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Issue 16 - Summer 2023

Welcome to the 16th issue of *Ngari Capes Marine Park News*

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Above: Eden Harris - Busselton Jetty

Marine park update

By Parks and Wildlife Service, Blackwood

Welcome to summer!

On the water, education and compliance patrols by the marine team continue, including joint operations with the Department of Transport and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

Under the water, the marine team has been refreshing their diver rescue skills with department Dive Officer Miecha Bradshaw. The exercises and scenarios of this refresher training have ensured that the marine team is as prepared as they can be for the upcoming seagrass monitoring this February.



Image right: Marine team onboard Department of Transport vessel PV2 practicing dive rescue scenarios.

On land, the marine team was joined by ornithologist Dr Erin Clitheroe for the second survey of St Alouarn Island, with the goal of finding breeding colonies of little penguins. The marine team was very excited to be given a chance to wear our weedy seadragon mascot for the annual Bioblitz, Say G'day to the Bay and Bay Ok events. These annual events aim to give primary school students a wider understanding of the marine creatures that live in their own backyard.



Images above: (Left) Glen on St Alouarn Island installing a motion camera. (Right) Marine team practicing dive rescue scenarios on Department of Transport vessel PV2.

These summer school holidays we welcome Sallyann from the Exmouth district. Sallyann will be joining the team for five weeks over the busy school holidays, as part of our marine ranger exchange program within the department. Learn a little more information about marine ranger Sallyann in her meet-the-team segment below.

This February is also an important milestone for our marine park, as it marks the 10-year anniversary of the park's management. To celebrate this milestone the marine team will be holding a free family-friendly event at the Busselton Foreshore. Check out the poster below for more details.



Images above: (Left) Kye at Bay Ok Day touch pool activity. (Right) The Ngari Capes Weedy Seadragon mascot at Bay Ok Day in Dunsborough.

Meet the team – Sallyann Gudge

Sallyann a marine ecologist and ocean lover, inspired to learn and care for marine ecosystems and the communities that are supported by them. Growing up in south-east Queensland and spending every spare moment exploring nearby coasts and islands instilled in her a love of nature from an early age. Her first snorkel on the outer Great Barrier Reef when she was 7 years old was one of the key experiences that set her life course towards one that would always revolve around the ocean.

Sallyann completed a Bachelor of Science (marine ecology majors) at the University of Queensland. During her studies she volunteered and worked with conservation groups, the local dive shop and aquarium, and on commercial fishing boats to gain diving, boating and conservation experiences. She then found her first island home and first marine park job with Parks and Wildlife in Moreton Bay Marine Park, QLD. Recently, Sallyann was the Marine Park Manager of Lord Howe Island Marine Park (NSW) and lived and worked there for over 10 years. Sallyann was the first female marine ranger on Wadjemup (Rottneest Island) and has also lived and worked on Minjerriba (North Stradbroke Island), at Cape Byron Marine Park and on Heron Island and other locations in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

For the past year, Sallyann has enjoyed the role of Marine Program Coordinator at Ningaloo Marine Park in Exmouth and is headed to Ngari Capes Marine Park to help the team over the summer.

Some of her career highlights are whale research in the Rottneest Trench, Galapagos shark research at

Lord Howe Island, discovering and researching new coral species at Lord Howe Island, monitoring marine life in amazing parts of the planet and working with Traditional Owners to care for Country. Sallyann enjoys exploring the ocean and coastal environments, surfing, free-diving, diving and ocean swimming and now loves sharing adventures above and below the water with her 10-year-old ocean-loving son.



Images above: Sallyann Gudge in Exmouth district.

A search for little penguins on islands of the NCMP

By Parks and Wildlife Service, Blackwood

The offshore islands scattered across the Ngari Capes Marine Park are like isolated havens for a unique array of flora and fauna. These little hotspots are home to countless seabirds and wildlife, but because they're so hard to get to we have very limited studies reporting exactly what wildlife lives here and why.

In light of this, Marine Rangers Glen Sutton, Kye Adams and Dave Lierich, and Research Scientist Dr Sahira Bell, headed to Hamelin and St Alouarn Islands to run seabird surveys, with the specific goal of finding breeding colonies of little penguins. A report from the 70's told us they used to be there – but whether the population had remained active over all these years was the question.

The trip was a success, and with the help of ornithologists Dr Erin Clitheroe (from West Coast Bird Research) and Louis Masarei (from Malu Fauna), the team were able to:



- find and microchip 3 little penguins in the marine park (one was even sitting on some eggs! And was not microchipped)
- count endless numbers of penguin burrows that showed clear signs of recent breeding, including lots of penguin tracks and chick feathers
- install a series of sound recorders to be analysed to identify all seabirds using the islands
- install camera traps to record seabirds who may be using the islands at night.

