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Wildlife Biology
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What's important to visitors at Port Smith, Eighty Mile Beach, Kimberley?

The Port Smith area lies within the recently declared Karajarri Indigenous Protected Area (Figure 1) and faces a number of visitor-related challenges including unmanaged tourist access and access in restricted areas, environmental pressures (notably overfishing) and lack of recognition of Karajarri cultural authority.

Murdoch University partnered with Karajarri Traditional Owners and Karajarri Rangers to find out what places and activities were important to visitors at Port Smith. This information will assist in ongoing management of area.

Methods and results

Together with Traditional Owners and Rangers we surveyed 97 people staying at the Port Smith Caravan Park to explore their values, activities and preferences. We asked people to mark on a paper map up to five places that they had visited in the Port Smith area. For each place we asked people: (1) what they valued about that place (14 values to choose from); (2) what

activities they had been involved in there (14 activities to choose from); and (3) what improvements they would like to see at that location (10 improvements to choose from). We also asked people about their experiences with the Karajarri Rangers.

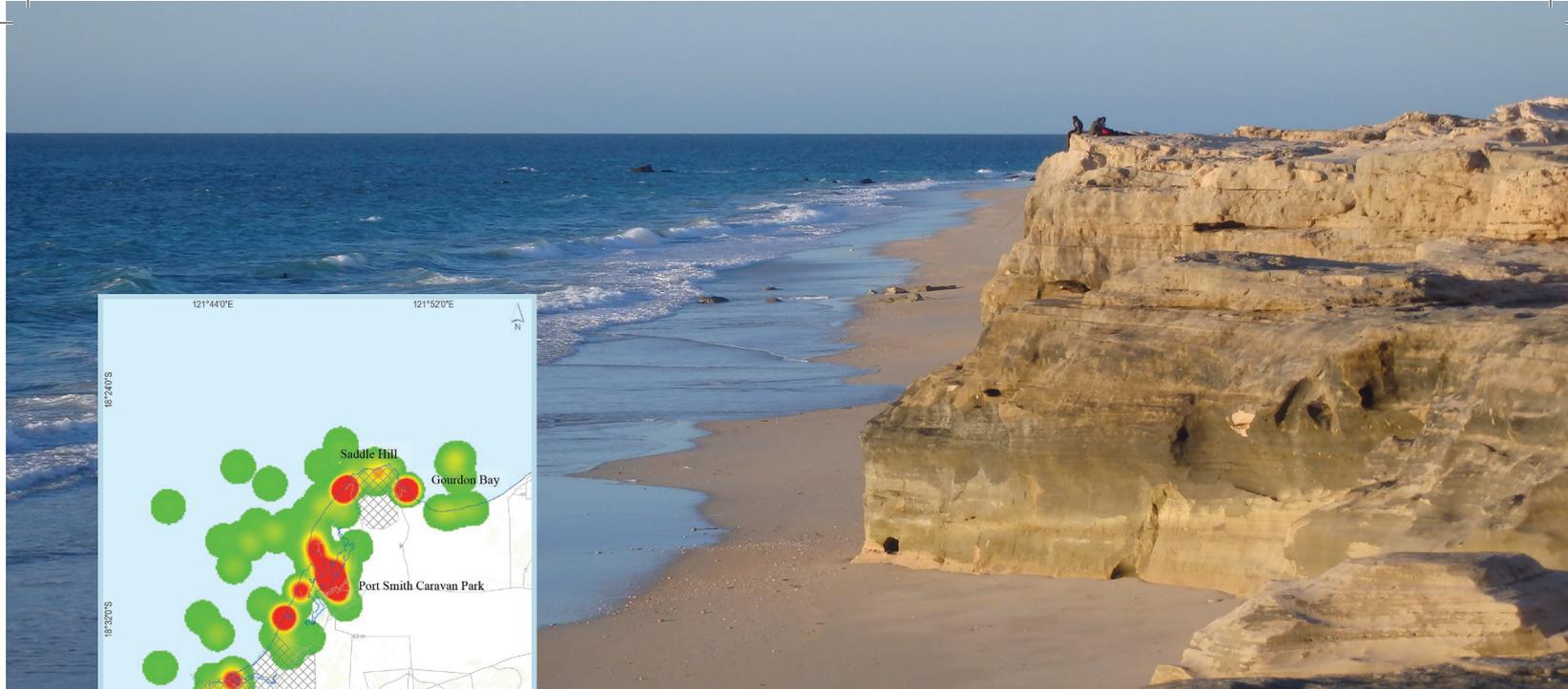
Mapped values for the Port Smith coastline and marine environment included indirect use values, direct use, non-consumptive values and direct use consumptive values, and non-use values. The main mapped values were bequest (16%), aesthetic (13%) and recreational fishing (12%). Spectating/sightseeing (17%), relaxing (16%) and wildlife/nature interaction or viewing (14%) were the most commonly mapped activities. Mapping of activities showed



