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Issue 27 - Spring 2025

Welcome to the 27th issue of *Ngari Capes Marine Park News*

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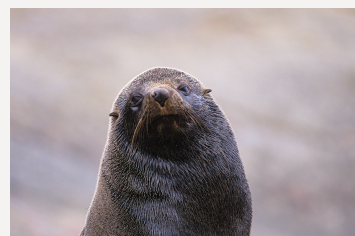


Image right: A long-nosed fur seal (*Arctocephalus fosteri*) by Jiri Lochman

Marine Park Update

By Parks and Wildlife Service, Blackwood

Welcome to the Spring edition of the Ngari Capes Marine Park (NCMP) newsletter. As the weather warms up, and longer days return the whales or 'mamang' as they are known by locals and Traditional Owners are migrating south to colder waters to spend the summer feeding and replenishing their energy reserves in the rich Antarctic waters. We are lucky enough to witness many travelling down with their calves, as they have spent some of winter breeding and birthing off the Kimberley coast. This year, sightings have been particularly abundant for the humpback whales, with local marine researchers and naturalists noting an increase in numbers during field surveys.

We are excited to share the great work that Blackwood District Parks and Wildlife Service Rangers are doing, and we hope you enjoy our story about the application of an interactive approach to deepen our knowledge and awareness of Noongar culture. While out on Noongar Boodja rangers are capturing key indicators of seasonal changes that reflect the Six Noongar Seasons helping them to deepen their understanding of the seasons and the natural seasonal indicators such as flowering plants, animal behaviour and weather patterns.

Kambarang season (October and November), is the Noongar flowering season and season of birth. This season also marks a time of heightened activity among our seabirds and coincides with breeding and beach-nesting. We take a look at the great work Birdlife and DBCA have been doing along the Ngari Capes Marine Park coastline including ongoing monitoring of nests and breeding pairs. Birdlife Australia volunteers and staff within the region contribute to conservation and management of many threatened birds, including seabirds and shorebirds using the marine park. Our local Birdlife volunteers work tirelessly to monitor and protect beach-nesting species, through protecting and restoring important habitat, providing education to the public, tagging and monitoring and much more. If you see DBCA and Birdlife signage and fencing on the beach, it is important to keep your distance and respect the rules, and this includes the four-legged family members. We understand that dogs love a trip to the beach but please abide by the signage and remember '*Birds on the nest...On lead is best*'.

Parks and Wildlife Service Marine and National Park Rangers, Nature Conservation staff and Busselton Jetty crew recently completed seabird rescue training with volunteer trainers from WA Seabird Rescue. This effort marks a powerful step forward in protecting seabirds and highlights the impact of volunteer led conservation. We also touch on a special visitor we had to the bay, a pygmy blue whale estimated to be approximately 23m. Special visits like this prompt us to remind the vessel operators and park visitors to go slow for those below and maintain separation distances with marina fauna while enjoying time out on the water.

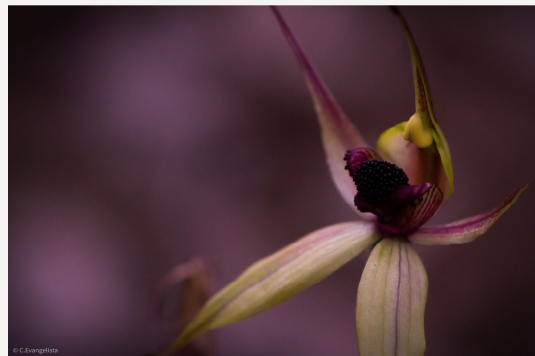


Above: Pygmy blues by Blair Ranford Sharky Aerials

The Six Noongar Seasons observed by Blackwood Parks and Wildlife staff.

By Kristy Fish, Parks and Wildlife Service, Blackwood

Over the past year Blackwood District staff have been collecting their observations of each of the Six Noongar Seasons. This is in honour of our continued commitment to the Department's Reconciliation Action Plan and to help staff connect with, and understand, each of the Six Noongar Seasons. Noongar Country covers an area from Jurien Bay through to Esperance in the South West of WA and Noongar people are the Traditional Aboriginal people of this area.



