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Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

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Take care by the sea

Strong gusts of air and water may suddenly erupt from blowholes and the rocks around them may be slippery.

- When near the water or at cliffs, watch the water for large unexpected waves.
- Please keep well clear of cliff edges and blowholes.
- Be prepared for sudden wind gusts.
- Supervise children at all times.

Top: Watch the water for large unexpected waves. Photo – *Western 4WDriver*
Above: Fishing is popular at Edel Land. Photo – *Paul Dickenson*

More information

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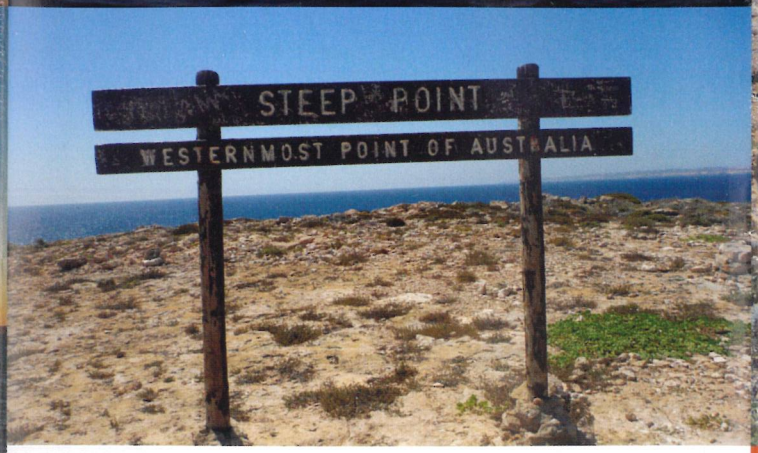
Shark Bay District
Knight Terrace, Denham WA 6537
Phone (08) 9948 2226
Fax (08) 9948 2201

Steep Point Ranger Station
Phone (08) 9948 3993
Fax (08) 9948 3963
Email ranger@steeppoint.com.au

www.sharkbay.org
www.dpaw.wa.gov.au



Top: Humpback whale. Photo – *Tracey Moran*
Front: Thunder Bay. Photo – *Parks and Wildlife*

Information current at April 2015.
This document is available in alternative formats on request.

Department of Parks and Wildlife

PARKS FOR PEOPLE

SHARK BAY world heritage

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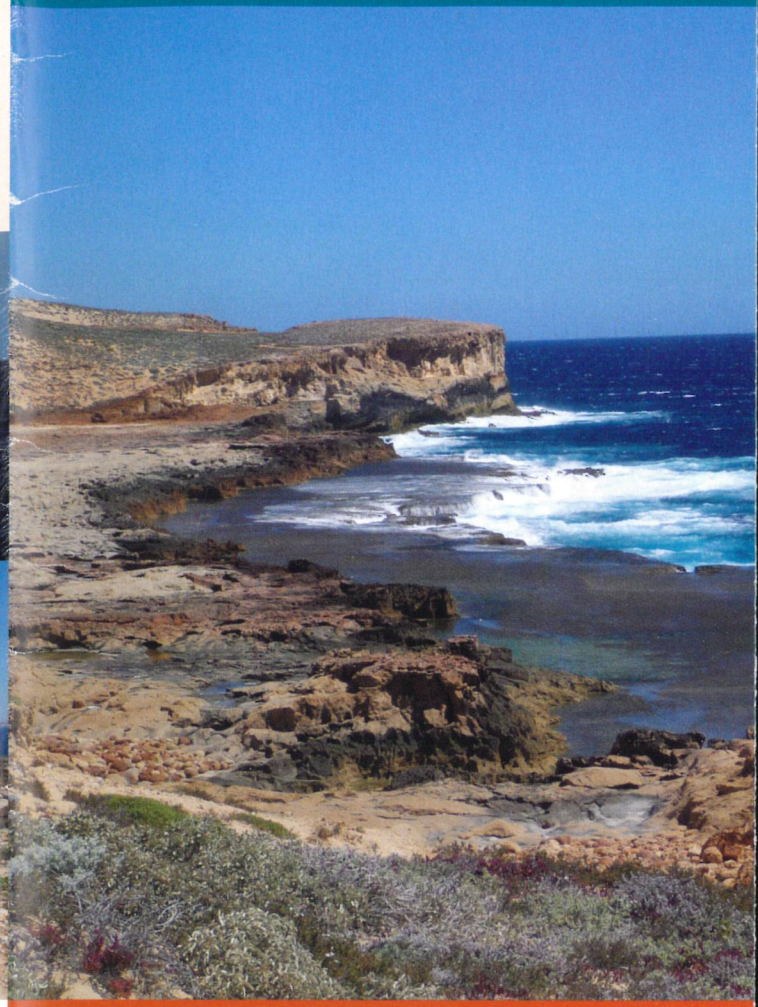
Edel Land including Steep Point



