



Issue 7 - Spring 2020

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

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Above: Torpedo Rocks, Yallingup

Second humpback whale entanglement in the bay



Above: *The humpback whale calf tethered to the seafloor by ropes and floats.*

On Monday 24 August, DBCA staff at the Busselton office were contacted by a local fisher who had spotted a humpback calf entangled in ropes and floats. The calf was approximately five nautical miles offshore from Forrest Beach and tethered to the seafloor.

A mature 15m humpback (presumed to be the calf's mother) stayed close by and occasionally assisted the calf to the surface so it could breathe.

Initial observations showed that ropes secured to the sea floor were wrapped multiple times around the calf's peduncle and tail fluke. These ropes were taut and holding the calf in one place just below the surface. There was also a line to the surface with two floats.

After assessing the calf's entanglement and the mature humpbacks behaviour, a disentanglement team led by marine park coordinator Steve Mills, and assisted by Eden Baxter, Ian Anderson, Dave Lierich and Russell Walters, was able to free the whale.



***Above:** The whale disentanglement team observing the adult humpback whale to the left and calf to the right with two floats visible at the surface.*

Immediately after being freed the calf was seen swimming strongly next to the mature humpback. A few moments later, while the team was decommissioning equipment, the adult whale was spotted breaching three times and the calf attempting to breach once.

Check out the fantastic video of this entanglement below.

***Right:** Parks and Wildlife Service staff Eden Baxter and Ian Anderson holding the ropes and floats that were removed from the humpback whale calf.*





Humpback whale calf disentanglement by Parks and Wildlife Service specialist team.

Introducing Marine Ranger Fiona Graham



I grew up by the sea in regional Victoria where I spent countless hours exploring the intertidal reefs, snorkelling, diving and surfing. After completing my schooling on Phillip Island, I headed north to the tropics and completed a Bachelor of Science with Honours at James Cook University. It was a great privilege to attend university on the doorstep of the Great Barrier Reef.

After graduating I headed west to work with the Department of Fisheries and later CSIRO. Both positions allowed me to explore the beautiful waters of Western Australia and I have been lucky enough to contribute to marine research programs in iconic places like Ningaloo Marine Park and the Shark Bay World Heritage Area. I now enjoy visiting these places with my young family and sharing the knowledge I have gained.

I've now been working with the Parks and Wildlife Service for nearly nine years in the south-west and I feel very lucky to call this beautiful part of the world 'home'. The marine ranger role is dynamic, challenging and exciting. I enjoy being outdoors, diving and boating in the park and working with like-minded people, sharing ideas, and being part of a team.

Even when I am not at work, I still spend most of my time in the marine park or camping and mountain biking in the Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park with my family.

UWA divers search for seadragons at Sugarloaf



While UWA Underwater Club divers have long been attracted to Cape Naturaliste to dive the Swan Wreck near Dunsborough there's growing interest amongst club members to explore more of the shoreline of Western Australia. An interest sparked by recent sightings of significant populations of weedy

seadragons at several sites along the coast from Augusta to Two Rocks.

Old records indicated that up to a third of seadragon sightings were leafy seadragons (photos below) and the rest common, or weedy, seadragons (above). However, no leafy seadragons have been spotted near Perth for the past few years.

Consequently, there was great excitement when the club's Shore Dive Officer, Michael Roelens, spotted a juvenile leafy seadragon at the beginning of the year near Canal Rocks. It was hanging out in the middle of what seemed to be weedy seadragon central.

Juvenile dragons are known to move on quickly in search of their more permanent home. However, a slightly larger juvenile, possibly the same one, was spotted nearby just a few weeks later by local diver Aaron Goodhew. But there were no further sightings after that.

The presence of the juvenile leafy seadragon gave Michael hope and he reasoned there must be adults around the Ngari Capes too. So, another visit down to the capes was needed to explore further.

Once COVID travel restrictions allowed, the club got together and organised their second visit to Dunsborough for the year.

Weather conditions just happened to create spectacular visibility in the region for the Queen's Birthday long weekend: >25m and perfectly blue water. Aaron suggested that the rock outcrops known as the "Indicators" at Sugarloaf were well worth a visit, as they feature steep rock faces from the surface down to 25m and covered in pristine sponges and corals with plenty of fish life.

UWA Underwater Club divers were not disappointed when they followed up on Aaron's suggestion. The place was as every bit as spectacular as he had made it out to be: massive rock walls, boulders and overhangs abundant with colourful sponges and fan corals.

And to top it off, after a bit of weed exploration, a majestic adult leafy seadragon was spotted at the end of their dive.