Image left: Dr Erin Clitheroe with one of the microchipped little penguins from St Alouarn Island.

This is really positive news for the NCMP and little penguins, who have been having a tough time in places further north along the WA coast. After analysing the camera traps and sound recorders, the team will have a more in-depth understanding of how significant this breeding population is, and whether or not management actions for the islands need to be altered.



Images above: (Left) Sound recorder installed at St Alouam Island. (Right) Penguin tracks. Photos by Sahira Bell.

Eyes in the sky

By Parks and Wildlife Service, Blackwood

On 23 November, Acting Marine Park Coordinator David Lierich assisted the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) with an aerial surveillance exercise in the South-West Marine Park network in Commonwealth waters (greater than 3nm offshore).

The flight path included surveillance of national park zones in the Perth Canyon Marine Park, Geographe Marine Park and South West Corner Marine Park. National park zones are areas in Commonwealth waters where fishing is prohibited, otherwise known as sanctuary zones in state waters marine parks.

The national park zones were checked for non-compliance, and where possible so were the sanctuary zones, in the Ngari Capes Marine Park. There were no instances of non-compliance recorded in either state or Commonwealth-managed marine parks.

David Lierich said “It was a great experience to see the marine park from the air and it was reassuring that no one was found fishing in areas where they were not supposed to.”



Images above: Aerial patrol over NCMP. Photos by Kev Johnson.

“Aerial patrols are one of many tools that DPIRD fisheries officers and DBCA marine park staff utilise to assist in monitoring compliance of the marine parks. In the summer season it will be important for DBCA and DPIRD to work closely to patrol these areas over one of the busiest times of the year.”

South-West divers

By Aaron Goodhew - Southwest WA Divers

For many years, traditional open circuit scuba diving gear has been the go-to for people wanting to get a glimpse of the underwater world. Most of the time, recreational set ups offer around an hour or less below the surface. Closed circuit rebreathers (CCRs) however can extend dive times by hours and are becoming more popular. The extended duration coupled with reduced decompression obligations are not the only advantages. During operation the units are almost silent so they offer a unique opportunity to get up close to the marine life. Larger animals like sharks and rays are much less skittish around rebreathers due to the lack of bubbles. For this reason they are a popular choice for wildlife photographers and videographers.

Whilst there are great benefits with using CCRs they do come with some disadvantages to regular scuba gear. CCRs are often much more expensive to purchase and maintain, they also need to be meticulously cared for to ensure their safe operation. Due to the potentially increased risks associated with using CCRs they require a disciplined diver. Extensive training is also required to safely operate the units.



Image above: (Left) Mark Crewe - photo by Aaron Goodhew. (Right) Andy McGregor - photo by Joseph Bicanic.

In the latter half of 2022 we saw four local individuals become certified on CCRs. Two of which were believed to be the first people ever to carry out their entire training course exclusively in the Ngari Capes Marine Park.

The long term plan will be to explore a whole range of areas in the marine park not only for longer duration but to greater depths. We have already carried out a selection of dives at Wrights Bank north of Cape Naturaliste and hit some amazing underwater terrain. With the assistance of diver propulsion vehicles (DPVs) we can increase the range even more significantly, with some dives covering nearly 4km in distance. Areas of the coastline only previously accessible by boat are now within easy reach.

We've also recently seen an increase in local divers using DPVs to access the wider ranges of the marine park from shore. As a result some fantastic photos and videos have been recorded of relatively rarely dived sites. As the popularity of technology increases to widen the exploration of the Ngari Capes Marine Park it will be interesting to see the discoveries of 2023.

If you have an interest in scuba diving or marine life in general in the South-West check out the not-for-profit group on Facebook 'Southwest WA Divers'. It's a group run by local divers and whether you live in the area or are just looking to visit, it's a great resource to find a buddy and information. We welcome new members to take a look and hopefully get inspiration from some of the great pictures and videos of our wonderful southern waters.



Image above: Peter Handcock (left), Bob Thompson (middle) and Aaron Goodhew (right). Photo by Jesse Pesch.

