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# Guide to Aboriginal customary activities on Parks and Wildlife Service-managed land and waters



Department of Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions



Working together on Country



**Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions**

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## INTRODUCTION

This guide has been developed by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) to provide guidance for Aboriginal peoples who wish to practise customary activities on Parks and Wildlife Service-managed land and waters.

DBCA was created on 1 July 2017, bringing together the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, Rottnest Island Authority, Zoological Parks Authority and the former Department of Parks and Wildlife (now the Parks and Wildlife Service). The Parks and Wildlife Service manages Western Australia's parks, forests and reserves for wildlife conservation, sustainable recreation and tourism, and for the value of the land for Aboriginal heritage, while protecting communities from bushfire. DBCA supports Aboriginal peoples in connecting with their ancestral lands and recognises that most customary activities can be carried out on Parks and Wildlife Service-managed land without detriment to conservation and public safety.

More information on practising customary activities on Parks and Wildlife Service-managed land and waters, as well as frequently asked questions, can be found on DBCA's website at [dbca.wa.gov.au/aboriginalinvolvement](http://dbca.wa.gov.au/aboriginalinvolvement)

A glossary of common terms used in this guide can be found on page 20.

### Acknowledgment of traditional ownership

DBCA acknowledges that First Nations people are the Traditional Owners of the land and waters that it manages and recognises that the ability for Aboriginal peoples to access Country and carry out customary activities is an important part of Aboriginal culture and connection to the land. DBCA shall, wherever possible, assist Aboriginal peoples to access and undertake customary activities on the land and waters it manages.

### Customary activities

Legislation was changed in 2012 to extend opportunities for Aboriginal peoples to access Parks and Wildlife Service-managed land and waters to carry out customary activities. Aboriginal customary activities, when referenced in this document, refer to the cultural activities that Aboriginal peoples are allowed to do under legislation for customary purposes.

Activities are considered to be done for a customary purpose if they involve traditional practices to do with:

- making and eating food
- making and using medicine
- practising artistic, ceremonial or other customary activities
- doing other things involved with any of the above; for example, using water and other natural resources such as ochre, stones and soil for ceremonies.

No activity is considered customary if it is done for financial gain or reward. Some of the different types of customary activities Aboriginal peoples are legally able to do on Parks and Wildlife Service-managed land and waters include:

- camping for up to 28 days outside designated camping sites and up to three months for ceremonial events
- lighting campfires or fires for smoking ceremonies
- undertaking ceremonial activities, including taking ochre or water, creating or maintaining rock art, moving natural features and disturbing the ground and vegetation
- using boats on rivers and lakes in nature reserves and in marine reserves
- hunting and gathering food and medicine
- entering restricted caves
- accessing additional areas with vehicle
- bringing dogs into additional areas.





## GUIDELINES FOR ACTIVITIES

### General information

#### Who is considered Aboriginal?

Under the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* (CALM Act) and the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*, an Aboriginal person is considered to be a person wholly or partly descended from the original inhabitants of Australia. Aboriginal peoples may invite non-Aboriginal friends and family members to observe and assist them while they undertake customary activities, provided it is for an Aboriginal customary purpose.

#### Fees on Parks and Wildlife Service-managed land

Entry fees do not apply to Aboriginal peoples when visiting Parks and Wildlife Service-managed land to do customary activities. Aboriginal peoples who camp in designated camping sites where fees are payable are only required to pay the concession rate.

#### Written permissions

In some circumstances, written permission from the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of DBCA (or delegate) is required for Aboriginal peoples to do customary activities, because of the environmental sensitivity of a place or the risk to public safety.

The CEO has delegated the authority to issue permissions to regional and district managers. Most of the written permissions are likely to be issued as outcomes of 'local area arrangements' (see below) with the Aboriginal groups and families of the region or district, but they can also be given on a case-by-case basis.

Written permission can be issued to a person or persons, or group, body or association of persons, and may or may not specify a minimum period of time for which the permission is valid. This process is designed to provide flexibility to deal with a range of situations and arrangements.

A written permission may have conditions. If the conditions are not met, or the Aboriginal person fails to observe the conditions, the person may be breaking the law. Written permission can be requested by contacting local parks and Wildlife Service offices.

#### Local area arrangements

When Aboriginal peoples wish to carry out restricted activities, or where Parks and Wildlife Service management activities will be impacted by customary activities, Parks and Wildlife Service will seek to establish 'local area arrangements' with the Aboriginal communities of the area that define how the access to land will be managed.

These arrangements would be ongoing and undertaken in good faith, with the aims of joint learning and achieving outcomes for protection of both the cultural and environmental values of the area. Contact your local Parks and Wildlife Service office to find out about being involved in these local arrangements.

#### Other terms

Other terms used in this document include:

- camping area – land designated as a camping area for the public
- recreational land – this includes carparks, sealed roads, camping areas and visitor areas, and the land within 500m of these areas
- urban land – this includes all Parks and Wildlife Service-managed land within the metropolitan regions of Perth, Peel and Bunbury
- visitor areas – this may include picnic areas, points of interest, lookouts or platforms, toilets, interpretive areas or a constructed thing. It does not include unsealed roads or walk trails.

### Access

Aboriginal peoples can access most areas of Parks and Wildlife Service-managed land and waters to carry out customary activities. There are some areas that pose safety risks or are environmentally sensitive, and where Aboriginal peoples will need special permission. Other people or agencies also have certain rights to control access under other laws. Aboriginal peoples will need to be aware of the following when accessing land.

#### Prohibited areas

These areas are not common but where they exist, no one is permitted in the area at any time without permission, usually because of a safety risk or because the land needs special protection from human disturbance. For example, to manage risk of dieback spread.

#### Locked gates

Locked gates prevent entry to some places, usually for safety reasons. The local Parks and Wildlife Service office may consider local area arrangements if access is required for customary purposes.

#### Mining areas and lease areas

Permission from the lessee is required to enter mining areas and lease areas. These are areas where the lessee (the renter) has come into an exclusive agreement with the Parks and Wildlife Service to use, occupy and enjoy a certain area of land, for a specific purpose(s) defined in the agreement.

Mining leases issued under the *Mining Act 1978* allow the lessee to use and occupy the land for mining purposes. The lessee has exclusive rights under the lease.

Accessing leased land is similar to entering private land; the occupier's permission is needed to do so. Without permission to enter the land, trespassers can be prosecuted under the law.

### Forest Enhancement Areas

Ecological thinning occurs in Forest Enhancement Areas, where the primary objective of thinning is to promote forest health and resilience to conserve biodiversity. These approved operations are part of the *Forest Management Plan 2024-2033*.

For safety reasons, Aboriginal peoples should check with their local Parks and Wildlife Service office to determine if ecological thinning operations are taking place.

More information can be found on the website: <https://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/management/forests/forest-management-plan>

#### Temporary control areas

Temporary control areas are areas that have been closed to access for specific reasons, either for safety, conservation or customary reasons. This can be because of floods or fires, because a certain animal or plant is in recovery, or because an Aboriginal group has requested exclusive use of an area for customary reasons. Temporary control areas can be arranged for up to 90 days.

