

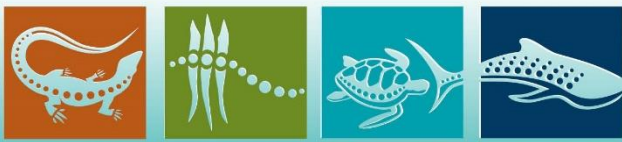
A seaweed summer house for fish.

Extensive meadows of seaweed are a natural feature of the Ningaloo lagoon and a key feature of the World Heritage property. During the summer months canopy forming species often grow to over a metre tall. This under water forest provides food and shelter for a plethora of sea creatures, including parrotfish, wrasse, and cod.

During the summer months larval fish also arrive from oceanic waters in large numbers. Some of these young fish take shelter in the coral and rubble on the reef, but others such as Spangled and Yellow Tailed Emperor settle exclusively into the seaweed meadows. Seaweeds are therefore an important habitat during the early lives of these fished species.

Accordingly, Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions and AIMS scientists have been conducting research to understand why some seaweed fields attract more fish than others and why some years we get exceptional numbers of young fish settling in the seaweed. Results to-date indicate that it is often areas with the tallest seaweed that have the most baby fish, whilst abundance of these youngsters is typically greater in La Nina years, when the Leeuwin current is at its strongest. This information is helping us to identify areas that are nurseries for young fish and improves our understanding of why adult fish numbers can vary naturally over time.

Above left: A seaweed meadow in the Ningaloo lagoon **Above right:** A young Spangled Emperor, only a few centimetres long, sheltering within a seaweed meadow. **Photos** - DBCA



NINGALOO COAST

WORLD HERITAGE



Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions



Winter | 2021

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Sharing knowledge: Nyinggulu Seasonal Calendar Project

One exciting joint management project Traditional Owners and Parks and Wildlife Service have been working together on is the creation of a seasonal calendar that represents traditional ecological knowledge of the Nyinggulu (Ningaloo) Coast. The calendar will illustrate how Traditional Owners have always understood the movements and cycles of animals and how the flowering and fruiting of particular plant species signal the right time to hunt and gather as the seasons change.

The calendar will feature everything from our iconic species such as whale sharks, humpback whales and manta rays right down to some of the lesser known but extremely important creatures like the burrowing bee, ghost crab and the migratory shorebirds which are all interconnected and hugely important to Traditional Owners.

The calendar includes many of the features that convey the outstanding universal value (OUV) of the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage property and is a great way to highlight the inherent link between natural and cultural values.



Above: Traditional Owners proudly display their work in progress calendar at workshop session in February.

Above right: The process of choosing photos to represent plants, animals and landscapes of Nyinggulu.

We expect the calendar to be complete midway through this year and are looking forward to sharing it with the community.