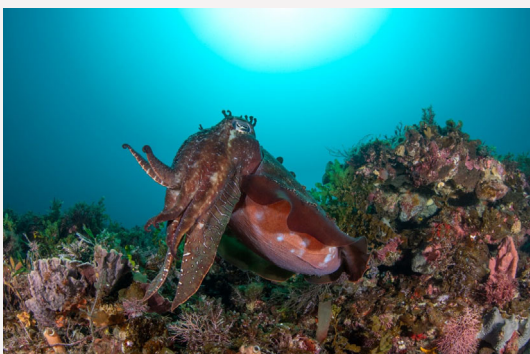
Reefs in Geographe Bay showcased in Australia's marine life publication



By [Australian Marine Parks](#), Parks Australia

Reef Life Survey (RLS) has recently created a visually-spectacular coffee table book of the offshore shallow reefs of Australian marine parks. With funding under the Our Marine Parks grants program, *Living offshore reefs of Australian Marine Parks* draws on over a decade of data, analysis and images collected by volunteer and scientific RLS SCUBA divers, from over 2000 sites around Australia.

Featuring over 400 images, the book highlights the incredible diversity of Australian marine parks and the fascinating marine life they aim to protect. The stunning images include coral gardens with abundant fish, giant cuttlefish and the seagrass meadows which cover about 60 per cent of Geographe Marine Park. Many people have not had the opportunity to visit these shallow reefs and appreciate the underwater world protected in Australian marine parks.



Images above: Photos by Rick Stuart-Smith.

Reef Life Survey Foundation was established in 2007, after a group of scientists, managers and divers from around Australia joined together to design a scientifically robust, practical and relatively cheap way to monitor the health of reefs.

Citizen science scuba divers are an essential part of the global Reef Life Survey program, surveying over a million square metres of reef to monitor and track the condition of reef ecosystems within our Australian marine parks.

The book is now available for purchase online through a range of retailers.



A milestone well worth celebrating... 10-year anniversary of the Ngari Cape Marine Park

By Parks and Wildlife Service, Blackwood

At 123,790-hectares, the Ngari Capes Marine Park is one of the most diverse temperate marine environments in Western Australia. This beautiful corner of the world is much loved by Western Australians as well as being a huge drawcard for interstate and international tourists.

Ngari Capes Marine Park was officially gazetted on 12 June 2012. The management plan for the marine park followed closely after and was in effect in early 2013.

To celebrate this milestone, the marine team will be hosting a free family-friendly event on the foreshore between Shelter Brewery and the Busselton Jetty on Sunday 4 February from 10am to 2pm. A huge range of kid-friendly education activities will be on offer, as well as a Welcome to Country at 10am.

Come join the celebrations!

Ngari Capes marine park

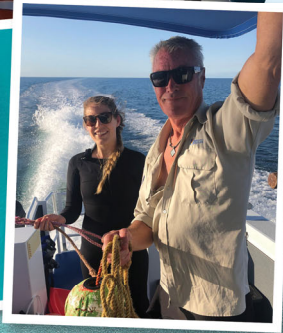
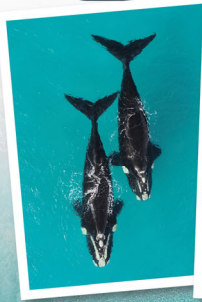
Family Fun Day!



Come and celebrate the **10-year anniversary** of the Ngari Capes Marine Park.



Learn about the marine park from **local marine experts** and there will also be heaps of fun kids activities.



WHERE Busselton Foreshore between Shelter Brewery and the Busselton Jetty.

WHEN Saturday February 4th 2023, 10am – 2pm

Welcome to Country at 10am

For more information please call the Busselton Parks and Wildlife Service office on 9752 5555.



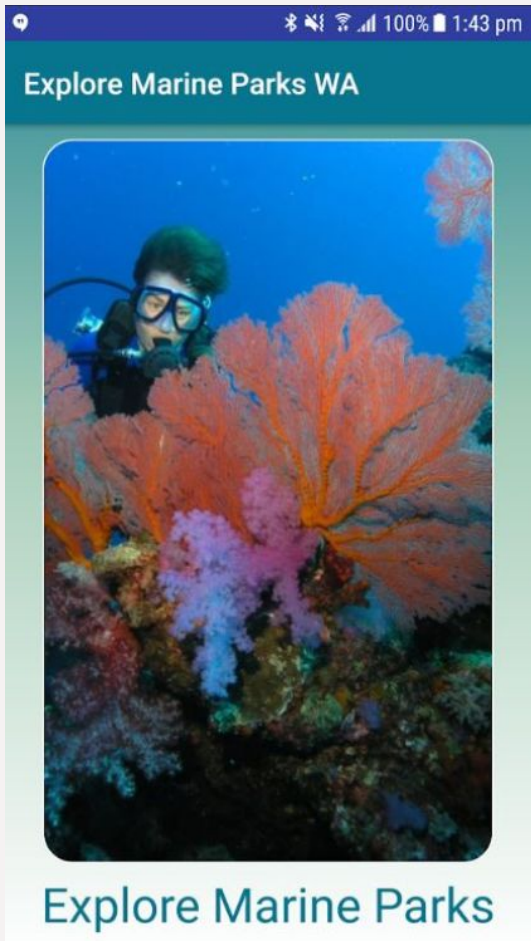
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Photos by Blair Ranford and DBCA



Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions
Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
Department of Transport
Department of Fire and Emergency Services

Do you know about marine park sanctuary zones?