Written permission may be provided for an Aboriginal person to enter temporary control areas set aside for safety purposes, or for the protection of plants and animals. Aboriginal peoples do not require permission to enter temporary control areas set aside for Aboriginal customary reasons.

#### Emergency measures

Parks are occasionally closed for safety reasons in an emergency, for example when there is a flood or fire. Closures are publicised on the department's website [alerts.dbca.wa.gov.au](https://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/alerts), on [emergency.wa.gov.au](https://www.emergency.wa.gov.au), and at local regional or district Parks and Wildlife Service offices. There might also be signs at the entry to parks. In case of these emergencies, please follow the instructions of Parks and Wildlife Service staff.

## Water catchment areas

A catchment is an area where water is collected by the natural landscape. In a catchment, all rain and run-off water eventually flows to a creek, river, lake or ocean, or into the groundwater system. Natural and human systems such as rivers, bushland, farms, dams, homes, plants, animals and people can co-exist in a catchment when managed appropriately.

Healthy catchments provide:

- a sustainable source of clean drinking water
- unspoilt natural areas for recreation
- habitat for plants and animals
- healthy vegetation and waterways
- reliable and clean water for stock and irrigation
- opportunities for sustainable agriculture and industry.

Water catchment areas can be entered for customary reasons but certain activities, such as camping and hunting, may not be allowed. As part of the South West Native Title Settlement, the *Metropolitan Water Supply Sewerage and Drainage Amendments By-Laws 2016*, and the *Country Areas Water Supply Amendments By-Laws 2016* were gazetted in 2016. The by-laws set out arrangements for Noongar people to access some water catchment areas in the south-west for certain limited customary activities, and will allow Noongar people to access and maintain Aboriginal sites and to teach and learn on Country. Check with the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation for specific restrictions if planning to do customary activities in a catchment area.

## Cars

Aboriginal peoples can take a vehicle off-road from unsealed roads in most areas of Parks and Wildlife Service-managed lands. A vehicle cannot be taken off-road from a sealed road. Please be aware that if new tracks are made, other visitors to the park could access areas culturally significant to Aboriginal peoples. There is also a risk of harming threatened native plants and disturbing animal habitats. The Parks and Wildlife Service encourages the use of established roads and tracks wherever possible.

Contact the local Parks and Wildlife Service office to seek permission or to develop a local area arrangement to access roads or tracks that have a locked gate or other barrier to stop traffic if it is culturally important to do so.

Vehicles must remain on all existing roads and tracks within Boonanarring Nature Reserve, Drummond Nature Reserve, or Moore River Nature Reserve in the Swan Region. Permission must be sought before taking a vehicle off-road within urban land, and for all other reserves within 500m of carparks, sealed roads, camping areas and visitor areas.

Using motorised vehicles on walking tracks or hiking trails is unsafe and is prohibited.

## Wilderness areas or limited access areas

These are areas that are particularly environmentally sensitive, or dangerous to enter. Aboriginal peoples can access a wilderness area but will need written permission to drive a vehicle, bring an animal and navigate a vessel. Written permission will be needed to enter a limited access area and drive a vehicle.

## Disease risk areas

Disease risk areas are places that have been identified to be at high risk from the disease caused by the introduced plant disease *Phytophthora cinnamomi* (dieback).

The introduction of dieback has had catastrophic consequences to the flora of Western Australia with more than one million hectares of the south-west region now infested. This includes many vulnerable forests, woodlands and heathlands that occur between Eneabba and Cape Arid, east of Esperance. Once introduced into a vulnerable native ecosystem the pathogen causes a decline in biodiversity, irreversibly damages plant communities, and affects the habitats and food supplies of native animals that live within them. Once detected, it is very expensive and difficult to eradicate. The main aim of management is to prevent the further spread of the pathogen.

Human activity causes the most significant and rapid spread of dieback. This includes road construction, earthmoving, the use of infested plant stock, and dirty vehicles that transport infested soil. It is illegal to enter a disease risk area in a vehicle without a permit because of the risk of transporting soil contaminated with the pathogen. Speak to district Parks and Wildlife Service staff about the location of sites to clean vehicles.

Maps of where dieback has been found and the locations of disease risk areas can be found at [dbca.wa.gov.au/dieback](http://dbca.wa.gov.au/dieback)

Aboriginal peoples can enter disease risk areas on foot, but not in a vehicle without a permit. When entering these areas, walkers need to ensure their shoes and any equipment are clean (and again when they leave) to ensure they don't accidentally spread dieback. Boot cleaning stations – with scrub brushes to help remove any mud or soil – can be found in some parks.

Permits to enter disease risk areas can be obtained from the local Parks and Wildlife Service office.