The Six Noongar Seasons have guided Aboriginal people to find food, shelter and know what to expect through observing natural seasonal indicators such as; flowering plants, animal behaviour and weather patterns. At the beginning of each of the Six Noongar Seasons, staff have been provided with information about the upcoming season and associated seasonal indicators. Staff then record field observations of seasonal indicators through photography.



Staff are also maintaining a collection of all the photos captured to provide a collective view of each season as they continue to develop deeper awareness and understanding of Aboriginal culture and celebrate the continuance of the oldest living culture on the planet. *Reconciliation Action Plan 2024*. This is in the hopes that it will help us engage with the Six Seasons, Boodja (Country) and encourage us to take note of the changes continually happening around us and the interconnectedness of our environment and share our observations with each other.

Above top right: Leaping Spider Orchid representing the flowering Kambarang (Oct-Nov) season by Stelle Evangelista

Below: Morning Fog, a seasonal indicator representing the Djeran (Apr-May) season by Rusty Rouse

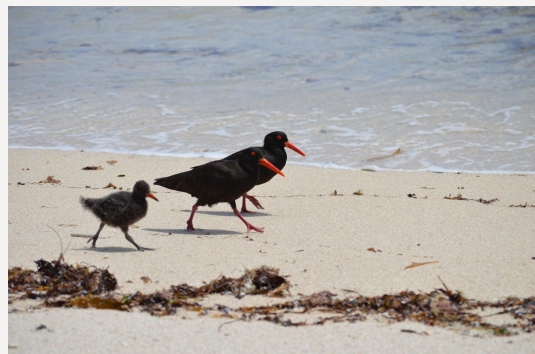
BirdLife

By Tegan Knowles from Birdlife Australia

Egg-citing Times: New Chicks on Our Beaches

We're well and truly into the beach-nesting breeding season! Several recorded nests dot the Augusta Margaret River coastline, with some sites already welcoming chicks.

While this news fills us with excitement, as a coastal community we have a vital role to play in helping these feathered families thrive.



Why Your Actions Matter

When people, unleashed dogs, or vehicles approach too closely, parent birds are forced to temporarily abandon their nests and chicks. They rely on camouflage alone to keep their young safe until danger passes. Though this survival strategy has served them well over millennia, it creates critical vulnerability windows where eggs and chicks face harsh temperatures and hungry predators like ravens and gulls.

The Urgent Reality

BirdLife Australia volunteers, together with the DBCA, Shire of Augusta Margaret River and City of Busselton, work tirelessly to monitor and protect the four species of beach-nesting birds that call our coast home. With approximately 40 Hooded Plovers remaining along the entire Capes coastline—and tragically, no successful fledglings recorded last year—we must act now to give these birds the space they desperately need to survive.

How You Can Help



Respect dog regulations: Only bring your dog to designated dog-friendly sites. When beach-nesting birds are nesting at off-leash beaches, please leash your dog when walking past any signed or fenced areas.

Give the birds space: Respect all signage and fencing—staying too close can be fatal to eggs and chicks. Birds need undisturbed space to successfully incubate their eggs and for the chicks to feed.



Stick to designated paths: While enjoying our beautiful beaches, please walk at the water's edge and use designated access routes. The upper beach and dune areas are sensitive habitat zones.

Together, we can ensure our children and grandchildren will also have the privilege of sharing our coastline with these remarkable birds. Every small action makes a difference in their fight for survival.

Top right: Sooty Oystercatcher family at Gnarabup Beach by Natalie Bell **Middle left:** Look out for these signs this spring and summer by Tegan Knowles **Bottom left:** Boodjidup Beach Hooded Plover Family photo September 2025 by Tegan Knowles

By Parks and Wildlife Service, Blackwood

Seabirds can sometimes find themselves in threatening situations, some of these situations are natural, for example exhaustion following long migration flights and others are caused through anthropogenic events such as oil spills or entanglement in fishing gear. To ensure Parks and Wildlife Service staff in the Blackwood district are well equipped to respond to these delicate situations staff were recently provided with field-based seabird rescue training delivered by two experienced volunteers from WA Seabird Rescue (WASR). WASR Trainers provided specialised training on rescue, rehabilitation and safe release procedures for a variety of species, including gannets, albatrosses, cormorants, darters, shearwaters, petrels, pelicans, black swans, ducks and more. WASR are a statewide non-profit registered charity who take calls 8am to 6pm every day. Their core objectives are to rescue and rehabilitate, to raise awareness and to work together with local wildlife organisations.



