

The role of science in conservation management

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Western Australia's diverse marine environment stretches across temperate, sub-tropical and tropical regions, from the rugged south coast to temperate west coast reefs and seagrass meadows in Shark Bay, to the iconic Ningaloo Reef and the wild Kimberley. Western Australian locals and visitors alike treasure the natural heritage and resources of our marine environment, which is home to a number of iconic species, such as whale sharks, marine turtles, whales, dolphins and dugongs, and supports a number of important industries.

The Western Australian Government, through the Department of Parks and Wildlife, is committed to a world class marine parks and reserves system. Since 2008, the Western Australian Government has created new marine parks on the south coast at Walpole, along the south-west Capes and in the Kimberley region and has committed to further new marine parks that will more than treble the area protected from approximately 1.5 million hectares to around 5 million hectares.

A sound understanding of natural values, and the ecological processes that support them, is vital to underpin effective management of these natural areas in a multiple use context. Parks and Wildlife, through the Marine Science Program and in partnership with institutions such as WAMSI, undertakes strategic research and monitoring programs designed to improve on-ground management of the marine environment, and draws on the outcomes of strategic marine research programs. The previous WAMSI Ningaloo Research Program and the current WAMSI Kimberley Marine Research Program are focused on key marine parks providing baseline physical, biological and cultural information that will assist in effective marine park management. Parks and Wildlife is also working with Aboriginal traditional owners, particularly in the Kimberley, to develop and implement joint management of the marine environment that recognises traditional cultural needs alongside conservation, tourism and industry.



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