

[Subscribe](#)

[Share](#) ▼

[Past Issues](#)

[Translate](#) ▼

[RSS](#) 

Summer 2014

[View this email in your browser](#)

Ningaloo Coast News



Department of
Parks and Wildlife

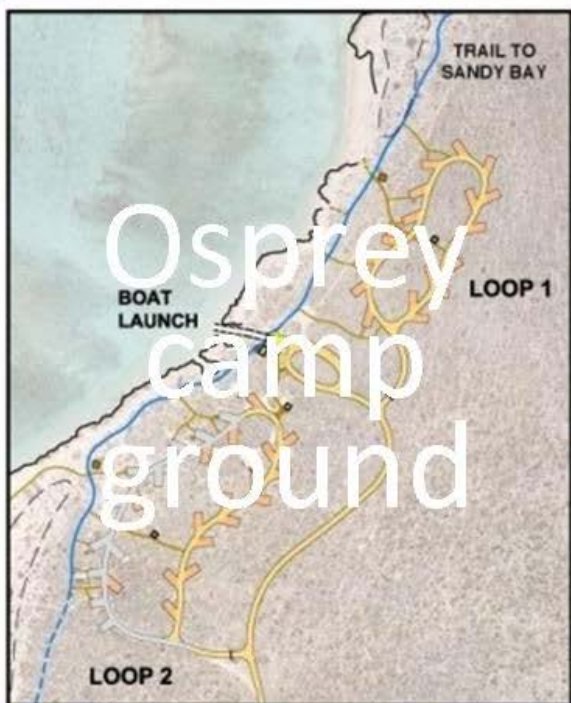


**PARKS
PEOPLE**



NINGALOO COAST
WORLD HERITAGE

In this issue



Osprey campground upgrade

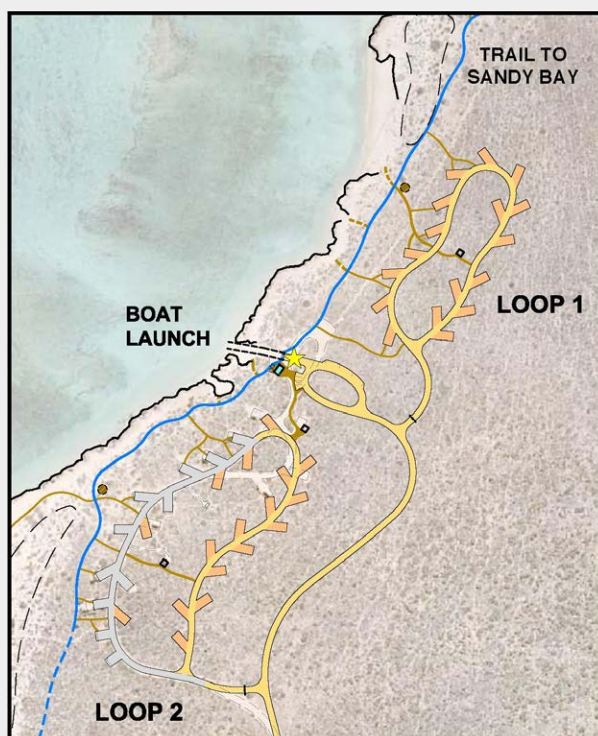
It's easy to see why Osprey Bay in Cape Range National Park (CRNP) is so popular and often booked out, given its panoramic ocean views, direct access to the pristine waters of the Ningaloo Marine Park and the kayak moorings and snorkel sites just off-shore.

Thanks to Royalties for Regions funding through the State Government's Caravan and Camping Initiative – Osprey Bay is currently undergoing a redevelopment and upgrade as outlined in the CRNP Management Plan.

Expansion and redesign of the campground will double the capacity and consist of two separate campground loops – one in the existing Osprey area and an additional loop to the north. Incorporating a pedestrian/bike path to Sandy Bay, new toilet facilities, sunset viewing platforms, shelters and picnic tables. There will also be a day-use area with separate access to reduce the level of passing traffic and include a small tinny/kayak-launching area plus shade shelters.

The redevelopment has been designed to ensure some camp sites retain their existing panoramic ocean views and maintain direct access to Ningaloo Reef. The site plans can be viewed at the Exmouth Parks and Wildlife office.

Works for the redevelopment commenced in November and the site is now closed. Completion and opening of the new site is planned before Easter 2015.



Site plan of the Osprey campground upgrade

Wonderful wildflower season

North West Cape had a wonderful wildflower season from August to October following floods in the area in April. The rainfall allowed the plants to flourish and the result was spectacular, with a variety of species including the striking purple mulla mulla (*Ptilotus* sp.), red and white variations of Sturt desert peas (*Swainsona* sp.), the canary yellow flowers of the *Senna* sp. and endemic species, such as the Cape Range Grevillea (*Grevillea variifolia*).

