



An Inventory of Wildlife Tourism in Western Australia

Peter Sandilands





Introduction

Wildlife Tourism:

- ❖ **Fastest growing form of tourism overall.**
- ❖ **Wildlife tourists estimated to be 20-40% of all tourists.**
- ❖ **Expectation of observing and/or interacting with certain species of animals or groups of animals.**
- ❖ **Possibility of exploitation or disturbance to the animals detriment, for example, Bottlenose Dolphins at Monkey Mia.**
- ❖ **Possibility of damage or degradation of the environment at or near locations being used by operators, for example, Stromatolites at Hamelin Pool.**

Western Australia:

- ❖ **Wide range of habitats.**
- ❖ **Diverse array of wildlife - many endemic.**

which in turn:

- ❖ **Attract increasing numbers of tourists - local, intrastate, interstate and overseas.**
- ❖ **Contribute large amounts of money to the state's economy.**
- ❖ **Require sustainable management of both the animals and the locations that attract the tourists.**





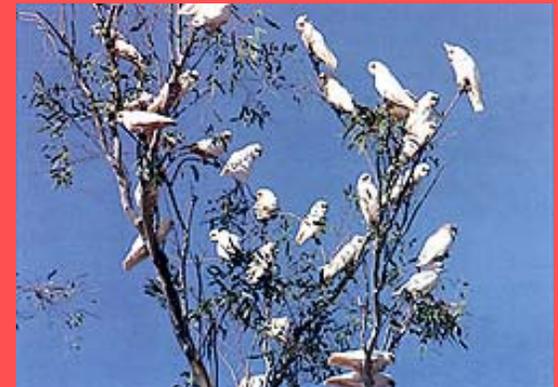
Aim & Objectives

Aim:

To find out which animals (resources) and which locations were being used as “attractors” by tourism operators.

Objectives:

- ❖ To determine the number of wildlife tourism operators using Western Australian wildlife resources.
- ❖ Whether the nature of the industry (natural area tourism) favours small-scale operations.
- ❖ Whether a few high profile resources are being used at or above capacity while many others were relatively little used or unknown.
- ❖ Whether a number of operators that use CALM managed lands are licensed to do so or not.

