



Issue 6 - Winter 2020

Welcome to the sixth issue of *Ngari Capes Marine Park News*

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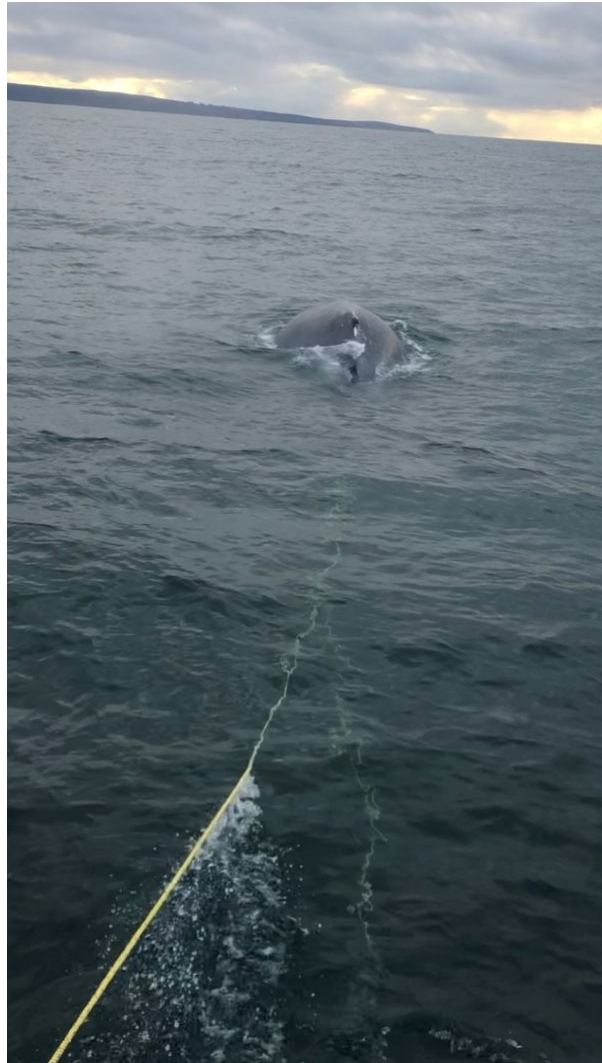


Above: *PV Leeuwin* at East Flinders Bay Sanctuary Zone, Augusta

Whale entanglement in Geographe Bay

On Monday 15 June, two Parks and Wildlife Service staff and Kev Johnson from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) successfully removed 80 metres of trailing rope that was entangled around the tail of a 15-metre humpback whale. The crew spent close to three hours with the whale, after receiving a call from a member of the public who spotted the whale near the Busselton jetty.

ID information from the two floats attached to the trailing rope helped to determine how long the whale has been entangled for and what direction it has been travelling in. It was discovered that this entanglement occurred between Jurien and Fremantle just a few days prior.



Above right: The entangled humpback whale was accompanied by two other humpback whales, all were heading north-west towards the Cape.

Below: The trailing rope and one of the two floats that were cut from the whale.



Introducing Marine Ranger David Lierich



I grew up in regional Victoria and my interest and passion for the marine environment began when we used to visit the coastline every school holiday. I spent many hours exploring the rockpools and coastline of the 'surf coast' in Victoria.

After finishing school I studied a Bachelor of Science (Marine and Freshwater Science) at Deakin University and continued my studies completing Honours at Southern Cross University in Lismore, NSW.

To develop my experience I volunteered on many projects including seabird rescue, turtle rehabilitation and long-nosed fur seal research in South Australia.

I have been working as a marine ranger with the WA Parks and Wildlife Service for 13 years and have worked in some amazing places in WA including Jurien Bay Marine Park, Shark Bay Marine Park, Ningaloo Marine Park, Montebello Islands Marine Park and Perth metropolitan marine parks.

I feel lucky to work in the Ngari Capes Marine Park in the south west and particularly enjoy the variety of work we do; scuba diving, driving boats, installing signage, working with marine wildlife and educating the community about the unique local marine environment.

