



Marmion Marine Park

Marmion Marine Park has great natural beauty and is one of Perth's most important areas for aquatic recreation.

The clear shallow lagoons, reefs and small islands of Marmion Marine Park provide habitats for seabirds, marine mammals and other remarkably diverse marine life. The reefs are a diver's paradise, forming ledges, caves and swimthroughs. They are inhabited by a wonderful array of fish and invertebrate species. Marmion was the State's first marine park, declared on 13 March 1987.

Superb dive sites

One of the park's jewels is undoubtedly Boyinaboat Reef, which lies in a sanctuary (no-take) zone in about six metres of water at the southern end of a chain of inshore reefs. It is just 75 metres from the sea wall of Hillarys Boat Harbour and its accessibility and beauty have made it one of the most popular dive sites in Perth. Caverns in the reef provide homes for many fish, including western blue devils, old wives, banded sweep, crested morwong, horseshoe leatherjackets, dusky morwong, truncate coralfish, bullseyes, wrasse and red-

striped cardinalfish. The reef top often comes alive with the frantic feeding of large schools of buffalo bream. Blue and orange nudibranchs are common and add to the colour.

Offshore from Little Island, sponges, gorgonians, hydroids, sea urchins and sea squirts crowd beneath ledges and into caves, and sea lions laze on the island's beach. The seagrass meadows that grow in sandy areas around the island support a huge range of animals such as baler shells.

If you are looking for a safe place close to Perth to introduce your children to snorkelling, look no further than Mettams Pool. This sheltered pool is a good family spot in which you can see a range of marine plant and animal species close to shore. It is less than two metres deep inside this naturally formed lagoon. There is also access for people with disabilities.

You will need a boat and scuba gear to explore North Lump, an entirely submerged reef that offers a rewarding dive within a small area. It has interesting arches, caves and tunnels

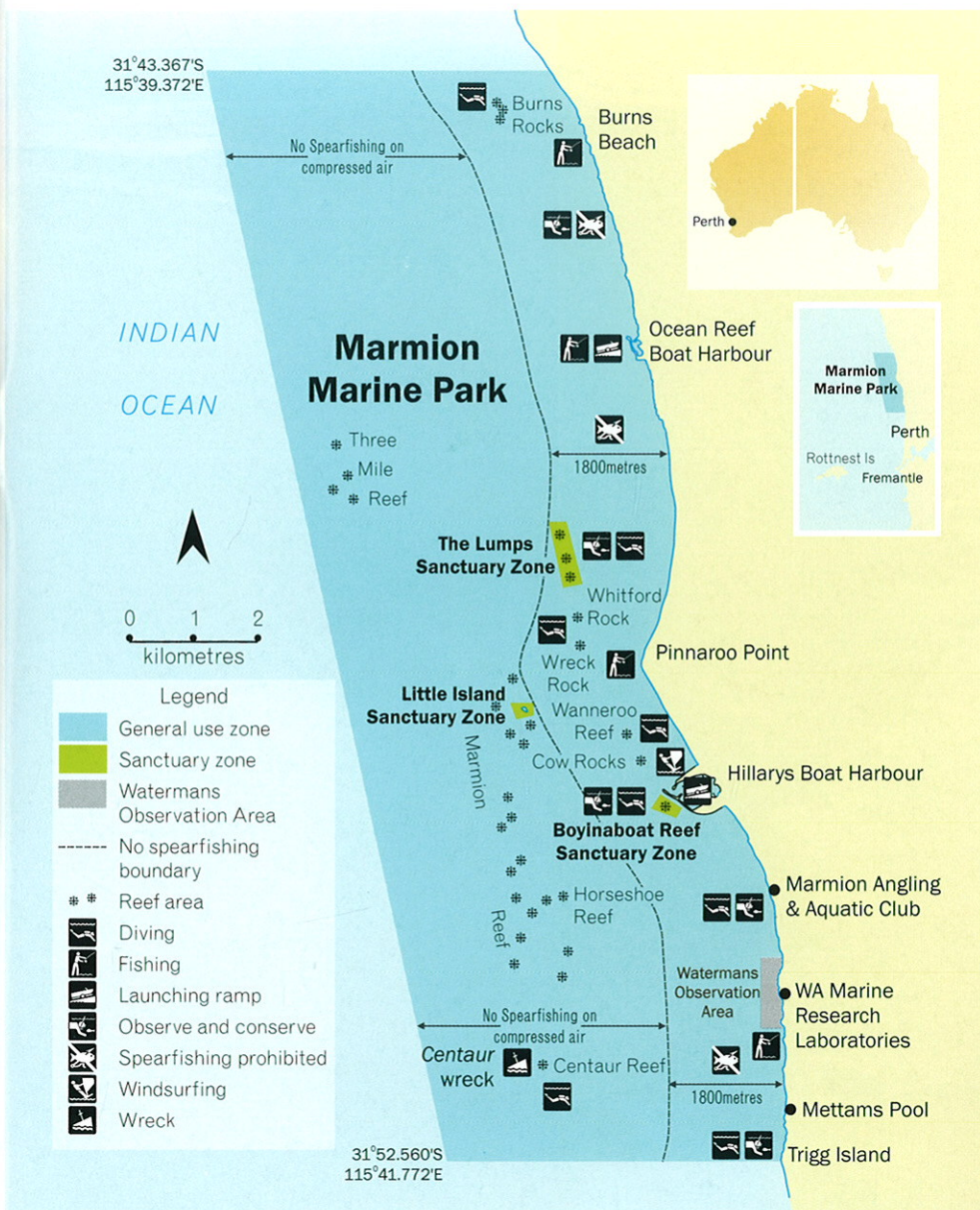
Above Trigg Island in Marmion Marine Park.

