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Department of Biodiversity,
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Fishing in Ningaloo Marine Park



Fish possession limits

There is a limit on the quantity of fish you may have in your possession throughout WA. These limits also apply whilst in the Marine Park land zone. Possession limits apply to all land west of the Minilya-Exmouth Road and north of Amherst Point, including the tip of North-West Cape and the townsites of Exmouth and Coral Bay (see map), including permanent places of residence as well as campsites and holiday accommodation.

You may have a maximum of:

- 20 kilos of fillets or pieces of fish; or
- 10 kilos of fillets or pieces of fish plus one day's bag limit of whole fish; or
- Two days' bag limit of whole fish.

These limits apply only to finfish (excluding squid, octopus, cuttlefish and rock lobster).

There is also a possession limit of eight rock lobsters per person in the Marine Park land zone.

Exmouth Gulf rock lobster landing limits

These apply to rock lobster landed on the western shore of the Gulf, below the south boundary of the Marine Park (see map opposite). You may land a maximum of four rock lobster (western and tropical combined) per fisher per day and a maximum of eight rock lobster per boat. Please refer to the Department of Fisheries regarding other specific rock lobster rules, including season dates and minimum legal sizes.

Transporting and storing your fish

All recreationally caught fish which are being transported or stored must be labelled under the following circumstances:

See the Department of Fisheries recreational netting brochure for further details.

You must be within 100m of your net at all times. Nets must be lifted and all fish removed at least once every hour. One end of the net must be above the waterline at all times. Nets may only be in the water between 5.30 am and 8.30 am in the morning, and 4.00 pm and 7.00 pm in the evening.

BEACH NETTING AREAS:

- Ned's Camp-Mesa
- Winderabandi Point
- Bruboodjoo
- 14-mile beach (Warroora Station).

Shell & coral gathering

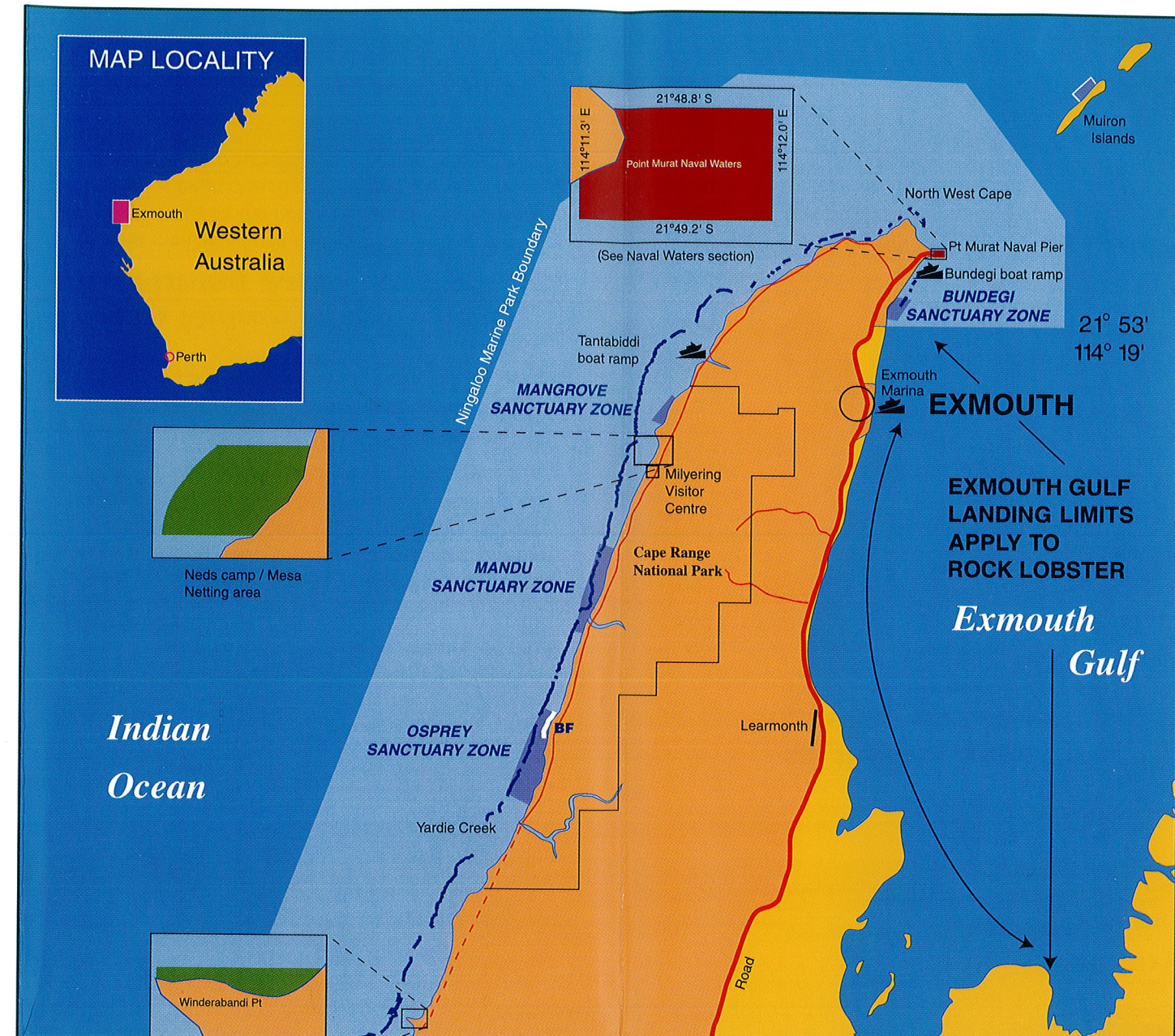
Shells and corals are all part of the reef ecosystem, and even when no longer alive they continue to provide shelter for other tiny sea creatures. Most marine animals are protected in the Marine Park. You may not collect shells, corals or any other form of marine animal. However, some common species may be taken outside of sanctuary zones. These are oysters, squid, cuttlefish, octopus, and rock lobsters.