Unfortunately seadragons are vulnerable to poaching and illegal aquarium trade. In an effort to document and conserve the species, a collaborative

research project has been set up. [SeadragonSearch](#) seeks to expand understanding of wild seadragon populations through meaningful community involvement.

Visit [SeadragonSearch.org](#) to submit your photographs and videos of seadragons, both wild and captive, to follow, monitor and keep tabs on individual seadragons for future generations to enjoy.



Photos: Michael Roelens

Sanctuary spotlight at Busselton Jetty

At the end of Busselton Jetty, some 1.7kms from shore, is the Ngari Capes Marine Parks Busselton Jetty Sanctuary - a zone was created to conserve the environmental values of Busselton Jetty and the nearby seagrass meadows.

The sanctuary zoning is complemented by a City of Busselton bylaw that assists in managing this valuable habitat, which is important for many marine species, including the Australian herring.

Beginning in October, the annual run of Australian herring (*Arripis georgianus*) continues until April each year. Most of Australia's herring population migrates from southern Australia towards the seagrass meadows of Geographe Bay during the summer months to spawn. The larval herring are then washed southwards in the Leeuwin current when it begins to flow in April, at the end of the herring run.

Australian herring, commonly known as Tommy rough, are silver with vertical rows of spots on the upper side of the body. The tail has black tips and the eyes are large and yellow.

Herring can be responsibly fished from the jetty and the amazing schools can be seen from the Underwater Observatory at the end of the jetty.

It is important to note that Australian herring is at risk from ocean warming in the future. During the 2010/11 marine heatwave the West Coast herring populations were affected by significant increases in local water temperatures.

Sophie Teede, Environmental Manager - Busselton Jetty.

Photo: An Australian herring at Busselton Jetty



Demersal finfish season closed - news from DPIRD

Don't forget the seasonal closure for demersal finfish has started.

In the West Coast Bioregion, from Black Point east of Augusta to the Zuytporp Cliffs north of Kalbarri, the closure runs from 15 October and 15 December (inclusive).

You cannot fish for, take, bring onto land, or be in possession of demersal finfish on a boat within the West Coast Bioregion during this period. If you catch a demersal finfish from a boat or from shore in this area during the closed season, you must return it to the water immediately with the least possible injury to the fish.

This annual closure is one of the management measures in place to reduce the recreational and charter catch of popular species including WA dhufish, pink snapper and baldchin groper by 50 per cent, to allow them to recover by 2030.

Alternative management arrangements are also in place to reduce the commercial sector catch by 50 per cent to allow this resource to recover by 2030.

The West Coast demersal scalefish resource is currently half way through a 20-year recovery plan and, while there are some early signs of recovery, there is still a long way to go. A stakeholder-based working group is developing a draft harvest strategy with the intent of releasing the draft in coming months.

[http://www.fish.wa.gov.au/.../fisheries_research_update_west ...](http://www.fish.wa.gov.au/.../fisheries_research_update_west...)

<http://www.fish.wa.gov.au/.../Public-.../Pages/Consultation.aspx>

Read more about this closure: <http://www.fish.wa.gov.au/.../Demersal-finfish-season-closure...>

Article from: *Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD)*



Photo: Baldchin groper - DPIRD

Ngari Neighbour News

Australian Marine Parks are busy places – whether its people enjoying themselves with a day out on the water, making a living, conducting research, or the natural activity of ocean waters and their inhabitants – there’s always something happening.

To keep up to date with the latest news in your neighbouring Geographe and South-west Corner Marine Parks, follow us on social media or visit our [website](#)



And if you’re thinking of heading out to Geographe or South-west Corner yourself – or to any of the other 22 Australian Marine Parks off Western Australia – your smartphone can help you plan your trip.

Use the latest Recfishwest app or Marine Parks WA app to find out what you can do in each park zone.

Download the Recfishwest app now by visiting the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#).
Download the Marine Parks WA app now by visiting the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#).



News doesn't just go one way – we'd love to hear about your experiences exploring our marine parks – use [@ausmarineparks](https://www.instagram.com/ausmarineparks) to tag us in your post.

News from Busselton Jetty



Photo: Supporting the Busselton Jetty Environment Fund container collection initiative - Busselton Jetty

Do you have empty cans, bottles or containers that could be recycled and would you like to support cleaner oceans, youth leadership and marine education in schools?

You can achieve all of this in Busselton right now under the new WA Containers for Change Rebate Scheme in conjunction with the Busselton Jetty. The Busselton Jetty Environment Fund (BJEF) has registered as a donation point to collect recyclable containers.

Locals can drop off single-use drink containers and make a positive change for the environment as t. The containers can be cleaned and either put back on the shelves or be used for making road base, clothes, home insulation or carpeting.

BJI CEO Lisa Shreeve said the world produces almost 20,000 single-use plastic bottles every second.