Opposite page

Top right Gorgonian coral.

Right Diver with a western red scorpioncod.

Photos – Ann Storrie



park facts

Where is it? Marmion Marine Park lies offshore from Perth's northern suburbs, between Trigg Island and Burns Beach.

Total area 9500 hectares.

What to do Diving, snorkelling, boating, whale watching (in season), surfing, fishing (outside sanctuary zones), windsurfing and swimming. Spearfishing is prohibited within 1800 metres of the shore and for divers using underwater breathing equipment.

Must see sites Stunning Boyinaboat Reef, in about six metres of water and just 75 metres from the sea wall of Hillarys Boat Harbour.

Naming The suburb of Marmion, after which the park takes its name, was named after early settler Patrick Marmion (1815–1856) of the schooner *Pelsart*, who operated a whaling station in the area in 1849. A plaque was placed in Padbury Circle, Sorrento, to commemorate this in 1970.

Relevant DEC office Swan Coastal District Marine Group, Unit 1A, 8 Calabrese Avenue, Pearsall WA. Phone (08) 9206 4795.

and excellent invertebrate life. North Lump is protected by a sanctuary zone so no fishing is permitted in the area. Wreck Rock, Cow Rocks, Wanneroo Reef and many other submerged reefs within the marine park also entice divers. A historic shipwreck lies in the waters of Marmion, testimony to days when sailing vessels provided an important lifeline. The *Centaur* was wrecked on the southernmost section of Marmion Reef in 1874, while en route to Fremantle.

Diving charters operate for most of the year and diving instruction is available. See the Department of Environment and Conservation's (DEC's) book *Dive and Snorkel Sites in Western Australia* (available from DEC and most dive shops around Perth) for mud maps and more information on these and other suggested dive sites.

Marine mammals and seabirds

Various marine mammal species are common in the park. The bottlenose dolphin can often be seen in all areas and Australian sea lions use Little Island as a resting place. While sea lions may look friendly, they are wild animals and should be viewed from a distance. Swimming with Australian sea lions is prohibited.

Humpback whales swim past Perth during their migration, from September to November, between breeding areas in the north and feeding areas in Antarctic waters and are frequently seen in Marmion Marine Park waters during these times. In winter and early spring, southern right whales sometimes migrate north to the park and may be accompanied by calves. They will approach the shore and



create a sensation for shore-based onlookers. Whale-watching charters leave from Hillarys marina at the peak of the humpback migration.

Seabirds abound through the park, but the best areas to view them are at Little Island, Burns Rocks, the Trigg Island area and Hillarys Boat Harbour. The beaches are also frequented by birds, including crested and Caspian terns and, of course, the ubiquitous silver gull. Little pied cormorants are often seen in the water or perched, holding their wings out to dry.

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