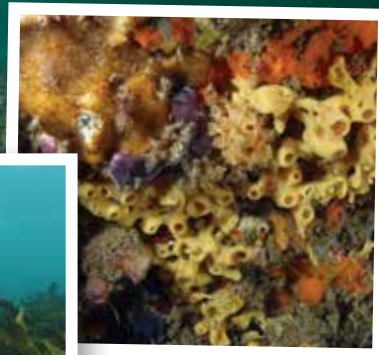


# *Marmion* Snorkel Trail

Situated just offshore, the Marmion Angling and Aquatic Club Dive and Snorkel Trail was officially opened in January 2020, providing those with an interest in marine life yet another reason to visit Perth's northern beaches and the Marmion Marine Park.

*by Dr John Huisman*



The seasonal storms had finally abated, and the swell was forecasted to be small, so my long-standing dive buddy Ian and I decided to check out the new Marmion Angling and Aquatic Club (MAAC) Dive and Snorkel Trail. While we're generally more unconstrained and not typically up for trails and guided dives, it had been some years since we had dived in the Marmion Marine Park and we were curious to see what was on offer.

The snorkel trail was created through a collaboration between Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) and the MAAC and is located just offshore from the MAAC clubhouse. Parking is available adjacent to the clubhouse and the trail is accessed by a ramp leading down to the beach.

## ON THE TRAIL

On the north wall of the clubhouse is a trailhead, including a map showing the course and advice on how to get the most out of the experience, with guidelines about how to stay safe. Entering the water, we immediately realised that the conditions weren't as great as we'd hoped; the water was quite murky, with large amounts of detached seaweed.

The snorkel trail comprises 20 underwater plinths, each with artwork by Kellee Merritt and including interesting snippets about local marine life. We snorkelled out to the large buoy that marks the start of the trail, then somewhat haphazardly followed the trail.

Finding the first of the plinths was fairly straightforward, but the conditions did hamper our progress. Each plinth has an indication of the distance to the next plinth and direction arrows to get you started. Snorkelling in clear water would make life easier, particularly as the artwork on the plinths have a reflective glass cover that is easily spotted from the surface.

## UNSTOPPABLE NATURE

Marine life has a habit of quickly colonising all available surfaces and the plinths are no exception, with most



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**Main above** Snorkelling on the reef.

Photo – Peter Nicholas/DBCA

**Main below** Common kelp.

**Inset from left:** One of 20 underwater plinths;

Divers can reach the deeper plinths.

Colourful sponges on the reef wall.

**Above** Moonlighter fish tend to be solitary.

Photos – John Huisman



Listen to more about the MAAC Dive and Snorkel Trail

Scan this QR code or visit Parks and Wildlife Service's 'LANDSCOPE' playlist on YouTube.



“Brightly coloured corals, sponges and other invertebrates were common on the vertical walls and overhangs of the reefs.”

of them sporting a healthy cover of seaweeds, even after only a relatively short time in the water.

The local limestone reefs are mostly covered with a healthy growth of seaweed, primarily the common kelp *Ecklonia radiata*, interspersed with a variety of smaller green, brown and red seaweeds. Brightly coloured corals, sponges and other invertebrates were common on the vertical walls and overhangs of the reefs. It is also the haunt of the McCulloch's scalyfin (*parma mccullochi*), a territorial damselfish that aggressively defends its patch. Those we

encountered leaving us in no doubt that we were definitely unwelcome intruders.

Further offshore as the depth increased, the water clarity improved considerably. Here we found swim throughs and underwater caves, often with large schools of tarwhine (*Rhabdosargus sarba*) and silver drummer (*Kyphosus sydneyanus*) swimming circuits through the caves, and the more lonesome moonlighter (*Tilodon sexfasciatus*) and banded sweep (*Scorpius georgiana*) hiding out. The cave walls were decorated with a collage of sponges, bryozoans and ascidians, providing a multicoloured



**Above** Snorkellers enjoying the trail.  
Photo – Peter Nicholas/DBCA

**Right** Construction/lowering of the trail plinths.  
Photo – Miecha Bradshaw/DBCA

**Below right** Silver drummers.  
Photo – John Huisman

backdrop to the ever-changing commotion of energetic fish. Other invertebrates, like the mobile but rarely seen on the move western slate-pencil urchin (*Phyllacanthus irregularis*) were spotted tucked into crevices.

## THE VERDICT

The trail follows an anticlockwise loop that eventually led us back closer to shore and we exited in front of the clubhouse. Our post-dive assessment: a nice dive/snorkel, plenty of marine life on view, with eye-catching plaques to keep you on track and informed, suitable for most beginners, but possibly a bit tame for the thrill seekers. But be warned, even the smallest of swells will stir up the detached seaweed and reduce the water clarity. Best to wait for several days of calm conditions for the best experience, which is when I'll be heading back for a second look.



## Do it yourself

**Where is it?** Marmion Angling and Aquatic Club Dive and Snorkel Trail is immediately offshore from the MAAC clubhouse, West Coast Drive, Marmion.

**What to do:** Snorkelling, swimming, diving.

The trail is situated in the General Use Zone of the Marmion Marine Park. Spearfishing and collection of marine fauna is not permitted.

**Staying safe:** This beach is not patrolled. Make sure you assess the conditions and only swim within your ability. Use a dive flag if using SCUBA or snorkelling more than 50 metres from shore.



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