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Commercial fishing near Exmouth

WA's second most important commercial fishery, the Exmouth Gulf prawn fishery, operates exclusively on the eastern side of the Exmouth Peninsula.

Sixteen prawn trawlers operate under strict controls for a limited season between April and November and catch around 1000 tonnes of prawns a year, worth more than \$10 million.

Within the Marine Park, commercial fishing has been prohibited inside the reef between Tantabiddi and Point Maud for over 20 years.

Sanctuary zones are completely closed to all fishing, and commercial fishing in the remaining zones of the Marine Park will be limited to a few fishermen with non-transferable licences, with the aim of a gradual phase-out.



Photos: Jiri Lochman/Lochman transparentales

SAFETY AT SEA

The major all-tide boat ramps for the Ningaloo Marine Park are 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.

The edge of the continental shelf lies close to the reef, and the deep ocean swells that strike the reef have built up over thousands of kilometres.

Even in calm conditions and fine weather, the combination of a sea-breeze and out-going



Photo: Andrew Cribb

tide can rapidly create "king waves" which may rear out of the ocean with no warning.

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 Marine and Harbours.

Let somebody know where you are going, and the time you expect to be back, before setting out on a boating trip.

FISH OR FOUL?

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

Plastic bags can get sucked into outboard motor intakes and cause a breakdown, or get accidentally eaten by turtles.

Old fishing line is a threat to marine mammals, birds and other sealife.

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.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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

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108 Adelaide Terrace, East Perth, 6004.
Ph (09) 220 5333

Exmouth District Office
Lot 375 Maidstone Crescent, Exmouth.
Ph (099) 49 1755

CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT
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Ph (09) 367 0333

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NINGALOO MARINE PARK



Photo: Robert Garvey

FISHING GUIDE

Fisheries Department of Western Australia
Department of Conservation and Land Management



June 1992



Ningaloo Marine Park,

some 1200km north of Perth by road, is one of Western Australia's most popular fishing holiday destinations.

The Marine Park is a key conservation area which runs for 260 km down the western coast of the Exmouth Peninsula, and protects Australia's largest fringing coral barrier reef and its associated marine animal and plant community.

Ningaloo Reef is a remarkable place. The reef is easily accessible from the shore, it is the closest place on the WA coast to the edge of the continental shelf, and it is the meeting place of tropical and temperate marine fish and animals at the northern and southern extremes of their range.

For many years, anglers have been heading for Exmouth or Coral Bay to experience the superb fishing and dramatic environment of this unique area.

Most come away with memories of an unspoilt coast, blue sea breaking on the long reef, and a fishing holiday like no other.

Part of this experience is being able to take home some of the catch to share with family, and perhaps relive a small part of that holiday over a fillet of spangled emperor and a glass of wine.

Over the years the recreational fishing pressure in the waters surrounding Ningaloo Reef has increased considerably. At the same time some parties of unscrupulous anglers, equipped with large trailer-freezers and no sense of a fishing ethic, have homed in on the reef, intent on catching and freezing as many fish as possible.

It is crucial for the future of the Ningaloo Marine Park, both as a conservation area, and as a recreational fishing area, that it is protected from overfishing.

In 1991 the Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee gave the following view of why most people go fishing:

"To aim to catch a feed for oneself and family and, for a variety of personal reasons, to enjoy the experience along the way."

This image was supported by thousands of fishers across the State.

This brochure is your guide to fishing for the future at Ningaloo. New fishing rules for the Ningaloo Marine Park



Photo: Andrew Cribb

"To aim to catch a feed for oneself and family and, for a variety of personal reasons, to enjoy the experience along the way."



Photo: Andrew Cribb

include a daily bag limit of seven fish per angler, a 17 kilo limit on the amount of fish you may have in your possession west of the Minilya-Exmouth Road, and special protection for rare and vulnerable fish species such as giant cod.

These limits are key conservation strategies for the area, and have been developed in close consultation with recreational fishing groups and the community. They are intended to protect fish breeding stocks, reduce recreational fishing pressure to a sustainable level, discourage excessive fish kills, and reduce the incentive for illegal "shamateur" fish selling.

Unless otherwise specified, normal state-wide fishing rules also apply in the Marine Park.

The future of the superb recreational fishing Ningaloo has to offer is firmly in the hands of every recreational fisher. How you choose to fish now will dictate whether the fish stocks of Ningaloo are maintained or fall into decline.

Use this brochure as your guide to conserving our precious fish breeding stocks, enjoy your fishing holiday, and come again next year.

