



Walpole and Nornalup Inlets Marine Park

Tall karri forest meets the sea at the Walpole and Nornalup Inlets Marine Park. It is the State's newest marine park, declared on 8 May 2009.

When William Nairne Clark and his party rowed into Nornalup Inlet—and thence up the Deep and Frankland rivers—in 1841, he recorded “lofty wooded hills, with tall eucalypt trees growing close to the water’s edge, and crowning the summits of these high hills, thus casting a deep gloom over the water and making the scenery the most romantic I ever witnessed in other quarters of the globe”.

The town of Walpole is adjacent to the shallow (mostly about one-metre-deep) 100-hectare Walpole Inlet, which is fed by the freshwater Walpole River. The larger (1,300-hectare) and deeper (up to five metres) Nornalup Inlet is fed by the freshwater Deep River and the saltier Frankland River. The marine park encompasses the Walpole and Nornalup inlets and the tidal parts of the Frankland, Deep and Walpole rivers.

The estuaries are joined by a natural one-kilometre-long and two-metre-deep channel, bordered by steep granite hills and rocky shores. These are known locally as ‘The Knolls’ and are clothed with dense karri forest.

The Walpole and Nornalup inlets are a permanently open estuarine system—one of very few in the south-west—that experiences marine-like conditions for most of the year. Seagrasses, algae and a diverse array of shellfish and other animals live in the estuary floor. Some prawn species, the blue swimmer crab and mud burrowing crab are also found in the inlets.

The open inlet mouth, the mixing of fresh and salt river waters, river deltas and two large inlets result in diverse marine habitats and a great range of fish species. Black bream, whiting, trevally, herring, juvenile Western Australian salmon and even pink snapper are just a few of at least 40 fish species that have been recorded here, including larger fish such as sharks, which are uncommon in other estuaries.

Black swans, ducks, grebes, swamphens, moorhens, coots, cormorants, herons, egrets, ibis, pelicans, whimbrel, sandpipers, stints, oystercatchers and plovers—among other birds—all use the marine park. Gulls and terns are abundant, and shearwaters, gannets and albatross may also be observed. Ospreys and white-

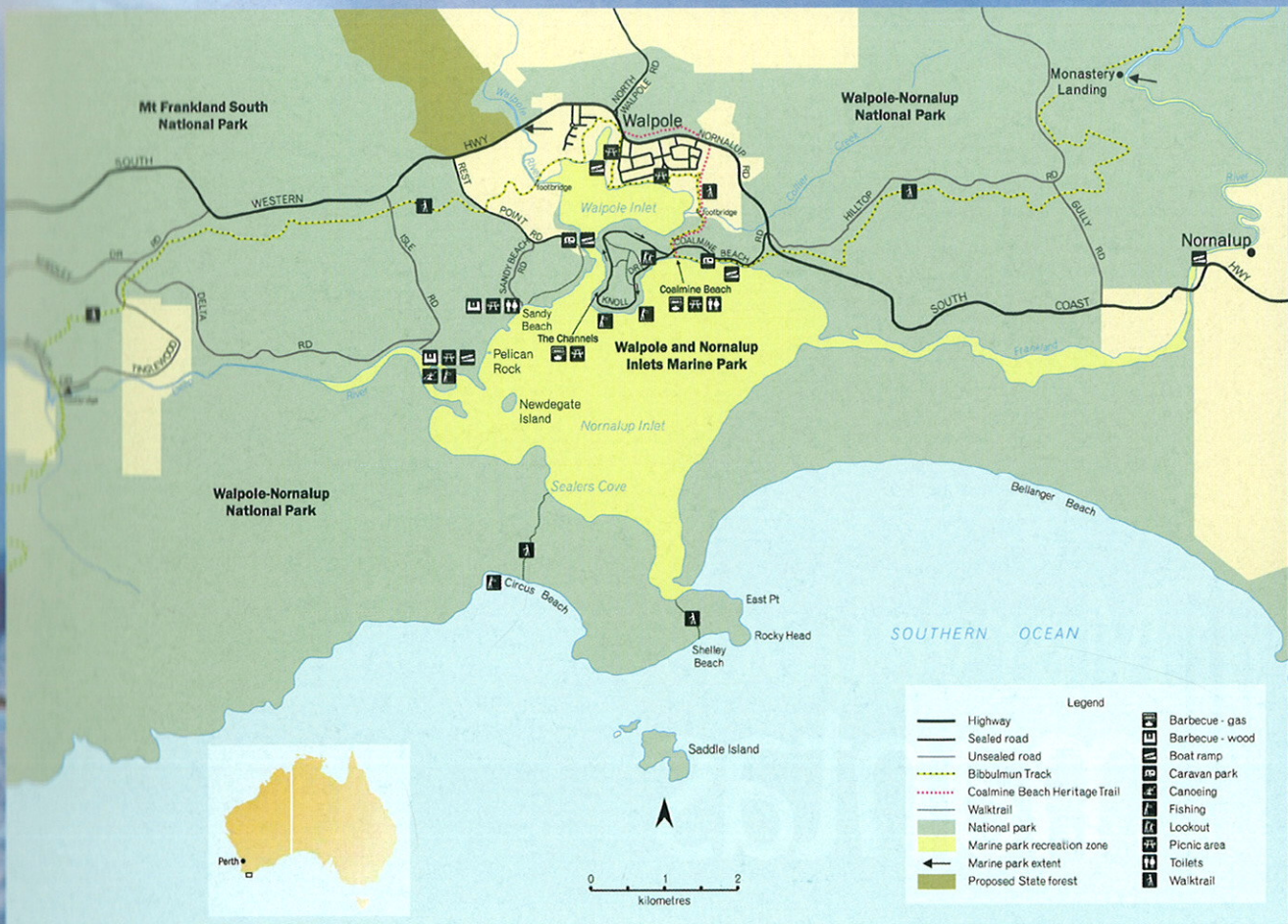
Above Nornalup Inlet.
Photo – David Bettini

