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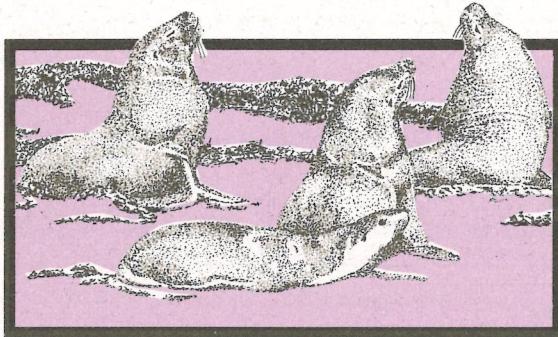
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SHOALWATER ISLANDS

the key issues



*A Summary of the
Draft Management Plan*



Department of Conservation and Land Management

PAM00478

Copies of the Shoalwater Islands
Draft Management Plan
can be bought from:

Operations Headquarters,
50 Hayman Road, Como 6152.
Phone (09) 3670333 Fax 3670466

Copies of the draft plan can be viewed at the City of Rockingham offices and at libraries in the Rockingham area.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

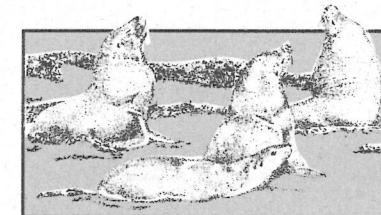
We would like to know what you think about the proposals in this Draft Management Plan.

Why not take the opportunity to express your views or provide information in a submission? You may choose to make a joint submission with others.

Guidelines for making submissions are available with the Draft Management Plan.

Note

This plan has been prepared for the Shoalwater Islands (not the surrounding waters). At a later date it will be complemented by a management plan for the recently gazetted Shoalwater Islands Marine Park. The Islands and Marine Park will be managed as an integrated unit.



Values of the Shoalwater Islands

The Shoalwater Islands are a chain of islands between Cape Peron and Becher Point that run parallel to the Rockingham coast. The chain comprises Penguin Island, Shag Rock, Seal Island, Gull Island, Bird Island, White Rock, The Sisters, Passage Rock, Third Rocks, First Rock and Second Rock. They cover an area of about 16ha.

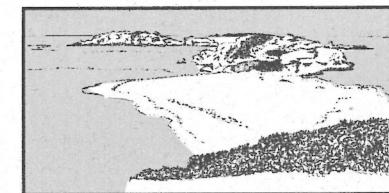
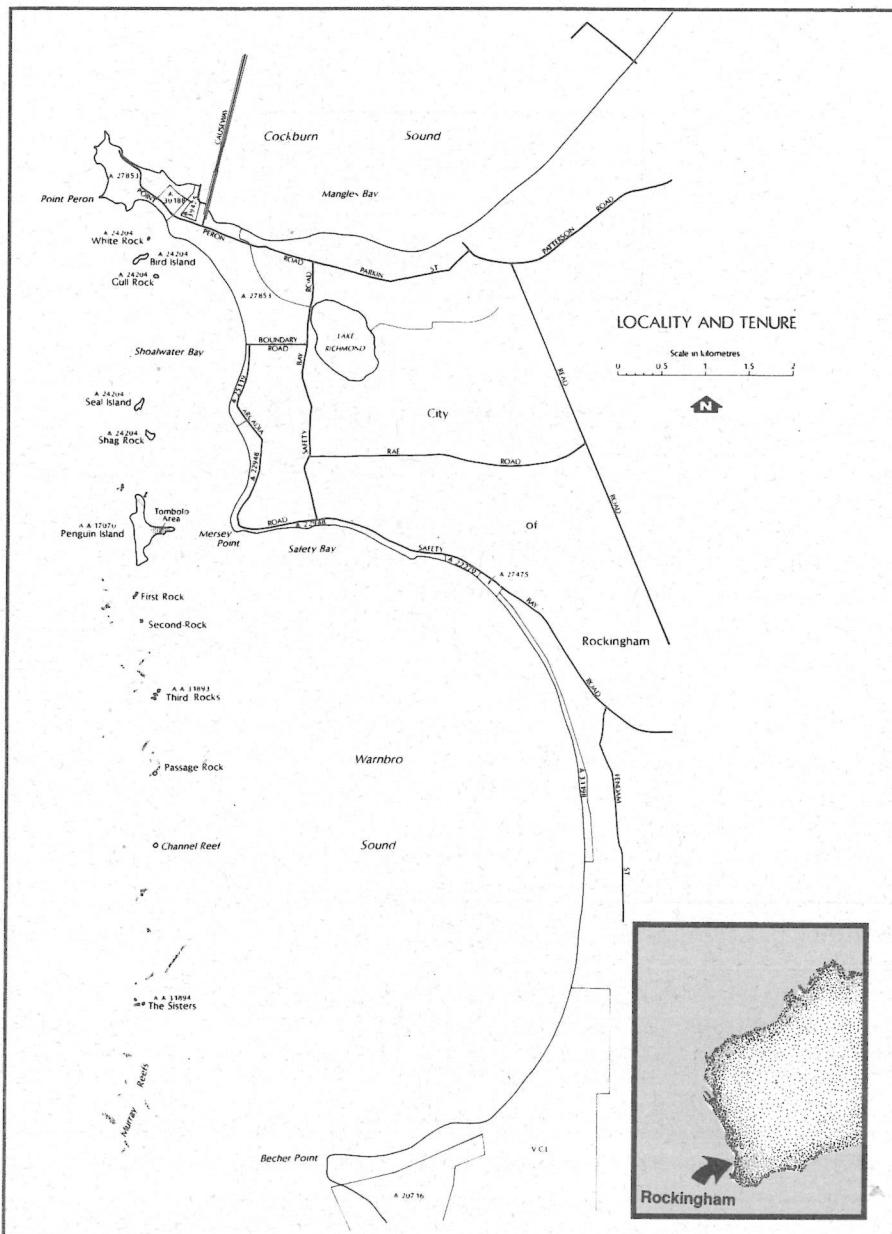
The islands have significant conservation value. Forty-eight species of birds use the islands, some for nesting, feeding and roosting. They include migratory species that are protected by international treaties. Penguin Island supports the largest breeding population of little penguins on the west coast of Australia. The Australian sea-lion, a species in need of special protection, uses Seal Island and occasionally other islands as resting sites.