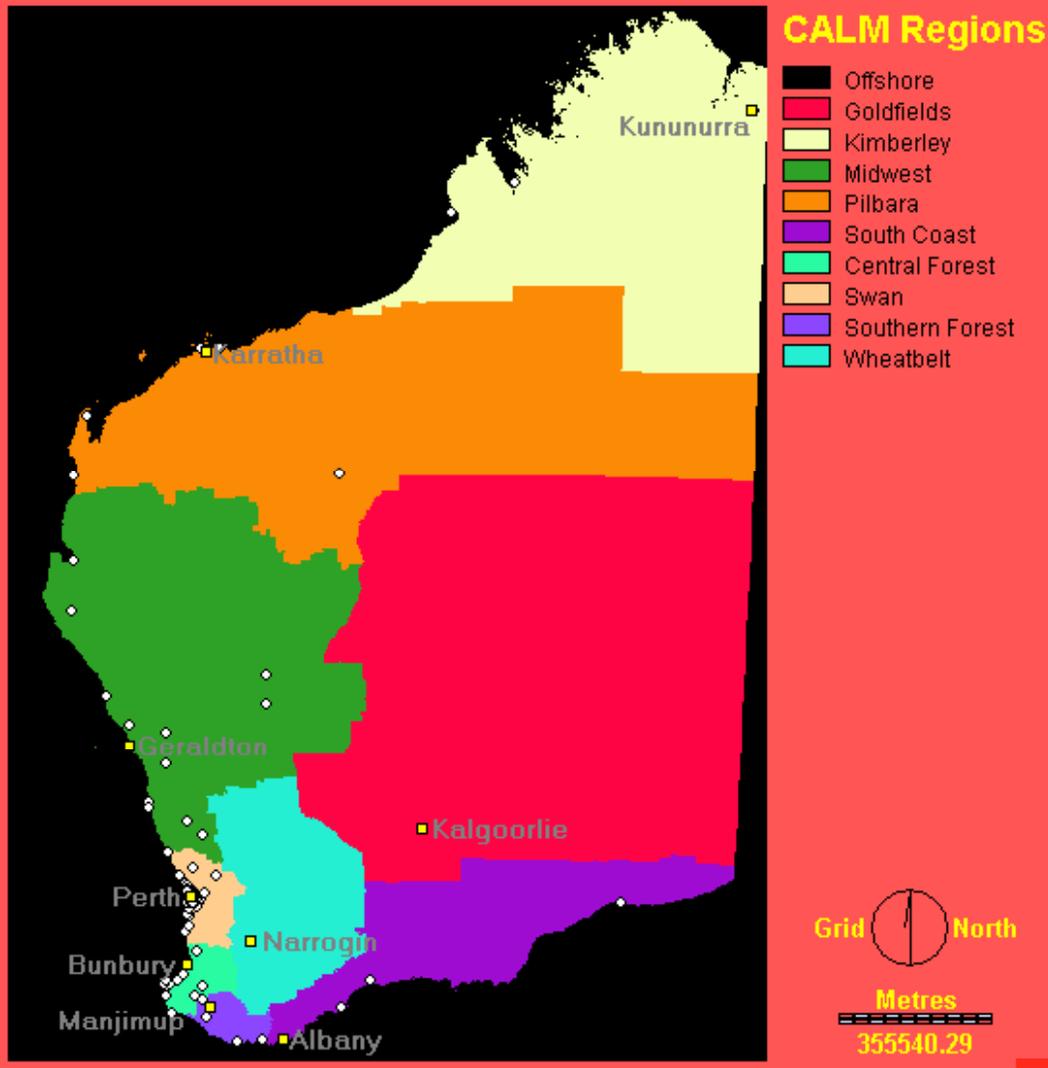




Methods

- ❖ **A literature review using specific criteria was conducted in two parts:**
 - ❖ **Books & journals from the natural science and tourism areas plus “lifestyle” magazines that covered areas where wildlife tourism may have been advertised.**
 - ❖ **A search of the world wide web.**
- ❖ **A database was designed and constructed using the FileMaker Pro software package with unique fields to prevent the entry of duplicate data.**
- ❖ **Analysis was carried out to answer the aim and objectives.**

Wildlife Tourism Operators



Results

- ❖ 243 operators working in Western Australia identified.
- ❖ The two largest groups are the accomodation and the charter fishing operators.
- ❖ Approximately 87% are based within the state at 104 locations.

