

# LIBRARY

Department of Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions

This PDF has been created for digital preservation. It may be used for research but is not suitable for other purposes. It may be superseded by a more current version or just be out-of-date and have no relevance to current situations.

# Carnac Island

## Caring for an island paradise



*Fairy tern eggs.*

### Enjoy your visit

Your safety is our concern but your responsibility. To ensure your visit to Carnac Island is a safe one, please:

- avoid overhanging cliff areas—these areas are fragile
- keep to the eastern beach and do not enter vegetated areas.

Carnac Island is regularly patrolled by Parks and Wildlife rangers—if you require assistance or further information relating to Carnac Island, please do not hesitate to ask them.

To report injured wildlife or incidents relating to Carnac Island please phone the Parks and Wildlife Swan Coastal District marine office.

### More information

#### Swan Coastal District marine office

Department of Parks and Wildlife  
PO Box 459  
Wanneroo WA 6946

Phone: (08) 9303 7780 or call the after-hours marine duty officer on (08) 9303 7700

For more information about Carnac Island visit Parks and Wildlife's website [www.dpaw.wa.gov.au](http://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au).

Information current at March 2015

This publication is available in alternative formats on request.

Cover: *Australian sea lion.*



### Visitor guide



Department of  
Parks and Wildlife



**PARKS**  
FOR  
**PEOPLE**



Department of  
Parks and Wildlife



**PARKS**  
FOR  
**PEOPLE**

**RECYCLE** Please return unwanted brochures to distribution points.



*Carnac Island, Eastern Beach.*

Carnac Island is a nature reserve 10km south-west of Fremantle, encompassing about 19ha. The reserve is managed by the Department of Parks and Wildlife. This 'island paradise'—surrounded by the emerald waters of the Indian Ocean—provides important habitat for a variety of local and migratory wildlife including seabirds, tiger snakes, king skinks and the rare Australian sea lion.

Carnac Island has had class 'A' reserve status since 1963 and has been regarded as one of the deadliest islands in the world, due to its snake population.

## Public access and safe boating

Carnac Island is very popular during the summer and can attract more than 150 vessels to the eastern bay alone. In order to protect both visitors and Carnac's fragile ecosystem, public access to most of the island is prohibited. The southern portion of the eastern beach is open to the public for day use (see map).

Please abide by the following guidelines for Carnac Island and its surrounding waters:

- be courteous to other vessels
- boat users to keep watch for and be wary of swimmers and snorkellers
- boat users to refrain from anchoring in seagrass
- keep all vessels and structures including tenders, canoes, eskies, sun shelters and tents off the beach at all times. The beach is an important haul-out site for the Australian sea lion and must remain clear for this purpose
- boat users should anchor no closer than 10m from the shore.

## Australian sea lion

The Australian sea lion is Carnac Island's most famous inhabitant. This species was hunted close to extinction and is now among the rarest of the world's seal species.

The Australian sea lion occupies only five known haul-out sites off the Perth metropolitan coast. Carnac Island and Seal Island are the most important as they are used by the greatest number of sea lions. It is thought that 'hauling out' is essential for recuperation after long trips foraging up and down the WA coastline feeding on rays, fish, octopus and crustaceans. These trips can be up to 24 hours long. One sea lion was recorded swimming from Rottnest Island to Busselton and back without a break. Disturbing hauled-out sea lions can interrupt their crucial rest periods.

Although these guys appear friendly and docile, the male sea lion can weigh up to 300kg and supports a jaw frame that matches that of a bear. Sea lions are deceptively mobile in water and on land and, if intimidated, can easily outrun a person. They can also carry the disease tuberculosis.



*An Australian sea lion.*

It is not permitted to approach a sea lion on land. To ensure your own safety and minimise disturbance to resting sea lions, Parks and Wildlife asks that visitors please:

- maintain a distance of at least 10m from any sea lion hauled out on Carnac Island
- do not get between sea lions and the water
- do not encircle sea lions
- do not attempt to induce sea lions to re-enter the water
- supervise children at all times
- if approached by a sea lion in the water, move away or leave the water so as to not encourage interaction.



*An adult fairy tern. Photo – Peter Mortimer*

## Seabirds

As one of only a handful of deserted vegetated islands off the Perth metropolitan coast, Carnac Island provides important breeding habitat and shelter for a wide range of both local and migratory seabirds. Seabirds that use Carnac Island for breeding include the wedge-tailed shearwater, pied cormorant, pied oystercatcher, Australian pelican, silver gull and a number of tern species including the Caspian tern, bridled tern, crested tern and the threatened fairy tern.

## Fairy tern

The fairy tern is one of the smallest of the tern species at only 20 to 27cm long. They breed mostly on islands off the southern coastlines of Australia from late October to February. Their nest consists of a shallow scrape in the sand and, like many beach nesting birds, are highly vulnerable to human disturbance. Because of the reduction in safe nesting habitat, fairy tern numbers have declined and the species is now listed as vulnerable under Federal and State legislation. The protection of this species' population on Carnac Island is considered significant for their survival.

Fairy terns intermittently use Carnac's beach areas for nesting and will not sit on the nest while people are nearby. It is therefore important that visitors do not approach or remain in the vicinity of the nests.

Nests can fail if parent terns are disturbed from incubating eggs or brooding chicks. If parents are absent, the eggs and chicks are vulnerable to extremes of temperature and predators such as gulls. Eggs and chicks are also susceptible to accidental trampling by island visitors.

- Keep an eye out for signs indicating areas where fairy terns are currently nesting and respect fenced-off areas.
- It is an offence to enter these areas and penalties apply.

## Tiger snakes






Carnac Island is home to unique and isolated populations of reptiles including the highly venomous tiger snake. The island is famous for having one of the highest concentrations of tiger snakes in WA and is home to more than 1000 adult tiger snakes. While the true story of their origin is not clear, it has been said that the snakes were abandoned there in the early 1900s by a snake charmer who lost his wife to a deadly bite.

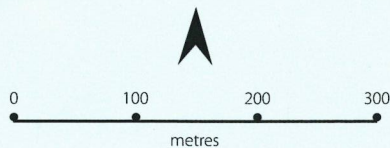
As a small isolated population, the tiger snakes of Carnac Island are valuable for research into reptilian ecology and adaptation. The snakes are also an important resource for antivenom production by local hospitals. A large proportion of the tiger snake population is blind due to encounters with their prey, birds.


*A tiger snake. Photo – Babs and Bert Wells/Parks and Wildlife*



### Legend

-  Nature reserve (prohibited-access area)
-  Beach (prohibited-access area)
-  Beach (limited-access area)
-  Rock
-  No boat anchoring within 10m of shoreline.



Smith Point  
  
Beach (prohibited-access area)

Beach (prohibited-access area)

South West Rock

INDIAN OCEAN

**Carnac Island  
Nature Reserve  
(prohibited-access area)**

Currie Point

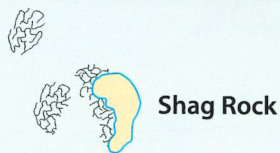
Beach (prohibited-access area)

Beach (limited-access area)

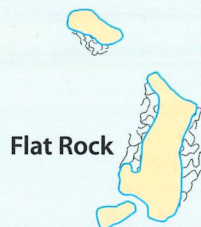
COCKBURN  
SOUND

Simmons Bay

South Point



Shag Rock



Flat Rock