



Issue 12 - Summer 2022

Welcome to the 12th issue of *Ngari Capes Marine Park News*

In this issue:

- [Marine park update](#)
- [Entangled long-nosed fur seal at Flinders Island rescued](#)
- [Say G'Day, Bay Ok and Bio Blitz Days](#)
- [West Coast Demersal Scalefish Resource: 2021 stock assessment](#)
- [Grey nurse shark aggregation in South-west Corner Marine Park](#)
- [Do you know about marine park sanctuary zones?](#)



Above: Mitchell Rocks

Marine park update

With warmer weather well and truly upon us, the NCMP team have been preparing for their busy season. From December to February the marine park will receive its highest number of visitors for the year. To prepare for this influx of visitors to the region, marine rangers have recently been conducting checks and tests on park infrastructure. Some of these checks include accounting for all angel rings (life rings), as well as load testing anchor points that are drilled into the rocks at popular rock fishing locations. Marine rangers have also spent many days helping with the district's bushfire emergency that burnt over 8,000ha within the Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park.



The marine team has also been involved with a number of annual events, including Cowaramup's Say G'Day to the Bay, Dunsborough Bay Ok Day and Margaret River's Bio Blitz at the Barrett St Weir. Special guest, Weedy the seadragon, also made an appearance at the Cowaramup Say G'Day, greeting students as they arrived on the school bus.



For just under two weeks, Liam Rawlins was welcomed into the NCMP team. Liam works for the department as a Senior Marine Ranger in the new Buccaneer Archipelago Marine Park. During his time at NCMP, Liam was involved with seal disentanglements, vessel patrols, rock anchor testing and Cowaramup Say G'Day to the Bay Day.

The NCMP team also farewelled Marine Ranger Fiona Graham. Fiona will be acting as a Senior Marine Ranger in Broome's Buccaneer Archipelago Marine Park for two years. We wish Fiona all the best with this fantastic opportunity and look forward to seeing her back in Ngari Capes in 2023.

Images above:

Angel ring (life ring) and rock anchor - Image credit: DBCA.

Weedy the Seadragon and Possum Mascots - Image credit: Christine Wilder.

Seal disentanglement crew, including Liam Rawlins onboard PV Leeuwin - Image credit: DBCA

Entangled long-nosed fur seal at Flinders Island rescued



Image above: Seal at Flinders Island with entanglement around its neck - Image credit: DBCA.

After receiving reports of an entangled seal at Flinders Island in winter, the NCMP team were on the lookout for the entangled individual during their patrols out of Augusta. On a compliance patrol in late October, marine rangers Eden and Dave spotted an entangled seal on the rocks just up from the water line on Flinders Island. They quickly retrieved the items they needed and were joined by colleague Lockie Pendlebury. However, the seal was too quick when it came time for capture and slid into the water before it could be netted.

