

Yardiyarra (dugong) distribution, population size and health at Nyngulu

In June 2023, DBCA's Marine Science staff teamed up with district staff and Traditional Owners to carry out aerial yardiyarra (dugong) surveys of the Nyngulu (Ningaloo) Coast including Exmouth Gulf and Ningaloo Marine Park (NMP) and Gathaagudu (Shark Bay). Since the late 1980s, aerial dugong surveys have occurred approximately every five years in Shark Bay to understand dugong abundance and distribution. Due to the possibility that dugongs move between Shark Bay and the Ningaloo Coast and Exmouth Gulf, these surveys were extended to capture these areas, with the last survey occurring in 2018.

The team completed four flights over NMP and three over Exmouth Gulf, observing many dugongs in smaller group sizes compared to the large herd (approx. 100 individuals) from the 2018 surveys.

Further to the aerial surveys, an on thanardi (sea) Country trip brought together Baiyungu Traditional Owners Hazel Walgar, Ethan Cooyou and Traezehl Kelly with Research Scientists Holly Raudino (DBCA Marine science) and Chris Cleguer (James Cook University). The trip provided an opportunity for traditional ecological knowledge and Western science exchange to better understand dugong distribution, movement and health in NMP and Exmouth Gulf.

This project is funded by the Australian Government's National Environmental Science Program (NESP).

Top right: Chris Cleguer (UWA) and Hazel Walgar, Baiyungu Traditional Owner sharing knowledge *Photo – Miranda Edmonds.* **Bottom right:** Yardiyarra (dugong) *Photo - Holly Raudino/DBCA*



School holiday fun along the coast

Over 300 kids and adults joined Parks and Wildlife Service these July school holidays for fun free activities along the coast. Visitors and locals participated in a range of activities, from taking a walk with Baiyungu Rangers, learning how Parks and Wildlife Service respond to whale disentanglements, searching for black-flanked rock wallabies in the gorges, making crafts, planting trees along the coast and much more.

The school holiday program aims to get locals and visitors of all ages involved to learn about the natural and cultural values of the Ningaloo Coast. To find out what is happening each holidays, please email exmouth@dbca.wa.gov.au



Above: Lauren, Kade and Spencer with Ranger Lyle taking part in the Seeds and Weeds School holiday activity at Coral Bay. *Photo - Cait Taylor/DBCA*