

Summer 2015–16

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Department of Parks and Wildlife



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Turtle nesting time at Ningaloo!

Each year over the summer months green, hawksbill and loggerhead turtles mate and nest along the beaches within the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage area. Visitors to the area are fortunate to have the opportunity to encounter turtles up close. It is common to see female turtles resting on the water's edge, as they recover after nesting and build up energy before re-entering the water to mate again with male turtles.

During the nesting season turtles are very susceptible to disturbance by humans. To reduce this and to increase their nesting success please keep your distance to a minimum of 3m and out of the turtle's line of sight, refrain from using torches to search for turtles, and keep pets away from nesting beaches. Please also remember that marine turtles are threatened species and are protected. It is illegal to touch, harass or disturb them. It is also illegal to drive on beaches within Ningaloo Marine Park; this has damaging impacts on turtle nests and emerging turtle hatchlings.

Before heading out to view nesting turtles, please read the *Turtle Watchers Code of Conduct*. The Jurabi Turtle Centre provides interpretive and educational displays on turtle biology and ecology. During the turtle nesting season Parks and Wildlife run regular evening sessions at the centre, providing general information on marine turtles, as well as advice and guidance on how and where to watch nesting turtles without disturbing them. Bookings are be made through the Exmouth Visitor Centre.



Female green turtle having a well-earned rest at the water's edge after nesting. Photo – Ningaloo Turtle Program

Fire season

The high levels of rainfall earlier this year resulted in heavy fuel loads which, when combined with soaring temperatures, mean that conditions on the Ningaloo Coast and surrounding areas are dangerous for bushfires. If you are out camping or exploring, please remember that fires are not allowed in Cape Range National Park. In other areas, campfires are only allowed where designated and properly constructed campfire facilities are provided and when fire danger rating is below high.

Parks and Wildlife, along with local government and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services are working together to respond to bushfires and carry out prescribed burns where appropriate. Remember to listen out for fire danger warnings and should you see smoke or fire anywhere, call 000 and report it immediately.



Parks and Wildlife carry out a prescribed burn to reduce fuel loads, Cape Range National Park.

Wrecked vessel recovered on South Muiron Island

Earlier this year, the jagged remains of a boat were uncovered on South Muiron Island. The first two attempts to remove the boat by shovel were thwarted by the soft sand. With turtle nesting season about to begin, and tens of thousands of wedge-tailed shearwaters about to lay their eggs on the island Parks and Wildlife sought specialist assistance from local contractors to get the job done. The wreckage was removed and safely returned to the mainland for proper disposal.



Returning the wreckage to the mainland.

Ningaloo Coast seascapes

Seascapes are prized natural treasures that have significant economic and social value. The breathtaking seascapes of Ningaloo include the panoramic vistas of turquoise lagoons, coral reefs, beaches, breaking surf and blue open-ocean, all of which exemplify the outstanding natural values of the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage area.

Parks and Wildlife are in the process of trialling a novel method for assessing seascapes along Ningaloo Marine Park. By assessing and measuring these values now, it will allow the land managers to conserve these much-loved values in their current state well into the future.



One of the breathtaking seascapes the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage area has to offer! Photo – Ganesh Penfold

In search of the bush stone-curlew

There are two species of stone-curlew found within Australia, the beach stone-curlew (*Esacus magnirostris*) (pictured right) and the bush stone-curlew (*Burhinus grallarius*). We are fortunate enough to see the beach stone-curlew on beaches along the Ningaloo coast and on the Muiron Islands.



The bush stone-curlew is commonly found in northern Australia but it is a very secretive bird with few recent sightings recorded within the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage area. Its presence is usually detected at night by its mournful wailing call, with the eerie call being one of the most recognisable sounds of the bush at night. Readers are encouraged to report any sightings to the Parks and Wildlife Exmouth office on (08) 9947 8000.

Photo – Grant Griffin/Parks and Wildlife



A pair of bush stone-curlew. Photo - Glen Fergus. * (Own work, Brisbane, Australia) [CC BY-SA 2.5 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5>)], via Wikimedia Commons

Your World Heritage Committee members

The Ningaloo Coast World Heritage area Committee held its fifth meeting at Warroora Station on 21 October. Key discussion topics included increasing recreational fishing pressure along the Ningaloo coast; key threatening processes such as introduced plants and animals; ensuring development proposals and planning processes, at both regional and local levels are aware of the Outstanding Universal Values of the area; and reviewing the plethora of research undertaken in the area and identifying gaps.

Committee members who you might like to discuss any of the above topics with are; Mr Simon Woodley (chair), Prof Bill Humphries, Mrs Hazel Walgar, Mr Turk Shales, Ms Jacqueline Hine, Mrs D. Ann Priest, Mr Frazer McGregor, Ms Leonie McLeod, Mr Anthony Dowling and Mr Anthony Evans.

For more information, please contact the World Heritage program manager Heather Barnes on (08) 9947 8000.

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