This training marks an important step in enhancing our local response capabilities and ensuring that our marine and national park ranger teams are well prepared for bird related emergencies. The training session was designed to teach staff how to safely handle and assess injured or sick seabirds, with a particular focus on local species and species that migrate through our park. WASR volunteers are a group of passionate and dedicate individuals across Western Australia who have spent countless hours learning, training and assisting in wildlife rescue efforts. Their willingness to share their knowledge and work collaboratively with our rangers exemplifies the spirit of community and teamwork that drive conservation efforts.



WASR focus on recusing and rehabilitating sick, injured, displaced and orphaned seabirds and waterbirds. The team aim to raise awareness to educate the public including recreating anglers about the threats faced by seabirds and ways we can all help in their conversation. WASR aim to work together with wildlife rehabilitation organisation in WA and around Australia to promote seabird conservation. If you are keen to become a Seabird rescue volunteer please visit [VOLUNTEERING | WASR](#) for more information.

WA Beach Cleanup

By Parks and Wildlife Service, Blackwood

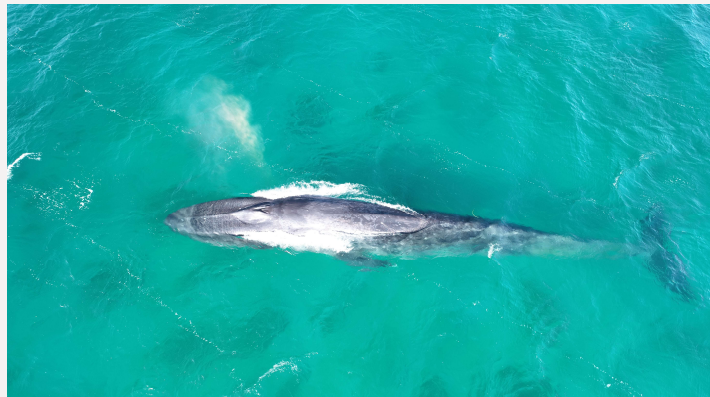
This year's annual Tangaroa Blue Foundation WA Beach Clean-up will be held from the 17th to the 20th of October 2025. Tangaroa Blue Foundation remove tonnes of marine debris from our coastline and contribute vital data to inform marine debris management, including helping to identify plastic pollution sources.

Tangaroa Blue provide free clean-up kits for everyone who wants to get involved. You can create your own event or join one of the many along the Ngari Capes Marine Park coastline; [2025 WA Beach Clean-up Map - Google My Maps](#). It is the 21st year of Tangaroa Blues annual statewide beach clean-up and both Marine and National Park Rangers will be joining in again to assist with the clean-up and disposal of rubbish from our coastline. We hope to see you there!

Blue whales are back in the bay!

By Parks and Wildlife Service, Blackwood

Not only do we have an abundance of humpback whales migrating through the Ngari Capes Marine Park, we are also thrilled to have blue whales back in the bay. A pygmy blue whale (*Balaenoptera musculus brevicauda*) with an estimated length of 23m was recently observed swimming through the Ngari Capes Marine Park.



We are incredibly fortunate to be able to witness this species in the marine park and it comes with an important reminder that we must allow these gentle giants room to move. We encourage you to use your binoculars, your curiosity and keep your distance. Whales face numerous threats and every visitor to our marine park plays a crucial role in protecting the creatures that inhabit it. By slowing down on the water, respecting separation distances and keeping your marine debris onboard to dispose of correctly we can all help to minimise disturbance.

Above: 'Blue whale blow hole' by Blair Ranford Sharky Aerials

Whale Watching In Ngari Capes Marine Park



Whale Watching Rules

- Go Slow for Those Below
- Never swim with whales or attempt to touch a whale.
- Maintain separation distances.
- You must not restrict the path of a whale or approach from behind.

