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From: Parks and Wildlife Service <no-reply@newsletters.dbca.wa.gov.au>
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Issue 23 - Spring 2024

Welcome to the 23rd issue of *Ngari Capes Marine Park News*

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Image right: Two humpbacks at Meelup beach, by Eden Harris

Marine park update

By Parks and Wildlife Service, Blackwood

Welcome to our latest issue of the Ngari Capes Marine Park newsletter.

Spring has arrived, ushering in the excitement of peak fur seal season! If you love wildlife watching, now is the perfect time to explore. From various lookout points and walking trails throughout the Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park, you can spot seals and may even catch a glimpse of southern right and humpback whales. With a bit of luck, you might even see an occasional blue whale!

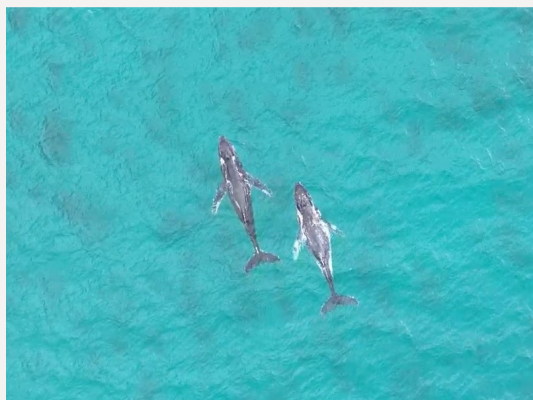
In celebration of whale season, the NCMP team invites you to an informal community talk at Eagle Bay Hall on Saturday, October 12th, at 2pm. Join us and a few guest presenters as we discuss whale strandings, recent disentanglements, and ongoing research efforts in the region. We'd love to see you there! Registration details for this event can be found below.



Image right: Fur seal colony at Cape Naturaliste during the 2024 September peak season.

This month, our team successfully disentangled a humpback whale off Stratham Beach, south of Bunbury. You can read more about this impressive effort below.

Lastly, we have a special story in this newsletter about a unique visitor who came ashore in poor condition but is now on the road to recovery. Be sure to check out the sea snake story below!



Above left: Two juvenile humpbacks at Meelup beach.



Above right: Whale disentanglement team on board point boat.

Whale disentanglement

Parks and Wildlife Service, Blackwood

On Sunday the 8th of September, the team was notified of an entangled humpback whale just north of the marine park near Stratham by a member of the public who was fishing in the area. Fortunately, this member of the public was able to stay with the whale while the whale disentanglement team mobilised. A short time later, the team arrived at the entangled whale and attached a satellite tag and control line to the trailing ropes and floats.

Due to the operation occurring later in the evening the team decided to head back into the marina after they had assessed the entanglement. With the satellite tag having already been securely attached to the entanglement the team was able to leave the whale overnight and return the following day due to the tracking capabilities.



Above left: Blackwood Large Whale Disentanglement point boat.



Above right: The team assessing gopro footage of the entanglement.

On Monday the 9th of September the whale disentanglement team returned early in the morning. Guided by the satellite tag, the team was able to quickly find the location of the whale as the tag is set to 'ping' every 15 minutes, enabling the team to monitor how fast and in which direction the whale is travelling. In a few short hours, the team were able to successfully remove all the floats and ropes from the whale.



Above: DBCA Senior Marine Operations Officer John Edwards watching the point vessel from the bow of the safety vessel. Satellite tag, control line and large orange kegs can be seen behind the point boat.

The NCMP team would like to thank the members of the public who promptly reported the entanglement and were able to stay with the entangled whale till we were able to arrive. Also thanks to Western Rock Lobster for supplying Parks and Wildlife Service with satellite tags for our whale disentanglements! This satellite tag enabled the team time to plan a safe two-day operation, all while not losing track of the whale.

If you see an entangled whale, please call the Wildcare Helpline on 9474 9055 or your closest Parks and Wildlife Service office. Do not attempt to disentangle the whale or cut any of the trailing rope. If safe to do so, stay with the whale at a safe distance for as long as possible until a response team has been mobilised.



