

Have you seen this starfish?

Crown of Thorns Starfish



Acanthaster brevispinus

What is Crown of Thorns Starfish?

Crown of Thorns Starfish (COTS) is a coral-eating starfish native to the Pacific region, typically occurring at very low densities of less than one starfish per hectare.

When numbers are low, coral reefs can recover from damage caused by feeding. However, if COTS densities increase to a point where a coral reef can no longer keep up with the damage caused, it is classed as an outbreak.

▼ *Control of COTS above feeding scar*



How can you help?



COTS spines are toxic, painful and pose a significant health risk. It is important that you do not touch or make contact with COTS.



Report it

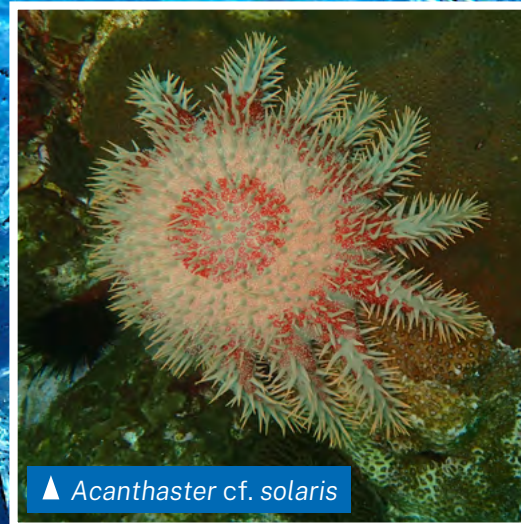
If you see a COTS in the Solitary Islands Marine Park or on any other NSW reef, please report the sighting to DPIRD as soon as possible:

Email: solitary.islands@dpird.nsw.gov.au

Phone: 02 6691 0600

Any photos and details of location, date, time, depth, species and numbers are helpful if possible.

Crown of Thorns Starfish
can be a serious threat
to coral habitats



▲ *Acanthaster cf. solaris*



▲ *Acanthaster brevispinus*

▲ *Acanthaster cf. solaris*

Crown of Thorns Starfish in the Solitary Islands Marine Park

One species of COTS, *Acanthaster cf. solaris* has been observed in parts of the Solitary Islands Marine Park in small numbers in the past.

In late 2024, an outbreak of two COTS species, *Acanthaster cf. solaris* and *Acanthaster brevispinus* was reported in the marine park for the first time. The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) controlled over 150 COTS to protect coral diversity at North Solitary Island.

Warmer waters and stronger currents associated with climate change are likely to see an increase in tropical species like COTS in future. Surveillance and monitoring for COTS continues to support a fast response to any future outbreaks.