Please don't forget - it is an offence under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* for vessels and people to approach a whale closer than the separation distances permitted.

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WA demersal scalefish science

Periodic stock assessments are undertaken to monitor stock status over time. The latest assessments show that demersal scalefish populations across WA are facing serious sustainability concerns.

Species at risk include baldchin groper, bight redfish, goldband snapper, pink snapper, red emperor, WA dhufish and Western blue groper.

Check out the latest demersal science

You can also share your thoughts on the status of WA's demersal scalefish stocks and how to ensure there are fish for the future.



dpird.wa.gov.au/demersal-scalefish-resources



dpird.wa.gov.au

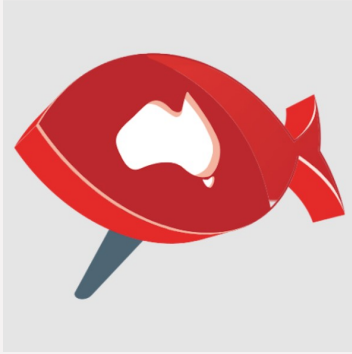
Have you seen anything unusual above or below the water?



Discover a new word of birding! eBird Australia is a collaborative project managed by the Centre for Biodiversity and Conservation Science. eBird Mobile makes it easy to record the birds you see in the field and seamlessly link these observations with eBird-- a global online database of bird records used by hundreds of thousands of birders around the world. This free resource makes it easy to keep track of what you see, while making your data openly available for scientific research, education, and conservation.

App for Apple: [eBird on the App Store](#)

App for Android: [eBird by Cornell Lab – Apps on Google Play](#)



If you are out on the water or diving below and spot a marine species you think is uncommon, you can record it on Redmap (Range Extension Database & Mapping project). Redmap is a citizen science research project that invites the community to spot, log and map marine species that are uncommon in Australia, or along particular parts of our coast. The species identification of these sightings is verified by a panel of Australian expert marine scientists. Over time, Redmap will use this 'citizen science' data to map which Australian marine species may be shifting where they live in response to changes in the marine environment, such as ocean warming/climate change.

App for Apple: [Redmap on the App Store](#)

Thank you for your continued support and interest in our work. We appreciate you taking the time to read about what makes our marine parks so special throughout this time of the year.

Keeping connected and up to date

Understanding the designated zones and their respective activities is crucial for a safe and enjoyable visit to Ngari Capes Marine Park. Since 2018, these zones have been in place to facilitate various recreational and commercial activities while prioritising conservation efforts. Catering to fishers, scuba divers, snorkelers, surfers, and kayakers, the zones promote sustainability and establish sanctuary areas for undisturbed appreciation of the marine environment.

To stay informed and connected, utilise resources such as the Deckee app, and the FishCatch WA app, alongside engaging with Recfishwest for insights tailored to recreational fishing. These apps provide comprehensive information on marine park regulations, enhancing visitor experiences while promoting responsible enjoyment of Western Australia's coastal treasures.



Recfishwest app:

Access all WA fishing rules, fish ID, GPS marine park info, and safety locations offline! High-quality illustrations and details on hundreds of species available on this free app. Stay updated on fishing seasons, bag limits, and easily identify catches with Recfishwest's three-step fish ID.

App for Apple: [recfishwest on the App Store](#)

App for Android: [Recfishwest – Apps on Google Play](#)



Deckee boating app

Deckee is a comprehensive boating assistant with features including on-water location sharing, automated logbooks, marine weather, safety alerts, and more, ensuring confident navigation for users. It offers automatic on-water detection, global member visibility, risk forecasting, activity logging, local knowledge heatmaps, interactive chart info, and worldwide vessel tracking, catering to both novice and experienced boaters.