Above: Team photo post-whale disentanglement back at the marina, standing in front of disentanglement equipment trailer and point boat.

Log on and off every trip

By the Department of Transport

Logging on ensures that someone will take action if you don't return on time.

Skippers, use your marine radio to log on and off with the local marine rescue group every time you head out. It's free, easy, and it's great insurance.

[Logging on and off
\(transport.wa.gov.au\)](https://transport.wa.gov.au)



Save the date for our whale talk



SAVE THE DATE

Whales of Ngari Capes Marine Park

Join us for an afternoon of informative family-friendly talks to learn about the whales that visit Ngari Capes Marine Park, the important research and monitoring programs happening in the park and gain an insight on what you can do to help these gentle giants.

**Saturday 12th October 2024,
at the Eagle Bay Hall 2pm**

Please pre-register for this exciting event at



Further Event Details to Follow, including a list of presenters



Call for skeletons

By the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD)

Instead of disposing of your fish skeletons (frames) after filleting your catch, contribute to vital science being undertaken at the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD). DPIRD are currently collecting frames from a number of finfish species in the south-west to contribute to important research projects.

Analysing fish frames can help improve our understanding of population length and age structures, growth patterns, maturity, spawning, diets and genetic connectivity of fish in different areas.

Kim Clayton, local DPIRD Technical Officer said, "I am currently after fishers to donate dhufish, snapper, baldchin groper and bass groper frames in a chilled but fresh state for some important DNA work we are currently undertaking."



Above left: Collecting DNA sample, by DPIRD. **Above right:** Pink snapper frame, by DPIRD.

For many demersal species, adult fish don't move far. Instead, the eggs they produce during spawning hatch into pelagic larvae, which move with the ocean currents for several weeks before settling into a suitable habitat. Where these larvae go determines how connected fish populations are. We take DNA samples from donated fish frames and use innovative genetic techniques to better understand how populations of demersal species are connected along the WA coast. This information shows if fish from different areas are part of the same stock or are genetically distinct.

"We haven't forgotten our nearshore finfish and would gladly take any herring, black bream or King George whiting frames you might have after a successful fishing trip to contribute to our research on these important nearshore species," Ms Clayton said.

To participate in the program, all you have to do is put your filleted fish frame with the head and guts intact into a plastic bag. Label your frames with who caught the fish, and when and where the fish was caught. Then, drop your frozen or fresh frames at your local DPIRD office or participating tackle store. You can find your nearest drop-off location at fish.wa.gov.au/frames or to enquire about our staff picking up frames from your house, please call Kim Clayton on 0419 192 101 or email fishframes@dpird.wa.gov.au.



Above left: Otolith ear bone, by DPIRD. **Above right:** Baldchin frame, by DPIRD.

Yellow-bellied sea snake rescued and on the road to recovery

By WA Wildlife

On August 7 2024, a yellow-bellied sea snake (*Hydrophis platurus*) was admitted to the WA Wildlife Hospital in Bibra Lake after being rescued by Parks and Wildlife Service officers from the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA). The snake was found washed ashore on a beach near Mandalay Holiday Resort, within the Ngari Capes Marine Park.

Upon assessment, it was discovered that the snake was displaced and suffering from exposure to the cold, with two open wounds along its body. The team at WA Wildlife determined that the injuries, likely caused by skin parasites or external factors, had compromised the snake's health due to the cold conditions.



WA Wildlife's expert team handled the sea snake with care, using specialised snake-handling equipment. The wounds were cleaned, debrided under local anaesthetic, and sutured to promote healing. After stabilising, the sea snake was transferred to the Aquarium of Western Australia (AQWA) for ongoing rehabilitation in a controlled marine environment.

Almost a month after its admission, the sea snake was brought back to WA Wildlife Hospital for a check-up. The results were positive—one wound had completely healed, while the second was healing steadily. The snake had also shed its skin and was swimming actively in AQWA's rehabilitation tank, an encouraging sign of recovery.

