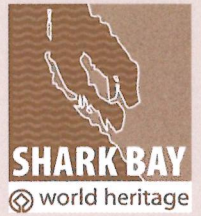


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Shark Bay World Heritage Notes



ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION DISTRICT OFFICE, DENHAM, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

WHAT MAKES SHARK BAY SO SPECIAL?

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Shark Bay is of global significance by virtue of its location. Shark Bay is the meeting point of tropical, desert and temperate climates. This means that flora and fauna adapted to all three of these different climates can be found here.

Shark Bay is the southernmost location that tropical species such as dugongs, some sea turtles and sea snakes can be found. It is also the northernmost location that temperate species such as black bream, zebra lionfish and green moray eels can be found.

A number of land species also reach either their southern limit (brahminy kite and blind snake) or their northern limit (regent parrot and ramsons python) in Shark Bay. This meeting of tropical and temperate doesn't stop with animals: Shark Bay is also an important transition point between the temperate vegetation zone of Western Australia's southwest, and the desert vegetation zone of WA's north and east. There is nowhere else in Australia where this change between vegetation zones is so abrupt.

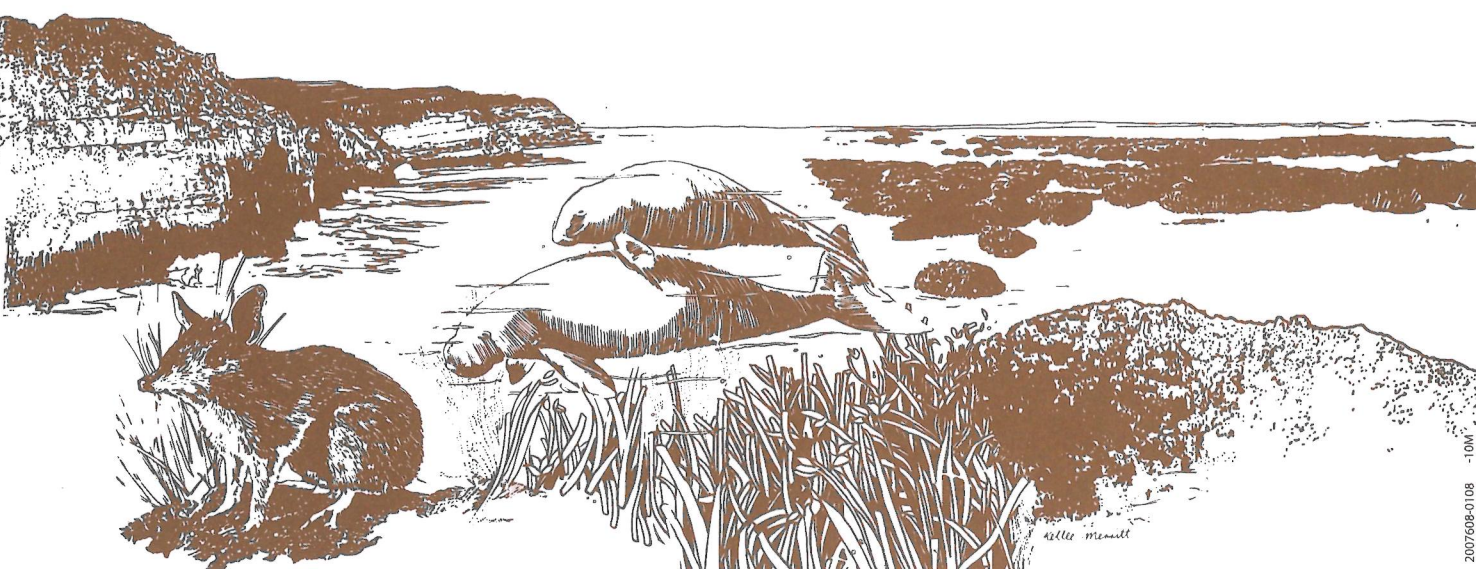
These Shark Bay animals and plants living either at the northern or southern extremes of their ranges are 'pioneer' species. To live here they must stretch their survival capabilities to the very limit.

Thanks to its remote location, large islands and relatively undisturbed nature, Shark Bay is also home to some of the most rare and endangered animals in Australia and the world, including 16 threatened animal species and 25 threatened or priority plant species.

Cat and fox-free Bernier and Dorre Islands (off the coast of Carnarvon) are home to five of the world's most endangered mammals. These islands, and the animals that inhabit them, were separated from the mainland by rising sea levels, after the last Ice Age about 7 000 years ago. Before Europeans arrived some 200 years ago, many more mammal species were found across Australia than are found today, but sadly these animals fell prey to the cats and foxes brought over by the Europeans, and many are now either extinct or critically endangered.

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Three of these once wide-spread animals: the rufous hare-wallaby (or mala), the banded hare-wallaby and the western barred bandicoot – remained safe on Shark Bay's islands while cats and foxes destroyed their cousins on the mainland. Now Shark Bay's islands are the only places left in the world where these three endangered species are found in the wild.

Add up all of this, and you have a very special and globally significant natural environment – one of the most important natural places the earth has to offer.