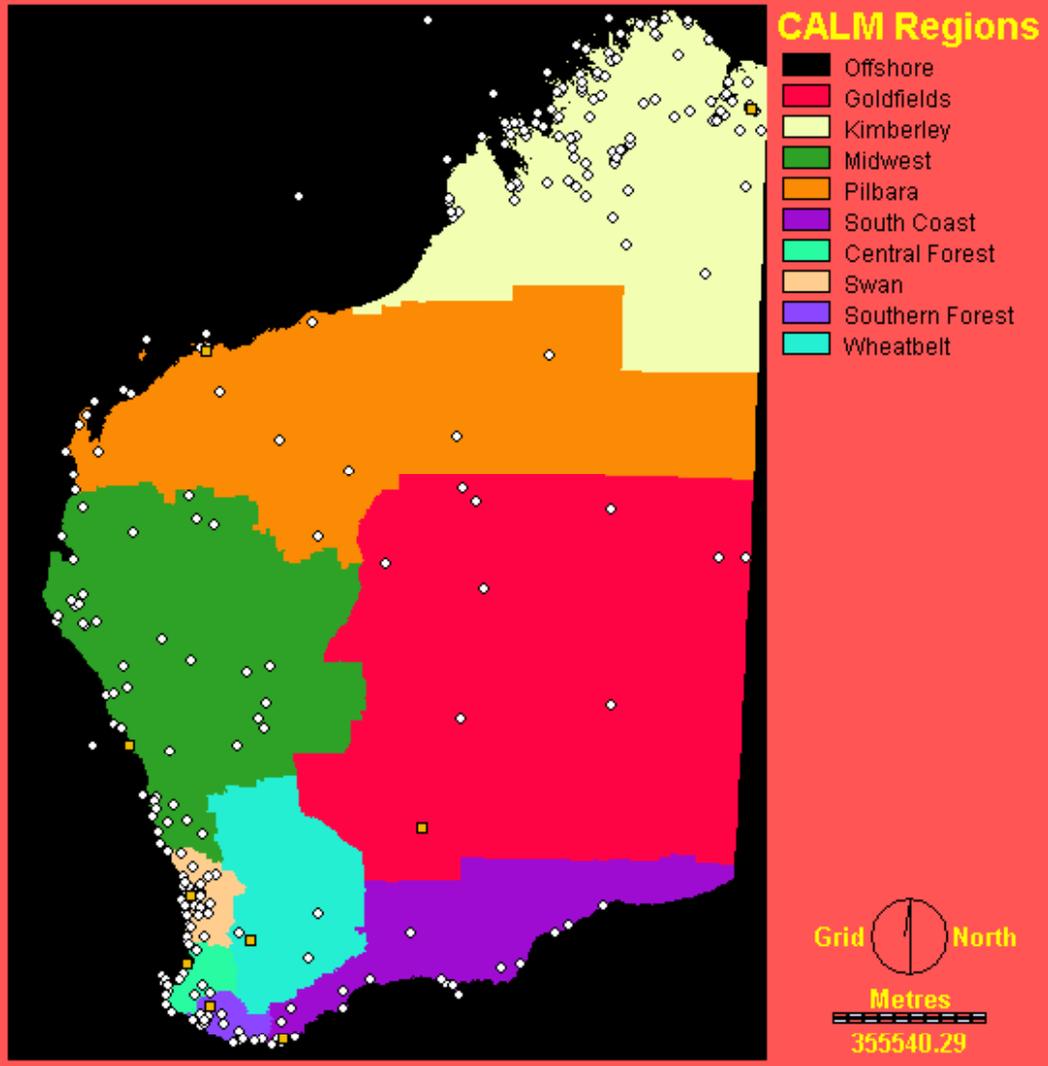


- ❖ **Apart from Perth, three major regional concentrations of operators have been identified:**
 - ❖ **Exmouth and Coral Bay near the Niingaloo Marine Park in the Pilbara region,**
 - ❖ **Broome - a major entry point into the Kimberley region,**
 - ❖ **Denham near the Shark Bay Marine Park, Monkey Mia Reserve and the stromatolites at Hamelin Pool Marine Nature Reserve in the Midwest region.**

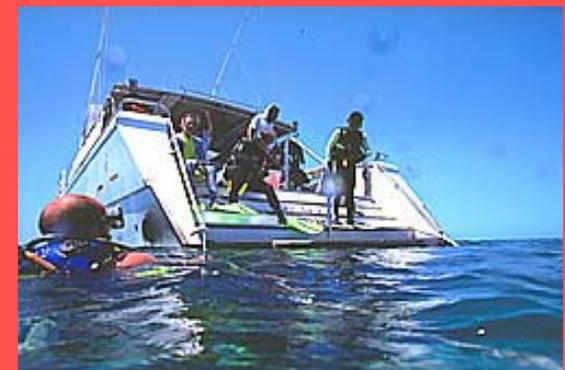
- ❖ **Operators use a wide variety of modes of transport to arrive at the locations where the target animals (resources) are found. These range from bicycle and camel to cruise ship and helicopter. The most common approach used is boat due to the influence of the charter fishing operators.**



Wildlife Tourism Locations



- ❖ 306 locations used by wildlife tourism operators have been identified.
- ❖ The most popular (in terms of numbers of operators visiting) are:
 - ❖ Ningaloo MP,
 - ❖ Broome,
 - ❖ Purnululu NP,
 - ❖ Monkey Mia Reserve,
 - ❖ Kalbarri NP, and
 - ❖ Windjana Gorge.



- ❖ **415 species of animals and 47 groups of animals are sought by wildlife tourism operators.**
- ❖ **These range from insects and sponges to fish and mammals.**
- ❖ **Fish attract the most interest followed by mammals - particularly marine mammals, birds, reptiles - mainly marine and freshwater reptiles - and anthozoans (corals).**
- ❖ **This attraction to coastal sites is reflected by the locations with four out of the top six being situated there.**
- ❖ **The species or groups of species that attract the most interest are similarly marine and water based.**
- ❖ **The most popular (in terms of number of operators interested) are:
Dolphins, whales, coral, kangaroos,
Whaleshark, Dugong, turtles and
manta ray.**





Discussion

- ❖ **The final figure of 243 operators is within the working range of 104 to 416 possible wildlife tourism operators that was estimated to work in the state.**
- ❖ **The data provides evidence for the idea that the nature of the industry supports small-scale operations. Many of the operators work from home locations in the Perth suburbs or towns in the regions close to the resource(s) they promote in their advertising.**
- ❖ **The location and animal data indicate that some resources are at or very close to their sustainable capacity and limitations on visitation may be required to keep the pressure on those resources at acceptable levels.**