Penguin Island, the largest in the chain covering 12.5ha and a popular visitor destination, provides a range of recreation activities. People from interstate and overseas visit the island as do researchers who study the island's wildlife. The diversity of natural resources on the islands have education value that is enhanced given their proximity to the metropolitan region.

Along with the Shoalwater Islands Marine Park, which is an important feeding area for birds and sea-lions, the islands have long been recognised as having high environmental significance and recreational potential.

Shoalwater Islands

the key issues



Management Goals

CONSERVATION

Conserve the islands' plants and animals and the processes that sustain them, and the physical, cultural and scenic resources.

RECREATION

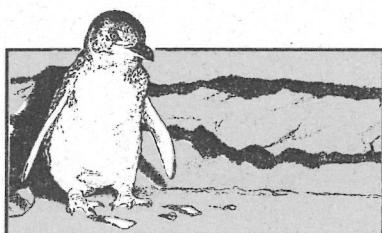
Facilitate the enjoyment of the islands' natural attributes in a manner that is compatible with conservation and other management objectives, and minimises conflict between users.

INFORMATION-EDUCATION

Promote an understanding of the natural environment, especially the wildlife, and an awareness and appreciation of the islands' values.

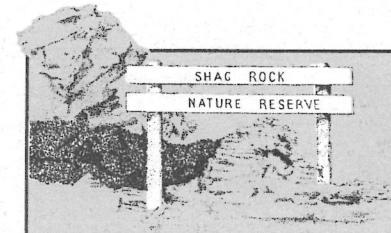
RESEARCH-MONITORING

Promote and undertake the study of the islands' physical, biological and social values and natural processes, and monitor the effects that management actions and visitor activities have on those values.



Key Issues

- ¤ Protect the wildlife, especially the Australian sea-lion, little penguin and other sea birds.
- ¤ Promote visitor awareness, appreciation and understanding of Penguin Island's natural resources and recreation opportunities.
- ¤ Control pests, weeds and fire. Remove planted species, and rehabilitate degraded areas.
- ¤ Encourage and facilitate the safe access of visitors to Penguin Island, and promote an awareness of the potential dangers of crossing to the island by the sandbar.
- ¤ Develop the islands' tourist potential and ensure that the conservation values that attract tourists are protected.
- ¤ Change the gazetted purpose of Penguin Island to Conservation Park, subject to Parliamentary approval.
- ¤ Consider a mobile facility on Penguin Island for basic refreshments.
- ¤ Protect the reefs, intertidal platforms and seagrass beds that surround the islands and are an integral part of their attraction.



Proposed Management Directions

Currently the Shoalwater Islands consist of four reserves and vacant Crown land. It is proposed to change the status of the islands to reflect their use and to protect their values.

Furthermore, management zones are proposed in order to protect nesting bird habitat and beach habitat for Australian sea-lions, to meet the needs of visitors and to minimise the impact of visitor activities.

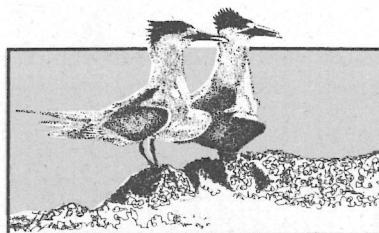
The proposed zones are -

Special Conservation

Rare, restricted and sensitive species and features that require careful management and protection are found in this zone. Access will be restricted to guided tours or by permit for research.

Recreation

This zone caters for the day use of Penguin Island by visitors. Although named recreation, the zone has conservation values that need protecting, for example penguin nests and little shearwater burrows. Basic facilities, such as toilets and shelter, will be provided. Penguin Island will be the focal point for public information and education.