Anchor damage

Boat anchors destroy fish habitats, especially coral and seagrass. Prevent reef damage by using sand anchors and anchoring in sand.

Aquatic charter tours

All aquatic tour operators offering fishing and eco-tourism charters must be licensed through the Department of Fisheries or the Department of Conservation and Land Management. A number of such operations are based in both Exmouth and Coral Bay and are subject to the same



- Where fish are being commercially consigned or transported;
- Where more than an individual possession limit is stored in a container;
- On premises involved in the commercial take, processing, transport, storage, sale or dealing with fish.

The label attached to the package or container must be clearly visible and must contain the full name of the owner. Labels must be at least 75mm long and 25mm wide.

The labelling requirement also applies to places of permanent residence in the Marine Park land zone. Fish consigned for transport on a truck or aircraft will be considered the property of the person who consigned them, until they are in the possession of the recipient.

Illegal fishing methods

Spearfishing is a highly selective fishing method, and can have a major impact on resident reef species in specific locations. Consequently, fishing with a speargun, gidgie or Hawaiian sling is prohibited in all waters between Tantabiddi and Winderabandi Point, as well as in sanctuary zones. The following resident reef species are also protected from spearfishing in Marine Park waters: groper, tuskfish and wrasse (family *Labridae*), cods and coral trout (family *Serranidae*).

You may not use compressed air breathing gear (SCUBA or hookah) or rock lobster pots when fishing or taking rock lobster in the Marine Park.

Netting

Beach netting for transient species such as mullet is a traditional pastime in some areas of the Marine Park. A licence from the Department of Fisheries is required for netting.

Four stretches of beach have been made available for set or haul net fishing, under strict conditions (see map). You may use a throw net in other areas of the Marine Park, but not in sanctuary zones. Minimum mesh sizes reduce the likelihood of capturing undersize fish. Inside the Ningaloo Marine Park, nets must have a mesh size no less than 63mm, and no more than 90mm, a maximum drop of 25 mesh, and a maximum length of 60 metres.