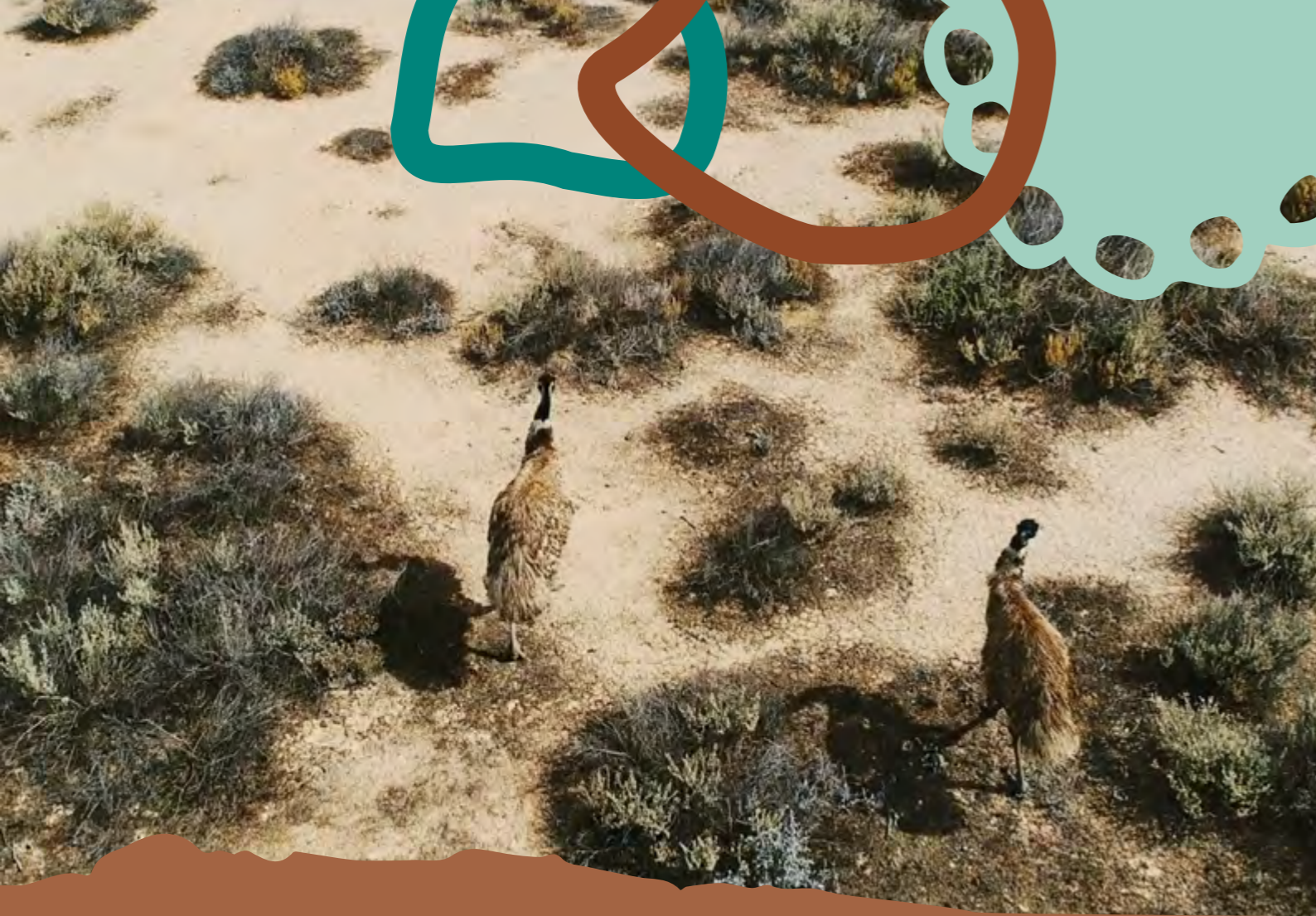
## Dogs

Aboriginal peoples may bring their dogs with them while engaging in customary activities. However, within recreational areas, urban land, and town sites, dogs must stay inside a vehicle—unless signage clearly indicates that dogs are permitted in the area. Always follow RSPCA animal welfare guidelines, and never leave dogs unattended in a vehicle. Permission is also needed to take dogs into poison risk areas, forest disease risk areas (if the animal is a potential carrier of disease), Dimalurra and Dangggu national parks, Parry Lagoons Nature Reserve and declared wilderness areas.

Poison risk areas are areas of Parks and Wildlife Service-managed land that are baited with 1080 poison. Through the use of 1080 poison baits as part of the *Western Shield* wildlife recovery program, the Parks and Wildlife Service is working to bring native animals back from the brink of extinction. The poison 1080 is found naturally in some Western Australian plants and native animals have therefore developed a high tolerance. However, it is toxic to introduced species, meaning it is an effective control method for introduced predators such as the fox and feral cat. This also means the poison can kill domestic dogs. The 1080 sausage baits and dried meat baits are attractive to dogs and can remain toxic for a long time. Dogs also need to remain under control at all times and should not scare or threaten other people.

**Please check with the local Parks and Wildlife Service office to see if the area is a poison risk before taking a dog onto Parks and Wildlife Service-managed land.**





## CAMPING

Aboriginal peoples can camp for free almost anywhere in a park for customary purposes (referred to as 'cultural camping'). Aboriginal peoples who camp in designated camp sites where fees are payable, or where bookings are required, pay the concession rate.

Cultural camping outside designated camp sites can be done for up to 28 days. When there are ceremonial events on Country – for example, for lore business or funerals – cultural camping is allowed for up to three months. It is a good idea to make the local Parks and Wildlife Service staff aware if there is an upcoming ceremonial event.

Written permission is needed for cultural camping outside designated camp sites in reserves within town sites or metropolitan areas, except in:

- Avon Valley National Park
- Dwellingup State Forest
- Lane Poole Reserve
- Jarrahdale State Forest
- Walyunga National Park.

Written permission is also required for cultural camping outside designated camp sites in Dimalurra National Park (in the Kimberley), Boonanarring Nature Reserve, Drummond Nature Reserve, or Moore River Nature Reserve (in the Swan Region), or within recreational areas.

All camps (designated or not) have to be kept clean and any rubbish removed when leaving.

## Fire

Unless there is a total fire ban in place, Aboriginal peoples can light small fires for cooking, camping or smoking ceremonies in most places. Written permission is required in town sites, recreational land, urban land and Moore River Nature Reserve, and the restrictions listed below also apply.

During a total fire ban no one should light, maintain or use a fire in the open air, or do an activity that is likely to cause a fire. Total fire bans are declared on days when fires will be difficult to control, are likely to threaten lives or property or when widespread fires can impact the availability of resources. The decision to put a ban in place is made by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) in consultation with the Bureau of Meteorology and local governments. The Parks and Wildlife Service may also declare an area restricted for fire purposes.

Restricted and prohibited burning periods are usually in place between November and April each year. These restrict the times, places and types of fires which can be lit. Under the *Bush Fires Act 1954*, DFES and local governments can declare fire restrictions. These restricted and prohibited burning periods vary for each local government area, so it is best to check with the local shire or council office to determine whether any restrictions are in place.

**It is important to know of, and abide by, all laws that exist in relation to lighting fire, such as fire bans and restrictions set by DFES and local governments. For more information about fire bans or the fire danger rating for the day go to [emergency.wa.gov.au](https://emergency.wa.gov.au) website or [dfes.wa.gov.au/hazard-information/bushfire/total-fire-ban](https://dfes.wa.gov.au/hazard-information/bushfire/total-fire-ban)**

When lighting a fire, it must be kept under control. It is important there is a three-metre area around the fire clear of any debris, including logs, stumps, twigs and leaves. When leaving a campfire, it should be fully extinguished with earth or water.

Unconfined fires, such as fires to clean Country or to aid in hunting, can only be lit with written permission from the Parks and Wildlife Service. If there is a desire or need to burn a particular piece of Country, contact the local Parks and Wildlife Service office to see if a local area arrangement can be made.

Before setting out to camp for customary purposes, check the fire danger rating and any other fire restrictions for the area.

## Prescribed burning

The Parks and Wildlife Service performs prescribed burning during certain times of the year. Through local area arrangements the Parks and Wildlife Service may perform these burns with Aboriginal peoples. However, there is also a danger that these burns may be carried out when Aboriginal peoples are cultural camping.

To ensure there is no danger of a prescribed burn when camping on Country it is a good idea to contact the local Parks and Wildlife Service office before setting out.

## Hunting and gathering

Parks and Wildlife Service-managed land and waters are public spaces and are shared with other people. Safety is very important and must be considered when using weapons and tools to hunt, so other people are not harmed. Aboriginal peoples will need a firearms licence issued by the Western Australian Police if hunting with a firearm.

Generally, Aboriginal peoples can:

- hunt animals without a firearm (for example, by trapping or snare) from areas that are more than 1km from carparks, sealed roads, designated camping sites and visitor areas, and not in urban land or a town site
- hunt animals with a firearms licence and a Category A firearm, such as an air rifle or a rim fire .22 rifle from areas that are more than 1.5km from carparks, sealed roads, designated camping sites and visitor areas, and not in urban land or a town site
- hunt animals with a firearms licence and a Category B firearm, such as a centre fire .22 or .223 rifle from areas that are more than 3km from carparks, sealed roads, designated camping sites and visitor areas, and not in urban land or a town site
- gather plants from areas that are more than 500m from carparks, sealed roads, designated camping sites and visitor areas, and not in urban land or a town site.