- ❖ **High profile resources highlighted by the data are whale watching, coral viewing and stromatolite viewing. The Freshwater Crocodiles at Windjana Gorge are also an important attraction.**
- ❖ **A large proportion of wildlife tourism in Western Australia occurs on CALM managed lands and waters and many operators use these locations as “attractors” in their advertising.**
- ❖ **A number of operators did not have a license to operate on those lands and waters and this indicates a disregard for the current system of regulation or a lack of knowledge (or both). CALM is also missing out on revenue from the licensing process.**
- ❖ **In addition there are special regulations for activities such as Whaleshark interaction. These may need to be extended to cover other areas where disturbance can cause problems, for example, seabird colonies, marine reptiles.**

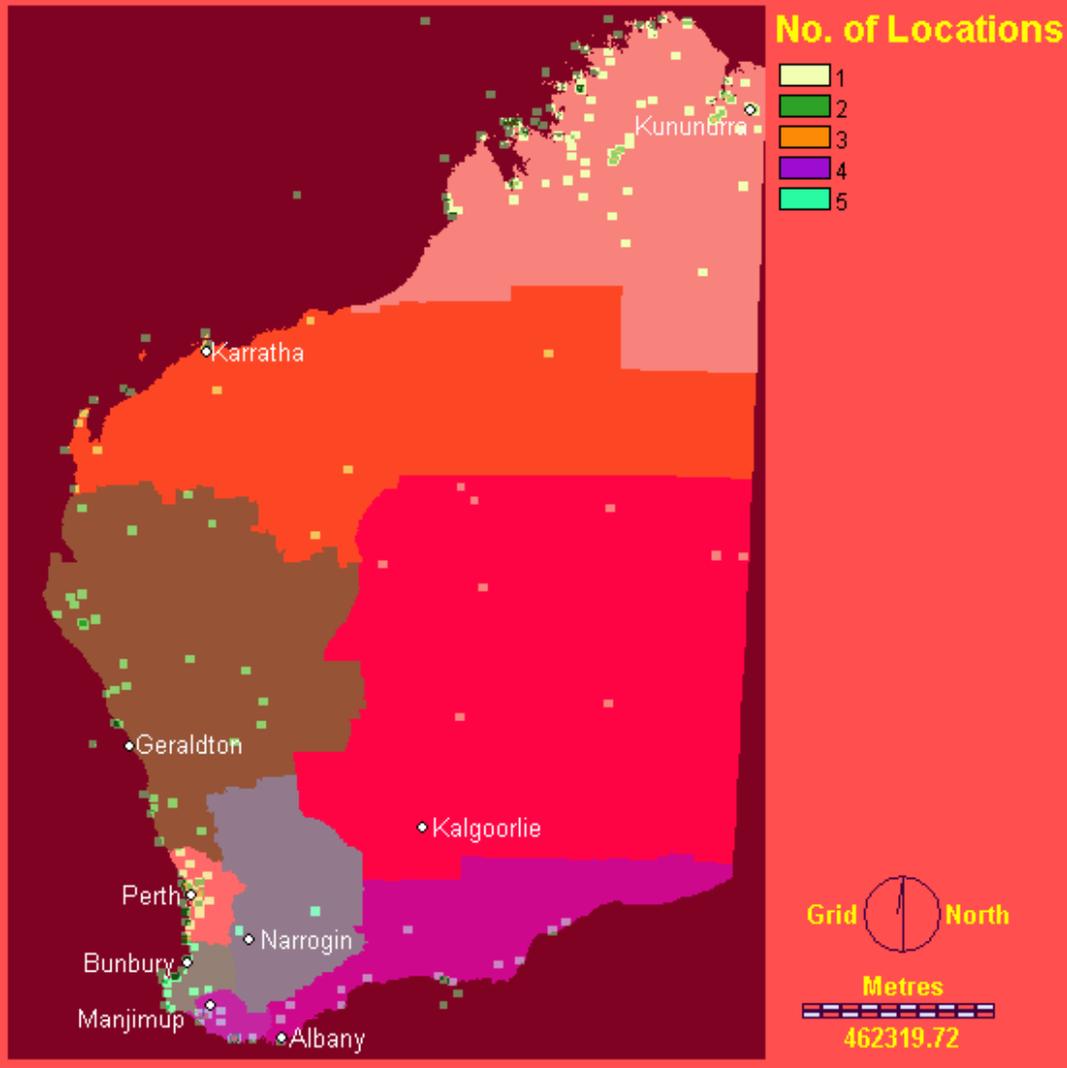




The Future

- ❖ **Identification of concentrations of wildlife tourism locations and operators. This was attempted using pattern analysis in a Geographic Information System, a technique often used for soil and land classifications as well as biodiversity.**
- ❖ **This process was quite successful and enabled nine concentrations of locations to be identified using the original data.**

