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Ngari Capes Marine Park



Visitor guide



Department of **Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions**
Department of **Primary Industries and Regional Development**

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Front cover Paddleboarding near Castle Rock. *Photo – Hamish Stubbs.*

Above Enjoying one of the many beaches in the marine park.
Photo – Sean Blocksidge.

Marine parks and reserves for all to enjoy

Western Australia's coastal waters are considered to be among the least disturbed in the world with many marine areas and species having global significance. Marine parks and reserves are established in areas that have been recognised as having special importance to the community in regard to their ecological values.

The conservation and sustainable use of WA's marine environment is everyone's responsibility. By working together to manage human activities we can ensure future generations enjoy the marine environment just as we do today.



Above Perfect surf at Margaret River's Main Break.
Photo – Surfing Margaret River

Welcome to Ngari Capes

Ngaala kaaditj Wadandi moort keyen kaadak nidja boodja.

We acknowledge the Wadandi people as the Traditional Owners of this land.

Ngari Capes Marine Park is at the southern transition between tropical and temperate marine environments and as such has a high level of species diversity. The shallow, protected sandy seagrass meadows of Geographe Bay are contrasted by the high-energy western coastline, comprising rocky reefs of limestone and granite, and the long white beaches of Flinders Bay.

Ancient spiritual beliefs connect the Noongar Aboriginal people and their culture to the Ngari Capes. Many important sites including fishing weirs, shell middens, grindstones, campsites and ceremonial places are located in the area. The coastal Noongar, the Wadandi people come down to the coast during Kambarang (October–November), Birak (December–January), and Bunuru (February–March) and catch whiting and pilchard at Dunsborough, groper at Yallingup Reef and harvest shellfish all along the coast. The annual salmon (ngari) migration is also very important to the Wadandi people which is represented in the name of the park.

The unique geographical location of this region exposes it to large, uninterrupted ocean swells and results in the south-west capes being one of the world's premier surfing regions. Swimming, diving, snorkelling, boating and nature-based tourism are also enjoyed along the coast, while commercial and recreational fishing for rock lobster, abalone, shark and demersal fish species is highly valued.

There are a range of pressures on Ngari Capes Marine Park. The park is adjacent to one of the fastest growing populations in Australia and adjoins Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park, which is the most popular national park in WA, receiving more than three million tourist visitors each year. Active management of Ngari Capes Marine Park will help to protect its important values for future generations.



Above A bird's eye view of the marine park.

Below Hikers on the Cape to Cape Track. *Photos – Sean Blocksidge*

Recreation

The amazing seascapes and natural features of the Ngari Capes are major attractions for visitors and locals alike, however, the region is probably best known for its world-class surf breaks. Since the first breaks were discovered surfing has grown to achieve iconic status in the region, with Margaret River's 'Main Break' being world-renowned and host to international surfing competitions. Kite surfing, windsurfing, wave sailing and paddle boarding are also increasing in popularity along the Leeuwin-Naturaliste coast.

Ngari Capes Marine Park offers diverse natural and artificial marine attractions for divers and snorkellers. Canal Rocks, Moses Rock, Cosy Corner, Kilcarnup, Prevelly, Gnarabup, Redgate, Hamelin Bay and the small islands off Augusta exhibit an abundance of colourful sea life. The HMAS Swan dive wreck and the Busselton Jetty are very popular artificial marine attractions, showcasing a host of sea squirts, sponges, telesto coral and schooling fish.





Above Osprey. *Photo – Ren McGann*

Wildlife

The spectacular winter seascapes of Ngari Capes Marine Park are associated with the migration paths of humpback and southern right whales. Humpbacks are frequently seen with very small, pale calves in Geographe Bay and occasionally in Flinders Bay, suggesting it is an important nursery area. The largest living animal on Earth, the blue whale, also frequents Geographe Bay, particularly during November. Up and down the coast, families of dolphins play in the surf while sea lions and fur seals come to fish.

