



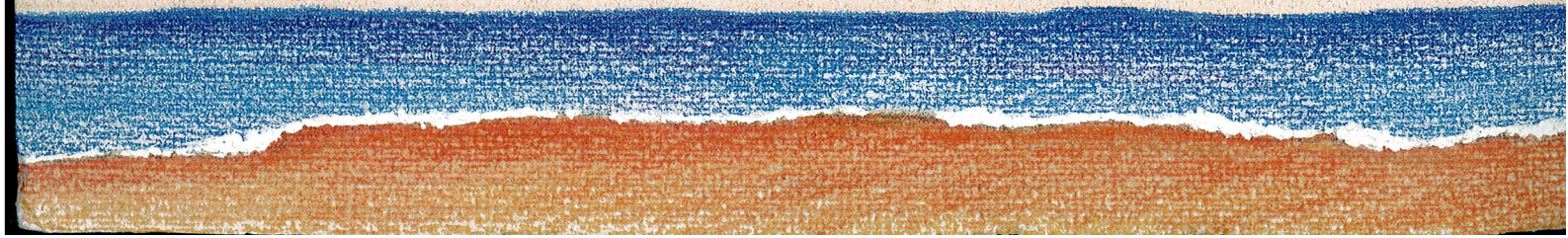
WORLD HERITAGE



Hamelin Pool stromatolites. Jiri Lochman, Lochman Transparencies

Shark Bay

Another Australian Wonder!





The World Heritage Convention

The Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (the World Heritage Convention) was adopted by the UNESCO General Conference at its 17th session in Paris on 16 November 1972. The Convention came into force in 1975. Australia ratified the Convention in 1974.

The World Heritage Convention aims to promote co-operation among nations to protect worldwide heritage which is of such universal value that its conservation is a concern of all people. Under the terms of the Convention there has been established a "World Heritage List" of properties having outstanding universal value which form part of the cultural and natural heritage of signatory countries.

In order to qualify for the World Heritage List, a nominated property must meet specific criteria of outstanding universal value from either a cultural or natural point of view.

Natural heritage is defined as follows:

- ◆ "natural features consisting of physical and biological formations or groups of such formations, which are of outstanding universal value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view;
- ◆ geological and physiographical formations and precisely delineated areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation;
- ◆ natural sites or precisely delineated natural areas of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty."

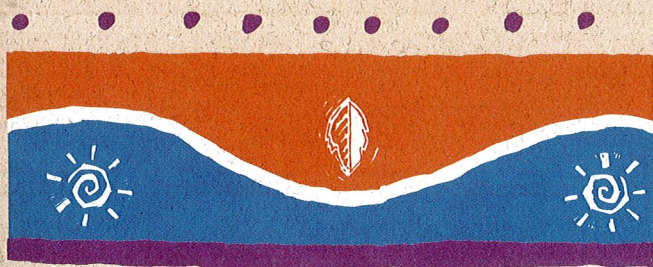
There are four criteria applied to each property that test this definition and each has associated integrity conditions. A property can also be listed for its cultural values, which entails considering another six criteria and the associated integrity conditions.



Big Lagoon, Peron Peninsula. Marie Lochman, Lochman Transparencies



Zuytdorp Cliffs. Jiri Lochman, Lochman Transparencies



Shark Bay

Shark Bay is located in Western Australia, 700 kilometres north of Perth. It is the most westerly point of the Australian continent.

Shark Bay was nominated for World Heritage listing in October 1990 and inscribed on the World Heritage List in December 1991. Shark Bay was nominated on the basis of its natural values. When listed in 1991, Shark Bay was one of only eleven places on the World Heritage List to satisfy all four natural criteria.

Nature's diversity

Shark Bay comprises a series of north-south trending peninsulas and islands which separate inlets and bays from each other and the Indian Ocean. The area covers some 22,000 square kilometres, of which about 66% is marine. The 1500 kilometre long internal coastline contributes to a great diversity of landscapes.

Sea cliffs are a distinctive feature of Shark Bay, with lots of variation in colour, form and height. Notable sea cliffs include Zuytdorp cliffs and those along Dirk Hartog Island, Heirisson and Bellefin Prongs and the strongly contrasting cliffs on Peron Peninsula. Other parts of Shark Bay are characterised by calm bays and inlets with wide sweeping beaches of sand or shells, interspersed by rocky platforms and headlands.

Inland of the magnificent coast, there are low rolling hills interspersed with low, flat clay pans or 'birridas'. Where the sea has access to these areas, shallow inland bays of great beauty are created such as Little Lagoon and Big Lagoon.