“By 2021, production will increase by 20 per cent to 583.3 billion plastic bottles every year. If these are left in the environment they can remain for hundreds of years, breaking down into smaller pieces that continue to cause environmental damage, especially to our marine life,” she said.

“If we recycle them, it takes about 10 bottles to make a t-shirt, 63 bottles to make a sweater or 114 bottles to make a sleeping bag.”

“And while this is all positive, the 10c from each container that goes to the Jetty’s Environment Fund will help with our marine conservation, youth leadership, school incursions, clean oceans and other important environmental programs.”

If you would like to drop off bags of single-use containers to the Busselton Jetty, you can do so at the Railway House Administration Office between 9am and 4pm Monday to Fridays.

For further information see www.busseltonjetty.com.au

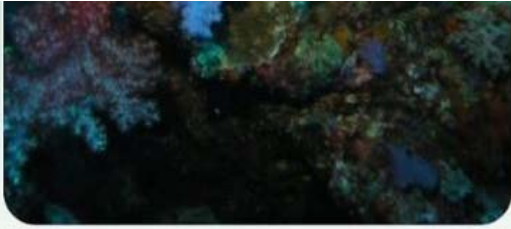
Lisa Shreeve, CEO – Busselton Jetty – 0437 781 480

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



Explore Marine Parks

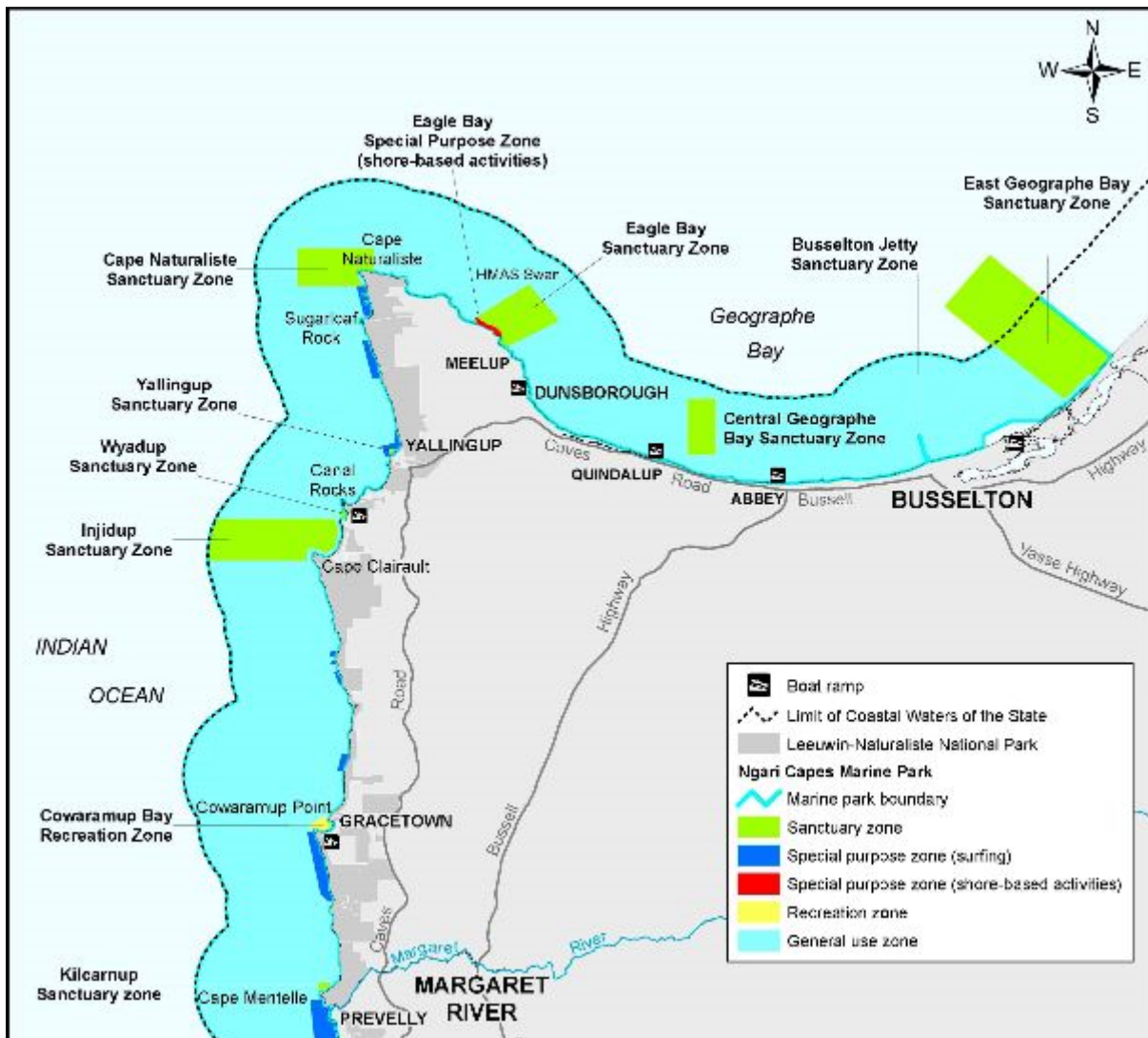
sanctuary zones for undisturbed nature study and passive enjoyment of the natural environment.