Ngari Capes Marine Park contains the most extensive and diverse temperate seagrass communities in WA. There are 13 species of seagrass in the marine park, including three that are unique to the Capes area. The seagrass meadows are an important habitat and nursery for many marine species including WA salmon, herring and King George whiting. The highly prized western blue groper inhabits the Ngari Capes and can reach 1.75 metres long and live for up to 70 years.

Hooded plovers can be found nesting on beaches in the marine park during the summer months. These shorebirds are very vulnerable to disturbance from dogs, cars, people and storms. The seabirds of the south-west are a unique mix of cool-water and tropical species. Sugarloaf Rock is one of the most southerly breeding sites in the world for the red-tailed tropic bird, while the bridled tern also reaches the southernmost limit of its breeding range on the islands off Cape Leeuwin. The coastal heath on Saint Alouarn Island is an important nesting area for many seabirds and is the only island within the marine park where the little penguin is found.

The limestone and granite reefs host an assemblage of macroalgae communities, finfish species, anemones, sea urchins and sponges. Caves and overhangs support brightly coloured sea squirts, bryzoans, soft corals and sea stars. Rare giant colonies of vase-like *Turbinaria* coral are found in Eagle Bay towering up to three metres above the sea bed.



Safety

The weather conditions in the south-west can change suddenly and the park can experience large swells, currents and strong winds making the exposed shorelines and waters dangerous for boating, swimming and rock fishing. Consider your safety and check the weather forecast before heading out to explore the marine park.

Rock fishing is popular in Ngari Capes Marine Park, however it is also very dangerous with a history of people being washed off rocks from large unexpected waves.

If you choose to fish from the rocks, please follow these simple safety messages:

Be prepared

- Check the weather and swell on multiple platforms before heading out.
- Know how to swim.
- Ask advice from locals.
- Tell someone your plans.

Be safe

- Wear the right clothing including non-slip shoes and lightweight clothing.
- Read safety signage and know how to use fishing safety infrastructure (rock anchors and angel rings).
- Spend time watching the full swell/wave cycle before fishing.
- Wear a lifejacket.
- Fish with a friend.
- Never turn your back on the ocean.
- You can loan a lifejacket for free from south-west tackle stores:
 - Augusta X-Treme Outdoor Sports
 - Down South Camping and Outdoors, Margaret River
 - Dunsborough Outdoor Sportz
 - Access Fishing, Dunsborough.

See where fishing safety infrastructure such as angel rings and rock fishing anchors are available on the coastline by visiting recfishwest.org.au/our-services/safefishing/

Zoning and permitted uses

Ngari Capes Marine Park is zoned to enable different levels of use to occur while ensuring the biodiversity values of the marine park are conserved and protected. In Ngari Capes Marine Park there are 15 sanctuary zones, 12 special purpose zones, two recreational zones and a large general use zone. The location and coordinates are displayed on the map within this brochure along with the activities permitted in each zone type.

Sanctuary zones

Sanctuary zones are 'look but don't take' areas managed for nature conservation and appreciation. Visitors can freely access these areas and undertake activities such as boating, swimming, diving and educational activities. Fishing is not permitted in sanctuary zones.

Recreation zones

Recreation zones at Cowaramup Bay and Hamelin Bay are designed solely for recreational use and enjoyment such as recreational fishing, diving and swimming. Commercial fishing and aquaculture are not permitted in recreation zones.

Special purpose zones

Special purpose zones are areas where a priority conservation purpose or use has been designated. There are two types of special purpose zones in Ngari Capes Marine Park:

- shore-based activities zones
- surfing zones.

The shore-based activities zones at Eagle Bay and Cosy Corner have particular conservation significance while also recognising the importance for coastal use such as recreational watersports and recreational fishing. The special purpose surfing zones recognise the high social value of surfing and no rock lobster potting is allowed in these zones for safety reasons. While the priority use in these zones is surfing other compatible activities are also allowed.