Angling at Ningaloo

Boat fishers, trolling outside the reef, often take superb pelagics including spanish mackerel, wahoo, cobia, tuna and mahi mahi, while inshore waters provide such excellent angling species as dart, queenfish, golden and other trevally.

Many of these species are either transient or migratory, and move through the Marine Park at various times of year.

The reef is also home to resident species favoured by anglers such as the north-west snappers (spangled emperor, long-nose emperor, sweetlip emperor, and lesser spangled emperor) coral and coronation trout, baldchin groper and many cods.

Resident fish species such as the spangled emperor (*Lethrinus nebulosus*) are thought to be relatively slow growing, and take up to 4 years to reach spawning size at 41 cm.

Research into recreational fish catches

Recreational fishers are thought to take more than 100,000 kilos of fish home from the Marine Park and nearby waters every year. Much of this consists of reef species such as the north-west snappers and cods.

With this level of fishing pressure, and the comparatively slow growth and reproductive rate of fish such as north-west snapper there is a real danger of depleting these stocks through uncontrolled fishing.

Anecdotal evidence from long-time Exmouth residents and other Park visitors indicates this is already happening, and there are clear signs that not only has the average size of fish caught dropped, but also the overall catch.

Recent estimates place the average recreational catch in the Marine Park at around four fish per angler per day, weighing a total of approximately eight kilos. Once processed, this translates to about 2.4 kilos of fish fillets.

By any standards this is still superb fishing, and more than sufficient to provide a great angling experience,

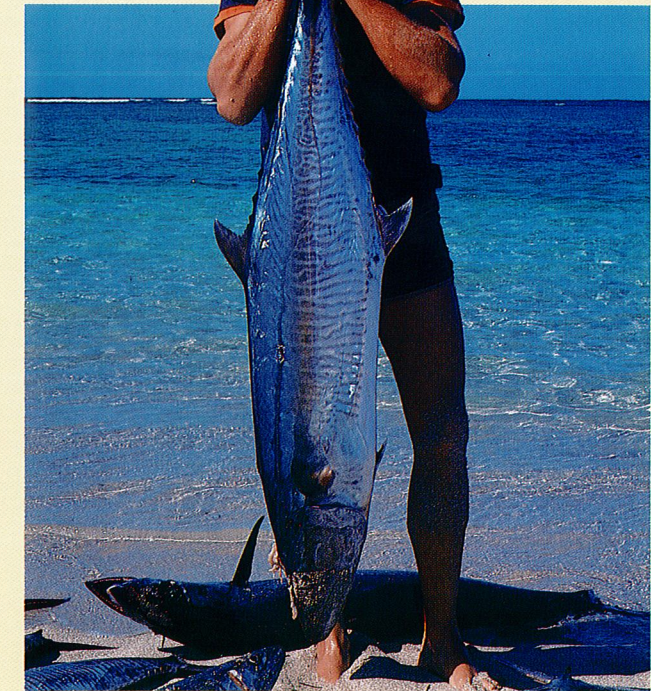


Photo: Ross Cotack

and a feed of top quality fish at the end of the day. But these catches are a far cry from the sugar bags full of 10 pound emperors reportedly taken by fishers in the 1960s and 1970s.

The Fisheries Department needs the cooperation of anglers to gather essential information on current catch levels. Fisheries and CALM officers will be handing out fishing survey forms each holiday season to collect current information on fish catches and fishing quality.

If you are approached to assist, please fill in the catch details and other questions as accurately as you can. Additional survey forms are available from the Fisheries Department in Exmouth.

Fishing in Ningaloo Marine Park



Daily bag limit - 7

There is a total mixed bag limit of seven fish per fisher per day in Marine Park waters for all species except mullet, whiting, tailor and threadfin salmon. Normal state bag limits apply to these species and to cephalopods (squid etc) and oysters.

Within your seven fish limit, the state-wide bag limit of 4 of each species per fisher also applies to "prize fish" species. (See "Fishing for the future" guide available from the Fisheries Department).

Only people actively fishing are entitled to a bag limit. This bag limit also applies to all boats landing at ramps within the Marine Park such as Bundegi or Tantabiddi.

Special conservation bag limits

Coral and coronation trout (combined) 1 per fisher per day.

Rock lobster (western and tropical "green" combined) 4 per fisher per day. Maximum 8 per boat.



No filleting at sea

Fish must be left whole while at sea, but you may clean (gill and gut) your catch. The only exceptions are mackerel (Scombridae family), which may be filleted at sea provided each fillet is a complete side of fish with the skin and pectoral fin left on.