Visitor guide

Department of Parks and Wildlife

PARKS FOR PEOPLE

SHARK BAY world heritage

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The proposed Edel Land National Park extends from Steep Point to just south of False Entrance and encompasses much of Belefin Prong. Its contrasting coastlines of tall rugged cliffs and crescent-shaped beaches form the western boundary of Shark Bay.

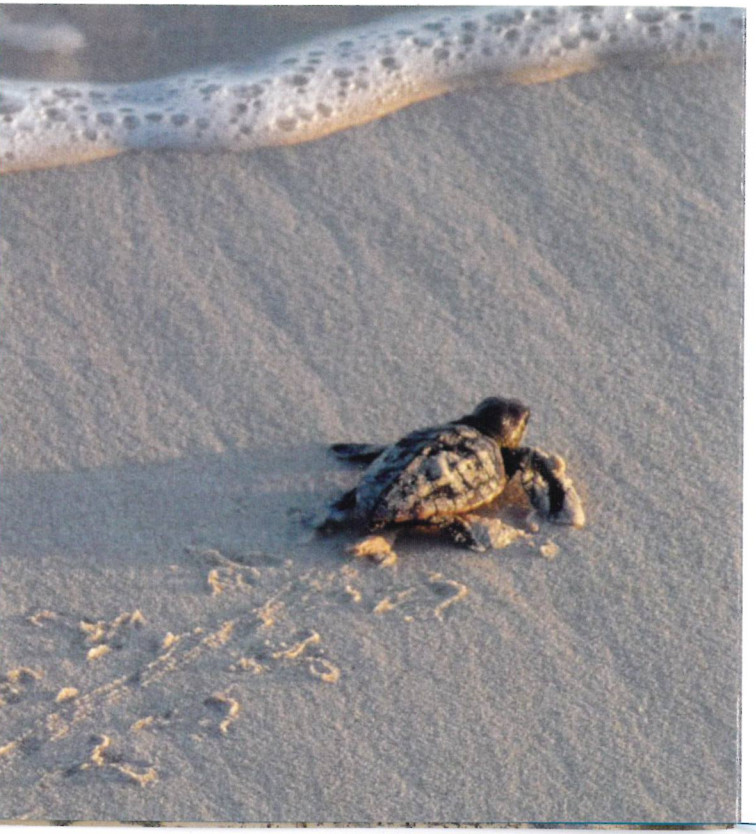
World Heritage

Rising 200m above the Indian Ocean on the western side of Shark Bay are outstanding features of exceptional natural beauty, the Zuytdorp Cliffs.

Backed by sweeping white sand dunes and secluded beaches, this dry and windswept limestone coast hosts resilient plant and animal life. Set against waters teeming with marine life, the beauty of this coastline is of World Heritage value.

While also visited by sightseers and those seeking the most westerly part of the Australian mainland, fishers are the most avid visitors to Steep Point.

Turtle hatchling at Shelter Bay. Photo – *Pam Dickenson*



Fishing

With over 320 species of fish, the marine life in South Passage is the most diverse in the Shark Bay Marine Park. Steep Point is renowned for having some of the best land-based fishing in Australia with mackerel, trevally and sailfish caught there, especially during summer.

Serious fishers float baits offshore with helium balloons and haul their catches up cliffs using special gaffs, although it is not unusual for sharks to take fish before they are landed.

Aboriginal occupation

Shark Bay is the traditional country of three Aboriginal language groups: the Malgana, Nhanda and Yingkarta.