Any owner of a firearm or weapon must adhere to the provisions of the *Firearms Act 2024* and the *Weapons Act 1999*. For more information on applying for a firearms licence go to [police.wa.gov.au](https://police.wa.gov.au)



## CARING AND PRESERVING

Aboriginal peoples can hunt and gather most plants and animals for customary activities, except if the plants and animals are threatened. These plants and animals have low population levels and need a chance to recover. For more information on these threatened plants and animals please go to [dbca.wa.gov.au/contact-us](http://dbca.wa.gov.au/contact-us) so your question can be directed to the right person or contact your local Parks and Wildlife Service office.

### Sanctuary areas and marine nature reserves

Sanctuary areas of marine parks provide the highest level of protection of vulnerable or specially protected species, and protect representative habitats from human disturbance. These areas are set aside as 'no-take' refuges for marine species to recover from fishing and hunting, and to breed.

Marine nature reserves are 'look but don't take' areas created primarily for conservation and scientific research, and are designed to protect a particular significant ecosystem or habitat. Hamelin Pool Marine Nature Reserve, where 2000-year-old stromatolites can be found, is currently the only marine nature reserve in Western Australia.

Written permission from the Parks and Wildlife Service is required before hunting and gathering in sanctuary areas of marine parks and in marine nature reserves unless it is otherwise provided for within the management plan for the marine park or reserves.

To find out what areas are sanctuary areas, check the management plan for the particular marine park. These management plans are available online at [www.dbca.wa.gov.au/management/plans](http://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/management/plans) or enquire at your local Parks and Wildlife Service office. Traditional Owners have raised concerns around visitors accessing certain areas of marine reserves by foot, such as intertidal reefs.

To conserve and protect the value of the land to the culture and heritage of Aboriginal peoples, DBCA's CEO may declare an area within a marine reserve a restricted area where access by foot is prohibited pursuant to Regulations 5 and 49A. The customary activities defence applies to access to these areas.

### Customary activities and commercial business

No activity is considered customary if it is done for financial gain or reward. Aboriginal peoples will need a commercial licence if they intend to take plants and animals other than for a customary purpose, or if they conduct business on CALM Act land and waters, such as cultural tours. Information on commercial licences to take and supply plants and animals can be found by contacting your local DBCA office or emailing [wildlifelicencing@dbca.wa.gov.au](mailto:wildlifelicencing@dbca.wa.gov.au). Information on commercial tourism operations can be found at [www.dbca.wa.gov.au/management/nature-based-tourism/commercial-activities](http://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/management/nature-based-tourism/commercial-activities)

## Fishing

Fishing activities are managed by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) and the CALM Act customary activities provisions do not apply to the taking of fish or shellfish. Under the DPIRD 'customary fishing' policy, Traditional Owners who fish according to customary laws do not require a fishing licence. The usual fishing rules and bag limits still apply to Aboriginal peoples when fishing or marroning. For more information refer to the policy on customary fishing at [www.dpird.wa.gov.au/regional-communities/customary-fishing](http://www.dpird.wa.gov.au/regional-communities/customary-fishing) or contact DPIRD by telephone on: 1300 374 73.

No one can hunt or gather rare, threatened, or otherwise protected species of plants and animals. However, Aboriginal peoples can hunt (except in marine sanctuary zones or marine nature reserves unless prescribed in a management plan):

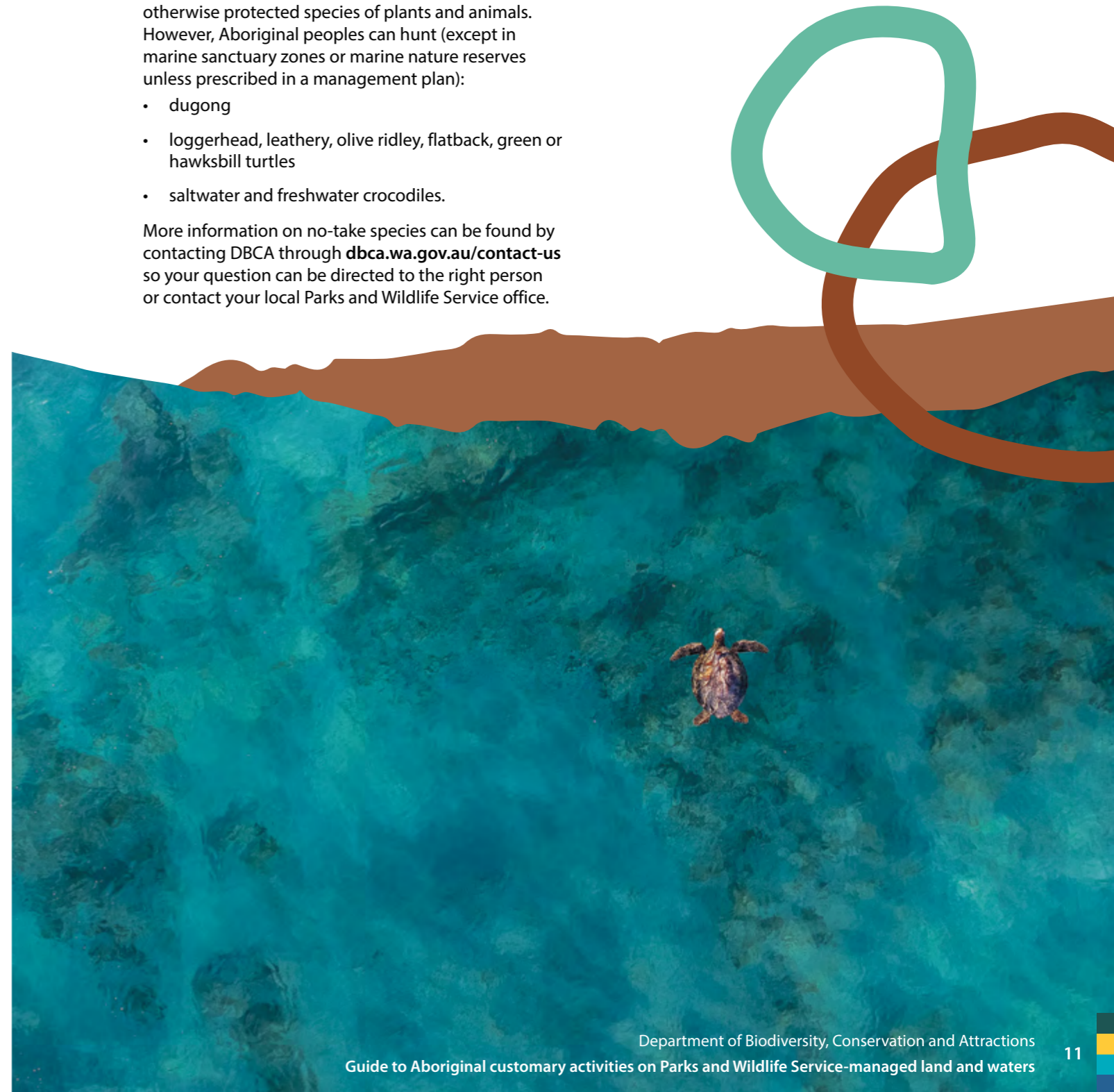
- dugong
- loggerhead, leathery, olive ridley, flatback, green or hawksbill turtles
- saltwater and freshwater crocodiles.

More information on no-take species can be found by contacting DBCA through [dbca.wa.gov.au/contact-us](http://dbca.wa.gov.au/contact-us) so your question can be directed to the right person or contact your local Parks and Wildlife Service office.