When I am not working I love spending time with my family, mountain biking, swimming, surfing and exploring Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park.

More angel rings to be installed in the south-west



The coastline adjacent to Ngari Capes Marine Park currently has 16 angel rings (life buoys) installed along its rocky coastline. The angel rings are designed to keep someone afloat until help arrives or a rescue can be organised, should the unfortunate event of being swept into the ocean occur.

These angel rings have helped save the lives of those who choose to fish from the rocks in the past. Together with Parks and Wildlife Service, Recfishwest – WA's peak body for recreational fishing – plan to install more angel rings over the coming months ahead of the popular salmon season and busy summer fishing period.

These additional angel rings will be installed in high risk fishing areas along the southwest coastline.



If you are a frequent fisher within Ngari Capes Marine Park and have a location suggestion for additional angel rings which could help save lives, please contact Alanna from Recfishwest alanna@recfishwest.org.au.

For more information on safe fishing, visit: recfishwest.org.au/our-services/safefishing/

Ngari Neighbour News

Deep-water seagrass monitoring in Geographe Bay

Geographe Bay is home to some of the largest seagrass meadows in Western Australia, with more than 10 distinct species recorded here. Unusually, these seagrasses extend far offshore, to depths of 45 metres.

Seagrass provides significant ecological and economic services, making it one of the most economically valuable habitats on earth. Geographe Bay's meadows protect coastal communities, support marine biodiversity and fisheries, improve water quality and store carbon.

Ngari Capes and Geographe marine park managers work together to protect this iconic marine ecosystem.

Parks Australia has commissioned research that will help us better understand some of the plants and animals that live in the bay. Led by The University of Western Australia, the team will compare different research methods to identify the best way to measure the status of the seagrass, and the diverse fish and algae communities that depend on it.

This work will help Parks Australia establish long-term monitoring in the marine park that is both effective and cost efficient and support the management of the bay's deeper seagrass communities.



Geographe Marine Park with management zones. Check the

rules for each zone at
parksaustralia.gov.au/geographe.

Ngari Capes Marine Park
protects the inshore waters
between the inner marine park
boundary and coastline.

After COVID-19 delays, the research team was finally able to get out on the water last month and early results are showing some diverse sponges and fish communities at depths beyond the reach of recreational divers. We're looking forward to sharing more images from the depths of Geographe Marine Park over the coming months.



*Above: The extra challenges of research in 2020 (thanks to Steve Mitchell from seafari.com.au).
Photo - Dr Tim Langlois/UWA.*

This work will contribute to another project currently underway which looks at the economic value of Geographe Bay's seagrass – we will bring you more about this work in future editions. In the meantime, you can read about other science projects on our [Australian Marine Parks Science Atlas](#).



We'd love to celebrate the beauty of the bay's seagrass on our socials – if you've got a great pic from your last diving trip, tag us @ausmarineparks.



SouWEST research moving into full swing with the arrival of southern right whales!

By Chandra P. Salgado Kent, Associate Professor at Edith Cowan University and Mr. Chris Burton, Western Whale Research

The Southwestern Whale Ecology Study's ([SouWEST](#)) team researchers and citizen scientists are ramping up for the whale season, with the first confirmed southern right whale in Geographe Bay this year sighted on 21 May – a small southern right, observed close to shore at Meelup Beach, slowly heading west towards Eagle Bay.

Since May SouWEST's team have had another four sightings, including one early in July, a large female with a small calf by her side. She and her calf are new to SouWEST's Southern Right Whale Catalogue of more than 50 individuals identified since 2010 in Ngari Capes Marine Park, using the unique arrangement of callosities on their heads to distinguish them.

Surprisingly, and probably unknown to her, a silver gull hitches a ride along the middle of her back. These two whales have not been seen since this sighting, but SouWEST continues to keep an eye out for her and to identify other new arrivals.



Above: Southern right whale with silver gull. Photo - Ian Wiese.

Iconic locals in South-west Corner Marine Park

The South-west Corner Marine Park, managed by Parks Australia, protects the offshore marine environment around the Capes.

