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Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions

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Caring for heritage

The Aboriginal and historical sites in this area are irreplaceable. These sites contribute to the history and identity of the local community and are an invaluable component of indigenous cultural heritage. Their cultural, scientific, educational and historic significance is recognised locally, nationally and internationally.

Heritage sites are fragile and can be easily damaged. When heritage sites are destroyed or damaged information about past cultural and environmental changes may be lost forever.

If you find engravings, artefacts or other cultural landscape features please respect their importance and don't touch them. Under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972*, fines and/or potential imprisonment apply to people who damage or interfere with Aboriginal sites. Please report any damage to Aboriginal sites to the Registrar of Aboriginal Sites: www.dia.wa.gov.au.

Please use common sense and respect when encountering these important sites. Help us preserve them for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations.

More information

Department of Environment and Conservation

Pilbara Regional Office

Cnr Anderson and Mardie roads

Karratha Industrial Estate

Karratha WA 6714

Ph (08) 9182 2000

Fax (08) 9144 1118

www.dec.wa.gov.au

Department of Fisheries

Karratha District Office

Unit 1/17-19 Crane Circle

Karratha WA 6714

Ph (08) 9144 4337

Fax (08) 9144 4348

www.fish.wa.gov.au

Department of Indigenous Affairs

Ph (08) 9235 8000

www.dia.wa.gov.au

Karratha Visitor Centre

Lot 4548 Karratha Road

Karratha WA 6714

Ph (08) 9144 4600

Fax (08) 9144 4620

Bureau of Meteorology

www.bom.gov.au/weather/wa/forecasts

- Weather call 1900 926 150
- Northern WA Coastal Waters Forecast 1900 969 901
- WA Coastal marine warnings 1300 659 223
- WA Tropical Cyclone information 1300 659 210

Sea Search and Rescue

WA Water Police

Ph (08) 9442 8600

Radio Frequencies

VHF 16 for distress and calling. The 27 MHz radio frequency is not monitored and is unreliable in this area.

- **Fishwatch:** Report illegal fishing 1800 815 507
- **Oil Spill Reporting:** Report marine oil spills 9480 9924
- **Emergency Pollution response:** 1300 784 782
- **Customs and Border Protection Service Hotline:** 1800 061 800
- **Wildlife Watch:** Report illegal wildlife activity 1800 449 453
- **Wildcare:** Report sick and injured wildlife 9474 9055

Photos – Rob Connell, Marissa Speirs, Cath Samson and Ulla Kail/DEC/Volunteer.

Dampier Archipelago Island reserves



Information guide



Department of Environment and Conservation
Department of Indigenous Affairs



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The Dampier Archipelago – 42 islands, islets and rocks, all within a 45-kilometre radius of Dampier – has exceptional natural beauty, high conservation values and outstanding heritage values.

Many of the Archipelago's islands are reserves managed by the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC). This protection is important as some islands maintain unique habitats for plants and animals, undamaged by feral animals and weeds. Some islands are classed as Special Conservation Zones where no public access is allowed as they provide nesting sites for threatened seabird populations and marine turtles.

The Dampier Archipelago's scenic landscape of spinifex-covered islands, dramatic piles of jumbled red rock and white sandy beaches contrast against aqua waters and bright blue skies. It provides a visual feast for all who visit and a wealth of recreational opportunities.

While the Dampier Archipelago is best known for fishing and boating, it has much more to offer.

The Dampier Archipelago is the richest area of marine biodiversity known in Western Australia, and is comparable with the Great Barrier Reef. Coral reefs, sponge gardens, sea grass and more than 650 species of fish make snorkelling and diving popular.

Whale watching is popular between June and September when humpback whales are commonly seen migrating

between their summer feeding grounds in the Antarctic and their winter breeding grounds in the tropics. Bottlenose and Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins are also regularly seen.

Flatback, green, hawksbill and loggerhead turtles are often seen in the Dampier Archipelago and during the summer visitors have the opportunity to watch female flatback, green and hawksbill turtles nesting on several beaches. The Archipelago supports the largest hawksbill turtle rookery in the Indo-Pacific region, one of the largest in the world.

Bird watchers have the opportunity to see more than 100 bird species, including several migratory waders that use the beaches and mudflats to feed and rest during the long flight to Australia from their breeding grounds in Northern Russia. Ospreys and sea eagles are frequently seen soaring over the Archipelago and the large osprey nests constructed of sticks are prominent and common features on the island headlands and rock stacks.

Visitors may also see the elusive Rothschild's rock wallaby among the rock piles on the larger islands or, if very lucky, the rare Pilbara olive python, one of 41 species of terrestrial reptiles found on the islands.

The islands, like the Burrup Peninsula, offer the unique opportunity to see excellent examples of Aboriginal heritage, in particular rock engravings.

Our Pilbara Heritage

Aboriginal heritage

Many thousands of Aboriginal rock engravings, shell middens, stone arrangements and artefact scatters are located in the Dampier Archipelago and Burrup Peninsula. These features are evidence of at least 20,000 years of intensive land use by past Aboriginal occupants. Some sites date back to the last ice age.

These outstanding examples of Aboriginal heritage and culture within the ancient landscape have been acknowledged through the National Heritage Listing of the area. Identified as one of the densest concentrations of rock engravings in the world, designs include an exceptional range of mythological beings, human and animal figures and geometric patterns. The area also contains a high density of stone features, including standing stones, stone pits and circular stone arrangements.