Wildlife Tourism Locations in WA

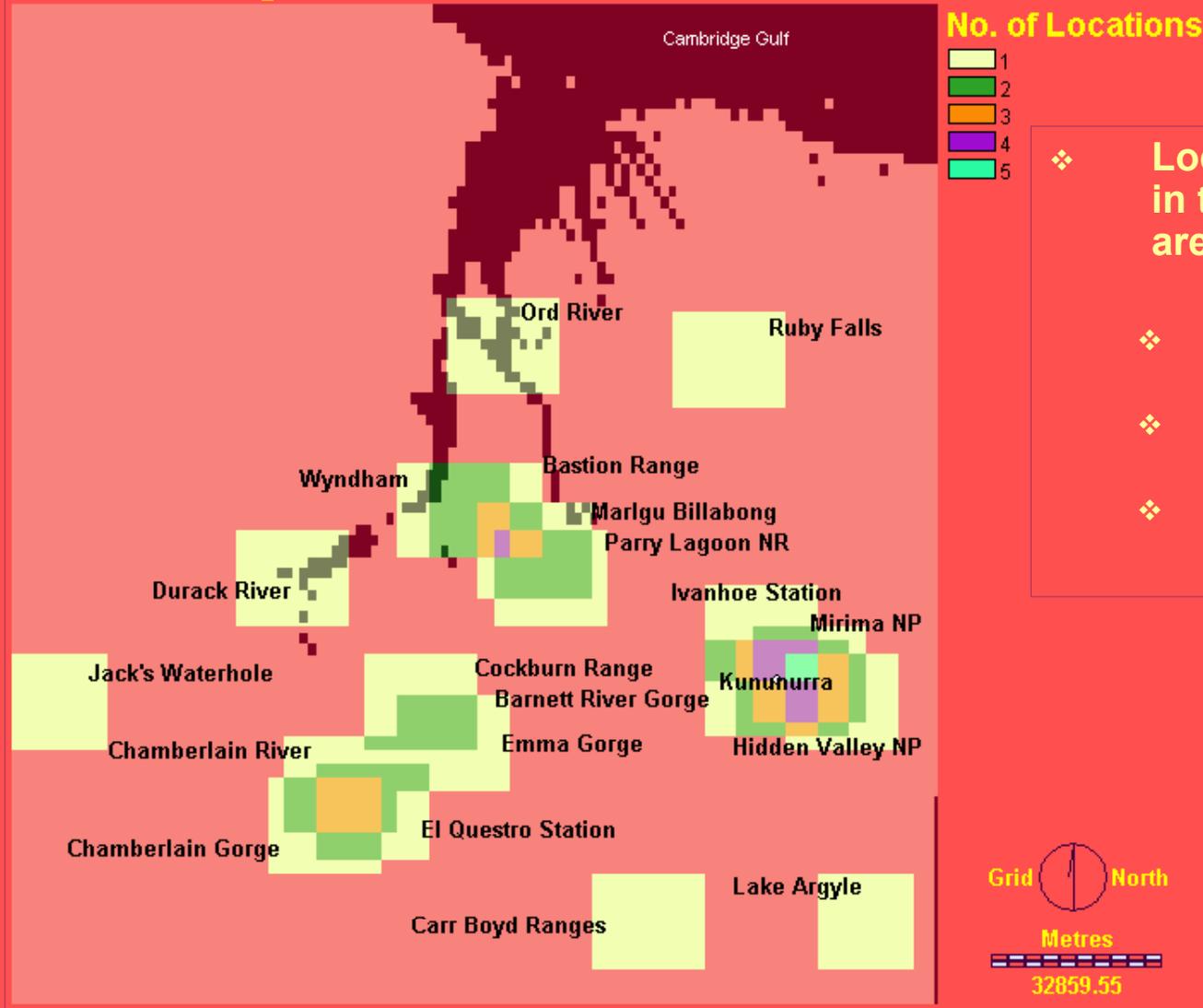


❖ Concentrations identified are in the areas of:

- ❖ Derby,
- ❖ Yampi Sound,
- ❖ Gibb River Rd,
- ❖ Kununurra
- ❖ Perth,
- ❖ Mandurah,
- ❖ Busselton,
- ❖ Pemberton &
- ❖ Denmark.



