Rare pictures uncover diverse marine life at Ningaloo Reef

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Researchers at The University of Western Australia have collected rare imagery revealing rich marine biodiversity at Ningaloo Reef, after deploying baited underwater cameras to analyze various fish species.

Dr. Tim Langlois, from UWA's Oceans Institute and School of Biological Sciences, worked with researchers from CSIRO to deploy the underwater stereo video cameras, which are capable of reaching depths up to 2000 meters.

"The project provided us with a unique opportunity to benchmark the habitats and fish populations within Ningaloo Marine Park, in Commonwealth waters, as little research has previously been done at these depths," Dr. Langlois said.

The researchers deployed the cameras in a recently established 'no-take National Park Zone,' which is an area designed to preserve and maintain marine life, prohibiting activities such as fishing in order to maintain the areas for tourism and public appreciation.

"The stereo pair of baited remote underwater video systems, also known as "BRUVs' captured stunning vision and measurements of fish species at the bottom of Ningaloo Reef," Dr. Langlois said.

Credit: University of Western Australia

"It was a privilege to witness such stunning biodiversity. We discovered sponge and gorgonian gardens that are like hidden cities, populated by incredible fish life, including red emperor, gold band snapper and potato rock cod."

Dr. Langlois said protected National Park Zones within Australian Marine Parks provide a window into our diverse marine life.

"Ningaloo Reef is a highly popular ecotourism destination that provides great social value. It's important that we share these biodiversity findings to highlight the importance of establishing protected zones that maintain our vital ocean life," he said.

Dr. Langlois said the data would contribute to better understanding the Ningaloo Marine Park, and greater influence the way Parks Australia manages the vibrant area.

Provided by University of Western Australia

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