmental issues.