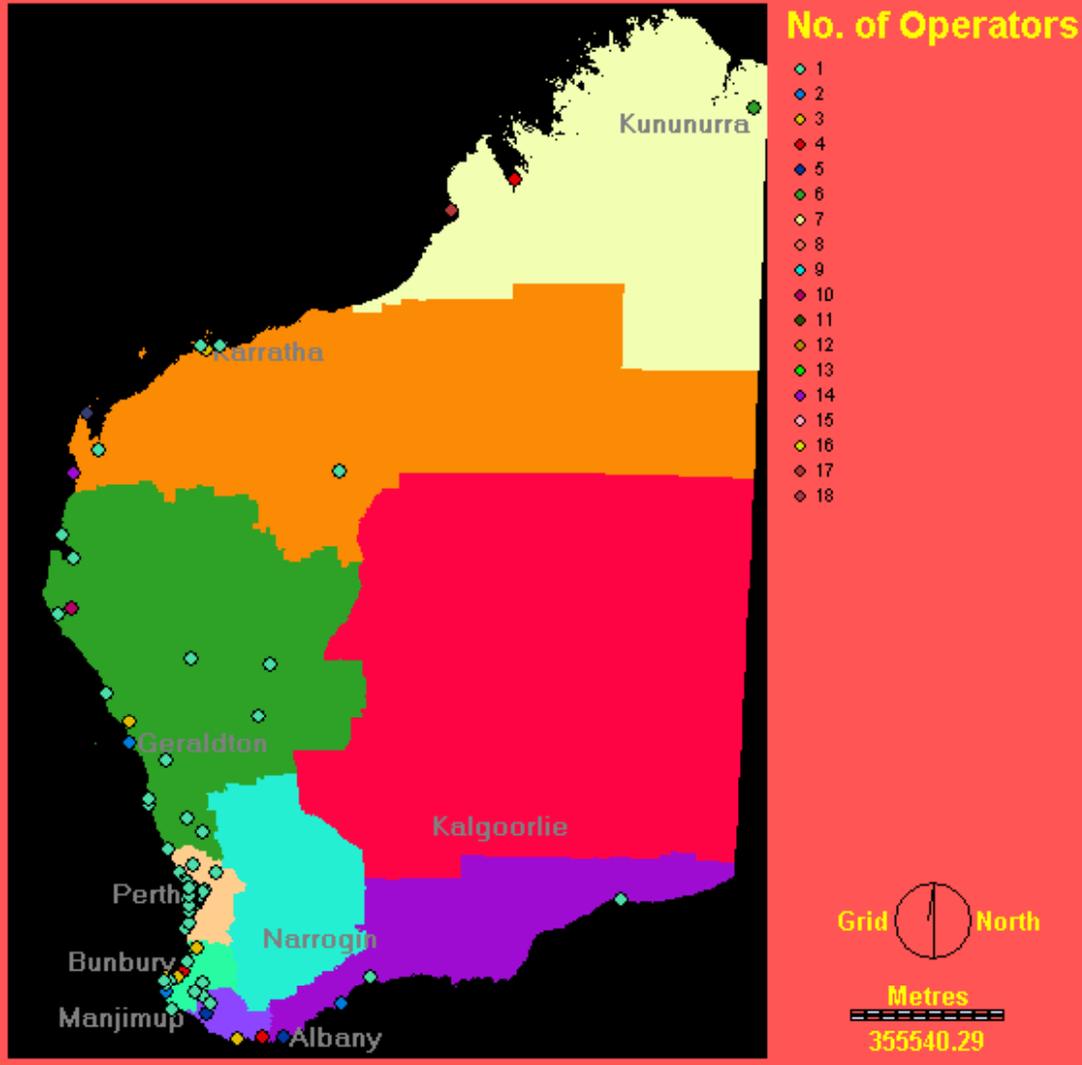
Enlargement of Kununurra Area



- ❖ **Location clusters in the Kununurra area:**
- ❖ El Questro Station
 - ❖ Ord River Floodplain
 - ❖ Kununurra Town