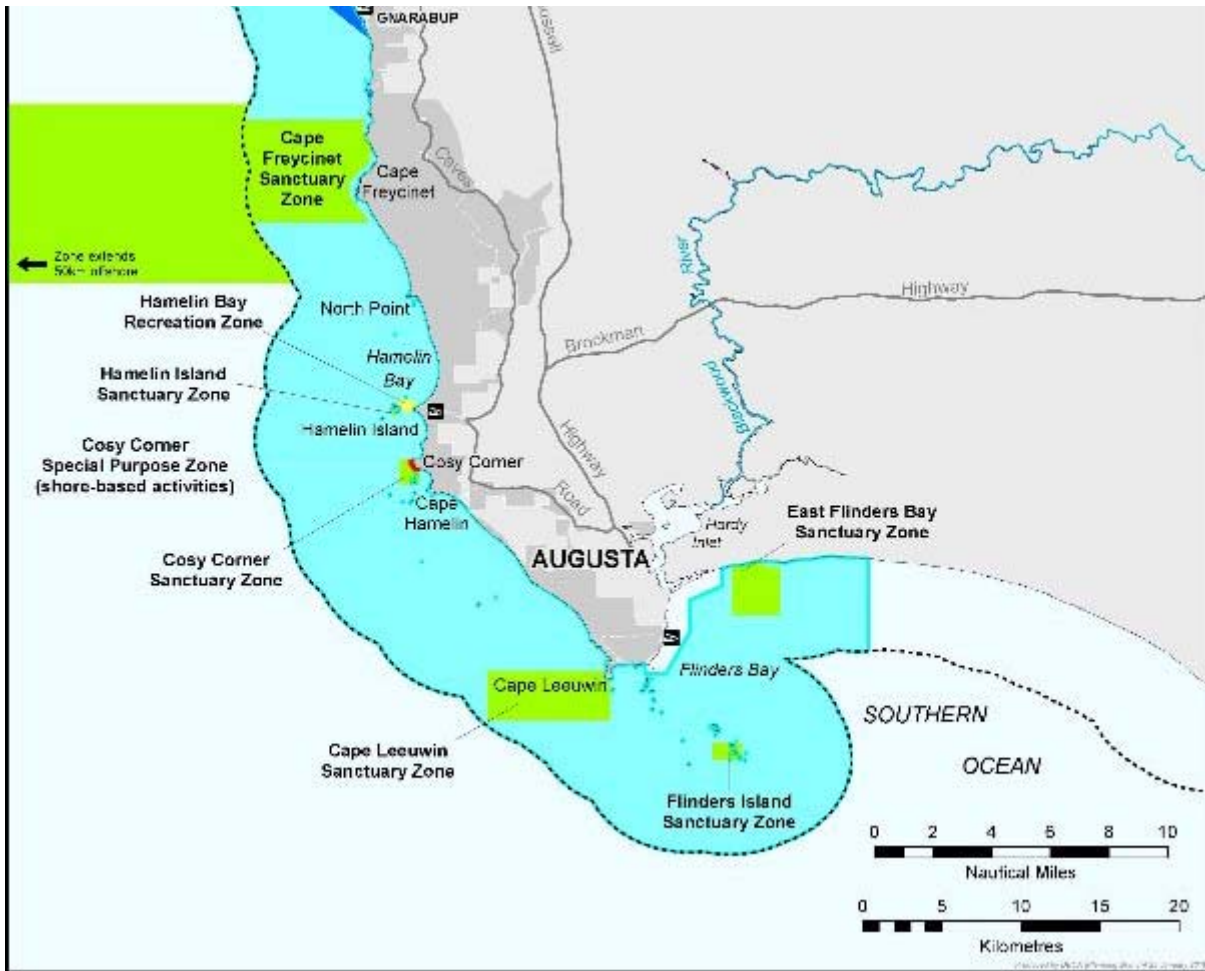
The map below is a great guide, however, if you require more

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](#)





Above Map of Ngari Capes Marine Park showing zones plus National Park Zones in adjacent Australian Marine Parks.



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