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Issue 25 - Autumn 2025

Welcome to the 25th issue of *Ngari Capes Marine Park News*

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Image right: St Alouarn Island, Ngari Capes Marine Park, by

Marine park update

By Parks and Wildlife Service, Blackwood

Welcome to our autumn edition of the Ngari Capes Marine Park (NCMP) newsletter! It is ngari (salmon) season. In this edition we take a look at the recent youth education program Waatu Kaatijin (Ocean Learning) Immersion Day at Gnarabup for Margaret River Primary School Year 5 students, hosted by Margaret River Nature Conservation, where students enjoyed an interactive learning activity about our wonderful world under the water. We touch on our visit to Cowaramup Primary School and West Busselton Primary students. We were also lucky enough to have DBCA Marine Research Scientist Dr Ines Leal and her team come down to survey the intertidal granite reefs of Ngari Capes Marine Park.

Furthermore, the DBCA Marine and Parks and Visitor Services (PVS) rangers have been busy cleaning up some of the beaches that adjoin the beautiful Ngari Capes Marine Park. And we have a great guest segment from the Marine Industry Mentoring Network with information on how you can get involved in a beach clean-up on the Busselton Foreshore beach. Alternatively, you can create your own beach clean-up and register it with the AMDI Database.

Christine Taylor, a Conservation Officer for Parks and Wildlife Service, provides us an update on the annual hooded plover survey between our capes. This survey is a collaborative effort by Birdlife Australia, Parks and Wildlife Service and our valued volunteers to gain a better understanding of the hoodies along our coastline, building on 24 years of data.

We also take a look at an uncrewed vessel known as 'Bluebottle' that came down to Geographe Marine Park to monitor compliance of recreational fishers.

Waatu Kaatijin makes a splash at Gnarabup



By Trevor Paddenburg, Margaret River Nature Conservation

Nature Conservation Margaret River Region's youth education program Waatu Kaatijin (Ocean Learning) made a splash at Gnarabup recently, turning local students into citizen scientists solving coastal conservation threats.

Waatu Kaatijin is now in its third year involving three Year 5 classes from Margaret River Primary School, thanks mainly to funding from the Shire of Augusta Margaret River. Program Officer Chloe Deakin said it involved practical, hands-on learning over the school year, where the kids learn from Traditional Owners, work with coastal and marine experts, carry out surveys, identify threats, meet with stakeholders, devise solutions, put them into practice and share their learnings with the community.

The Year 5 students began by hitting the beach at Gnarabup, where they heard about the cultural significance of the coast and native plants from Undalup Association's Wadandi rangers, and identified local birds with Birdlife WA's Christine Wilder. They also heard from marine scientist Jessica Leask, discussing our incredible intertidal marine life; delved into the specialised zoning on the Ngari Capes Marine Park with activities led by Parks and Wildlife Service marine rangers; discussed the impacts of dogs on beaches from shire rangers; and discovered fishing size and catch limits and the science driving management from Fisheries.

Chloe said the students relished swapping the classroom for the beach and were fascinated to learn more about our coastline and ocean conservation.

"We got a beautiful day and the kids were having a blast – I was seeing a lot of smiles! They were also really engaging with the presenters and taking in a lot of knowledge," she said.

Year 5 teacher Troy Yates said Waatu Kaatijin tied in with and even accelerated the school curriculum. "To try and replicate this in the classroom would take months, and it's not as real as being on Country and connecting to our wonderful coastline, so it ticks every box," he said.

Inquiry-based learning takes a different approach from traditional education. It fosters exploration, investigation, and questioning, allowing students to develop a deeper understanding of subjects. Rather than memorising facts, students actively participate in problem-solving and critical thinking to build their own knowledge.

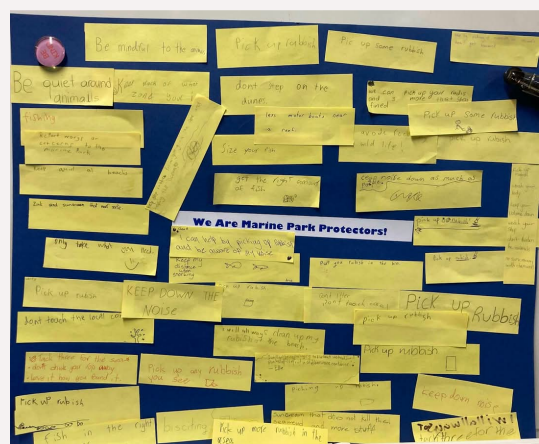
Nature Conservation has secured funding from the [Shire of Augusta Margaret River](#), [Jock Clough Marine Foundation](#) and [Cape Mentelle](#) to run Waatu Kaatijin for 2025 at Margaret River Primary School. But the group is still seeking sponsorship funding to boost the program and roll out to other schools across the capes region.