Dugong accompanied by sucker fish. Geoff Taylor, Lochman Transparencies



Shark Bay Rose. Jiri Lochman, Lochman Transparencies



Shark Bay Mouse. Marie Lochman, Lochman Transparencies

Plants and animals

It is the marine flora and fauna that make Shark Bay uniquely significant. The waters of the Bay play host to a range of large marine animals, including dolphins, manta rays, whales and several species of sharks. Shark Bay also provides a habitat for a population of about 10,000 dugongs, which are the world's only herbivorous marine mammals. They graze on the vast beds of seagrass on the eastern side of the Bay. The seagrass beds cover approximately 400 square kilometres of the Bay.

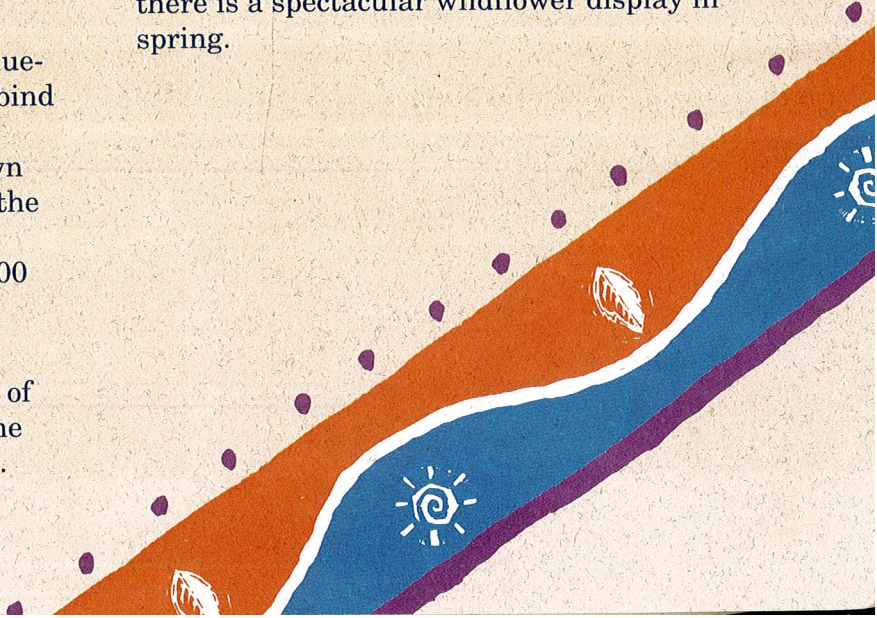
The numerous species of seagrass support other animals, including green and loggerhead turtles. The banks produced by the seagrass help to maintain the salinity of Hamelin Pool in the southeast corner of the Bay. This hypersaline condition is conducive to the growth of cyanobacteria (formerly called blue-green algae). The cyanobacteria trap and bind sediment to produce a variety of mats and structures including laminated types known as stromatolites. Stromatolites represent the oldest form of life on earth. They are representative of life-forms living some 3500 million years ago.

Shark Bay's land fauna is also of great significance, primarily due to the isolation of habitats on peninsulas and islands from the disturbance which has occurred elsewhere.

In particular, the spinifex covered Bernier and Dorre islands provide refuge for several species that no longer exist, or are found only in isolated pockets, on the mainland. These include the banded and rufous hare wallabies, the barred bandicoot and the endemic Shark Bay mouse.

Among the many reptiles adapted to the semi-arid conditions is the shingleback lizard, conspicuous because of its size and arresting looks. Less obvious are a number of smaller endemic creatures, including a legless lizard and the recently discovered sandhill frog.

Shark Bay's vegetation consists mainly of grasses, especially spinifex, and low shrubs. As in many other parts of Western Australia, there is a spectacular wildflower display in spring.



Cultural history...Different things to different people

Although nominated only for its natural criteria, Shark Bay also possesses significant cultural features. The Bay was undoubtedly important to the Aboriginal population with the first evidence of their presence and use of the marine environment dating back some 5000 years.

Shark Bay is also of great importance for its association with early European landings, explorations and scientific investigations from 1616 onwards. There are sites and features of historic importance. Dirk Hartog Island is the site of the first recorded visit of a European to Western Australia. Dampier's visit in 1699 is of biological significance in that he collected the first specimens of Australian flora. A number of the blue-flowered plants which impressed Dampier are readily visible today. Dampier was also the first European to describe a kangaroo.

The collections made by scientists such as Peron, Baudin and others can be seen in museums in Europe. The scientific papers resulting from these early expeditions are not only of heritage value, but assist in the study of the factors which have led to the extinction of small mammals.

Many of the early explorers have left their names and those of their ships and crew on

the various features at Shark Bay. The wreck of the Zuytdorp in 1712 has led to the name of the coastal cliffs south of Steep Point.