Opposite page

Far right Sea squirt.
Photo – Eva Boogaard/Lochman
Transparencies

Centre right Sunset at Walpole Inlet.
Photo – Gary Muir

Right Rest Point boat ramp, Walpole Inlet.
Photo – Alex Bond



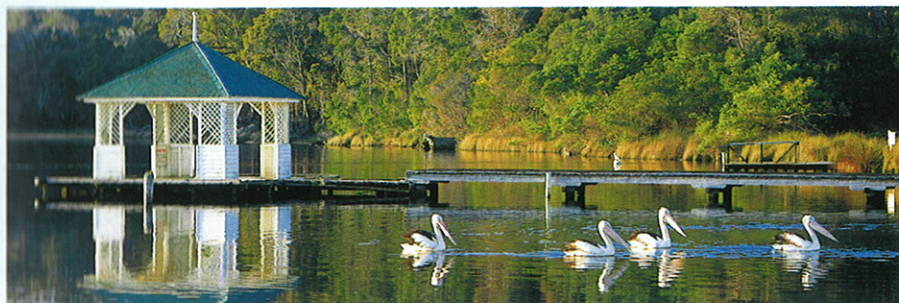
bellied sea-eagles ply the inlet waters for fish. Migratory shorebirds use the tidal delta flats.

Enjoying the marine park

The untouched nature, wildlife and scenic quality of the Walpole and Nornalup inlets provide a wealth of opportunities for canoeing, boating, recreational fishing and other water-based activities. A major attraction of the inlet system to visitors is the perception of naturalness and remoteness that can be experienced, particularly in parts of the Nornalup Inlet and the Frankland and Deep rivers. Nature-based tourism charters from Walpole are available so people can get up-close to the wildlife and experience the marine park's stunning scenery.

The entire Walpole and Nornalup Inlets Marine Park is zoned for

recreation, and recreational fishing is therefore permitted in all areas. The marine park supports excellent recreational fishing opportunities for a number of fish species. Check first with the Department of Fisheries to find out about bag limits, minimum sizes and any licences that may be needed. Commercial fishing has been banned from the inlets since early last century.



park facts

Where is it? About 450 kilometres south of Perth on WA's south coast.

Total area: Approximately 1,442 hectares.

What to do: If you don't have your own boat, local nature-based boat tours are available and highly recommended.

Must see sites: 'The Knolls', where steep granite hills and rocky shores adjacent to the marine park are clothed with majestic karri forest.

Naming: The park takes its name from the Walpole and Nornalup estuaries. Nornalup is an Aboriginal name meaning 'place of the tiger snake'. Walpole Inlet was named after Captain W Walpole, who served aboard the *Warspite* in 1808 with James Stirling, who later became the Governor of WA.

Nearest DEC office: Department of Environment and Conservation, South Coast Highway, Walpole WA 6398, phone (08) 9840 0400.

- 53 Perth's river dolphins
New research is looking into the lifestyles of the bottlenose dolphins of the Swan and Canning rivers in Perth.
- 59 Living fossils at Lake Thetis
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Regulars

- 3 Contributors and Editor's letter
- 29 Bookmarks
Mawson's Huts: The Birthplace of Australia's Antarctic Heritage
Great Whales
Leaf and branch
- 30 Feature park
Walpole and Nornalup Inlets Marine Park
- 45 Endangered
Rare plant community on massive limestone ridges
- 62 Urban Antics
A sense of place...

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Prepress and printing Advance Press,
Western Australia.

© ISSN 0815-4465

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Visit www.dec.wa.gov.au

Published by the Department of Environment and Conservation,
17 Dick Perry Avenue, Kensington,
Western Australia.



Department of Environment and Conservation

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