

Grouper aggregations and how MPAs help them



What are Groupers?

Groupers are slow growing, commercially valuable fish that are **ecologically important** to coral reef ecosystems.

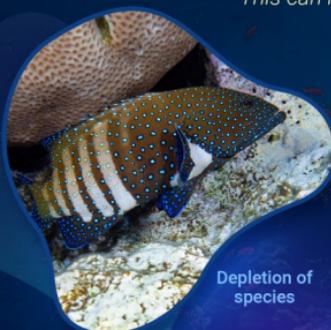
There are more than **40 species** of groupers recorded in the Maldives, they are **highly valuable** to tourists and they are the basis of a large commercial fishery.



GROUPERS ARE VULNERABLE TO FISHING IMPACTS BECAUSE THEY ONLY REPRODUCE LATER IN THEIR LIFE.

Groupers gather in large aggregations at predictable locations to reproduce over a period of several weeks. Spawning aggregations are particularly prone to overfishing and can very rapidly be overharvested.

This can lead to:



Depletion of species



Groupers grow to smaller sizes



Reduction of the population of species



Disruptions in food webs that the grouper is an important part of

SPAWNING AGGREGATION SITES ARE WHERE LIFE BEGINS FOR GROUPER FISH SPECIES AND ARE CRUCIAL TO MAINTAINING A HEALTHY POPULATION, WHICH IN TURN, SUPPORTS VALUABLE GROUPER FISHERIES.



90% of the 10 highest valued grouper species landed were immature.

(MMPH report - 2020)



There are around **700** grouper fishers in the Maldives.

How MPAs come into play?

MPAs or Marine Protected Areas help protect aggregating groupers in the Maldives by managing certain activities in the key areas groupers spawn. Activities can be managed permanently or only during the spawning season.

Grouper aggregation MPAs are powerful tools that have been proven to be successful for long-term conservation of grouper populations. There are currently five such MPAs in the Maldives.



Restricted activities in grouper aggregation MPAs



All types of fishing, including spear fishing



Diving or snorkeling



Boat anchoring or other types of physical disturbance



Helping to maintain healthy populations.



Helping to grow marine food webs more robustly, attracting other predatory species.

How MPAs help grouper aggregations?



Creating safe breeding grounds for fish species.

Helping the recovery of severely depleted and endangered grouper populations.



UK Government UKaid

Support MPAs. Save Marine Life.