Marine Biodiversity Hub and UWA researcher Dr Tim Langlois, working in collaboration with traditional owners and Parks Australia, is taking a closer look at what's living in our offshore waters.

Full surveys were delayed until 2021 due to COVID-19, but this autumn Tim and his team took advantage of easing restrictions and a few glassy days, to conduct some initial video surveys inside never before explored areas in the National Park Zones.



Above: Ready to deploy Baited Remote Underwater Stereo-Video systems.

“We found hidden cities of kelps, seagrass and sponge gardens thriving off the west coast at 45 metres, including iconic local species such as dhu fish and pink snapper”.

More information on the project led by traditional owners will be out soon. But for now the team is back on dry land, using this data to plan for the full surveys next year, that will include extensive seabed mapping and remotely operated vehicles deployed down to 200 metres in collaboration with local fishers.

This project has opened a window into Australia's marine biodiversity. Nationally, research at these depths is rare, so this work provides unique local insights and is critical for nationally managing our new marine parks.

Thanks to Dean Jensen on the *FV Santosha* and Steve Mitchell from [Seafari Marine](#).

This research is supported by the Australian Government's National Environmental Science Program Marine Biodiversity Hub.

[View video highlights from the project.](#)



Above: Pink snapper (*Chrysophrys auratus*) and breaksea cod (*Epinephiledis armatus*) over kelp (*Ecklonia radiata*) and seagrass (*Thalassodendron pachyrhizum*) covered reef at 45 metres. Can you spot the wobbegong?

Close shave at Merchant Rock

The following is an account from a member of the public and his experience at Merchant Rock.



I am writing this as yet another person drowned at Contos Beach, south of Margaret River yesterday. It was on a rock just 100m or so to the south of where I regularly fish. I am a primary school teacher and we have two children under the age of 10. I am a keen fisherman, but not a particularly good one.

About 18 months ago, on a calm, sunny south-west morning not that dissimilar to yesterday, I drove to the beach for a fish. I chalked up my quota of herring within a few hours and sat down on the rock to clean and fillet them, something that I don't normally do as I have a filleting table at home; but it was *such a beautiful morning*. I *had* checked the weather app on my phone, and yes the swell was up, but I was on Merchant Rock sitting 18 metres above the base shore line and the sun was shining.

When we first moved to the south-west from a stint in the Kimberley, I had honestly never tied myself onto a rock when fishing. And for the first year down here those big stainless still rings (for just that purpose) remained an anomaly.

On this particular morning the swell was up, admittedly, but the waves weren't any more menacing than usual and were in fact more undulating with no splash or foam. Now bearing in mind, I'm on of a huge rock over 18 metres high - I had my back to the ocean popping out some neat butterfly fillets. I just happened to glance over my shoulder to see what seemed a particularly largish wall of rolling water coming in my way. It kept coming and I kept staring, trying to gauge it's potential: *'yep, this one's gonna be a biggie,'* I thought.

Now this morning *I was tied onto the rock*, by an old nylon boat rope threaded through my jean loops and tied onto the stainless still ring behind me. I dropped to my knees and pulled the rope taught to take the up the slack as the wave took me. It rolled over me at maybe half a metre, drenching me and washing everything away, and I mean everything - rods, coffee cup, tackle, the lot. Supposedly waves come in threes, so I braced for the second one, which was just as terrifying as the first. I waited and waited for the third, but it never came, yet.

Gingerly and shaking more than a little, I untied myself in an attempt to repatriate my situation. Fortunately, I found my keys and phone (*though underwater*) in a rock pool some metres behind me. Several metres further down was my backpack and one of my snapped rods wedged in a small opening in the rock (and if you know Merchant Rock - you'll know the one I'm talking about). Yes, and I know what they say, '*never scramble down to retrieve a dropped fish*', but nonetheless I braved the slippery, slimy slope on my hands and knees and retrieved what I could. No sooner had I got back up, gathering my wits to leave, when *number three* rolled in. Although no longer tied in, I was to the left and out of the firing line. But that surge sent several tons of water pounding through that little gap where I had been crouching just moments before.

