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Reef monitoring: tourists step up to the post

The latest tool for protecting the Great Barrier Reef may be a simple aluminium post.



Credit: Martin Fluker

Victoria University researcher Dr Martin Fluker has just installed three 'Fluker Posts' on the Great Barrier Reef near Cairns to encourage tourists to participate in a monitoring project. The posts are placed at strategic sites and contain a small platform for a camera and instructions on where to point and shoot.

The photographs are then uploaded to a [central site](#) where reef and marine wildlife managers can monitor the area over time.

Two posts have been installed on the upper deck of Cairns' Reef Magic-operated Marine World pontoon, facing north and southeast over sections of reef exposed at low tide.

A third post has been installed underwater looking at a coral bombora, or coral 'shelf'.

It is hoped the posts will be well used by the hundreds of tourists aboard catamaran snorkel tours run by Reef Magic, who regularly use the pontoon for tourist charters.

'The success of this design is its simplicity,' Dr Fluker said. 'It has minimal set-up or maintenance costs yet delivers on the need for monitoring large and often remote natural environments.'

Reef Magic and James Cook University are both supporting the Victoria University research project.

While new to the Great Barrier Reef, Fluker Posts have been used for several years in forests and wetlands in South-eastern Australia, from Werribee to Cape Otway.

Parks Victoria ranger Nick Alexeyeff said the innovative method to collect data in these locations had been working well.

'By positioning the Fluker Posts in remote locations I am able to gain information from these sites without using resources from here,' Mr Alexeyeff said.

'This has cost benefits for me by not having to regularly send staff out to monitor these sections, which in turn frees up my team for other work.'

Source: Victoria University

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