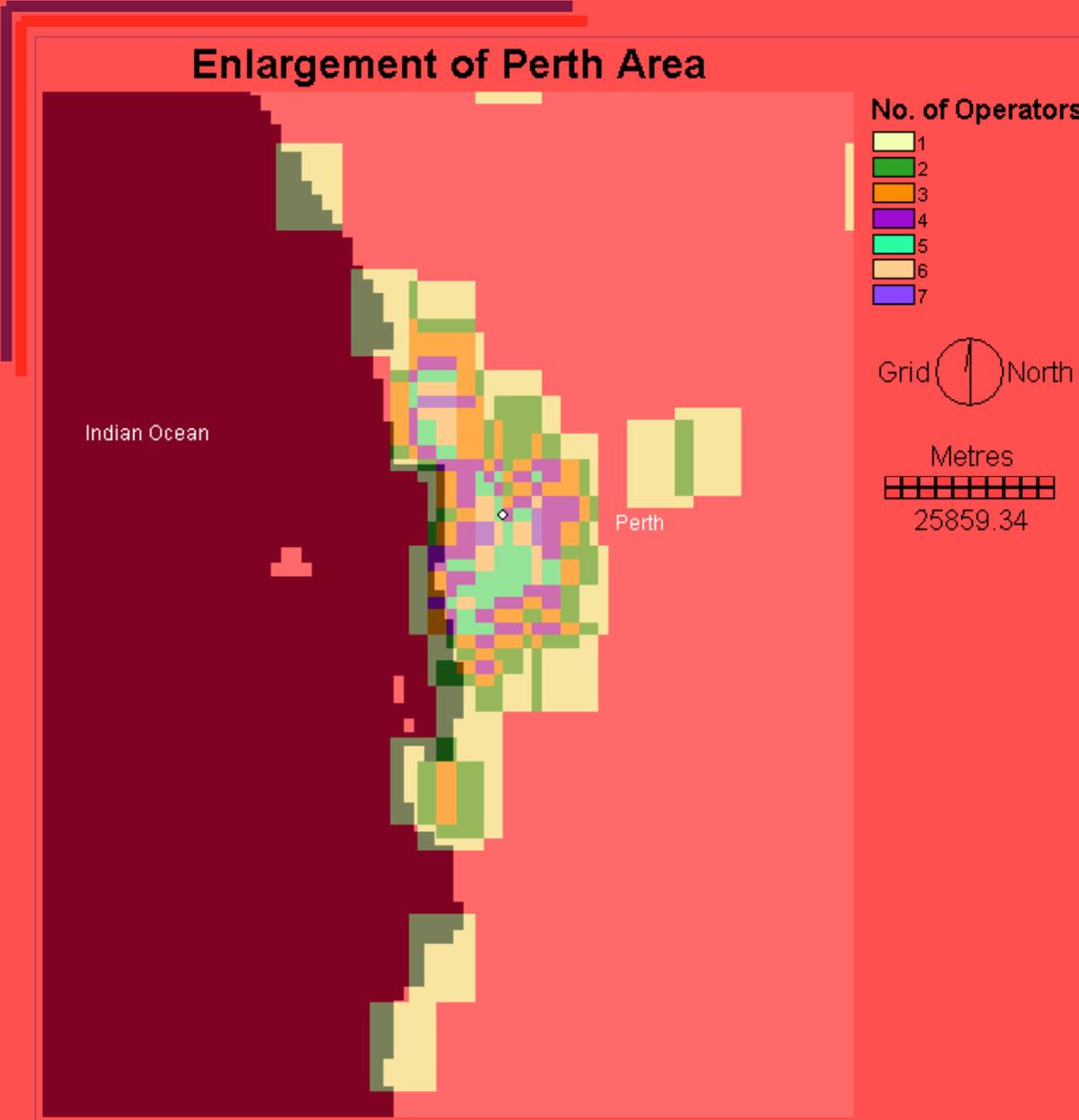


Wildlife Tourism Operators in WA

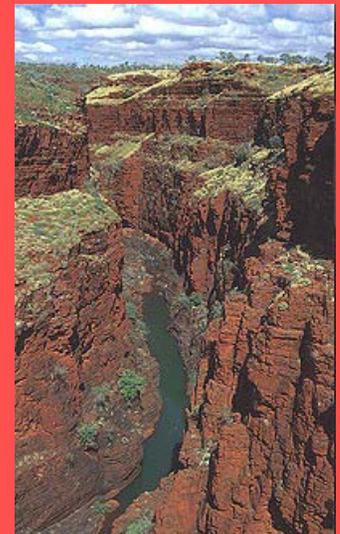


❖ Due to the number of operators having the same latitude and longitude, pattern analysis did not work well. However, using a point value and allocating colours to those can be useful.