Fish possession limit - 10 kilos + 7 fish/fisher

There is a limit on the quantity of fish, either filleted or whole, you may have in your possession while 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 (see map). The townsite of Exmouth is excluded.

You may have a maximum of 17 kilos of processed fish in your possession or 10 kilos of fillets and 7 fish or parts of fish (excluding



Diving and spearfishing

Ningaloo Marine Park is a diver's paradise, and offers tremendous scope for exploring underwater and for photography.

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) when fishing or taking rock lobster in the Marine Park.



Legal fishing gear

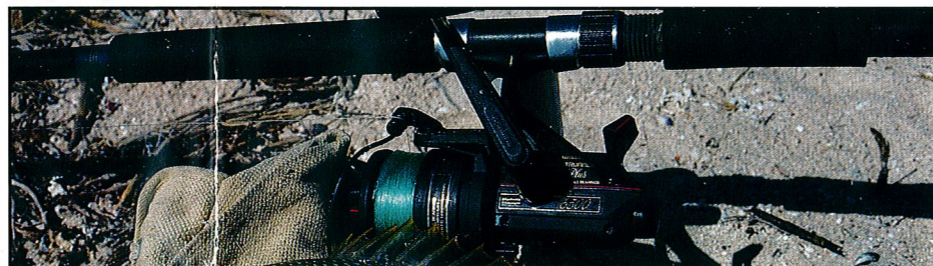
Fishers may use a rod and line or handline in marine park waters, a speargun or hand spear in open waters, and a set net in defined netting areas (see netting and spearfishing).

State-wide fishing rules limit you to a maximum of three hooks or gangs per line.

All other fishing methods including fish traps, drop nets, set lines and lobster pots are prohibited.

You must have a fishing licence if you wish to take rock lobsters or use a net.

Spangled Emperor *Lethrinus nebulosus*



Netting

Beach netting for transient species such as mullet is a traditional pastime in some areas of the Marine Park, and has little adverse affect on these fish stocks.

Four stretches of beach have been made available for this type of recreational fishing, under strict conditions. Netting is not permitted in any other area of the Marine Park.

Minimum mesh sizes reduce the likelihood of capturing undersize fish, and fishing times co-incide with the times mullet run along the beach.

You must have a recreational fishing licence to use a fishing net in WA (available from the Fisheries Department).

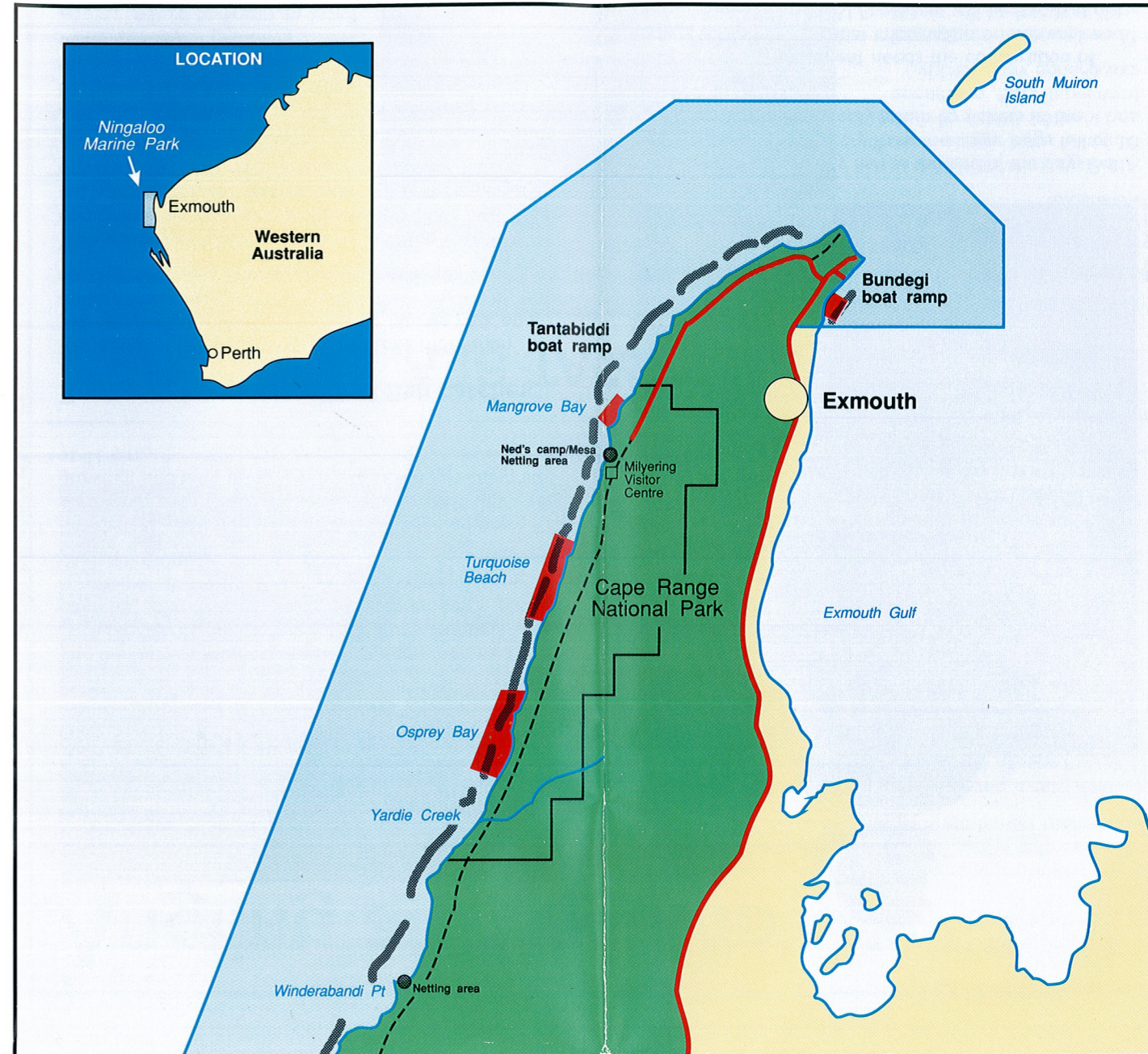
Inside the Ningaloo Marine Park nets must have a mesh size no less than 63mm, and no more than 90mm. You may not use any other kind of net in the Marine Park.