Above: WA Wildlife CEO Dean Huxley restrains the sea snake for veterinary assessment, by WA Wildlife.

The sea snake is expected to make a full recovery and is scheduled for release back into its natural habitat at the end of September or early October. This successful rescue and rehabilitation highlight the collaborative efforts between WA Wildlife, AQWA and DBCA to protect and conserve marine wildlife.

Members of the public should not handle sea snakes under any circumstance. All sea snakes discovered so far are venomous and produce some of the most dangerous venoms known in the animal kingdom and should only be handled by trained professionals.

WA Wildlife is a non-profit organisation and wildlife rehabilitation facility licensed with DBCA. The WA Wildlife Hospital is a licensed veterinary hospital with the Veterinary Practice Board of WA and admits in excess of 6000 sick and injured native animals each year.



Above: Yellow-bellied sea snake on arrival at AQWA, by AQWA.

Keeping connected and up to date

Understanding the designated zones and their respective activities is crucial for a safe and enjoyable visit to Ngari Capes Marine Park. Since 2018, these zones have been in place to facilitate various recreational and commercial activities while prioritising conservation efforts. Catering to fishers, scuba divers, snorkelers, surfers, and kayakers, the zones promote sustainability and establish sanctuary areas for undisturbed appreciation of the marine environment.

To stay informed and connected, utilise resources such as the Deckee app, Marine Parks app (available for Apple devices), and the FishCatch WA app, alongside engaging with Recfishwest for insights tailored to recreational fishing. These apps provide comprehensive information on marine park regulations, enhancing visitor experiences while promoting responsible enjoyment of Western Australia's coastal treasures.



Marine Parks WA app (Apple only):

Discover Western Australia's diverse marine parks, including Commonwealth marine parks, spanning Camden Sound to Walpole. This app provides comprehensive details on each park and 72 marine wildlife species. With a 'where am I?' feature, users can access zone-specific activity information, including fishing, offline.

Get the app: <https://apps.apple.com/au/app/marine-parks-wa/id1138213788>



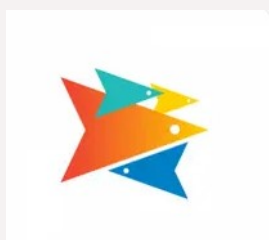
FishCatch WA app:

Recreational fishers in Western Australia, exploring the waters from Kalbarri to Augusta, are invited to utilise the innovative FishCatchWA™ tool to document their demersal scalefish catches. Efficiently log your demersal catches and access valuable insights while actively contributing to scientific research. Seamlessly access the FishCatchWA™ tool through the ServiceWA app or download it now for immediate use.

App for Apple: <https://apps.apple.com/au/app/servicewa/id1599181775>

App for

Android: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=au.gov.wa.digital.service.mobile.servicewa.citizen&hl=en&gl=US>



Recfishwest app:

Access all WA fishing rules, fish ID, GPS marine park info, and safety locations offline! High-quality illustrations and details on hundreds of species available on this free app. Stay updated on fishing seasons, bag limits, and easily identify catches with Recfishwest's three-step fish ID.

App for Apple: <https://apps.apple.com/au/app/recfishwest/id1103630115>

App for

Android: https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.redi.rfw.production&hl=en_AU&gl=US&pli=1