The area south of Henri Freycinet Harbour was occupied by Nhanda speakers while the central part of Shark Bay, including Edel Land, was occupied by Malgana speakers. The Malgana name for Shark Bay is Gutharraguda, meaning 'two bays'.

Edel Land was an important place for Aboriginal people. A quarry at Crayfish Bay provided stone for spear tips and tools, and there was fresh water at Willyah Mia, on the eastern shore of Heirisson Prong. The number of middens and camp sites indicate there was plenty of good food.

Recent history

In 1616 Dirk Hartog made the first recorded landing by a European in Western Australia. He was followed in 1697 by Willem de Vlamingh. In 1699 William Dampier studied this area during his New Holland coast exploration. In 1772 St Alouarn claimed the western half of New Holland for France, but he died in Mauritius without reaching France and having his claim confirmed.

Voyages of scientific discovery were conducted by Nicolas Baudin in 1801–03 and Louis de Freycinet in 1818. Henry Mangles Denham surveyed the area in 1858, producing charts that were used into the 1960s.

Settlement followed these voyages of discovery. Guano was stripped from Shark Bay's islands around 1850. Pearling started about the same time and continued into the 1930s when the shells were depleted through overfishing.

Zuytdorp Cliffs. Photo – *Parks and Wildlife*

Sheep were introduced in the 1860s and the pastoral industry has been through good times and droughts since then. Some pastoral stations have become conservation areas in recent years.

Sandalwood was cut from the 1890s until 2000, but fishing was the area's economic mainstay from the early 20th century.

In the 21st century pearling is making a comeback through pearl farming, fishing continues and tourism has become increasingly important.

Shipwrecks

The Zuytdorp Cliffs were named after the Dutch ship, the Zuytdorp, wrecked against the cliffs south of Shark Bay in 1712.

From 1712 to 1963 a number of ships were wrecked around Shark Bay, including the fishing vessel Nor 6, which smashed into the cliffs south of Steep Point in 1963.

Access

Steep Point can only be accessed by high clearance four-wheel-drive vehicles or by boat.

It is about 185km by road from the Northwest Coastal Highway to Steep Point, including 140km of unsealed road. The last 30km is a single lane of soft track winding around sand dunes.

The journey to Shelter Bay from Denham by boat is about 50km via the South Passage.

Camping and facilities

There are camp sites at Shelter Bay, The Oven (Steep Point) and False Entrance. Permits are required and camp sites are popular so book well in advance. For details see www.sharkbay.org, email ranger@steeppoint.com.au or phone (08) 9948 3993. Camping fees apply.

Facilities are basic with some drop toilets. Make sure you have enough food, water and fuel as there is nowhere to purchase supplies in the Edel Land area.

Watch your step at the Blowholes. Photo – *Parks and Wildlife*

Things to see and do

South Passage and Shelter Bay

Camp sites at Shelter Bay offer idyllic beach camping and views of Dirk Hartog Island. The most popular time to visit is from April to October when winds are lighter and the sea calmer. Make sure you book camp sites for these months well in advance.

Steep Point

When anchored off the southern tip of Dirk Hartog Island in 1697, the Dutch seafarer Willem de Vlamingh named this point *Steyle Hock*, translated as Steep Point.

Today many people come to this most westerly point as part of a pilgrimage to visit all of the extreme cardinal points on the Australian mainland. Close by, The Oven and The Faultline are popular fishing spots.

South Passage from Shelter Bay. Photo – *Parks and Wildlife*

Between Steep Point and Thunder Bay

The four-wheel-drive track between Steep Point and Thunder Bay follows the Zuytdorp Cliffs and offers a series of spectacular views with a few special stops.

- The Nor 6 is a monument to the fishing vessel that was wrecked on the rocks below.
- Enjoy a 360 degree view of the peninsula from the lookout.
- Stop and listen to the Thunder Bay blowholes as they breathe deeply during a light swell. Be careful around these large holes and stay well back during heavy seas when water shoots through them 20m into the air.

False Entrance

This break in the Zuytdorp Cliffs was named False Entrance because many early mariners mistook it for the South Passage, the entrance to Shark Bay between Dirk Hartog Island and Steep Point.

Today visitors come here to fish, enjoy a walk along the beach and to see the nearby blowholes.