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 set 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 are:

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



...squid, octopus, cuttlefish and rock lobsters).

There is also a possession limit of 8 rock lobsters per person.



Label your catch

Fish or fillets stored in the marine park land zone must be clearly labelled with the full name of the owner. When freezing or chilling your catch either label each bag of fish, or whole fish. If you are the only one using the freezer or esky, you may just attach a label to the lid or handle (minimum label size 75mm x 25mm).



Photo: Ross O'Leary

Conservation is catching on

Sanctuary zones - no fishing

Sanctuary zones are living marine aquariums. Look but don't touch is the message in these areas, and certainly no fishing or collecting of any kind.

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.

They also help to protect resident fish and shellfish breeding stocks, and act as "seed banks" which assist in replenishing fish stocks in other areas of the Marine Park.

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

Angling from the beach is permitted on a limited stretch of shore next to the Osprey, Cloates, and Maud sanctuary zones.

- There are eight sanctuary zones in the Marine Park.
- Bundegi
 - Osprey
 - Maud
 - Mangrove
 - Cloates
 - Pelican
 - Mandu
 - Dugong

Protected species

The following species are completely protected in Marine Park waters:

- Queensland groper
- Whale sharks
- Molluscs, (except oysters, cuttlefish, squid and octopus).
- Potato cod
- Manta rays

Shell 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 of edible shellfish may be taken. These are: oysters, squid, cuttlefish, octopus, and rock lobsters.

Potato cod *Epinephelus tukula*

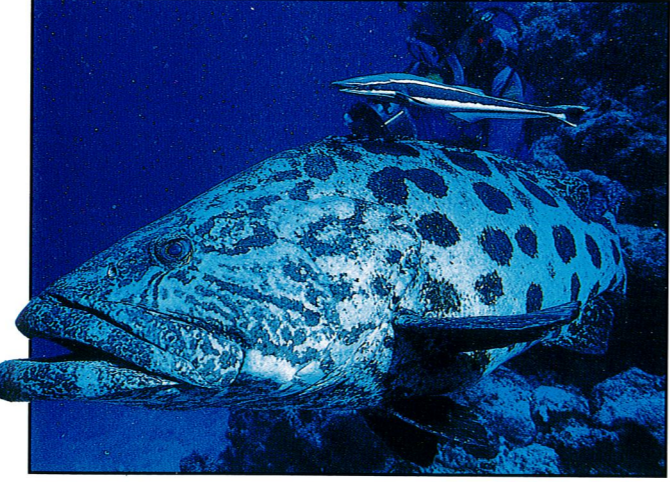


Photo: Neil Wehbeck/Lochman Transparencies