Management

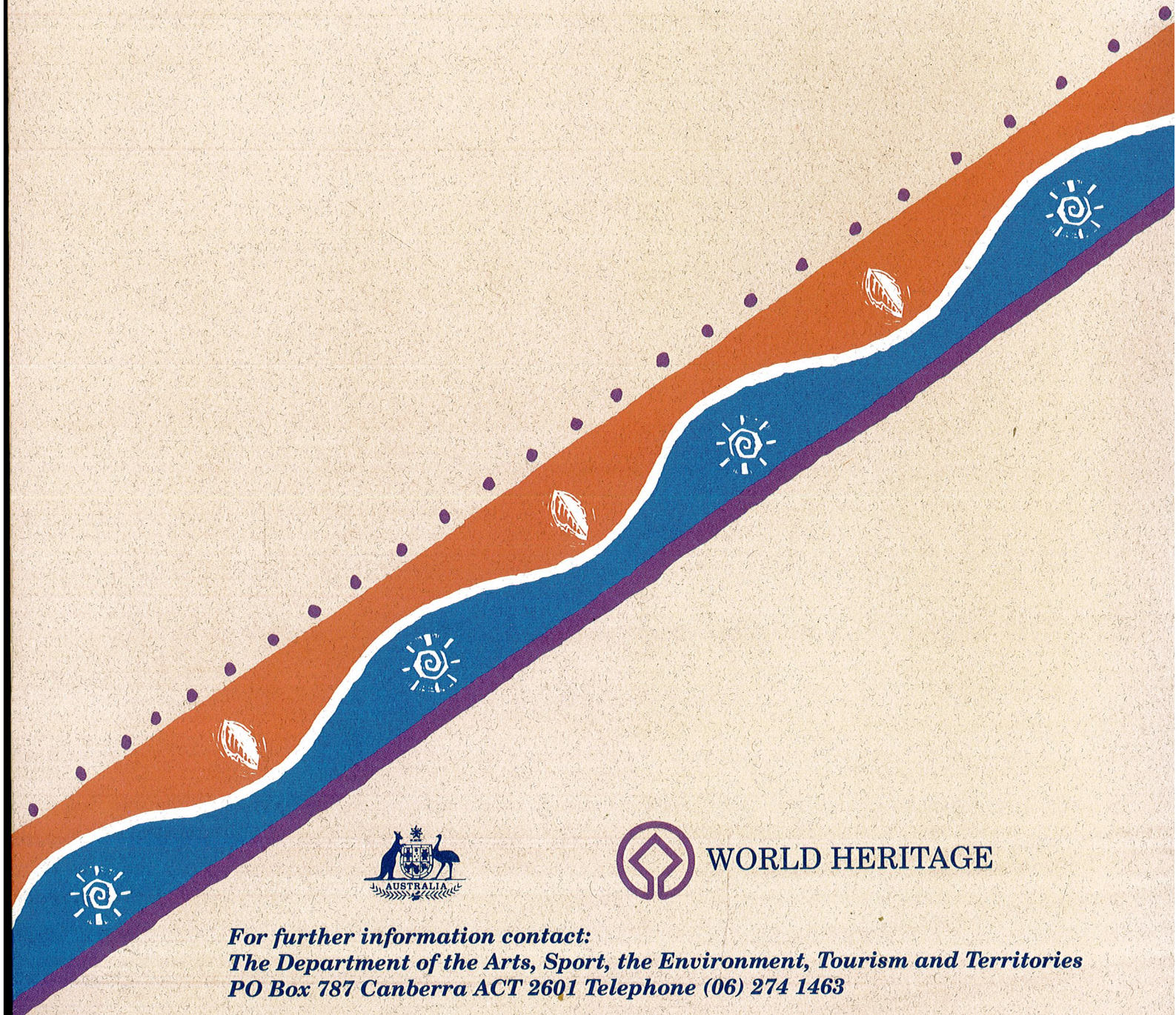
The Western Australian Government and the Australian Government will introduce complementary legislation into both Parliaments to deal with management of the property. The Shark Bay Region Plan, developed in consultation with the Shark Bay community and adopted by the Western Australian Government in June 1988, is the basis for management of the property. More detailed management plans for particular areas are being developed by the Western Australian Government. Any future major change to land-use will require further public consultation as occurred with the original Region Plan. The Region Plan and the management plans will give effect to Australia's obligations under the World Heritage Convention to protect and conserve the property.

Day to day administration is undertaken by Western Australia in accordance with existing Western Australian legislation including the Fisheries Act, Local Government Act, Land Act, Conservation and Land Management Act and the Environment Protection Act.



Common Ribbon Weed - home to many small animals. Clay Bryce, Lochman Transparencies





WORLD HERITAGE

***For further information contact:
The Department of the Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories
PO Box 787 Canberra ACT 2601 Telephone (06) 274 1463***

*Designed and produced by Neville Jeffress Advertising Canberra
Colour Separations by Ross Graphics Printed by Inprint Limited
100% recycled Australian paper*