## Firewood

Aboriginal peoples can collect and use firewood for customary activities on Parks and Wildlife Service-managed lands. When firewood is collected for household customary activities it must only be collected from designated public firewood collection points. The same rules and fees apply for Aboriginal peoples as for the rest of the population. For information on where these areas are, enquire at any Parks and Wildlife Service office.

Forest products such as charcoal, gum, sap, honey and seeds can be taken and used for customary activities.





## HELPFUL CONTACTS

### PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE OFFICES

#### HEAD OFFICE

##### Kensington (including Western Australian Herbarium)

17 Dick Perry Avenue  
KENSINGTON  
Phone (08) 9219 9000  
Fax (08) 9334 0498

##### Aboriginal Engagement and Heritage Unit

17 Dick Perry Avenue  
KENSINGTON  
Phone (08) 9219 9000  
Fax (08) 9334 0498

#### KIMBERLEY REGION

##### East Kimberley District (Kununurra)

Lot 248 Ivanhoe Road  
KUNUNURRA  
Phone (08) 9168 4200  
Fax (08) 9168 2179

##### West Kimberley District (Broome)

111 Herbert Street  
BROOME  
Phone (08) 9195 5500  
Fax (08) 9193 5027

#### GOLDFIELDS REGION

##### Kalgoorlie (regional headquarters)

32 Brookman Street  
KALGOORLIE  
Phone (08) 9080 5555  
Fax (08) 9021 7831

#### MIDWEST REGION

##### Geraldton (regional headquarters)

1st Floor, The Foreshore Centre  
201 Foreshore Drive  
GERALDTON  
Phone (08) 9964 0901  
Fax (08) 9964 0977

##### Gascoyne District

61–63 Knight Terrace  
DENHAM  
Phone (08) 9948 2226  
Fax (08) 9948 2201

##### Jurien Bay (Turquoise Coast District)

Lot 67 Bashford Street  
JURIEN BAY  
Phone (08) 9688 6000  
Fax (08) 9652 1922

#### PILBARA REGION

##### Karratha (regional headquarters)

Lot 984 Woodbrook Road  
Industrial Estate  
KARRATHA  
Phone (08) 9182 2000

##### Exmouth District

20 Nimitz Street  
EXMOUTH  
Phone (08) 9947 8000  
Fax (08) 9947 8050

#### SOUTH COAST REGION

##### Albany (regional headquarters)

120 Albany Highway  
ALBANY  
Phone (08) 9842 4500

##### Esperance District

92 Dempster Street  
ESPERANCE  
Phone (08) 9083 2100

#### SOUTH WEST REGION

##### Bunbury (regional headquarters)

Cnr of Dodson Road and South  
West Highway  
BUNBURY  
Phone (08) 9725 4300

##### Busselton (Blackwood District)

14 Queen Street  
BUSSELTON  
Phone (08) 9752 5555  
Fax (08) 9752 1432

##### Collie (Wellington District)

147 Wittenoom Street  
COLLIE  
Phone (08) 9735 1988

#### SWAN REGION

##### Crawley (regional headquarters)

Cnr Hackett and Australia II  
Drives  
CRAWLEY  
Phone (08) 9442 0300  
Fax (08) 9386 1578

##### PERTH HILLS DISTRICT

275 Allen Road  
MUNDARING  
Phone (08) 9290 6100  
Fax (08) 9290 6101

##### SWAN COASTAL DISTRICT

5 Dundobar Road  
WANNEROO  
Phone (08) 9303 7700  
Fax (08) 9405 0777

#### WARREN REGION

##### Manjimup (regional headquarters)

Brain Street  
MANJIMUP  
Phone (08) 9771 7988  
Fax (08) 9771 2677

##### Donnelly District

Kennedy Street  
PEMBERTON  
Phone (08) 9776 1207  
Fax (08) 9776 1410

##### Frankland District

South Coast Highway  
WALPOLE  
Phone (08) 9840 0400  
Fax (08) 9840 1251

#### WHEATBELT REGION

##### Narrogin (regional headquarters)

Wald Street  
NARROGIN  
Phone (08) 9881 9200  
Fax (08) 9881 1645

##### Merredin (Central Wheatbelt District)

Cnr of Crooks Road and Great  
Eastern Highway  
MERREDIN  
Phone (08) 9041 6000  
Fax (08) 9041 6011

### OTHER HELPFUL CONTACTS

**Wildcare helpline** – for sick or injured wildlife and illegal wildlife activity (08) 9474 9055

**Fish Watch** – for reporting illegal fishing activity 1800 815 507

#### WA Police

131 444  
(non emergency)

#### Marine emergencies

(08) 9483 6462

#### Poisons Hotline

13 11 26

#### DFES

(08) 9395 9300

#### Emergency information

For all emergencies, contact emergency services on 000

## OTHER INFORMATION

### Native title and customary protocols

Aboriginal peoples may go on to Parks and Wildlife Service-managed land and waters and undertake customary activities such as hunting, fishing, camping and ceremonies. However, when the Parks and Wildlife Service-managed land or waters are part of an Aboriginal group's exclusive possession native title land, then other Aboriginal peoples must have the permission of the native title holders to undertake traditional activities on that land or waters.

Even if exclusive possession native title has not been recognised over an area, non-exclusive native title rights may be in existence and should be respected. The customary activities provisions will not apply where these are inconsistent with other people's native title rights. Traditional Aboriginal customary protocols may also need to be considered in addition to these laws.

### Joint management

Some land and waters are jointly managed by the Parks and Wildlife Service and an Aboriginal group with a cultural connection to a particular park or reserve. The involvement of Aboriginal peoples in the management of traditional land and waters contributes to improved protection of cultural and heritage values and the maintenance of customary activities.

### Areas under a joint management agreement

When DBCA and an Aboriginal group jointly manage land or waters, there may be rules and protocols about what customary activities can be carried out and where. If unsure about doing any customary activities on jointly managed lands and waters talk to your local Parks and Wildlife Service office (see contact list).

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### General

**Q** What is the effect of the CALM Act on native title rights?

**A** The *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* (CALM Act) does not affect native title rights. Non-native title holders cannot undertake customary activities if inconsistent with native title holders' rights and interests.

**Q** What are the main components of legislation in relation to Aboriginal customary activities?

**A** The CALM Act and the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (BC Act) allow Aboriginal peoples to undertake a range of activities for customary purposes on reserves, or to take flowers, plants and animals usually protected under the BC Act for customary purposes, extending the opportunities previously available.

Activities for customary purposes consist of accessing land and waters, camping temporarily, driving or riding a vehicle, navigating a vessel, bringing an animal onto the land, lighting fire, and taking or removing flora or fauna (including hunting).

The legislation gives Aboriginal peoples the legal ability to do the activities if they are for a customary purpose, unless they are otherwise restricted or excluded by regulation or are inconsistent with the native title holder's rights and interests.

Aboriginal peoples will continue to need the approval of the occupier when taking plants and animals on land and waters not managed by the Parks and Wildlife Service unless exercising their native title rights to do so.

**Q** Do joint management agreements need to be in place to practise customary activities on Parks and Wildlife Service-managed land?