Fishing licences

You must have a WA recreational fishing licence to use set, haul or throw nets, or take rock lobsters or abalone. Licences are available from the Department of Fisheries or Australia Post.

SAFETY AT SEA

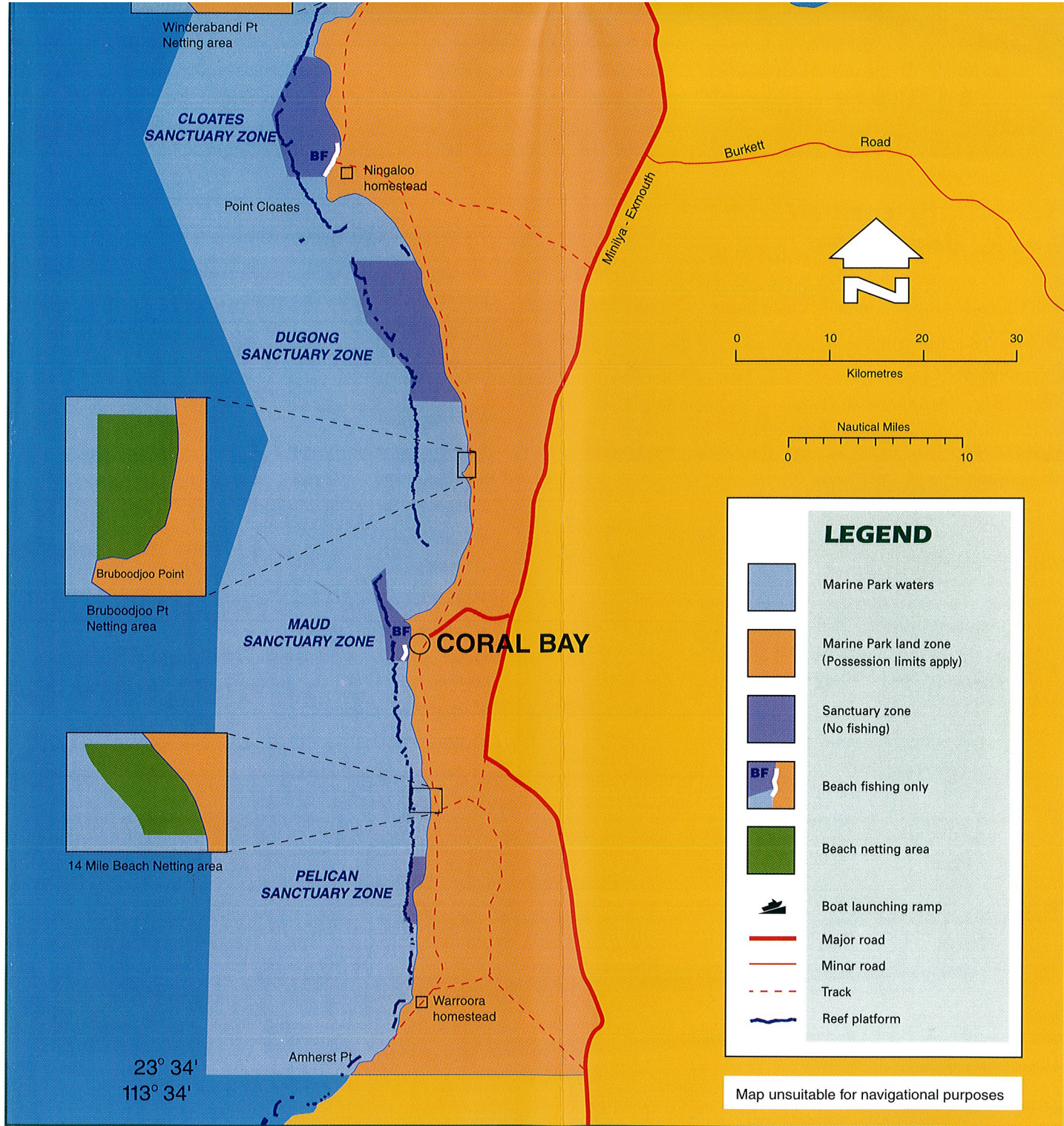
Major all-tide boat ramps for accessing the Ningaloo Marine Park are located at the Exmouth Marina, at Bundegi, just north of Exmouth and at Tantabiddi on the west side of the Exmouth Peninsula.