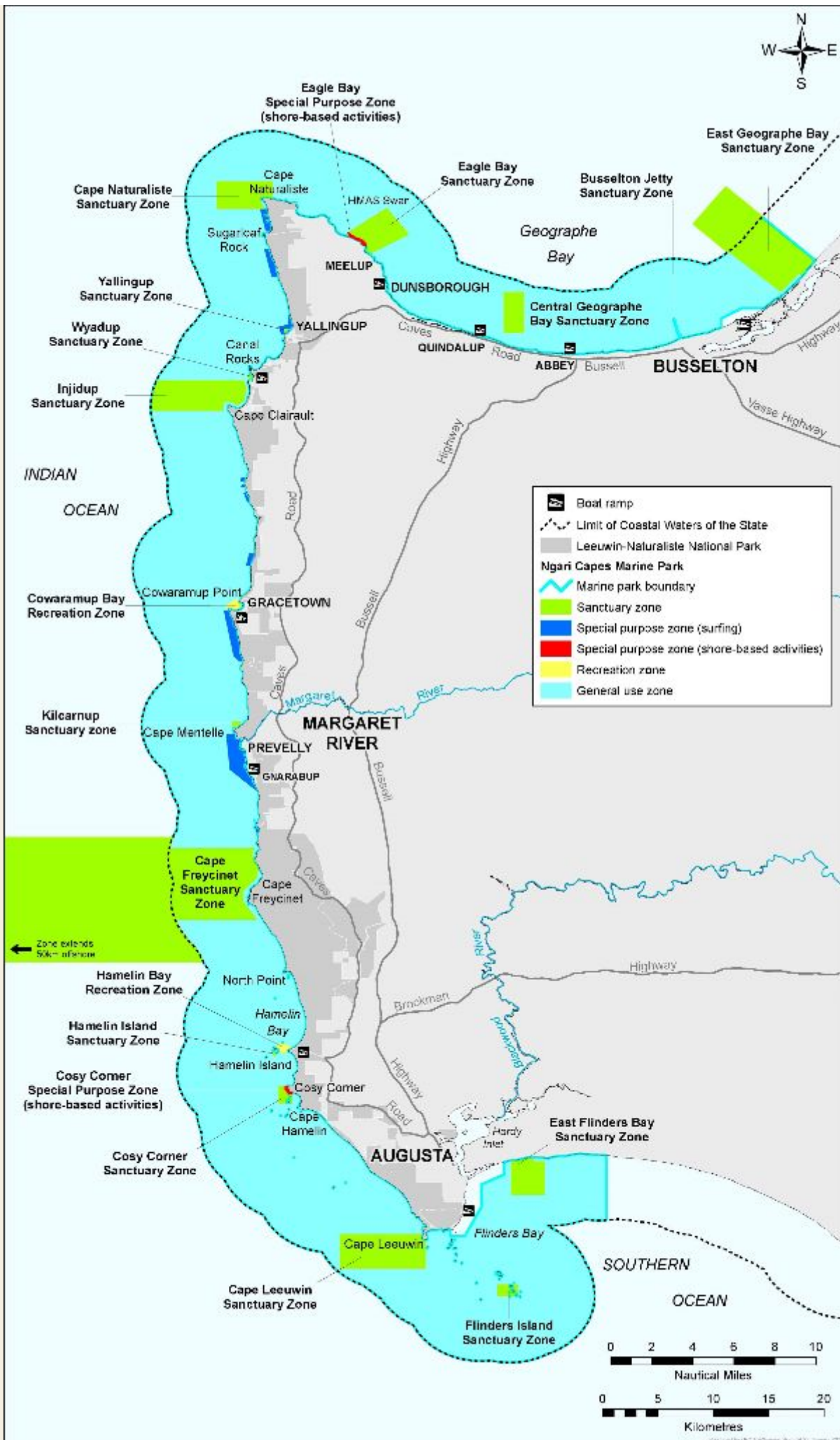
**Deckee boating app:**

DECKEE is a comprehensive boating assistant with features like on-water location sharing, automated logbooks, marine weather, safety alerts, and more, ensuring confident navigation for users. It offers automatic on-water detection, global member visibility, risk forecasting, activity logging, local knowledge heatmaps, interactive chart info, and worldwide vessel tracking, catering to both novice and experienced boaters.


App for Apple: <https://apps.apple.com/au/app/deckee-boating/id1402262696>

App for Android:

https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.deckee.app&hl=en_AU&gl=US



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



Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions

**PARKS AND
WILDLIFE
SERVICE**

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