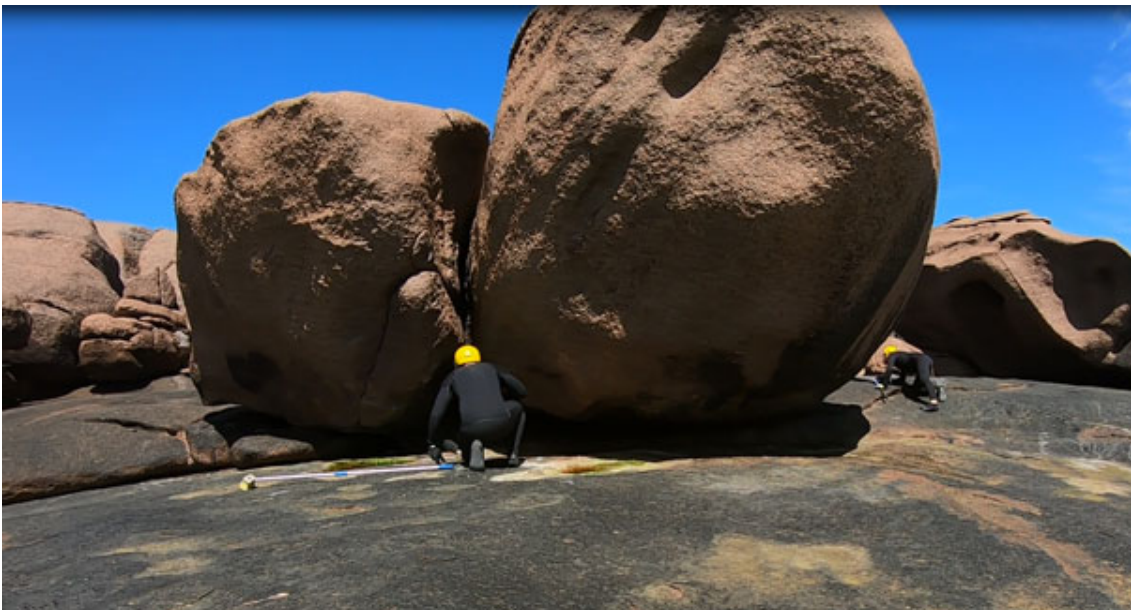
A second attempt to disentangle the seal was scheduled for the 10th of November. The NCMP team was joined by John Edwards, Senior Operations Officer (Marine) and Liam Rawlings, Senior Marine Ranger for Buccaneer Archipelago Marine Park. The team were fortunate to spot the seal from the vessel on the southern side of the island.

After confirming the seal was on the island the disentanglement team stepped onto the Northside of the island and divided into two teams. The next task was to locate the seal on foot without spooking it into the water. After a few minutes of searching the seal was spotted. However, another challenge presented itself; the entangled seal was hiding under a large rock with multiple exits and three other seals. Good thing the disentanglement team was six people strong with two large nets, and a broom (aka the nudge pole).



Image above: Seal disentanglement team on Flinders Island - Image credit: DBCA

Unable to disentangle the seal from under the large rock the next step would be to persuade the four seals to leave the rock and make a break for the ocean and then quickly net the entangled seal before it enters the water. The team were able to do this by blocking off all but one of the exits under the rock and then with the help of the nudge pole and some loud noises, the four seals made a break for the water. Once the seals left the cover of the rock, the entangled seal was quickly netted in a large cone-shaped net while the other three seals entered the water. The entanglement around the seal's neck was then removed before it was released.



The photo above: Entangled seal hiding under a large rock with three other seals - Image credit: DBCA



The marine team was delighted to be involved in this year Cowaramup Say G'Day to the Bay, Dunsborough Bay Ok Day and Margaret River's Bio Blitz. At these events, marine rangers provided a variety of environmental education activities such as touch pool, touch table and a sustainable fishing activity. These activities aim to give primary school-aged students a wider understanding of the marine creatures that live in their own backyard.



Images above: Touch pool and touch table at Say G'Day to the Bay Gracetown. Stall set up at Bay Ok Dunsborough - Image credit: DBCA

West Coast Demersal Scalefish Resource: 2021 stock assessment

The West Coast Demersal Scalefish Resource includes over 100 demersal scalefish species and spans from Kalbarri to Augusta and out to the extremities of the Australian Fishing Zone. To monitor the health of

value. Indicator species for the West Coast Demersal Scalefish Resource include dhufish, pink snapper and baldchin groper (inshore species) and hapuku, bass groper and blue-eye trevalla (offshore species).

A stock assessment undertaken in 2007 of the West Coast Demersal Scalefish Resource concluded that overfishing was occurring. Following extensive community consultation, a recovery plan was introduced in 2010. This resulted in recreational and commercial catches being reduced by 50 per cent in 2010 to recover the resource by 2030. This included closing the metropolitan area to commercial fishing and the introduction of an annual two month closure for recreational fishers.

The latest (2021) scientific stock assessment undertaken by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) has found that while management arrangements have prevented further stock decline, the resource is not recovering fast enough to safeguard future sustainability and meet the 2030 recovery targets.

Although a few good years of recruitment has enhanced population replenishment, not enough fish from these years are surviving long enough to reproduce and contribute to future stock recovery. Specifically, not enough older dhufish and pink snapper are present in the population, making it unlikely to recover by 2030.