Although the waters of Ningaloo often appear calm, and ideal for fishing or diving from small craft, conditions can change very quickly. Powerful rips and unexpected swells can also occur near gaps in the reef. Boat fishers should keep a careful watch on ocean and weather conditions at all times. Make doubly sure you have the right safety equipment on board, including lifejackets and flares as specified by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure. Let somebody know where you are going, and the time you expect to be back, before setting out on a boating trip.

Sea Rescue Radio Service at Exmouth and Coral Bay - the VHF marine band (Exmouth Ch. 21 & 22 Coral Bay Ch. 12 & 16) network ensures excellent radio coverage of Coral Bay & North-West Cape across to Onslow. 27.88MHz and 27.90MHz are also monitored but VHF is the preferred radio communication in the region. A digital & CDMA mobile phone network is installed in the Exmouth and Coral Bay area (this network is limited in some parts of the area).

Naval waters

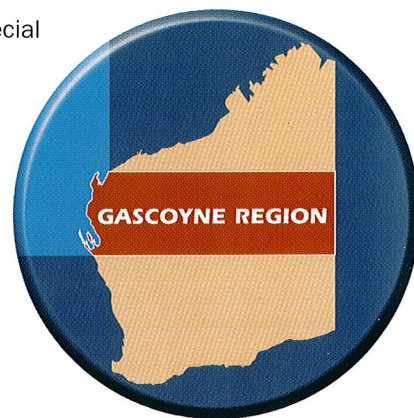
The Point Murat Naval Pier, the outer dolphins (i.e. pier extensions) and the waters surrounding the pier, for a distance of 400 meters are Naval Waters and Prohibited Commonwealth Property. It is an offence to trespass on the naval pier or the dolphins. Fishing, anchoring or loitering is not permitted in the Naval Waters. You are permitted to traverse Naval Waters at a safe speed and at a safe distance from the outer dolphins but not under the attached dolphins. These areas are patrolled and offenders will be prosecuted under the *Crimes Act 1914* and the *Control of Naval Waters Act 1918*.



Ningaloo Marine Park

Ningaloo Marine Park is some 1,200 km north of Perth by road, and has been among the most popular fishing destinations in the Gascoyne Region for many years.

The Marine Park was declared in 1992, and runs for about 260km south along the Exmouth Peninsula, and protects Western Australia's premier fringing coral reef system. Due to its key conservation status, special fishing rules were first introduced for the Marine Park in 1992. These included sanctuary areas, a spearfishing ban, a possession limit, and a mixed daily bag limit for larger pelagic and bottom fish lower than elsewhere in the State.

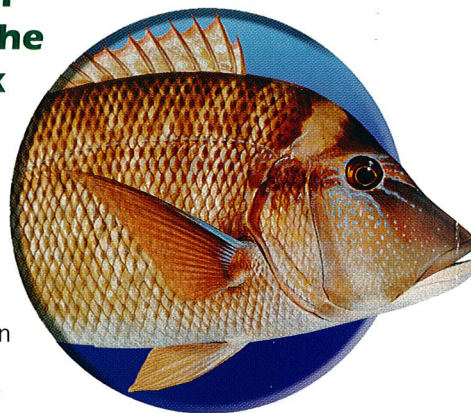


A recent review of recreational fisheries management identified tourism and population growth, and improvements in coastal access and fishing technology, as a major threat to the long-term sustainability of the region's fish populations. Consequently, new recreational fishing rules such as reduced species bag limits, a revised possession limit per person, and new legal size limits now apply throughout the Gascoyne region. These rules also apply to Ningaloo Marine Park.

