

## THE BRITISH INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORY MARINE PROTECTED AREA (BIOT MPA)

- Created in 2010, the BIOT MPA is one of the largest MPAs in the world and protects over 1% of all the world's coral reefs.
- Commercial fishing is forbidden over this area of 640,000 km<sup>2</sup> of the Indian Ocean and the MPA provides a safe haven for some 310 coral species, 821 fish, and 355 species of molluscs.
- It is a home for species found no-where else in the world, such as the Chagos brain coral and the Chagos anemone fish.
- It safeguards endangered species, including important populations of green and hawksbill turtles, sharks, rays and rare reef fish.
- It protects critical seabird populations, including the only increasing populations of red-footed and brown booby in the Indian Ocean.
- Reef fish here are on average six times more abundant than at any other location in the Indian Ocean.
- Offshore waters are home to the only unfished populations of tuna, oceanic sharks and billfish in the Indian Ocean.

The British Indian Ocean Territory Administration (BIOTA) currently permits the safe passage of yachts through the MPA and smaller vessels can apply for a permit to remain in specified areas for up to one month.

### Please remember

- This is an incredibly special and unique place
- Take nothing but photos, leave nothing but footprints
- Take all waste with you and dispose of it responsibly, outside of BIOT's waters
- Fishing must be limited and only sufficient for up to three days' personal consumption. Molluscs and crustaceans may not be taken
- Anchor only on sandy seabed areas in permitted anchorage areas



*This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of the British Indian Ocean Territory Administration and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union.*



# British Indian Ocean Territory

## ADVICE FOR VESSELS IN TRANSIT

*One of the most important,  
unpolluted tropical ocean  
wilderness areas in the world*

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## THE IMPACT OF NON-NATIVE AND INVASIVE SPECIES INTRODUCTIONS

The isolated waters and islands of BIOT are populated by species that have adapted to island life. Seabirds, for example, nest freely on or near the ground, in the absence of predators such as mammals which cannot naturally cross the intervening oceans.

Such adaptations however, make native island species extremely vulnerable if humans introduce new species, or 'non-natives'. Non-natives are particularly devastating where they compete for food, occupy others' homes or predate the natural wildlife. The species which cause such damaging impacts



are called 'invasive non-natives' and can be plants and animals, fish or other marine life and even a host of micro-organisms that may bring disease to local wildlife.

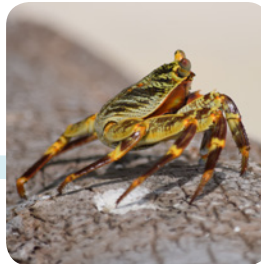
Historically, ships have already provided the transportation of such invaders to BIOT. Rats, introduced in the 1700s, have decimated island bird populations and impacted natural vegetation by eating native hardwood seeds and fruits. In other islands around the world ship-borne invaders have included snakes, spiders and insects.

## WE NEED YOUR HELP TO PREVENT FURTHER INTRODUCTIONS

Visitors to BIOT must be extremely careful to prevent further invasions. Please respect these guidelines:

### Prior to arrival

- Scrub your hulls to remove the many hitchhikers which are found on weedy hulls.
- Inspect all containers and wash all fruit and vegetables when provisioning. No living organisms should come with you.
- Empty any bilge or ballast water in the open sea before entering BIOT waters.



### In BIOT

- Don't keep live plants on your vessel – these are likely to house insects and micro-organisms on the plant and in the soil.
- Don't take fresh food ashore – this prevents any accidental transport of seeds or other organisms.
- Before going ashore, check everything! All clothes, kit, small inflatables – seeds, insects, spiders, rats and reptiles may be well hidden, so please examine everything carefully.

## RAT-FREE ISLANDS

Several islands in BIOT have been declared as Strict Nature Reserves. These special places have remained free of invasive species and so bird populations flourish in extraordinary numbers. Invasive species introductions to these islands would be catastrophic and so it is not permitted to land or even to come within 3 nautical miles of these places. Fines for non-compliance may be up to £5000.



## RESTORING ISLAND ECOSYSTEMS

For the islands which have been damaged by invasive species, there is hope. In 2014 scientists began a successful rat eradication on Ile Vache Marine. Following much hard work, the island was officially declared rat-free in 2017. However, this eradication, and other island restoration work, such as removing the old coconut plantations and replanting native trees is costly, time-consuming, and challenging. Even when successful, recovery of native populations takes years, so **prevention is key to success**. Only continued efforts and vigilance will keep BIOT safe.