**A** No.

**Q** Can customary activities be practised outside Parks and Wildlife Service-managed land? Do Aboriginal peoples need permission? If so, who do Aboriginal peoples need permission from?

**A** Yes, customary activities can be practised outside Parks and Wildlife Service-managed land, with the permission of the owners/occupiers of that land. Exclusions apply to the taking of specially protected and threatened flora and fauna. Fire bans and restrictions set by DFES still apply.

**Q** What is the effect of the CALM Act on native title rights?

**A** The CALM Act does not affect native title rights. Non-native title holders cannot undertake customary activities if inconsistent with native title holders' rights and interests.

**Q** What is a cave for the purposes of customary activities?

**A** A cave generally means a naturally formed cavity or hollow beneath the surface of the earth that is large enough to be entered by humans.

**Q** Can an Aboriginal person take a non-Aboriginal person (for example, wife, husband, friend who has gone through lore/law) to practise customary activities?

**A** A non-Aboriginal person may be invited to accompany Aboriginal peoples to observe or assist in carrying out a customary activity. A wife, husband or friend, who is not an Aboriginal person, even if they have been accepted into the community, may not individually access and carry out activities for customary purposes under these laws.

**Q** Will Aboriginal customary activities have any effect on commercial activities, that is, forestry, commercial flora harvesting, or commercial tour operations?

**A** Commercial activities will continue to be permitted on land managed by the Parks and Wildlife Service, in accordance with management plans, and it is envisaged that Aboriginal customary activities and commercial activities will be able to coexist. However, if an issue arises that cannot be resolved between two affected parties, then the Parks and Wildlife Service may address the matter under regulations.

The preparation of management plans will also have to take into account whether an activity will have a material adverse effect on the value of the land to Aboriginal culture and heritage.

**Q** Will Aboriginal peoples have access to conduct customary activities to the exclusion of others?

**A** Aboriginal peoples will be able to access areas in order to conduct certain activities for customary purposes. This access may be limited or controlled through appropriate regulation where safety is of concern or where it is considered to be detrimental to the conservation values of the area.

The only time the general public would be excluded is if a temporary control area is established to protect the value of the land to the culture and heritage of Aboriginal peoples. A temporary control area can be set aside for up to 90 days. Any closures will be publicly advertised.

These access rights are in recognition of the fact that Aboriginal peoples were the first occupiers of the land, and aim to allow them to continue to undertake traditional activities on Country, where their activities do not conflict with the conservation values of the land.

**Q** Will Aboriginal customary activities be permitted on land where exclusive native title has been determined, but where the people performing the activities are not the holders of the exclusive native title on that land?

**A** Aboriginal peoples will need the permission of exclusive possession native title holders to undertake customary activities.

## Access

**Q Can Aboriginal peoples access blocked-off pathways or tracks?**

**A** Yes. However, where the path is gated and locked for public safety, environmental reasons or dieback disease, permission will be required.

**Q Can Aboriginal peoples access Parks and Wildlife Service-managed land at any time? That is, during the day and night?**

**A** Yes. However, there are certain areas that are closed off to the public at night due to vandalism. If Aboriginal peoples need access to the area at a time when the Parks and Wildlife Service-managed land is closed to the general public, they can contact their local Parks and Wildlife Service office to arrange access.

**Q How do Aboriginal peoples go about getting permission to access cultural sites that are as yet not accessible?**

**A** If Aboriginal peoples cannot access a cultural site, they can consult with their local Parks and Wildlife Service office for assistance or to come to a local area arrangement to provide access for Aboriginal peoples.

It is important to note that if a new track is created to access a site, there is a possibility that the general public will access the site as well. This is why it is advisable to consult the Parks and Wildlife Service on access to special places.

**Q Will Aboriginal customary activities have any effect on public access to parks and reserves, and activities within parks and reserves, that is, walking, camping, swimming or fishing?**

**A** The public will continue to have access to parks and reserves, and the activities allowed in each park or reserve will continue to be guided by the relevant management plan. There may be, on occasion, temporary control areas established for up to 90 days to protect the value of the land to the culture and heritage of Aboriginal peoples. Any closures will be publicly advertised.

## Fire

**Q Can Aboriginal peoples light fires at all times of the year? What kinds of fires are permitted?**

**A** No, there are times when fires should not be lit.

If Aboriginal peoples wish to light a fire for camping or cooking (including night-time light, smoking ceremonies or ceremonial if it is like a campfire) they should first check:

- If there is a total fire ban in place, Aboriginal peoples will need to apply for an exemption from DFES if they wish to do a cultural activity. For example, a smoking ceremony.
- If exemption is also required to carry out activities that involve the use of fire during local government restricted and prohibited burning periods.
- That the fire will not risk damage to any forest produce.
- That the area within three metres of any side of the fire is cleared of all bush and other flammable material, including logs or stumps.

In addition, any fire has to be completely extinguished by water or earth before leaving it.

Fires in the bush have a high risk of igniting or sparking a damaging bushfire, particularly during certain parts of the year. The use of fire for customary purposes needs to be done safely and responsibly and in line with any requirements under the *Bush Fires Act 1954*. If the fire is lit for any other purpose it will also require permission from Parks and Wildlife Service.

**Q Can Aboriginal peoples go into partnership with the Parks and Wildlife Service to do prescribed burns?**

**A** Contact the local Parks and Wildlife Service office to discuss the opportunities for developing a local area arrangement around prescribed burning.

**Q Can smoking ceremonies be conducted outside caves to make them safe?**

**A** Smoking ceremonies can be conducted outside caves if the fire is lit and extinguished according to the *Bush Fires Act 1954*.

**Q Is a smoking ceremony considered a fire?**

**A** Yes. All fires, no matter what the purpose, still need to comply with the *Bush Fires Act 1954*. The fire must have a three-metre clearing around it, must be extinguished with either water or earth, and should not be left unattended. If Aboriginal peoples need to do a smoking ceremony when there is a total fire ban or other restriction in place, please contact the local Parks and Wildlife Service office.

**Q Will fire restrictions still be applied to Aboriginal customary activities?**

**A** Yes, restrictions under the *Bush Fires Act 1954* apply to all people.

**Q What does a total fire ban mean?**

**A** It means a person must not light, maintain or use a fire in the open air, or carry out an activity in the open air that causes or is likely to cause a fire. The ban includes hot works (welding, grinding, soldering, gas cutting), all open solid fuel fires for the purpose of cooking or camping, the use of incinerators and other activities (as described under 'What can't I do on a total fire ban day?').

**Q When will a total fire ban be declared?**

**A** Total fire bans are declared on days when fires will be difficult to control, are most likely to threaten lives and property, or when widespread fires are impacting the availability of fire suppression resources. The decision to put a ban in place is based on the weather forecast. DFES consults with the Bureau of Meteorology to determine when dangerous fire weather conditions are likely. DFES also consults with local governments that will be affected. The need for the ban to remain is assessed and may be revoked in the morning if weather conditions ease. The status of a ban should be checked after 6pm each day.

**Q How long is a total fire ban in place?**

**A** The ban will usually be in place for the whole of the day declared.

**Q What can't I do on a total fire ban day? Can I use my barbecue?**

**A** This depends on the type of barbecue or cooker, and where it is located. During a total fire ban you cannot light or use a fire in the open air. Undercover areas such as patios, pergolas and huts that are open or partially open to the weather are deemed to be in the open air.