European heritage

Although the islands now known as the Dampier Archipelago appeared on a chart drawn in 1628 for the Dutch East India Company the first recorded European to visit to the Dampier Archipelago was Englishman William Dampier aboard the *Cygnet* in 1688.

Relics of later occupation can be seen on the islands with structures remaining from whaling, pearling and pastoral activities. Large cast iron try-pots encased in stone ovens on Malus Island are the remnants of a whaling station that operated between 1870 and 1872. On the east side of West Lewis Island are the remains of a pastoral settlement, with stone buildings and extensive sheep pens still visible.

Between 1870 and 1900 Flying Foam Passage was the major pearling area of the North West. The remains of the pearlers camp can be seen at Black Hawke Bay on Gidley Island.



Playing safe on the Pilbara Coast

To ensure an enjoyable visit to the Dampier Archipelago, plan your trip and stay safe.

There are no facilities on the islands and little shade. Take plenty of water and be sun-safe.

The five-metre tidal range catches out many visitors to the Archipelago. Vessels may become stranded or trapped as some bays and channels dry out at low tide. Ensure you put sufficient anchor rope out for the high tides and that items left on the beach won't be taken away by the tide.

Cyclones can form at any time but mainly between November and April. Visitors are urged to be vigilant for cyclone warnings.

Be aware that crocodiles are occasionally seen in the area so take care launching your boat and don't clean fish at the water's edge.

Stinging jellyfish are known to occur in the area occasionally, particularly in the summer months. While the risk of being stung is low, especially if stinger suits are worn, ensure you have plenty of vinegar (to douse stings) and that you are aware of general first aid procedures.

1080 poison baits are laid on several of the island reserves to control feral pests such as foxes and cats. 1080 is poisonous to humans and will kill dogs and cats if consumed. Do not take your pets to the islands.

Planning your trip

Planning your trip to the Dampier Archipelago should include being aware of the local waters and ensuring your vessel is seaworthy.

Always check weather and tides and make sure you are familiar with the waters you intend travelling. Consult charts if required.

Always tell someone where you plan to go and when you intend to return. Update them if your plans change and let them know when you are safely on land.

Make sure your safety gear and first aid kit is on board and you have adequate fuel.

Radio communications

The only radio frequency monitored in this area is VHF 16 for distress and calling. The 27 MHz radio frequency is not monitored and is unreliable in the Archipelago.

Keep clear of shipping

The Port of Dampier is one of the world's largest bulk export ports and consequently, there are large ships and tugs operating 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. For safety's sake, it is important that recreational boaters keep clear of these large vessels as they cannot alter course or stop quickly.



Recreational fishing

To conserve our precious fish stocks, fishing regulations apply throughout Western Australia.

For the most up-to-date information on fishing rules in the North Coast Region, check the Department of Fisheries website (www.fish.wa.gov.au) or contact your nearest Department of Fisheries office before going fishing. Fines apply for recreational fishing offences.

Help ensure there will be 'Fish for the future' by observing size, bag and possession limits, and releasing undersize and excess fish as quickly and carefully as possible.

What fishing licenses do I need?

- Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence (required for any general fishing activity conducted with the use of a powered boat)
- Rock Lobster
- Net Fishing (set, haul and throw nets)

You may purchase or renew your licenses online at www.fish.wa.gov.au or at any Australia Post outlet and Department of Fisheries office.

All revenue from recreational fishing licences goes directly to the research and management of WA's recreational fisheries.

Protected zones

There are two protected zones in the Dampier Archipelago and surrounds.

At Point Samson all reef life is protected including sharks and rays. You may fish with a line or spear for finfish only.

At the Kunmunya and Samson II wreck sites, fishing is not allowed within 500 metres of the wreck sites intersection of 20° 25.81' S and 117° 12.80'E; see map).



Caring for the Dampier Archipelago

- Camping is permitted only on selected islands up to 100 metres inland of the high water mark on beaches zoned for recreation (see map) and for no more than five consecutive nights. Observe these restrictions to protect wildlife and the landscape.
- There are no bins on the islands. Always take your rubbish home with you – rubbish can harm wildlife.
- Open fires are not permitted on the islands – escaped campfires can cause damage to the ecology of the islands. Please use a portable gas stove.
- Keep pest plants and animals off the islands – they are important refuges for native animals threatened or no longer existing on the mainland.
- Do not take pets to the islands.
- Check your boat is clean and pest free.
- Check your clothing and footwear are not carrying soil or seeds.
- Check your containers and food are clean and pest free.
- Firearms are not permitted on the islands.
- Fish for the future. Observe size, bag and possession limits. Quickly return undersized and unwanted fish to the water. Use wet hands or a wet cloth when handling fish and avoid placing them on hot dry surfaces.
- Anchor in sand to protect fragile coral, sponge, seagrass and seaweed communities.
- Minimise disturbance to marine wildlife by following the observation guidelines for whales, dugongs and turtles.
- Take care not to disturb seabird colonies on the islands. Many seabirds lay eggs on the ground or in burrows close to the beach. Do not walk in areas of nesting birds (walk below the high tide line) and when boating stay clear of resting birds.
- When boating be alert for marine wildlife. Reduce speed in shallow areas and where animals have been sighted. Boats are damaged and animals are killed and injured by collisions.
- Please do not collect shells. Some shells provide homes for animals such as the hermit crabs and octopus.