The stock assessment makes it clear that changes to management arrangements are required to get the recovery of demersal scalefish to sustainable levels. Any future changes to management will help ensure healthy demersal scalefish stocks for future generations to enjoy.



Perhaps it's time to give demersal scalefish a break. There are plenty of other species of fish that can be targeted and are great eating, including mackerel, shark, whiting and western rock lobster.

What happens next?

A stakeholder-based reference group, with membership from DPIRD, Recfishwest and the WA Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC), will review the 2021 stock assessment against the Harvest Strategy to determine an appropriate management response for consideration by Government.

Members of the public will have an opportunity to comment on these management options during a public consultation period in early 2022.

Photo's above: Dhufish. Image credit: DPIRD

Grey nurse shark aggregation in South-west Corner Marine Park



Image: A grey nurse shark (*Carcharias taurus*) in the national park zone of South-west Corner Marine Park. Imagery taken from a drop camera deployment to 141m. **Image credit:** UWA

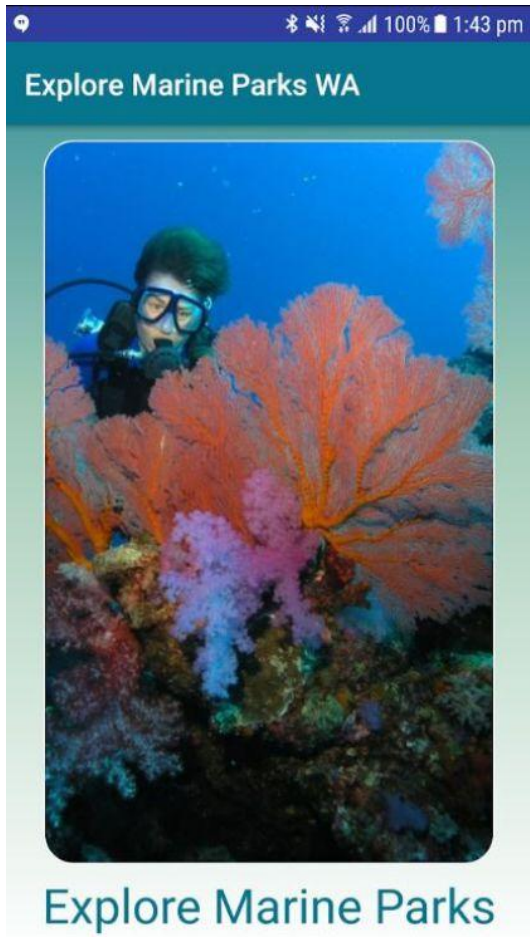
In exciting news, researchers found a potential aggregation site for grey nurse sharks (*Carcharias taurus*) within the national park zone of **South-west Corner Marine Park**. They observed five individuals at one site at a depth of 141 metres, recorded by a drop camera. This is believed to be the deepest aggregation site observed to date for this species. The only other published aggregation site in Western Australia is at the Navy Pier in Exmouth.

South-west Corner Marine Park, managed by Parks Australia, is adjacent to Ngari Capes Marine Park. It is the largest marine park in the south-west network and protects the offshore marine environment around the capes. This discovery was part of a collaborative research survey of the marine park, led by the University of Western Australia (UWA).

Identification and protection of aggregation sites is important for conserving grey nurse sharks. Although the west coast population is listed as vulnerable under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, the more-studied eastern Australian population is listed as critically endangered. Their biennial reproductive cycle and slow population growth make this species vulnerable to decline and Australian Marine Parks play a key role in ensuring their protection.

additional funding from UWA and Parks Australia. The survey was part of the Marine Biodiversity Hub project *'Implementing monitoring of Australian Marine Parks and the status of marine biodiversity assets on the continental shelf'* which aims to build baseline knowledge for marine parks in priority areas of the national network.

Do you know about marine park sanctuary zones?