**Types of barbecues include the following . . .**

### Solid fuel

No. You cannot use any barbecue or cooker that requires solid fuel such as wood or charcoal. This includes wood-fired ovens or stoves, and Webber-like barbecues.

### Gas

Yes. You can use a gas barbecue for cooking if it has an enclosed flame and all flammable material is cleared five metres away from around your barbecue. Your barbecue must never be left unattended. Barbecues with exposed flames cannot be used.

### Electric

Yes. You can use an electric barbecue where there is no flame.

## Camping

**Q Can Aboriginal peoples take their vehicle off road and set up camp at any time? Or do they have to ask permission first?**

**A** Yes, Aboriginal peoples are allowed to take their vehicle off an unsealed road and set up camp at any time, but not within 500m of recreational land or visitor areas. The Parks and Wildlife Service asks that Aboriginal peoples do not block the road or path to other users, do not damage the plants around their camp site and that they remove any rubbish when they leave.

**Q How long are Aboriginal peoples allowed to stay/camp to practise their customary activities?**

**A** Aboriginal peoples can camp for up to 28 days for customary activities, up to three months for ceremonial activities and longer by arrangement with the regional Parks and Wildlife Service offices.

**Q Do Aboriginal peoples have to pay to camp on Parks and Wildlife Service-managed land?**

**A** Aboriginal peoples undertaking customary camping 500m or more away from a designated campground do not have to pay to camp. Aboriginal peoples who choose to camp in a designated camp site where fees are payable only have to pay the concession rate.

## Hunting and gathering

**Q Can Aboriginal peoples go hunting?**

**A** Generally, Aboriginal peoples can:

- hunt animals without a firearm (for example, by trapping or snare) from areas that are more than 1km from carparks, sealed roads, designated camping sites and visitor areas, and not in urban land or a town site
- hunt animals with a firearms licence and a Category A firearm, such as an air rifle or a rim fire .22 rifle from areas that are more than 1.5km from carparks, sealed roads, designated camping sites and visitor areas, and not in urban land or a town site
- hunt animals with a firearms licence and a Category B firearm, such as a centre fire .22 or .223 rifle from areas that are more than 3km from carparks, sealed roads, designated camping sites and visitor areas, and not in urban land or a town site
- gather plants from areas that are more than 500m from carparks, sealed roads, designated camping sites and visitor areas, and not in urban land or a town site
- Any owner of a firearm or weapon must adhere to the provisions of the *Firearms Act 2024* and the *Weapons Act 1999*. For more information on applying for a firearms licence go to [police.wa.gov.au](http://police.wa.gov.au)

**Q Do Aboriginal peoples need to abide by the laws and regulations set out by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development in regards to fishing and marroning?**

**A** Yes, the laws regarding fishing and marroning still apply. For more information contact DPIRD.

**Q Can Aboriginal peoples hunt in their vehicles?**

**A** Aboriginal peoples can use their vehicle to access a hunting site but, to ensure the safety of the general public, are asked not to hunt from a moving vehicle.

**Q Do Aboriginal peoples need a licence to collect flora?**

**A** No. However, a commercial licence will be required if the plant material will be used for a commercial purpose. If the plant is a rare species Aboriginal peoples will need written permission.

**Q Can Aboriginal peoples take flowers, plants and animals for commercial purposes?**

**A** Aboriginal peoples will need to have a commercial licence to remove flowers, plants and animals for commercial purposes.

**Q Haven't Aboriginal peoples always been able to take flowers, plants and animals?**

**A** Aboriginal peoples have been permitted to take flowers, plants and animals for food for themselves and their families without having to seek a licence since the *Wildlife Conservation Act* came into effect in 1952. Amendments to the WC Act in 2012 extended this to also allow the taking of flowers, plants and animals by Aboriginal peoples for medicinal, ceremonial and artistic purposes. These provisions were continued with the BC Act. Certain threatened species still cannot be taken – a complete list of these species can be found by contacting your local Parks and Wildlife Service office or emailing [wildlifelicencing@dbca.wa.gov.au](mailto:wildlifelicencing@dbca.wa.gov.au)



## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Aboriginal person** means a person wholly or partly descended from the original inhabitants of Australia.

### Camp means

(a) to stay or lodge (whether in a camping unit or otherwise) during any period of the night after 9pm and before 6am

(b) to stay or lodge in a camping unit, building or structure during any period of the day after 6am and before 9pm.

**Camping area** means an area designated by sign as a camping area.

**Conservation parks** are areas of land reserved for the regional or local significance of their scenic, customary or biological values. They can accommodate recreation that is consistent with maintaining these values.

**Customary activities** are certain activities undertaken for an Aboriginal customary purpose in accordance with section 103A of the CALM Act. These activities include:

- (a) entering the land
- (b) driving or riding a vehicle or navigating a vessel on the land
- (c) bringing an animal onto the land
- (d) camping temporarily on the land
- (e) lighting or kindling a fire on the land
- (f) taking or removing a protected thing on the land.

**An Aboriginal customary purpose** means:

- (a) preparing or consuming food customarily eaten by Aboriginal peoples
- (b) preparing or using medicine customarily used by Aboriginal peoples
- (c) engaging in artistic, ceremonial or other customary activities customarily engaged in by Aboriginal peoples
- (d) engaging in activities incidental to these purposes.

**DFES** means the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, formerly the Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA).

**Disease Risk Area (DRA)** is an area declared by the Minister for the Environment to be at risk of being infected by a forest disease.

**Dog area** means an area that has been designated or has a sign that designates it as a dog area.

**Australian Fire Danger Rating System (AFDRS)** Fire danger ratings are used on days when there is a risk of bushfires and you need to take action. The higher the fire danger, the more dangerous the conditions. Ratings are calculated using a combination of weather forecasting and information about vegetation that could fuel a fire. Total fire bans will typically apply at 'extreme' level and above. Fire danger ratings are declared for a fire area. These are based on local government areas. For more information go to [afdrs.com.au](http://afdrs.com.au)

When the FDR is 'extreme' or 'catastrophic' in the area it means any fires that start are likely to be so fierce that even a well prepared, well constructed and actively defended home may not survive.

If this sort of weather is expected people should leave the day or hours before a fire might threaten as this is the best option for their survival.

**Firewood** means dead wood lying on the ground. It includes parts of trees of all species.

**Forest produce** includes trees, parts of trees, timber, sawdust, chips, firewood, charcoal, gum, kino, resin, sap, honey, seed, beeswax, rocks, stone and soil but does not include minerals within the meaning of the *Mining Act 1978*.

**Marine parks** are marine areas set aside to protect natural features and maintain beauty while enabling compatible recreation and commercial activities. In sanctuary zones, fishing is totally prohibited.

**National parks** are areas of land that have national significance for scenic, customary or biological values, and can accommodate recreation that is consistent with maintaining these values.

**Nature reserves** are areas of land set aside for the primary purpose of conservation. They are managed to maintain and restore the natural environment, and to protect, care for and promote the study of indigenous fauna and flora.