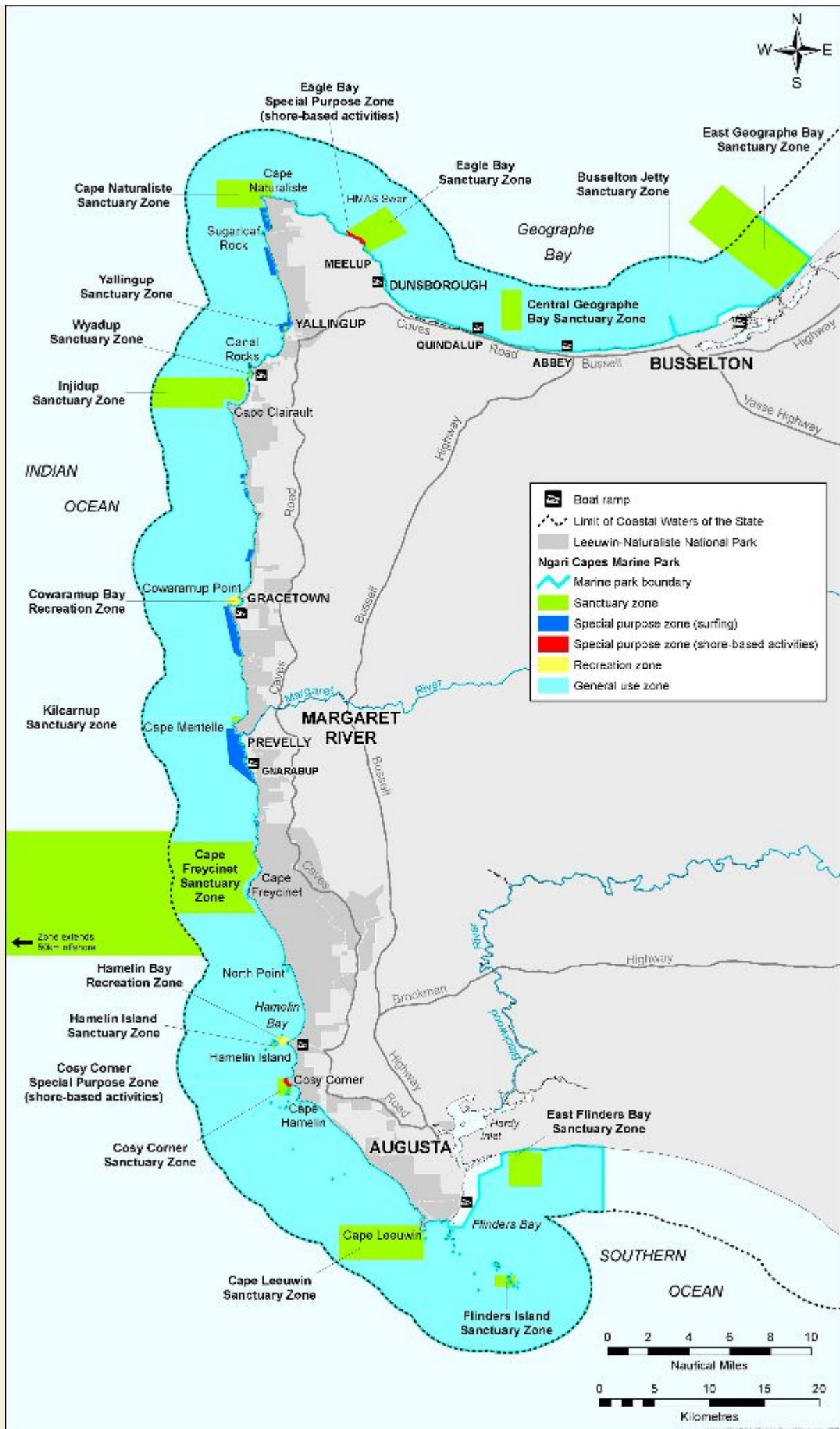
Before visiting any marine park, it's important to always 'know your zones' and find out what you can do in each zone. Since April 2020, the Ngari Capes Marine Park zones have been enforced.

These zones cater for a wide range of user groups from fishers, scuba divers and snorkelers, 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](#)



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



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