The flowers seen this season are just some of the 630 plant species recorded in the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage area, many of which are not found anywhere else in the world. There is a surprisingly large diversity of flora for such an arid limestone environment, this is due to the area being a transition zone between the tropic, temperate and desert regions (called a bio geographical transitional zone) and was a key reason for the area's World Heritage listing.



Cape Range wildflowers - the mulla mulla, red Sturt desert pea and flannel bush

New dolphin species found, endemic to Ningaloo

The newly declared Australian humpback dolphin, or *Sousa sahalensis*, is a regular resident at Ningaloo. Previously

thought to be the Indo–Pacific humpback dolphin (*Sousa chinensis*) scientists have determined the Australian humpback dolphin possess enough unique features to be considered its own species, endemic to north-western Australian waters.

The Australian humpback dolphin differs in appearance from the three other humpback dolphin species found in the world; its dorsal fin is lower and triangular with a wide base, and lacks the typical 'hump'. It has a distinct skull shape, specific number of teeth and a darker 'cape' across its back. Very little is known about population sizes and behaviour of the animal.

Tim Hunt, a researcher with Flinders University has been studying Australian humpback dolphins around Ningaloo and the North West Cape since early 2013, investigating the population size, habitat use and social structure. Tim and his research team have built a photo-identification catalogue and identified over 100 distinctive animals from the nicks, notches and scars on their dorsal fins.

“Over the past two years of research at Ningaloo, we are regularly sighting the same animals, suggesting that Ningaloo is an important area for many Australian humpback dolphins. Future conservation and management actions will likely be required to ensure the protection of this endemic species” he said.

Thanks to Tim Hunt from Flinders University for his contribution to this article.



*The newly declared Australian humpback dolphin (*Sousa sahalensis*)*

World Heritage signage

World Heritage listing is a great acknowledgement of how globally unique the Ningaloo Coast is.

A key objective of the World Heritage program is to educate and inform visitors about the World Heritage area's important values. A logo acknowledging Ningaloo Coast's World Heritage listing was developed and is now displayed on large gateway signs near Exmouth, Coral Bay and a sign is scheduled to be installed the southern section of the World Heritage area.

The signs let visitors know they are approaching a World Heritage area; an outstanding natural environment that needs to be looked after and protected.

The designs and locations were decided after extensive stakeholder consultation with government agencies and community groups. In the near future these signs will also be supported by tourism directional road signs and other information about the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage area.



The World Heritage northern gateway sign at Exmouth

Exmouth Sprayground

The Ningaloo Coast's marine life and wildlife is globally unique and the children's Exmouth Sprayground has been designed to celebrate this in a fun and interactive way.

New education signs have recently been installed as a joint project by Parks and Wildlife and Shire of Exmouth to provide information about the key World Heritage and historical vales of the Ningaloo Coast including: turtles, dolphins, humpback whales, blind gudgeon cave fish, Cape Range coral fossils and the VLF towers in a way that is fun and caters to the whole community from young children to adults.

Also to come is interactive and educational play equipment as well as online, a free kid's activity sheet and fact sheets at <http://www.exmouth.wa.gov.au/Water-Sprayground.aspx>.



Signage at the Exmouth

Sprayground

Exmouth Gulf islands

Did you know there are more than 20 islands in the Exmouth Gulf? These islands vary in size and are home to flora and fauna of high conservation significance including rodents, small marsupials, reptiles such as marine turtles as well as many species of lizards including sand monitors. They are also important roosting and nesting sites for sea birds such as ospreys, wedge-tailed shearwaters, white-bellied sea eagles and terns. The gulf itself is also an important and rich marine environment. It is a nursery for humpback whales, dugong and turtles and the extensive mangrove systems provide primary productivity feeding and restocking opportunities for both the gulf and Ningaloo Reef.

A number of islands in the Exmouth Gulf are classified as Class 'A' Nature Reserves, and the Muiron Islands are World Heritage listed to help protect these important values. The remainder are nature reserves and declared as such for the conservation of flora and fauna.

As the islands are small, they are particularly vulnerable to physical impacts. It is essential to help protect these ecosystems and ensure they are sustained into the future. To help ensure the conservation of these areas, key management actions such as the closure of the Muiron Islands to camping during the turtle nesting period, are in place.

A broader study of island nature reserves is being conducted to provide information on how to best manage the Exmouth Gulf islands. Based on these findings, a management plan will be developed, outlining what activities are permitted on which islands, management priorities and focus areas.

For further information contact Carolyn Williams on (08) 9947 8000 or carolyn.williams@dpaw.wa.gov.au



Locker Island in the north eastern Exmouth Gulf, which is an important roosting site

For more information about Ningaloo Coast News contact the
Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Program Manager,
Department of Parks and Wildlife
Exmouth District
22 Nimitz Street, Exmouth, WA, 6707
Phone (08) 9947 8000
Email Exmouth@dpaw.wa.gov.au

Copyright © 2014 Department of Parks and Wildlife, All rights reserved.