Some rules unique to the Ningaloo Marine Park will continue to apply in recognition of the area's special conservation status. These are described in this brochure, which should be read in conjunction with the *Gascoyne Region Recreational Fishing Guide*, available from the Department of Fisheries.

Recreational Fishing in the Marine Park

Recreational fishers target and land about 50 species of marine finfish in the Marine Park, most of which are common to the Indo-Pacific Region. A number of pelagic species including spanish mackerel, sailfish, and marlin are seasonal visitors, while demersal species such as members of the emperor (north-west snapper) family while not migratory, move on and offshore in response to seasonal conditions.



Data from a recreational fishing survey of the Gascoyne Bioregion in 1998/99 estimated a total of 85,254 fisher days were spent in the Marine Park over a 12 month period. This comprised 40,476 fisher days by boats launched from public boat ramps at Coral Bay, Tantabiddi, Bundegi and Exmouth; 25,881 fisher days by boats launched from beaches within the Marine Park; and 18,897 days by shore-based fishers.

The most common species by total weight landed by all recreational fishers in the Ningaloo Marine Park were spangled emperor (60 tonnes), golden trevally (15 tonnes), sweetlip emperor (13 tonnes), blue-lined emperor (9 tonnes) and chinaman cod (8 tonnes). The most common species by number kept by all recreational fishers in the Ningaloo Marine Park were spangled emperor (22,600), chinaman cod (19,700), sweetlip

emperor (10,400), blue-lined emperor (8,500), squid (8,200), golden trevally (4,800), and yellow-tailed emperor (4,700). Boat fishers landed in excess of 90 per cent of the total catch.

These figures are consistent with total catch estimates made in the early 1990s before the declaration of the Marine Park.

Recent reductions in species bag limits and changes to other fishing rules are aimed at ensuring long-term sustainability in the face of growing visitors numbers, improved access, better boat launching facilities and greater use of improved fishing technology.

Details on the status of fish stocks and fisheries research and management can be found on the Department of Fisheries website: www.fish.wa.gov.au

South Muiron Island - No Fishing Area

An area measuring one nautical mile by one-half nautical miles on the north-western tip of South Muiron Island has been closed to fishing to protect marine life. Both Muiron Islands have spectacular coral reefs inhabited by such species as snapper, trevally, coral trout and cod.

Manta rays visit the area to be defouled by cleaner wrasse. Green and loggerhead turtles breed on the island beaches. Visitors gather to watch the annual shark migrations and some local potato cod have become tame enough to greet divers. The 'No Fishing Area' is marked by boundary signs on the high water mark at each end of the zone. The signs consist of a bright orange square base with a white post, for offshore recognition.

No Fishing Area South Muiron Island

Intersection of Latitude 21° 39.43' South and Longitude 114° 20.19' East.

Intersection of Latitude 21° 40.11' South and Longitude 114° 19.44' East

1 N.M.

0.5 N.M.

0.5 N.M.

NORTH MUIRON ISLAND

ISLANDS

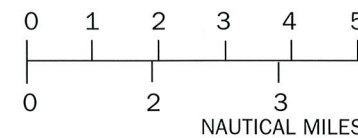
Intersection of Latitude 21° 39.77' South and the High Water Mark.

SOUTH MUIRON ISLAND

Intersection of Latitude 21° 40.55' South and the High Water Mark.



SCALE 1: 100 000 KILOMETRES



Sanctuary Zones at Ningaloo

Sanctuary zones - Look, don't take

Sanctuary zones are living marine aquariums. **Look but don't touch** is the message in these areas.

All material (dead or alive) is protected up to the high water mark.

Sanctuaries, as their name suggests, are there to protect typical areas of the coral reef system, and its resident fish and other animals, in as near to a pristine condition as possible.

Anglers travelling through these areas by boat must make sure all fishing gear is out of the water, and stowed on deck.

There are eight sanctuary zones in the Ningaloo Marine Park. These are closed to fishing, however, angling from the beach is permitted on a limited stretch of shore next to the Osprey, Cloates and Maud sanctuary zones.