FIGURE 1 Port Smith on the Kimberley coast



ABOVE: Murdoch researchers and Karajarri Traditional Owners and rangers discuss the survey. (Photo: R. Swain)



ABOVE: Saddle Hill cliffs. (Photo: S. Bayley)

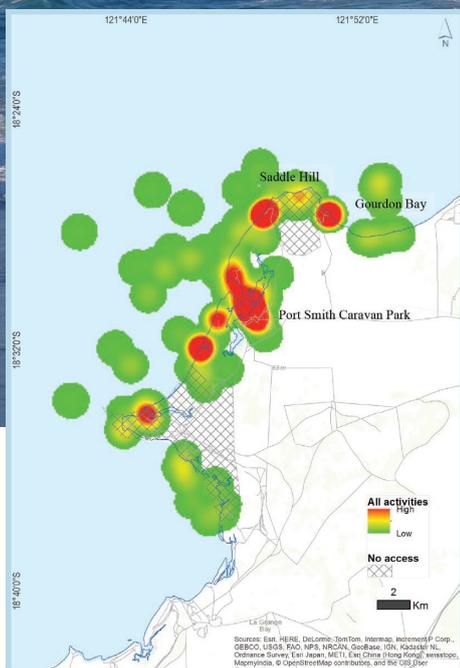


FIGURE 2 Hotspots for all activities relative to 'no access' areas

visitors were using restricted areas, with the restrictions determined by Traditional Owners based on cultural concerns (Figure 2). The most commonly desired improvements were visitor guides/maps (24%), information/interpretation boards (20%) and walk trails (12%).

More than half of all people said they had not seen or spoken to Karajarri rangers during their visit, while almost 71% of people said that having more interaction with the Rangers would have improved their stay at Port Smith.

We generated 'hotspot' maps for each value, activity and improvement type. They show the places most frequently identified and mapped during the survey and allow us to see if hotspots exist in areas that are set aside as 'no public access' (Figure 2). Most hotspots were clustered around coastal access points.

Management implications

1. Visitors hold a broad range of values for the Port Smith area that must underpin any planning for future use. Bequest value, aesthetics and recreational fishing are the most common values associated with the area.
2. Visitor activities and desired improvements are co-located with access points. This illustrates how pressures and opportunities for management concentrate at certain points along coastlines. It also emphasises how important managing access is for the sustainable future of such areas.
3. Port Smith visitors continue to visit areas designated as 'no public access'. This suggests the need for improved signage and other information for visitors such as brochures to inform and direct visitors regarding 'no access' areas. Karajarri managers could also consider providing signs describing culturally appropriate information on the reasons for access closures. The attendance of Karajarri representatives at regular Caravan Park visitor evenings could complement this.
4. Visitors are greatly interested in engaging with local Aboriginal people, and learning about the area's cultural

significance. This suggests the potential for Karajarri representatives, including Rangers, to develop a range of formal and informal interpretive or cultural tourism activities for visitors. ■

More information

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References

- 1 This article is an excerpt from: Strickland-Munro J, Kobryn H, Bayley S, Moore SA and Palmer D (2016). Human values and aspirations for coastal waters of the Kimberley: Port Smith (Purnturrpurnturr) visitor survey. Technical Report. Kimberley Marine Research Program Node of the Western Australian Marine Science Institution, WAMSI, Perth, Western Australia.

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