Proposed Conservation Strategies

Fauna

Shoalwater Islands support a significant number of sea birds. Fourteen of the 48 species recorded in the area nest on the islands, including the little penguin, little shearwater, five species of tern, white-faced storm petrel and pied and little cormorants. Some species, including the caspian tern, bridled tern, ruddy turnstone, whimbrel and bar-tailed godwit, are protected by migratory bird agreements with Japan and China. The draft plan encourages appropriate research of these species and their nesting, feeding and breeding habitats, and prohibits public access to specific areas.

Up to 500 pairs of little penguins have been known to breed on Penguin Island. This isolated and distinct population may represent a sub-species. Whereas the past management of Penguin Island was more concerned with catering for visitors than conservation, the draft management plan proposes that the number of buildings on the island be minimised to enhance the availability of nesting sites, and that the island is closed to the public in winter during the peak laying season.

The draft plan also recommends that Seal Island be closed to the public to protect the Australian sea-lion, a species gazetted as in need of special

protection. The beach area on Seal Island cannot support both the sea-lions and the large number of people who visit the island. The plan proposes that guided tours to Seal Island be introduced and that people observe the sea-lions from boats.

Flora

Eight vegetation communities have been identified on the Shoalwater Islands. They are subject to disturbance from natural sources and from humans, which can lead to erosion and the loss of nesting habitat.

The plan proposes to rehabilitate degraded areas, especially the tombolo area of Penguin Island, and to provide guided access for visitors along walkways, boardwalks and beaches.

Weeds and Planted Species

Weeds have been introduced and will continue to infiltrate the Shoalwater Islands, and may grow to the detriment of native species. Exotic species, including pine and fig trees, have been planted on Penguin Island.

The draft management plan recommends the control of weeds, especially those most detrimental to indigenous species, and the removal of planted species. These sites will be rehabilitated.

Pests

Current estimates show that up to 4000 pairs of silver gulls nest on Shoalwater Islands, including 3000 pairs on Penguin Island. Before 1940 the figure was 200 pairs. The availability of food from rubbish tips on the mainland is believed to be responsible for the population increase.

The number of pigeons on the islands is also increasing. Pigeons are not a native species and compete with sea birds, including the bridled tern, a

migratory species, for breeding habitat. The increase in their numbers is related to the availability of grain from Kwinana.

The draft plan recommends that methods to control both the silver gull and pigeon populations be instigated. To this end CALM will continue to liaise with the City of Rockingham and others to limit the availability of food.

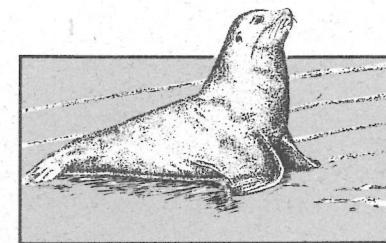


Proposed Recreation Strategies

The Shoalwater Islands provide a range of water and land-based activities. Visitors are attracted by natural features such as the islands' wildlife, landscape, and protected beaches and waters, and the diversity of plants and animals on the intertidal platforms, reefs and seagrass beds.

Up to 70,000 people visit Penguin Island annually, with about 3000 people on the island on the busiest days. Overcrowding does occur. This may effect the quality of the visitors' experience and have a detrimental effect on the ecosystem.

The draft management plan proposes to promote recreational experiences on Penguin Island that are based on an appreciation of the natural resource, that enhance the visitor's enjoyment, that are of a passive nature, and that differ from activities available elsewhere in the region. Other islands in the chain will be closed to the public.



Proposed Interpretation Strategies

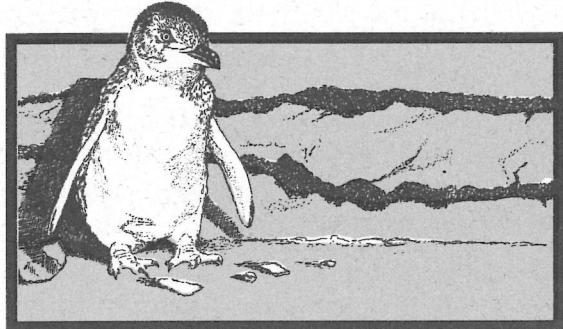
The major use of Penguin Island in the past was active recreation. The proposed change in emphasis for the island is towards passive activities.

With the close proximity of the islands to the metropolitan area the recreational use will be supported by information and education programs that promote an awareness and appreciation of the Shoalwater Islands' values and an understanding of the natural environment.

Proposed Research and Monitoring Strategies

The Shoalwater Islands have been of interest to researchers, who have studied the area's flora and fauna for many years. However, the impact of recreational use of the islands is not known.

The draft management plan recommends that research be undertaken to develop an understanding of the ecology of the islands' flora and fauna and assess the effects of visitor activities and management actions. The monitoring of changes to the islands' biota and physical environments will enable managers to counter any adverse effects.



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