When I got home, I had a hot shower and hopped into bed and slept for three and half hours. I had no fish to fillet.

Occasionally attached to those large stainless steel rings bolted into the granite along the coast, are small plates that say, "if this ring has offered you safety etc, call this number..." or something to that effect. And so few months back I called the number and spoke to a nice bloke and told him my story and thanked him for putting them there. He actually had put that exact stainless steel ring in himself - the one that saved me. He asked me to put pen to paper and so is my account of my very, very close shave. Today, I finally went and bought myself a new garage remote control to replace the one that got water damaged on that morning.

And all that for 12 little herring. Tie yourself in people when you fish.

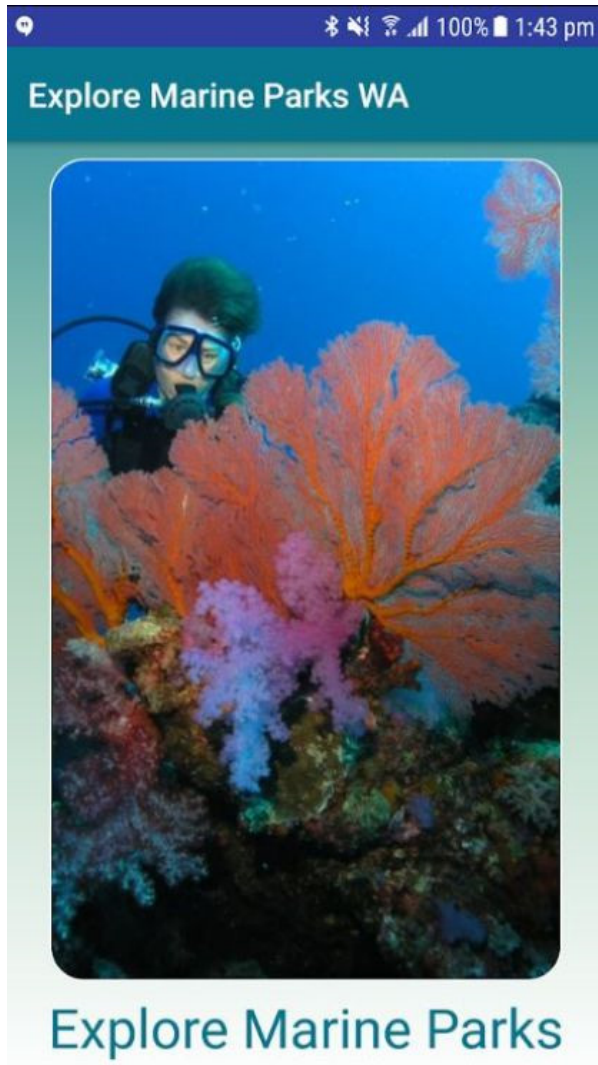
Editor's note: *Fishing from rocks is particularly dangerous. A number of fishers drown in WA each year after being swept off rocks by large or unexpected waves, or by slipping on wet rocks into the water. We recommend keeping the sand between*

your toes - stay safe and fish from the beach where you have great access to salmon and other big fish. If you choose to fish from rocks, ensure you follow these [guidelines for safe fishing](#).



Above: Stainless steel rock anchor.

Do you know about marine park sanctuary zones?



Before visiting any marine park, it's important to always 'know your zones' and find out what you can do in each zone. Since April 2020 the Ngari Capes Marine Park zones have been enforced.

These zones cater for a wide range of user groups from fishers, scuba divers and snorkellers to surfers and kayakers.

While allowing sustainable recreational and commercial activities, zoning also provides for conservation. By establishing sanctuary zones for undisturbed nature study and passive enjoyment of the natural environment.

The map below is a great guide, however, if you require more information about the zones and

what activities are permitted, for marine parks around the Capes or anywhere off the WA coast please download the Marine Parks WA App or call the Parks and Wildlife Service Busselton office on 9752 5555.

Get the app on iTunes

Get the app on Android

