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# Lacepede Islands Nature Reserve



## Visitor guide



Department of Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions



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**Above** Lacepede Islands.

## The Lacepede Islands Nature Reserve

**A unique and remote coastal island environment.**

Sometimes referred to simply as the Lacepedes, the four islands of the Lacepede Islands Nature Reserve offer visitors the opportunity to explore a stunning remote marine environment.

Located approximately 120km north of Broome and 15 nautical miles (28km) west of the Dampier Peninsula, the Reserve includes West, Middle, East and Sandy Islands. It covers an area of 180.2 hectares and is gazetted to the low water mark. The Lacepedes are small, low-lying atolls of coarse sand and limestone, lying atop a broad fringing platform reef. The islands are internationally significant as they are home to one of the largest colonies for the brown booby (*Sula leucogaster*) and the largest breeding colony in the Indian Ocean for the lesser frigatebird (*Fregata ariel*). The Lacepedes are also one of Western Australia's most important breeding grounds for green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*).



**Above** Guano mining remains.

## History

The Nyul Nyul, Nimanburr and Jabirr Jabirr/Ngumbarl Traditional Owner groups jointly hold Native Title over approximately 12,000 square kilometres of Country which includes the Lacepede Islands. This extends from Willie Creek in the South to Pender Bay and Disaster Bay in the North.

The Lacepede Islands were named in 1801 by French explorer Nicolas Baudin, aboard the ships *Naturaliste* and *Geographe*, after Bernard Germain Etienne de la Ville, Comte de Lacepede (1756–1825), President of the French senate. Lacepede was also a naturalist who described many of Australia's fish species between 1798 and 1804, mostly during the time of Baudin's expedition.

During the early days of the pearling industry in Western Australia, the Lacepedes were illegally used for the inhumane practice of 'blackbirding'. Aboriginal people were kidnapped, marooned on the islands, and forced into labour including pearl diving and processing.

While uninhabited today, these small atolls played a pivotal role in the development of the North West. In the late 19th century, they were amongst numerous islands off the Western Australian coast that were mined for guano (bird excrement), internationally sold for their use as an agricultural fertilizer. Horse-drawn tramways were built to transfer this cargo onto ships, evidence of which can still be seen today. During this time many vessels including the *Star of Jamaica* were shipwrecked on the island's fringing reefs during cyclones and storms.

Today the Lacepedes are managed by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions' Parks and Wildlife Service and visited by traditional owners, fishermen, scientists and naturalists.



**Below** 1 Brown booby fledgeling. 2 Green turtle. 3 Flatback turtle tracks. 4 Eastern Curlew.

## Wildlife

The Lacepede Islands are surrounded by a rich array of marine life including fish, dolphins, crocodiles, dugongs and whales. While the islands themselves are sparsely vegetated with beach spinifex (*Spinifex longifolius*) and saltbushes (*Halosarcia*), they are home to over 50 species of birds, many of which are threatened or protected under international agreements including the fairy tern (*Sternula nereis*), eastern curlew (*Numenius madagascariensis*), curlew sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*) and great knot (*Calidris tenuirostris*). The islands host the largest single seabird nesting colony of the brown booby (*Sula leucogaster*) in the world. They are also major turtle rookeries for green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) and have significant populations of geckos (*Gehyra punctata*) and Gilbert's dragon (*Gemmatophora gilberti*).



## Visiting the Islands

The Lacepedes are remote and can only be accessed by boat. Given the low-lying sparsely vegetated terrain and the high density of birds and turtles nesting on the islands, these species are highly sensitive to disturbance from visitation. If visiting the islands, please remain on the beach areas and do not venture further inland past the dune vegetation. Several activities may be undertaken for those visiting the Islands, including:

- beach walks
- bird, whale, and wildlife watching
- beach and boat fishing.

**Commercial tour operators must obtain a commercial operations licence from DBCA to visit the Lacepede Islands and must book access to the Reserve through the DBCA Parks and Wildlife Service Broome office (08 9195 5500) at least seven days prior to any visit.**



## Facilities & Infrastructure

**There are no public facilities on the Islands.**

There is a fully operational, unmanned lighthouse on East Island (admiralty number K1658).

### No camping or lighting fires



To help protect the various species that breed on the Islands, camping/overnight stays and the lighting of fires are not permitted.

## Access

The Lacepede Islands Nature Reserve may be accessed by boat. However, all areas are **closed to public visitation between October and April (inclusive) each year** when nesting and hatching periods for seabirds and turtles are at their peak.

## Fees

There are no entry fees to the Nature Reserve, however all visitors are advised to contact the DBCA Parks and Wildlife Service Broome office (08 9195 5500) prior to travel.

## Water

No freshwater is available on the Islands. Visitors should ensure they carry sufficient drinking water.





**Above** Colony of Common noddies.



## Caring for the Nature Reserve

The Lacepede Islands are fragile ecosystems highly sensitive to disturbance, such as trampling, fire and introduced species.

Please do not feed or disturb fish or other wildlife. Take all rubbish with you when you leave and report any marine debris or pollution as well as unusual or dead wildlife.