Drive carefully

- The access road is long and rough (140km of unsealed track – about three hours driving). Be prepared.
- Only high clearance four-wheel-drive vehicles are able to traverse the last 30km of sandy tracks.
- Unlicensed off-road vehicles (quads, motorbikes) are not permitted.
- Ensure your vehicle is in sound condition and has all of the recommended safety equipment.
- Normal road traffic rules apply.
- Seatbelts must be worn and riding in the back of utilities is prohibited.
- Drive at a safe speed suitable to the conditions.
- Reduce tyre pressure to at least 20psi (trailers included) to negotiate the soft sand tracks. The pressure will vary according to vehicle type and load as well as type of tyre and rim.
- Remember to inflate tyres when you are back on the Useless Loop Road.
- Drive only on existing vehicle tracks and keep four-wheel drive engaged to minimise track damage.
- Entry to the Useless Loop townsite and surrounding area is not permitted.

Reduce tyre pressure on the soft sandy four-wheel-drive tracks.
Photo – *Parks and Wildlife*

False Entrance blowholes. Photo – *Western 4WDriver*

Enjoy your visit. Look after the park and yourself

- Edel Land is remote and potentially dangerous – your safety is your responsibility.
- There are no water, food, fuel or vehicle services in the area.
- Camp sites must be booked prior to arrival.
- Visitors must register on arrival and display an entry permit on vehicle dashboard.
- Open fires are not permitted. Please use portable gas cookers.
- Do not empty chemicals into toilets as chemicals destroy composting micro-organisms.
- Where there are no toilets, bury human waste at least 100m from public areas and the water.
- During summer, heat is a potential safety hazard – make sure you take enough water.
- Be aware of uneven and sharp rock surfaces when walking.
- Firearms, weapons and fireworks are not permitted.
- No pets allowed.
- All native wildlife is protected. Leave plants, animals, rocks and shells as you find them.
- Fish bag limits and size restrictions apply. Please check and abide by the Department of Fisheries regulations www.fish.wa.gov.au.
- Sandy Point Sanctuary Zone and Surf Point Sanctuary Zone are marine refuges in Shark Bay Marine Park. See the Shark Bay Marine Reserves brochure or go to www.sharkbay.org for further information.
- Fishing is not permitted and nothing may be removed from marine sanctuary zones.
- Stow rubbish away from wildlife and prevent it from being blown away.

CLIFF RISK AREA

For your safety:

- Keep well clear of cliff edges
- Be prepared for sudden wind gusts
- Watch out for large unpredictable waves
- Supervise children at all times

DANGER

Legend

- Beach access
- Camping
- Toilet
- Fishing
- Lighthouse
- Scenic vista
- No fishing
- No spear fishing
- Ranger station
- 4WD only
- Sand dune heath
- Sand dunes
- Unsealed road
- 4WD track
- Marine park boundary
- National park (proposed) boundary
- 2 Kilometre distance between points

Stay safe when rock fishing

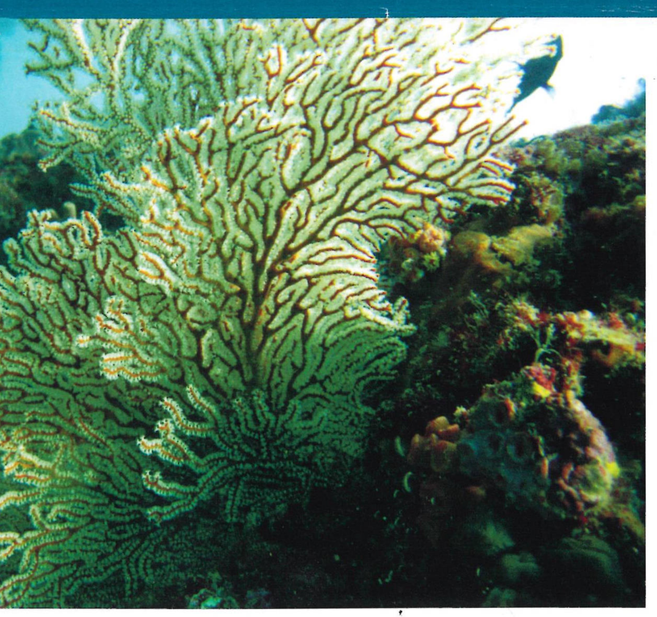
- Check the marine weather forecast and tides. Ask the ranger if necessary.
- Watch the sea conditions for at least 30 minutes before fishing.
- Never fish where waves and spray have been washing over rocks.
- Stay alert to sea conditions.
- Plan an escape route in case you fall in.
- Always fish with at least two other people so that if one person falls in, one can keep watch while the other gets help.
- Do not jump in to rescue someone – throw them a rope or other life-line.
- Make sure someone responsible knows where you are going and when you plan to return.
- Have the right safety gear – wear a life jacket and rock-hopper boots and carry a VHF radio or satellite phone, flares and a torch.