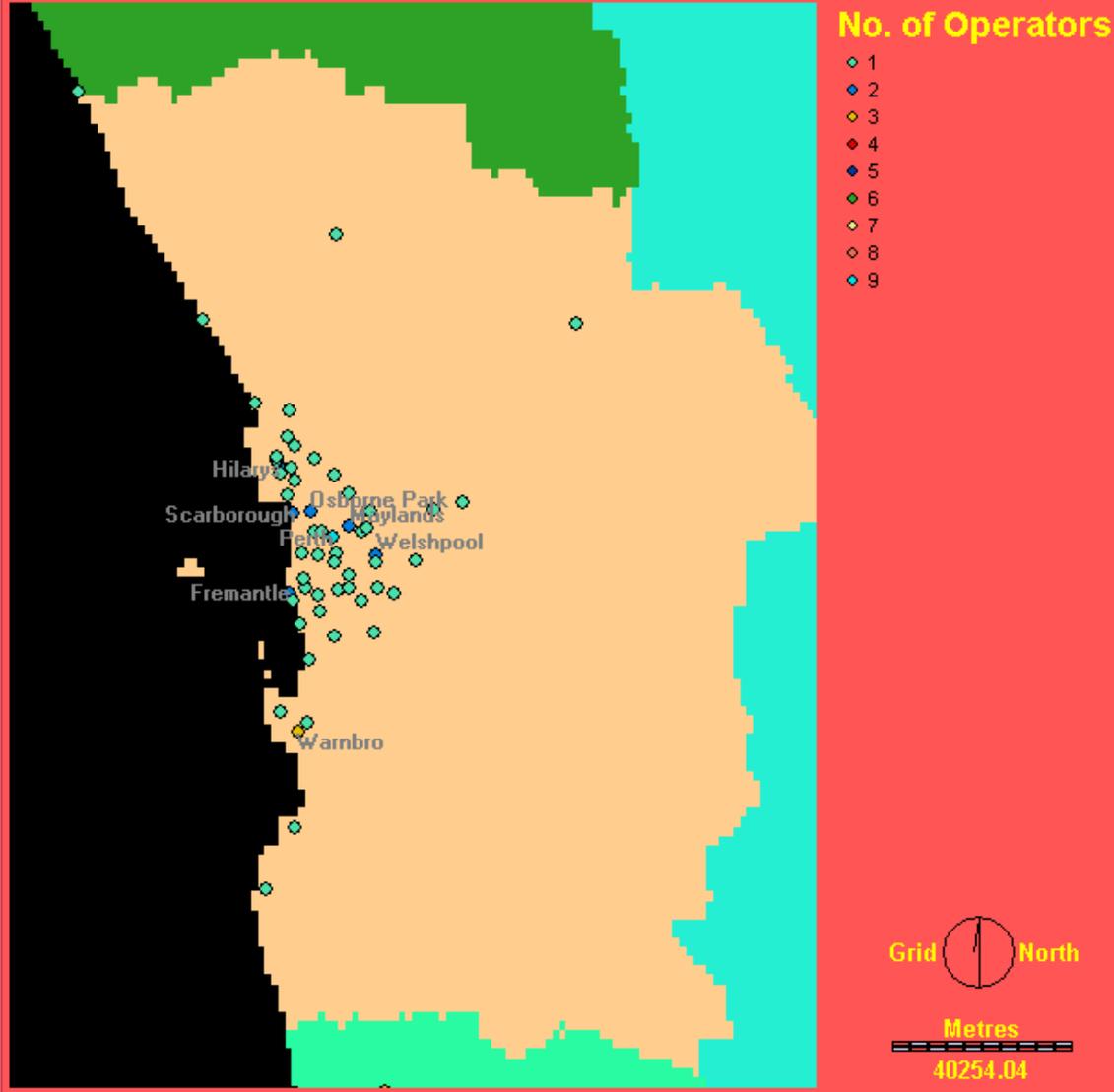




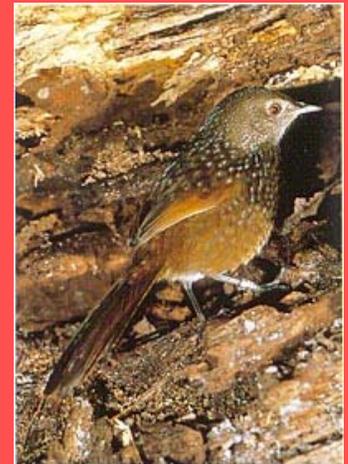
- ❖ The only cluster of any note was for the Perth area due to the large number of suburbs that had their latitudes and longitudes recorded.



Enlargement of Swan Region



❖ The point values and colours again allow useful analysis.



Acknowledgements

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