**Recreational land** means CALM land (land managed under the CALM Act) that is, or is within 500m of, any of the following:

- (a) a carpark, including any area where signs direct vehicles to be parked or that is predominantly used for parking vehicles
- (b) a sealed road
- (c) a camping area
- (d) a visitor area.

**Regional parks** are terrestrial areas managed to preserve and restore valuable ecosystems while encouraging a range of sustainable nature-based recreation activities.

**Sell** can include to

- (a) sell by wholesale or retail
- (b) supply or perform for profit
- (c) receive for sale
- (d) have in possession for sale
- (e) send, forward or deliver for sale
- (f) cause to be sold
- (g) dispose or offer for disposal under a hire-purchase agreement.

**State forests** are terrestrial areas containing indigenous vegetation that are managed for purposes such as recreation and nature conservation, the protection of water catchments and the production of a sustainable harvest of timber.

**Take** means

- (a) to injure, destroy or otherwise interfere with, or cause or permit the doing of any of those things
- (b) to hunt any fauna even though no fauna is actually taken
- (c) an attempt to take.

**A total fire ban (TFB)** is declared when extreme weather conditions or widespread fires are stretching firefighting resources. It is declared by the Minister for Emergency Services on advice from DFES after consultation with relevant local shire councils that may be affected.

When a TFB is declared it prohibits the lighting of any fires in open air and any other activities that may start a fire. The ban includes all open fires for the purpose of cooking or camping. It also includes incinerators, welding, grinding, soldering or gas cutting.

**Town site** has the meaning given in the *Land Administration Act 1997* section 26(1).

**Tree** includes a tree that is dead, provided the tree is still standing.

**Urban land** means land within the metropolitan region as defined in the *Planning and Development Act 2005* section 4(1), the Peel Region described in Schedule 4 to that Act or the local government district of Bunbury.

**Vehicle** has the same meaning as in the *Road Traffic Act 1974*; which includes:

- (a) every conveyance, not being a train, vessel or aircraft, and every object capable of being propelled or drawn, on wheels or tracks, by any means; and
- (b) where the context permits, an animal being driven or ridden.

**Vessel** means anything used, or capable of being used, to move people or things by water and it does not matter:

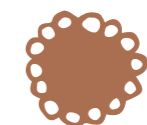
- (a) that such a thing is ordinarily stationary; or
- (b) how any such thing is moved or propelled.

**Visitor area** includes any of the following:

- (a) an area of cultivated lawn
- (b) an area signposted as a picnic area
- (c) an area signposted as a historical, natural or cultural point of interest
- (d) an area where any of the following have been provided for visitors:
  - (i) tables and seating
  - (ii) a lookout or platform
  - (iii) a toilet facility
  - (iv) a rubbish bin
  - (v) interpretive information
  - (vi) any building, facility or other erected or constructed thing, but does not include a walk trail or unsealed road.

**1080** (sodium fluoroacetate) is a naturally occurring toxin found in many native south-west Western Australian plants known as 'poison peas'. Western Australia's native animals have developed a high tolerance to the poison. This has given Parks and Wildlife Service a valuable ally in its battle to control foxes and feral cats in Western Australia, as '1080' baits can be used to selectively kill introduced predators without endangering our native wildlife.

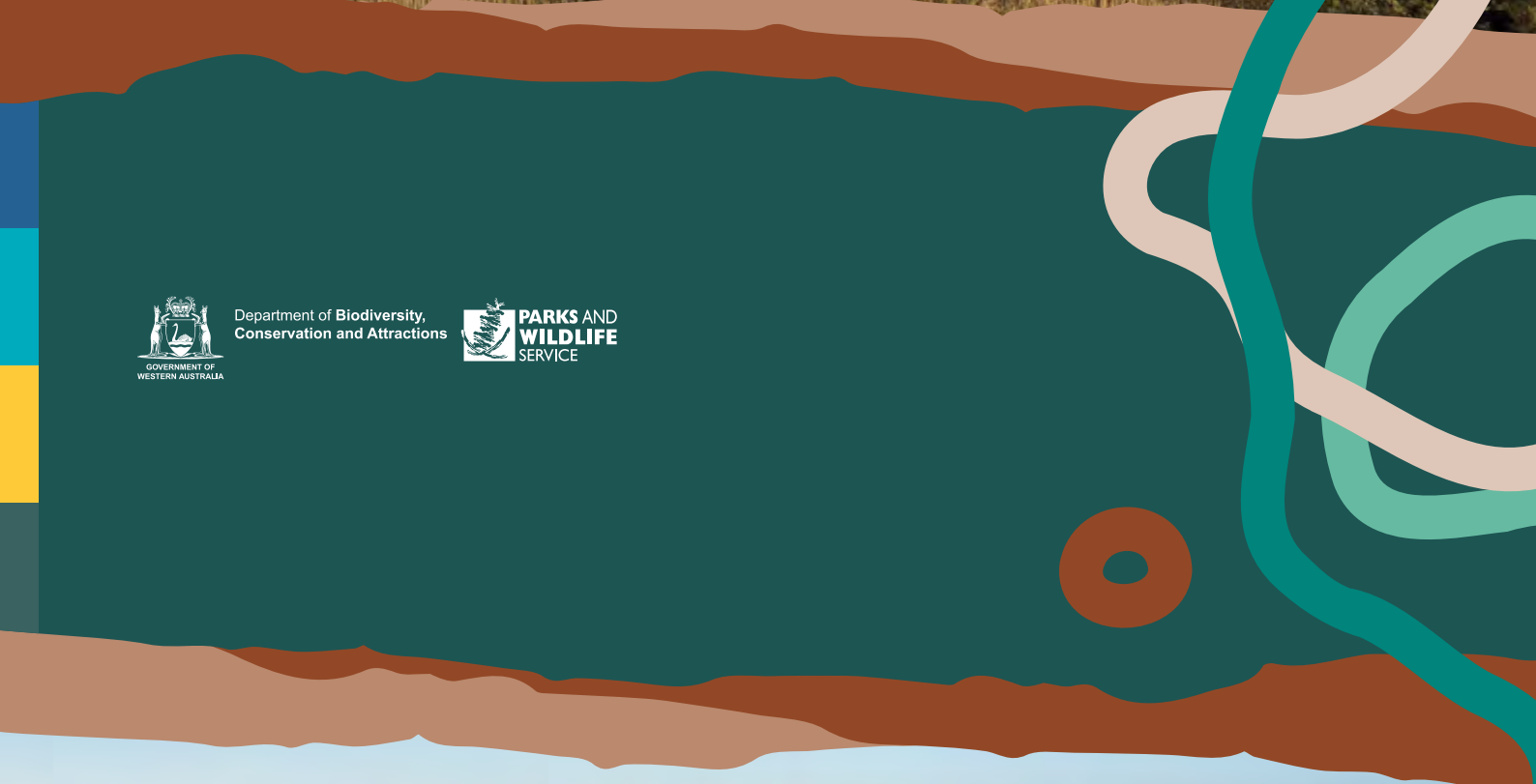
### Cultural elements



*Campfire.*  
Tina Bowers



*Men and women, sitting.*  
Tina Bowers



GOVERNMENT OF  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Department of Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions



**PARKS AND  
WILDLIFE**  
SERVICE