App for Apple: [DECKEE Boating on the App Store](#)

App for Android: [DECKEE Boating – Apps on Google Play](#)

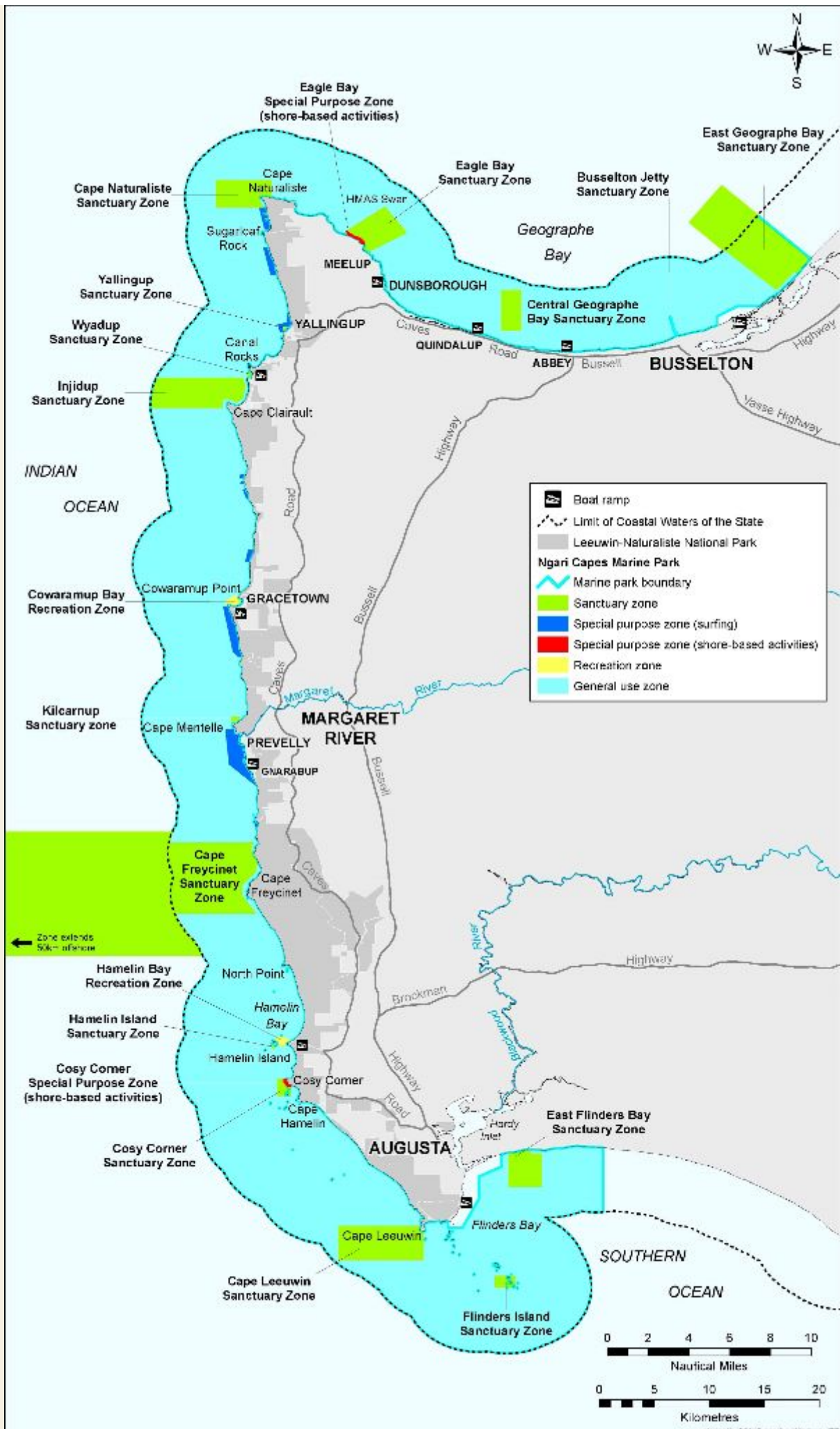


FishCatch WA app

Recreational fishers in Western Australia, exploring the waters from Kalbarri to Augusta, are invited to utilise the innovative FishCatchWA™ tool to document their demersal scalefish catches. Efficiently log your demersal catches and access valuable insights while actively contributing to scientific research. Seamlessly access the FishCatchWA™ tool through the ServiceWA app or download it now for immediate use.

App for Apple: [ServiceWA on the App Store](#)

App for Android: [ServiceWA - Apps on Google Play](#)



Above: Map of Ngari Capes Marine Park showing zones plus national park zones in adjacent Australian marine parks.



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