"The ocean is so central to what we all love about this special part of the world, and Waatu Kaatijin is a really powerful way to engage young people to become stewards of the ocean and the coast," Nature Conservation [general manager Drew McKenzie](#) said. "We're asking corporate or philanthropic donors to get in touch so more local students can reap the benefits of this exciting initiative."



School visits for Waatu Kaatijin

In addition to the immersion day at Gnarabup Beach, Marine Rangers Dean and Amber from Parks and Wildlife Service visited Cowaramup Primary School and West Busselton Primary School to help students understand the importance of the Ngari Capes Marine Park. This visit was a part of the Waatu Kaatijin Educational Marine Areas program. Rangers educated students on the marine park and its management, highlighting how the zones were established to protect biodiversity while allowing people to enjoy the ocean. Students finished the lesson by writing down a pledge to become a marine park protector.



Images above: Marine rangers visiting Year 5 students at West Busselton Primary School (left), marine park protectors poster (right), photos by Educational Marine Areas Australia

Marine wonders of the Ngari Capes Marine Park

Surveying granite cobble reefs

By Dr Inês Leal, Research Scientist, Marine Science Program, DBCA Kensington

This February, DBCA researchers and regional staff, alongside dedicated volunteers, conducted a comprehensive survey of intertidal granite reefs within the Ngari Capes Marine Park.

High and low relief granite reefs exist in both shallow and deep waters. In more sheltered areas such as Smiths Beach and Canal Rocks, granites form boulder fields or may be incorporated into the limestone matrix, such as occurs at Cowaramup and Moses Rock.

These reefs are home to a diverse array of marine life, ranging from primitive molluscs like chitons to vibrant sea slugs. The recent survey recorded over 70 species, contributing valuable data to ongoing monitoring efforts. This information is crucial for assessing changes in reef health over time.

These surveys are part of DBCA's statewide research and monitoring programs that assist in managing our marine parks and reserves. Such work will help to ensure that WA's biologically diverse intertidal reefs will remain a source of wonder for generations to come.

The Marine Science Program extends its gratitude to all the volunteers who dedicated countless hours to this program, making the extensive data collection possible across such a vast coastline.

Have a look below at the images showcasing the diverse life and beauty of these reefs!



Images above: Nudibranch *Chromodoris westraliensis* (left) and volunteer team heading to Canal Rocks sampling site (right). Images by Inês Leal (MSP).

Images below: Cobble reef in Point Picquet (top left), starfish in Flinders Bay including *Meridiastra* and *Coscinasterias* species (top right), Australian triton *Ranella australasia* (bottom left), sampling in Yallingup granite reef (bottom right). Images by Inês Leal (MSP).



Cleaning up the beach!



By Parks and Wildlife Service, Blackwood

The DBCA rangers have been busy cleaning up our beaches. As marine debris becomes all the more common on our beaches it is important that we all do our part. Senior Marine Ranger Josh organised a beach cleanup in February to remove marine debris including a dinghy that had washed ashore in the south of the Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park. Planning is also underway for a similar collaboration between Marine and PVS rangers in the northern areas of the park. If you are interested in finding out how you can get involved in a community beach cleanup, check out the details below from Marine Industry Mentoring Network.

Working together for a cleaner coast: Busselton beach clean up

By Marine Industry Mentoring Network

On 13 April 2025, the Marine Industry Mentoring (MIM) Network will host a community beach cleanup along the picturesque Busselton foreshore. The event will bring together local MIM Network scientists, dedicated volunteers, local artists, small businesses, and environmental enthusiasts to clean up our local Busselton beaches and raise awareness about the impact of pollution on our coastlines.

Microplastics: The invisible danger

Microplastics—plastic particles less than five millimetres in size—come from the breakdown of larger plastics or are intentionally added to products like cosmetics. These tiny pollutants are now pervasive in our oceans, posing serious risks to marine life and human health. Beach cleanups play a crucial role in tackling plastic pollution, helping to remove waste before it fragments into microplastics and spreads further into the environment.

Why beach cleanups are essential, but not enough

Cleaning beaches provides aesthetic value and helps preserve our ecosystems by removing plastic waste that poses a risk to marine life through ingestion or entanglement. Beach cleanups also strengthen community spirit and raise awareness about the effects of littering.