- **Be kind** – it is an offence to disturb or remove cultural artefacts, animals, plants, fossils or rocks. Leave them as you find them for others to see. No firearms are permitted in the park.
- **Be clean** – take your rubbish out of the park when you leave.

## Quarantine and Hygiene Protocols

- Keep your boat and clothing clean. Check all gear including footwear and remove any soil, seeds, pests, and animals before launching or leaving the mooring.
- Ensure your food and fishing gear are free from pests and diseases and store them in insect and rodent-proof containers.
- Use the sea for bodily wastes or dig a deep hole on the beach (more than 30cm) and bury completely.

- **Dogs and domestic pets are not permitted.**

Pets can harm native fauna and disrupt visitor's enjoyment of parks and reserves. The sight, sound and smell of pets (even when on leads) can cause native animals great stress.



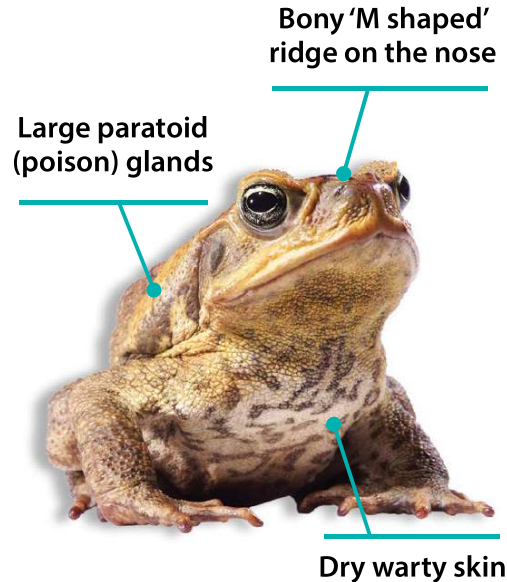


## Check your load for a toad

Cane toads are great stowaways and can easily be transported in your goods and luggage. If you've visited an area where cane toads are present, particularly if you are travelling to an area without cane toads, check your load for a toad.

### Cane toad identification

Cane toads are easily mistaken for native frogs. If you think you have found a cane toad, send a clear photo to **0400 693 807** for instant identification and look for the three distinguishing features.



## Fish for the Future

Fishing is permitted on the Islands. Please refer to Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development bag and size limits at [fish.wa.gov.au](http://fish.wa.gov.au)

If you have seen something involving fish or fishing which doesn't look quite right, the FishWatch phone line provides a quick and easy way to report it.

**FishWatch – 1800 815 507**



## Visitor safety

Visitors are expected to:

- check weather forecasts and current ocean conditions
- take appropriate clothing, first aid supplies, fuel, and adequate water
- **Be Crocwise** – when you enter the Kimberley you are entering crocodile country
- remember that your safety in natural areas is our concern but your responsibility.

# BE CROCWISE



**CROCS ARE COMMON:** In Kimberley waters you are in 'Croc Country'

**CROCS MOVE AROUND:** they can be found in any waterway, including fresh water.

**CROCS ARE DEADLY:** Crocodiles are dangerous and attacks can be fatal.

**BE CROCWISE:** Don't become complacent.



## Swimming, camping, fishing and boating in the Kimberley

1. If in doubt do not swim, canoe or use small boats where crocodiles may live.
2. Always obey warning signs. No sign does not mean no crocodile.
3. Avoid the water's edge wherever possible. Children and pets are at particular risk.
4. Don't assume you can always spot crocodiles - they can remain hidden underwater for long periods.
5. Camp at least 5m above the high-water mark and at least 50m from the water's edge.
6. Don't clean fish, prepare food or wash at the water's edge. Do chores at least 50m away.
7. Never dispose of food scraps or fish offal in the water, around campsites or boat ramps.
8. Fish at least 5m back from the water's edge. Don't attempt to retrieve lures.
9. Do not enter water to collect bait with your cast net.
10. Be vigilant when launching or retrieving your boat.
11. Never hang arms, legs or any part of your body over the edge of a boat.

## More information

### Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

Parks and Wildlife Service  
111 Herbert Street Broome WA  
Ph: (08) 9195 5500

[dbca.wa.gov.au](http://dbca.wa.gov.au)

### Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

Fisheries Division  
Broome Office  
Ph: (08) 9193 8600

[fish.wa.gov.au](http://fish.wa.gov.au)

### Broome Sea Rescue

Radio call sign VMR 650  
Contact: 0447 912 820

[fish.wa.gov.au](http://fish.wa.gov.au)

### Bureau of Meteorology

Weather call  
Ph: 1900 926 150

[bom.gov.au](http://bom.gov.au)



Save the  
app that  
could save  
your life



[emergencyplus.com.au](http://emergencyplus.com.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.

Check for alerts and updates directly related to parks and major trails at [alerts.dbca.wa.gov.au](http://alerts.dbca.wa.gov.au) and for all emergency information in Western Australia at [emergency.wa.gov.au](http://emergency.wa.gov.au).

Find more park visitor information, book campsites and share your experiences at [exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au](http://exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au).

@waparkswildlife



@exploreparkswa



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