Boat safely in Shark Bay Marine Park

- Plan your trip well and observe standard safety precautions.
- Always check the weather forecast before you leave. Check with ranger staff if necessary.
- Boat according to your skills, experience and the conditions.
- Keep an eye on the weather and the water at all times while on the water. Boats have been swamped by unexpected waves and lives lost.
- Carry the safety equipment relevant to your vessel and enough life jackets for each person on board.
- Ensure your boat is in good working order and has extra fuel.
- Carry enough water, food supplies and sun protection for your trip.
- Let a responsible adult know about your trip.
- Keep at least 50m clear of dive flags.
- Avoid anchoring close to cliff edges or on fragile corals.

Take care when diving or snorkelling

- Only dive and snorkel on a slack tide.
- Stay alert for boat traffic.
- Display a dive flag when diving. Dive flags should be at least 750 x 600mm.
- It is recommended that a dive flag is displayed when snorkelling over 200m from the shore.
- Interaction with marine plants and animals is both a privilege and a responsibility. Leave areas as you find them.
- Make sure your diving gear is secured, not dangling, and be careful where you kick.
- Always leave someone on board when diving or snorkelling from a boat.
- Shark Bay Marine Park is zoned to protect marine life and habitats in certain areas. Please observe regulations for the area in which you are diving or snorkelling.
- Many marine animals use venom or toxins for catching prey or defending themselves. Some can cause serious harm to people.
- Shipwrecks are protected and the removal of artefacts is prohibited. Please help preserve our maritime heritage by leaving wrecks undisturbed.



Coral at Surf Point.

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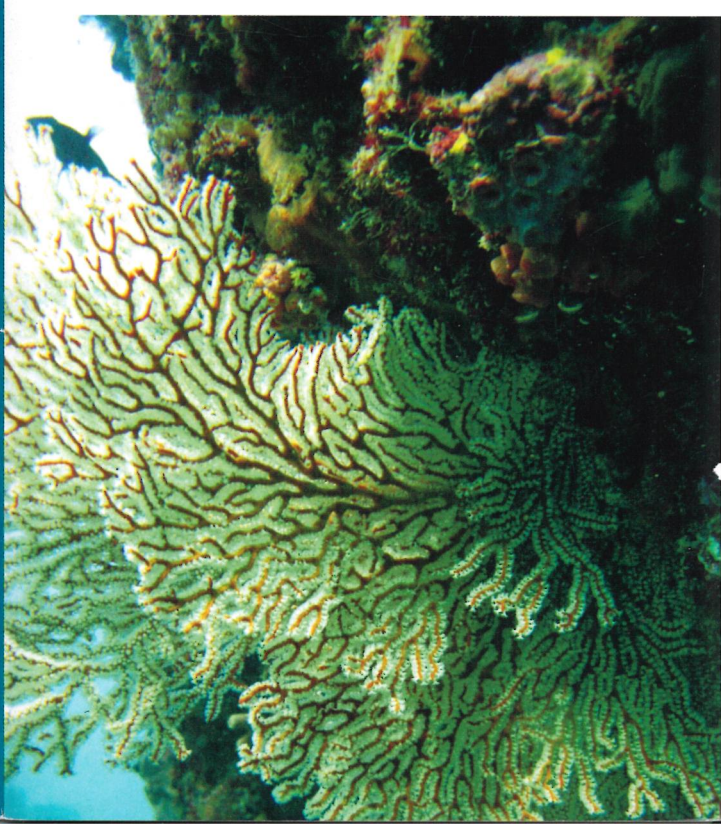
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