Environmental changes and cultural impacts: Women’s perspectives from a fishing community in Western Australia

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Gender AquaFish
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Note from Author

• This presentation has been significantly modified from that presented at the GAF4 Yeosu Korea.
• Most of the images have been removed as the paper was part of a larger project using fishers photos.
• Only those images taken by the authors have been included in this version.
• The methodology for the larger project was presented at the 10AFAF Conference Yeosu Korea.
New era? (1990s)

• Female Premier (WA first)
• Increased representation of Women on Boards (National and State)
• New Fisheries Act (FRMA 1994)
  i. addressed habitat & environmental issues
  ii. embedded community consultation in legislation
Perspective from Abrolhos fisher

‘Friends of the Abrolhos’

• Predominantly female membership (first 50+)
• Environmental campaigns (clean-ups, trails & walkways)
• Increased awareness of industry (talks: schools & visitors)
• Hosted researchers (esp collaborative research)
• Published information (visitor guides, signage)
• Representation & advisory role (AIMAC, DoF, PSSA, CoC, development & heritage)
• Community & social focus (nursing post, emergency evac, community events)
• Fundraising for community (schools, nursing & health, telecommunications, community events)
• Increased community stewardship and community cooperation
• Voice of the Abrolhos Islands
CARING FOR THE ABROLHOS ISLANDS

The Abrolhos Islands and surrounding waters are home to a combination of animals, plants and marine life found nowhere else in the world.

The Abrolhos Islands have internationally significant heritage values. The islands are a World Heritage Reserve and the State terrestrial waters are a declared Fish Habitat Protection Area. The Department of Conservation and Land Management has been actively involved in the management of the islands for over 30 years.

This is a special place that needs your protection.

Be careful: Keep to the water's edge or marked paths to prevent nesting seabirds and plant communities.

Be courteous: Make sure you don't upset someone else's enjoyment of the islands. Please respect the private property of fishing families.

Be clean: Take your rubbish away with you when you leave.

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Be aware, take care and enjoy the Abrolhos Islands.

SEABIRDS ON THE ABROLHOS ISLANDS

The Abrolhos Islands support the largest seabird colonies in Western Australia. Every spring, more than three million birds return to the islands from their oceanic breeding grounds in the tropics.

Five species of seabirds can be found here including terns, gulls, shinnowers and mollymawks. One of these, the Lesser noddy, is listed as a threatened species.

When disturbed, ground-nesting seabirds may abandon their nests – leaving unguarded eggs and chicks vulnerable to predators and gulls.

Walk along the shoreline preferably at low tide rather than across an island and keep to marked trails to avoid disturbing seabird nesting colonies.

Help protect Abrolhos seabirds:

- Please keep out of nesting colonies.
- Please stay on marked trails only and keep to the marked signs and marked trails.
- Please do not approach nesting seabirds.
- No dogs are allowed on the islands at any time.

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Caring Conservation

Wildlife Conservation

For the Future
Rock Lobster Industry Advisory Committee (RLIAC)

- Advice to Minister on all things Rock Lobster
- Male membership on RLIAC and sub-committees
- 2003: 2 female members appointed
- Equity for smaller operators (shift from pot reductions to overall effort reductions)
- Increased focus on community and social issues (Sundays off, early seasonal closures, crew safety)
Community (prior 2006)

Strong community
Inter-island sporting events
Regular community events
Schools on each Island group (5)
Carrier boats for each group (4)
House proud
Art works
Community clean-up days
Families lived and worked together (inter-generational)
Scientists

With years, Australia's Leeuwin Coast has experienced temperature changes. A new study shows that's here, just like last year's rise in temperatures, some species have migrated to waters above and will adapt. The fisheries, which have long relied on these species, Abrolhos Current, will need to adapt. Climate Change is affecting our water.
Community (2012)

- No schools (from 5)
- Only 2 carrier boats (from 4)
- Community halls closed
- Reduced air service
- No sporting events
- No community events
- Families staying on the mainland
- Camps and houses in decay
- Suicides and mental health issues

- Community collapse
Affect on women

- Most women work on mainland (2+ jobs to maintain income)
- Families no longer raised on the Islands
- Loss of inter-generational connections
- Husbands away for long periods (fishing season over 12 months)
- Declining stewardship on Islands
- Reduced services (nursing, transport, supplies)
- Stress issues (men and women)
- Community breakdown
Could the situation have been averted?

- Difficult to know (environment, stock protection)
- Submissions by fishers (AIMAC, Body Corporates) to Fisheries Dept and Fisheries Minister to maintain shorter season length. Input not heeded
- Limited community consultation and input in management decisions
- Appears to be limited consideration of social outcomes in management decisions

To consider social impacts, representation from the fishing community, and particularly women, is required in all management and decision making processes
References


Thank you