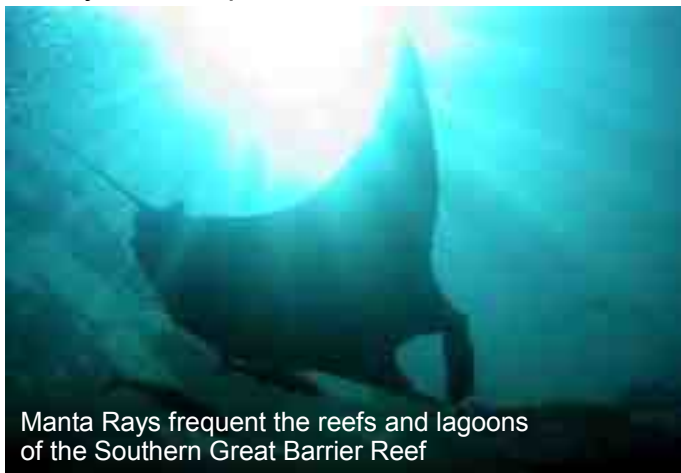




Coral Coast Companions, from river to reef and beyond...

The seas and rivers in the Bundaberg and Coral Coast region are teeming with an aBUNDance of aquatic species. Take time to say hello to some of them!

Manta Rays (*Manta birostris*) are a familiar sight in the reef waters near Bundaberg. The Southern Great Barrier Reef is home to this magnificent creature and they are frequently seen near the two grand dames of the reef, Lady Elliot and Lady Musgrave Islands. Manta Rays have been known to grow to sizes spanning two metres across their wings. Despite their size, they're filter feeders, dining on tiny krill and plankton.



Manta Rays frequent the reefs and lagoons of the Southern Great Barrier Reef

You can always see **Humpback Whales** at Bundaberg; just stand in the main street and look up! The Whaling (or Whale) Wall is a constant reminder of these large marine visitors who frequent our shores from August to October. Residents and tourists alike have spotted many migrating humpbacks off the beaches of the Coral Coast. Barolin Rocks is amongst the best coastal whale watching spots.

Dugongs (*Dugong dugon*) have a protected home at Rodds Harbour in Miriam Vale Shire. It is now a designated sanctuary and these mysterious mammals can sometimes be seen when exploring the maze of waterways.



Friendly dolphins can be seen swimming at Moore Park Beach

Bottlenose Dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) frequent the waters of the Coral Coast and can often be seen playing or fishing off Moore Park Beach. Mother dolphins have been known to bring their calves into the lower Burnett River to take advantage of more sheltered waters.

Turtles are the star attraction at Australia's best-known mainland sea turtle rookery at **Mon Repos**. From November to March, this rare attraction offers one of the most inspiring wildlife spectacles in Australia. This small beach is the most important and accessible nesting site along the eastern Australian mainland, supporting the largest concentration of nesting sea turtles, including **Loggerhead, Green, Flatback** and **Leatherback** turtles. The Flatback is native only to Australian waters.



The **Platypus** (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*) is known to live in the freshwater of the Burnett River. It is an unusual creature for it is one of only two mammals that lay eggs, the other being the Echidna. The male has poisonous spurs on its hind legs that can cause incredible pain to the victim if stung. The platypus has sensors in the skin of its bill that are highly sensitive to electric fields. It is thought that this is how they find most of their prey, which consists mainly of worms, snails and small fish.





The Basin at Bargara yields an opportunity to interact with many different species of fish. The Basin forms a large rock pool that offers safe swimming and snorkelling. When the tide recedes, a multitude of fish are caught in the pool to the delight of snorkellers. The fish are more than glad to be fed by generous visitors.

Most of the beaches along the Coral Coast feature many smaller **rock pools** that support miniature eco-systems, ideal for study or just to satisfy curiosity. The best rock pools for viewing a variety of marine life – such as sea anemones, crustaceans, small fish, etc. – can be found at **Barolin Rocks** and **Bargara**.



Lungfish sculpture at Riverside Parklands



Rocky foreshore at Barolin Rocks



Marlin fishing makes for an exciting sport

Native to the Mary and Burnett Rivers, the very rare **Lungfish** is now an endangered species. A monument to this remarkable creature can be found in the **Bundaberg Riverside Parklands**, an interpretive metal sculpture of a ceratodus by John Olsen.

In times of drought, the Lungfish is known for its extraordinary ability to survive above water for long periods. When its lake or stream dries up, the fish surrounds itself in a cocoon of mud and mucous, which hardens to form a protective casing. The fish then breathes air through a small hole in the cocoon, and can live like this in hibernation for many months until rains arrive.

Marlin and many other ocean fish, such as mackerel, can be caught off the waters of the Coral Coast. Marlin fishing makes for an exciting sport, and they can be caught as close as 60 nautical miles off the coast. Marlin are known for their habit of leaping from the water when caught. There are many operators in the region who offer tailored charter fishing tours so you can experience these amazing adventures.

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