While cleanups like the one at Busselton Foreshore help prevent plastic waste from breaking down into microplastics, they are not a comprehensive solution. The growing presence of microplastics in our bodies demonstrates that more is needed. Systematic changes are crucial, including:

- reducing plastic production and promoting sustainable alternatives
- better waste management and enforcing stricter regulations on single-use plastics
- supporting research on microplastics and their effects on health
- raising public awareness and education about pollution.

The waste collected during the MIM Network Busselton Foreshore beach cleanup will be recorded electronically using the Australian Marine Debris Initiative (AMD) Database app. The AMD Database provides a centralised repository for marine debris data to be collected for analysis and this data enables the identification of prevalent rubbish and also guides future educational efforts. A local artist will transform the waste into an art piece to visually highlight the issue and encourage people to rethink pollution from a creative perspective.

Get involved - for a plastic-free future

Beach cleanups are a good start, but we need to do more. The fight against plastic pollution requires long-term solutions and an informed society. **On 13 April 2025**, you have the opportunity to take action. Join us—MIM Network and many other collaborators—and set an example for the protection of our environment, our oceans, and our health.

To get involved on the day, please register here: <https://www.mimnetwork.com.au/event-details/mim-network-south-west-beach-clean-up>

For more information on MIM Network and upcoming opportunities and events, visit our website:

<https://www.mimnetwork.com.au/>.

Marine debris a mess you can help tackle

By Parks and Wildlife Service

If you notice a beach near you that needs a cleanup, you can plan and create your own cleanup event, with support from Tangaroa Blue Foundation. See [Volunteer - Tangaroa Blue Foundation](#) for more details. Following your cleanup, you can enter your data into the AMDI Database. You can record marine debris and litter at any location any time. This database can provide users with a comprehensive understanding of the marine debris that are impacting our coastlines Australia-wide.

Annual hooded plover survey



By Christine Taylor, Parks and Wildlife Service

In November 2024, Birdlife Australia's Beach-nesting Bird Team travelled to WA to undertake community workshops and on-ground capture and flagging of our Cape to Cape hooded plovers. This is the second year the team has been on ground in WA in a project supported by funding from the Western Australian Government's State NRM Program.

Trained beach-nesting bird volunteers thoroughly surveyed the coastline prior to the team's arrival to confirm breeding activity and locations of our hoodies. The Birdlife team, along with assistance from volunteers and DBCA staff, were able to catch and flag 13 hooded plovers between Sarge Bay and Cape Naturaliste. In addition to the 15 adults and juveniles flagged in 2023, there are now 28 flagged individuals in the Cape to Cape population, allowing us to track movement and site fidelity of our hoodie pairs.

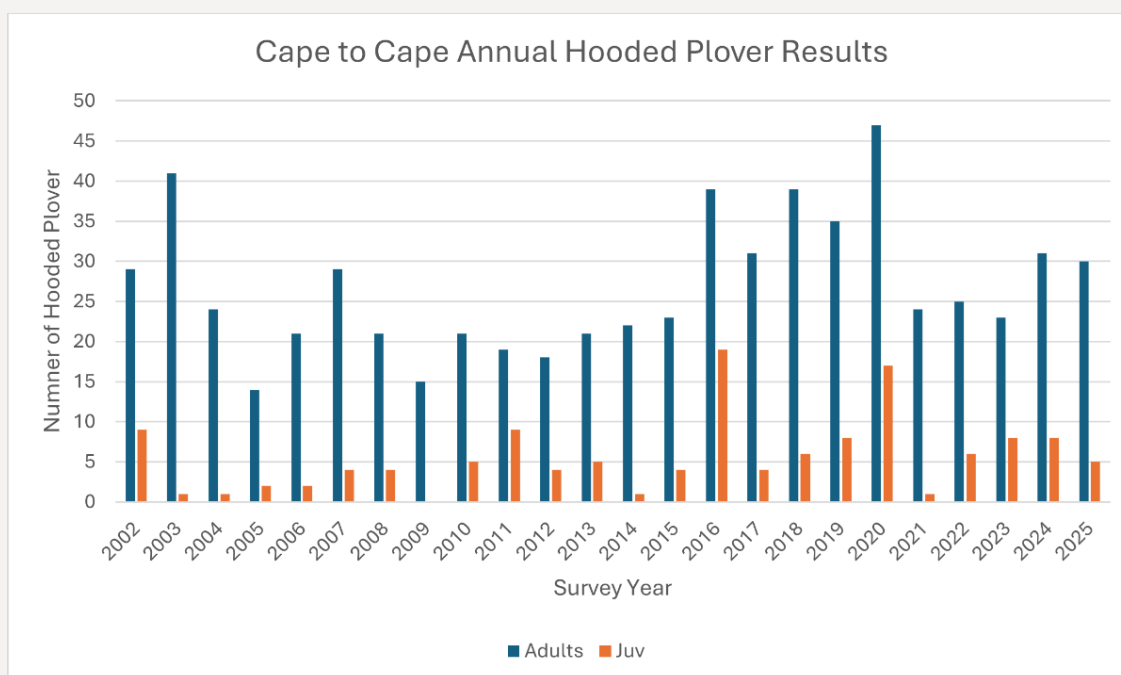
Tegan Knowles, Birdlife Australia's WA Beach-nesting Birds Project Officer praised everyone's commitment to the surveys and said "the monitoring of these flagged individuals, combined with the genetic analysis of blood samples and morphometric measurements, will provide a greater understanding of this threatened species and will ultimately inform ongoing conservation and habitat protection efforts. I wanted to say a massive thank you to the volunteer citizen scientists, organisations and land managers that made this week such a huge success."