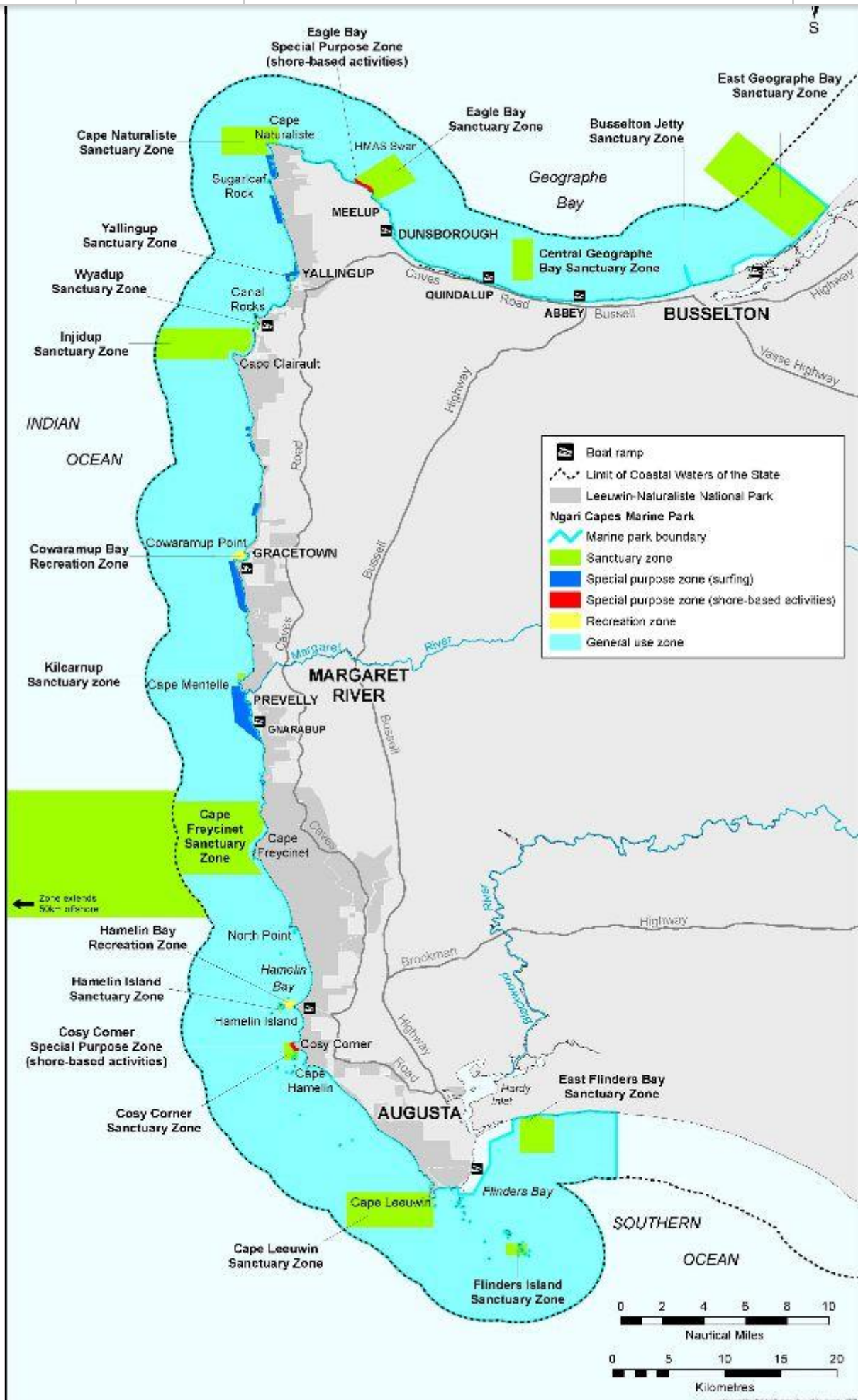
Before visiting any marine park, it's important to always 'know your zones' and find out what you can do in each zone. Since April 2020, the Ngari Capes Marine Park zones have been enforced.

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](#)





Copyright © 2022 Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can update your preferences or unsubscribe from this list.