



South Coast Marine Park

Everyone is welcome in the new South Coast Marine Park, which protects southern right whale nurseries, kelp forests, vulnerable seal and sea lion colonies, precious reefs, while maintaining opportunities for recreational and commercial fishing.

The traditional Sea Country of the Wagyl Kaip South Noongar, Wudjari, Ngadju and Western Australian Mirning Traditional Owners on the south coast of WA has a rich biodiversity found nowhere else in the world (see 'Ancient ancestral beauty' *LANDSCOPE*, Spring 2023). Southern coastal waters include spectacular granite reefs, sponge gardens, limestone reefs, seagrass meadows, kelp gardens and communities of filter feeders in deeper waters.

In November 2024, four adjacent marine parks over Wudjari, Ngadju and Mirning

native title determination areas and the eastern section of the Wagyl Kaip Southern Noongar portion of the South West Native Title Settlement were gazetted to collectively form the South Coast Marine Park.

The Mamang Maambakoort, Wudjari and Mirning marine parks are jointly managed with Wagyl Kaip Southern Noongar, Wudjari and WA Mirning Traditional Owners respectively, alongside the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA). The Western Bight Marine Park Management Plan enables future joint management of the park with Ngadju Traditional Owners.

The marine parks protect interconnected Aboriginal cultural places.

Significant Sea Country sites include fish traps, middens, fishing and hunting grounds, seascape features, shell sites, breeding areas and culturally important habitats such as reefs or beaches. Intangible values include stories and song lines, traditional knowledge and relationships with specific plants and animals, and enjoyment of Country and customary activities.

There are excellent recreational fishing opportunities from a boat in about 80 per cent of the parks (areas outside sanctuary zones), and along 85 per cent of the parks shoreline lines also provide these opportunities.

Southern right whales (*Eubalaena australis*) use the sheltered bays close to shore between June and November each

Above Black-headed puller (*Chromis klunzingeri*) and sea sponges.
Photo – Ann Storr



“The most striking landforms are the 100-metre-high limestone coastal cliffs that plummet to the sea below.”

year (see ‘Migration mysteries’, *LANDSCOPE* Summer 2022–23), and long-nosed fur seals (*Arctocephalus forsteri*) and Australian sea lions (*Neophoca cinerea*) breed and forage in the area. These breeding colonies include the largest in WA for both species.

MIRNING MARINE PARK

The Mirning Marine Park is the first reserve to be jointly managed with WA Mirning Traditional Owners and protects the outstanding cultural and ecological values of Mirning Sea Country.

The most striking landforms are the 100-metre-high limestone coastal cliffs that plummet to the sea below. While visitors to this area are few, there are opportunities to fish off the beach by traversing offroad tracks.

WESTERN BIGHT MARINE PARK

In Ngadju Sea Country, the Western Bight Marine Park is a place of exceptional beauty and cultural value.

The main land-based visitor site is at Point Culver in the Nuytsland Nature Reserve. Access to Point Culver is by four-wheel drive (experienced drivers only) from Israelite Bay to the west a long the beach and the Telegraph Track or via tracks from the Eyre Highway to the north.

WUDJARI MARINE PARK

Wudjari Marine Park is in Wudjari Sea Country from Jerdacuttup (Mason Bay) in the west to Euradup (Point Malcolm) in the east and is jointly managed with the Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation.

The magnificent Recherche Archipelago off Esperance (which has more than 100 islands and 1500 islets) includes Woody Island, which is a major tourism drawcard. There are daily boat trips to the island from Esperance and it offers excellent snorkelling and wildlife viewing.



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Clockwise (from top left) Baxter Cliffs, Mirning Marine Park. *Photo – Tourism WA; Australian sea lion (Neophoca cinerea). Photo – Jiri Lochman; whale watching platform at Point Ann, Mamang Maambakoort Marine Park. Photo – Colin Ingram; Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins. Photo – Dave and Fiona Harvey; Four-wheel driving. Photo – L-A Shibish; Bremer Bay corals. Photo – Claire Ross*

Parks for people South Coast Marine Park



MAMANG MAAMBAKOORT MARINE PARK

Mamang Maambakoort Marine Park stretches from Point Hood near Bremer Bay to Mason Bay in the east in Wagyl Kaip Southern Noongar Sea Country.

Point Ann has a whale watching platform in the adjacent Fitzgerald River National Park and is one of the best locations for shore-based whale watching in Western Australia. Here, and elsewhere along the coast, numerous southern right whales give birth in the shallow waters of the marine park and spend time in the area nursing their young. Elsewhere in the park there are several popular dive and snorkel sites.

SANCTUARY ZONES

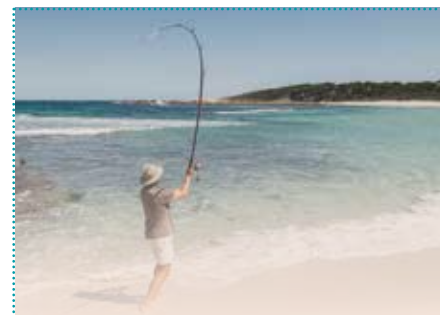
Sanctuary zones in the marine park are 'look but don't take' areas managed solely for nature conservation and low impact recreation and tourism. They

provide the highest level of protection for marine wildlife and important habitats, as extractive activities like recreational fishing, commercial fishing and collecting are excluded.

Sanctuary zones are fantastic places to enjoy snorkelling or diving, as they are often placed in areas with the most spectacular marine wildlife and underwater landscapes. They are often adjacent to islands where seabirds, sea lions and penguins go ashore to breed. Sanctuary zones and are also important for scientists to be able to monitor relatively undisturbed marine environments, which they can compare to adjacent areas where activities like fishing are allowed.

Above right Beach fishing.

Below Wudjari Country.
Photos – Dan Paris



Do it yourself

Where are they? The four new parks stretch from east of Bremer Bay east to the South Australian border.

Total area 1.3 million hectares.

Things to do Fishing (outside sanctuary zones), diving, snorkelling, boating, kayaking and other water sports.

Nearest Parks and Wildlife office

Esperance District office, 92 Dempster Street, Esperance WA 6450 (08) 9083 2100