General use zones

The general use zone is the largest zone in Ngari Capes Marine Park and enables a wide range of sustainable commercial and recreational activities to occur.



Above Sanctuary zone marker. *Photo – David Lierich/DBCA*

Zone markers

On the water

Sanctuary zones in Geographe Bay as well as the East Flinders Bay Sanctuary Zone are marked by yellow buoys that extend about one metre above sea level. These buoys can be used as a guide to line up the zone boundary.

The buoys are not designed to be used as moorings and it is an offence to do so.

On the land

Where there are restrictions on fishing from the shore the boundaries will be marked with signs showing where the zone starts and finishes.



Above Long-nosed fur seal. *Photo – Ren McGann*

Geographe and South-West Corner Marine Parks

Complementing the state managed park, Geographe and South-west Corner marine parks are adjacent to the Ngari Capes. These two parks are managed by Parks Australia and are part of the South-west Network of Australian Marine Parks that extend offshore. The parks are zoned to protect marine habitats and species while enabling sustainable use. The location and zone coordinates of some of these zones are displayed on the maps within this brochure. Recreational fishing is not allowed in National Park Zones – for all other zones, recreational fishing can occur in accordance with the WA recreational fishing rules.

The Geographe Marine Park provides protection for bountiful seagrass meadows that are found further offshore. Importantly the sheltered waters off Geographe Bay provide safe nursery habitat for many species and are part of the migratory pathway for humpback and blue whales.

South-west Corner Marine Park wraps around the Capes and extends out into the deep ocean. The park supports vibrant marine life including sponges, algae and fish assemblages due to the upwelling of nutrient rich water during summer which boosts marine life around the capes.

Australian Marine Parks support a range of uses that are important to the Australian way of life.

For more information please visit the Australian Marine Parks website parksaustralia.gov.au/south-west



Above Leafy seadragon. *Photo – Shannon Conway*

Caring for the marine environment

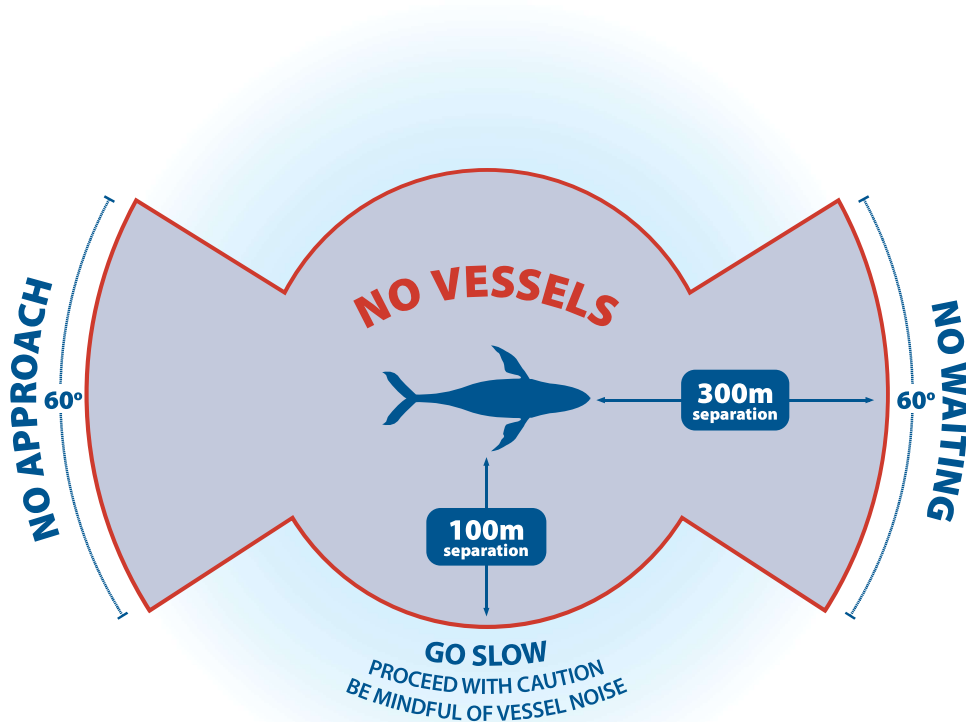
- Always take your litter home with you – remember that plastics and fishing line can harm marine wildlife.
- Anchor in sand to protect fragile reef, seagrass and seaweed communities. These are important fish nursery habitats.
- Scuba diving and snorkelling have claimed lives and divers should never become complacent about safe diving practices. Swimming into caverns and under ledges can be hazardous. Take care to avoid boat traffic and be sure to tow a dive flag.
- Keep off reefs where possible – reef walking causes damage to intertidal reef communities.
- Take care in the catchment. Minimise the transport of nutrients, sediment and other contaminants from urban and rural areas. In particular reduce or avoid the use of fertilisers.
- Ngari Capes Marine Park is adjacent to the very popular Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park. If you are visiting the national park please ensure you leave your dog at home and always camp in designated campsites. In some campgrounds, fires are not permitted at any time; at others, campfires are permitted with seasonal restrictions and in provided fire pits only. Generally, fires are not permitted between 1 December and 31 March inclusive. You can check the current campfire status at various locations on our website.