The zones are:

- Bundegi
- Mandu
- Cloates
- Maud
- Mangrove
- Osprey
- Dugong
- Pelican

Fish or Foul?

Plastics and other rubbish are not only an eyesore, they are a health and safety hazard and a threat to marine life.

Take a rubbish bag with you as part of your fishing gear, and take your old fishing line and other rubbish out of the Marine Park for proper disposal.

Protected species:

The following species are totally protected throughout Western Australia:

- All undersized fish
- Berried rock lobster and crabs
- Setose and/or tarspot Western Rock Lobster
- Potato cod
- All cod over 1.2m
- Whale shark
- Humpheaded maori wrasse
- Grey nurse shark
- Great white shark
- Coral
- Leafy seadragons

Some species are also protected in Ningaloo Marine Park Waters:

- Queensland groper
- Manta ray
- Molluscs (except oysters, cuttlefish, squid and octopus)



Potato Cod, one of the protected species

Further Information

Contact the Department of Fisheries or the Department of Conservation and Land Management for more information on fishing at Ningaloo or the management of the Ningaloo Marine Park.

Refer to the *Recreational Fishing Guide for the Gascoyne Region* for bag limits, size limits and other fishing rules.

Fines for recreational fishing offences may be as high as \$5,000 plus up to ten times the dollar value of the species.

DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES

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Ph: (08) 9482 7333 Fax: (08) 9482 7389
web: <http://www.fish.wa.gov.au>
e-mail: headoffice@fish.wa.gov.au

EXMOUTH DISTRICT OFFICE

cnr Payne & Riggs Street, Exmouth 6707
Ph: (08) 9949 2755 Fax: (08) 9949 1558

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT (CALM)

17 Dick Perry Ave, Kensington 6151
Ph: (08) 9334 0333

CALM EXMOUTH OFFICE

22 Nimitz Street, Exmouth 6707
Ph: (08) 9949 1676
Fax: (08) 9949 1580

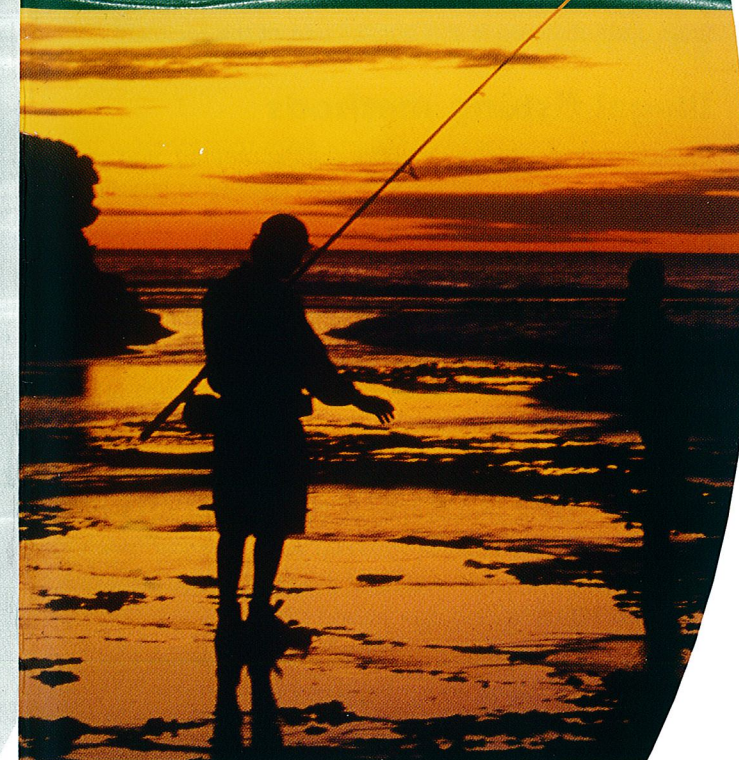
MILYERING VISITOR CENTRE

Ph: (08) 9949 2808



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Recreational Fishing Guide Ningaloo Marine Park



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