In February 2025 the annual Birdlife shorebird monitoring survey was coordinated by Birdlife WA Cape to Cape branch convener, Christine Wilder. This count has been completed annually for the last 24 years by volunteers walking all the beaches from Cape Leeuwin to Cape Naturaliste over the first weekend in February. Several DBCA rangers and marine park rangers assisted by covering some of the remote beaches, but unfortunately none were lucky enough to sight a Hoodie or any birds other than silver gulls!

This year the total count of 30 adults and five chicks/juveniles demonstrates some consistency with last year's figures of 31. Our volunteers may be disappointed not to see more confirmed fledglings in the count, with only one juvenile of flying age reported at Deepdene with unflagged parents. While volunteers have found and reported multiple nests this breeding season, and nest protection such as fencing and signage were often deployed, unfortunately, many eggs did not make it to hatching and those that did rarely survived past the first week as a chick. Still, it was positive to see some chicks and possible nests still on the ground at the time of the count, so all hope is not yet lost.

This survey also provides a great opportunity to get a snapshot of where all the flagged birds are currently holding territories, which has been difficult to keep track of in a rather chaotic and tumultuous season in the private life of our hoodies. Only 15 of the 28 flagged birds were reported, though at least another two (MK and CC) have been reported since so are 'known to be alive' at the time of the count. Hopefully more will show up again, though we will never know where they have been hiding!

Thanks to all that contributed to this and previous surveys—to have an ongoing dataset of hoodie numbers for the past 24 years along our coastline is a very impressive achievement!



Bluebottle strikes: Fishers caught in illegal fishing sting in Geopraphe Marine Park

By Australian Marine Parks

During last summer in Geographe Bay, an uncrewed surface vessel known as a 'Bluebottle' was successfully deployed to monitor compliance of recreational fishers within Geographe Marine Park, adjacent to Ngari Capes Marine Park, managed by Parks Australia.

The Bluebottle deployment was part of an extended operation across Geographe Marine Park and Two Rocks Marine Park (north of Perth), undertaking 59 days of 24-hour monitoring and capturing 27 incidents of potential illegal fishing.

Developed by the Australian company Ocius, Bluebottles use renewable energy to either autonomously or remotely monitor a designated area capturing real-time imagery and data 24/7. Equipped with 360-degree day/night infrared cameras, radar and satellite, the 22ft yacht-like vessels are used to report on vessel activity within national park zones where fishing is not allowed. Information captured is relayed to marine park compliance officers allowing for consistent monitoring in these highly protected areas.

This Bluebottle deployment builds on the successful trial of this emerging technology in Two Rocks and Jurien marine parks in January 2023. Over a 30-day period the Bluebottle detected 22 incidences of potential illegal fishing which were referred to marine park compliance officers for investigation with the majority resulting in penalty infringement notices being issued.





Parks Australia is continuing to explore how new technologies can improve and complement our existing compliance monitoring and surveillance program in the future. These technologies provide a strong deterrent for illegal fishing in marine parks and for those not complying with the rules, penalties can include penalty infringement notices of \$782.50 issued to the skipper of the vessel, and possible prosecution. Suspicious or illegal activity in Australian Marine Parks can be reported to the **Marine Parks hotline number 1800 852 975** or email Marine.Compliance@dcceew.gov.au For more information about fishing zones, visit the Australian Marine Parks' [website](#) for more details.