Fishing

- Fish for the future. Fishing is one of the greatest pressures facing Ngari Capes Marine Park. You can help preserve fish stocks in the park by following the fishing rules and respecting sanctuary zones.
- The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) legally enforces gear, bag, size and possession limits to ensure there will always be fish for the future in Ngari Capes Marine Park. Fishers should become familiar with these limits before heading off for a day fishing.
- Quickly return undersize and unwanted fish to the water. Use wet hands or a wet cloth when handling fish and avoid placing on hot dry surfaces.
- For more information contact DPIRD. See the back of this brochure for contact details.

Whale watching

To reduce disturbance and injuries to marine mammals always keep a good look out. You cannot approach a whale closer than 100m from its side or closer than 300m in front or behind the whale.





Above Dolphins in the surf. *Photo – Sean Blocksidge.*



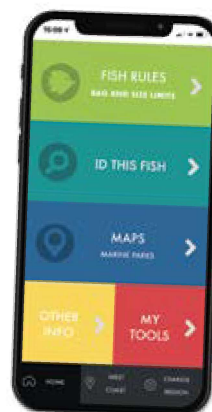
Marine Parks WA app

Discover Western Australia's marine parks with the Marine Parks WA smartphone app.

The 'where am I?' functions means you can see which marine park zone you are in and what activities you can enjoy in each particular area, even when offline or out of mobile phone range.

Recfishwest app

Recfishwest has also developed a very useful app with recreational fishing bag and size limit information, a helpful fish identification section and maps featuring the marine parks.



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triplezero.gov.au

emergencyapp.triplezero.gov.au

Download the free Emergency+ app before your visit. Use the app in an emergency to call for assistance. If there is no mobile phone coverage you **WILL NOT** be able to call **000** but the app will provide you with your GPS location.

More information

Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions Parks and Wildlife Service – Blackwood District

14 Queen Street BUSSELTON 6280

Ph (08) 9752 5555

dbca.wa.gov.au

Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development – Busselton District Office

48a Bussell Hwy BUSSELTON 6280

Ph (08) 9752 2152

fish.wa.gov.au/recfishing

Parks Australia

Australian Marine Parks

Ph 1800 069 352

marineparks@environment.gov.au

Bureau of Meteorology

Weather call 1900 926 150

bom.gov.au/wa/forecasts/

Busselton Volunteer Marine Rescue Group

Ph (08) 9754 7777

Naturaliste Volunteer Marine Rescue Group

Ph (08) 9781 3030

Margaret River Volunteer Marine Rescue Group

0415 333 100

Augusta Volunteer Marine Rescue Group

0408 907 966



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