Keeping safe this autumn

Thank you for your continued support and interest in our work. If you or your family are out fishing for salmon this autumn, follow key messaging from Recfishwest and keep the sand between your toes, with a high chance you will catch more fish from the beach than from the rocks. Refer to their tips here; [2025 awesome autumn of salmon - Recfishwest](#). If you do decide to fish off the rocks, please remember to wear a life jacket, never turn your back to the swell and tie up to a rock anchor safety point. Recreational fishers are also urged to bleed their catch well away from the water's edge and discard fish waste and rubbish responsibly, away from swimmers and other water users. Refer to Explore Parks for more fishing and safety tips this autumn: [Fishing, boating, paddling, snorkelling and diving | Explore Parks WA](#)

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, 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.



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 including 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



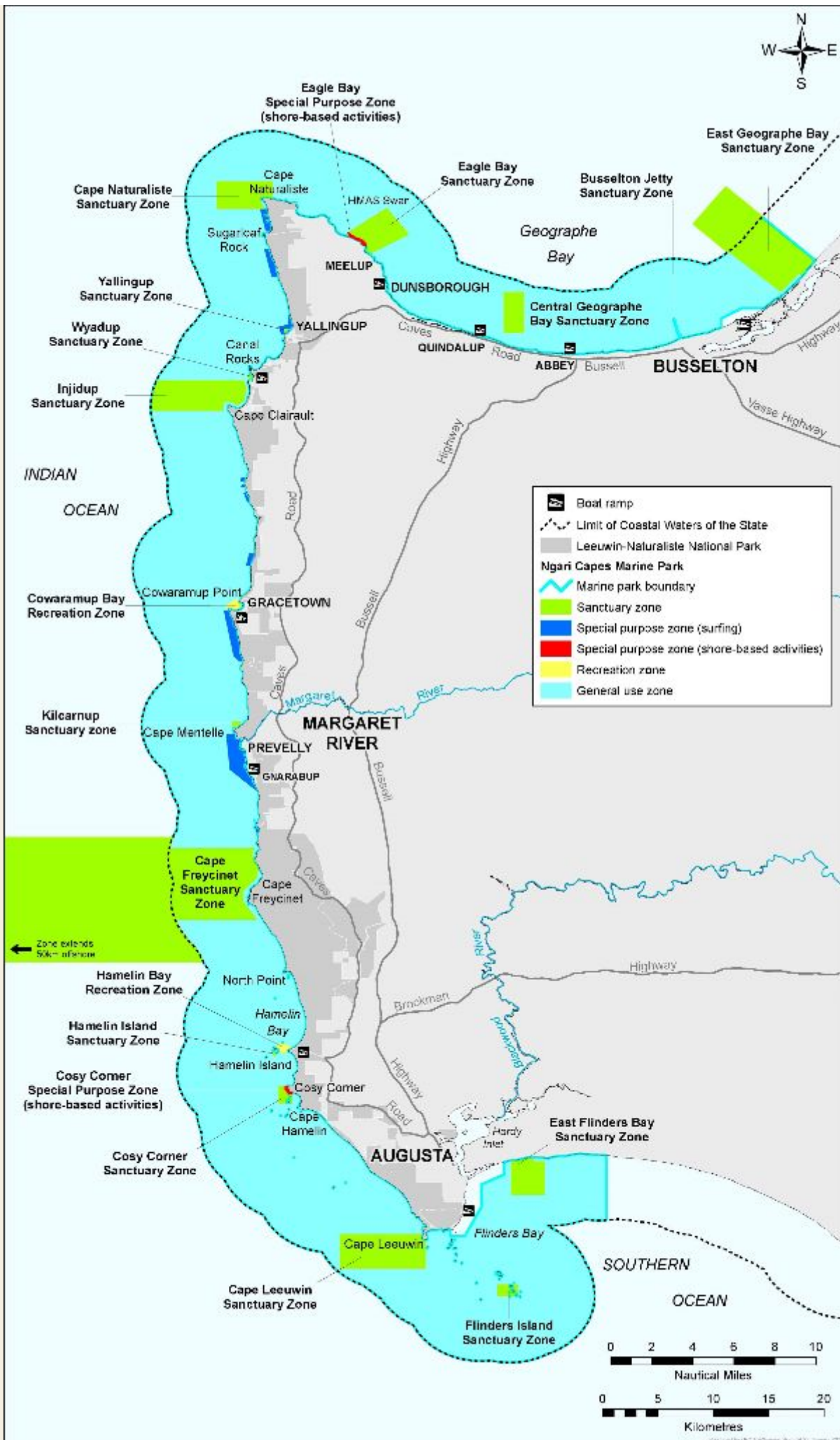
FishCatch WA app

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>



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



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