

## Library

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**From:** Parks and Wildlife Service <no-reply@newsletters.dbca.wa.gov.au>  
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**Subject:** Ngari Capes Newsletter - Winter 2025



Issue 26 - Winter 2025

## Welcome to the 26th issue of *Ngari Capes Marine Park News*

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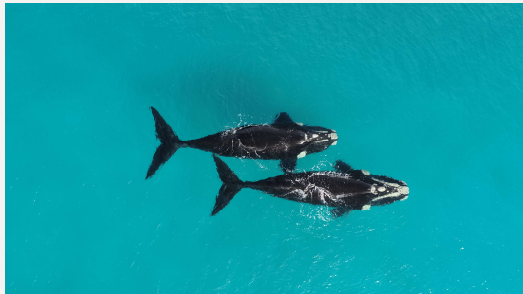
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**Image right:** Starfish spotted while seagrass monitoring in Ngari Capes Marine Park by Tanika Shalders

## Marine park update



Above: Two southern right whales by Blair Ranford

*By Parks and Wildlife Service, Blackwood*

Welcome to our latest edition of the Ngari Capes Marine Park (NCMP) newsletter! As the seasons change and the coastal winds grow brisker, the marine park experiences the beauty of the annual northern migration of whales along our coastline. With over 40,000 mamang (humpback whale in Noongar language) migrating north, they can be seen gathering and resting in Noongar waters.

We generally welcome the southern right whales to our shores later in the season after they have made their way north from the Antarctic. However, the Ngari Capes marine team were lucky enough to have already spotted this endangered species in May. The increase in whale visitors to our shorelines means it is time for the Large Whale Disentanglement (LWD) team to sharpen their skills. Read below and find out how our LWD team gets geared up for winter.

Our coastal creature feature takes a look at Australia's own endemic species of sea lion, the Australian sea lion. This charismatic and inquisitive species has recently been spotted enjoying some rest on the shores of Ngari Capes Marine Park. Marine Rangers made a visit to Margaret River Primary School to discuss the importance of conservation for Australian sea lions, aligning with their research topic for the term on threatened species. We also spent some of the Easter school holidays set up with DPIRD Fisheries at Hamelin Bay beach to deliver education to visitors hoping to catch a glimpse of the local stingray inhabitants. We touch upon the importance in caring for the stingrays that are protected at Hamelin Bay by not feeding them and allowing them to stay wild. We share a segment from Parks Australia, looking at their trip collecting baseline data on fish communities and benthic habitats in the South-west Corner Marine Park.

We look back on a fantastic effort by MIM Network who were able to clear 112.1kg of waste from the Busselton Foreshore in April. The team organised a clean-up that was attended by 40 volunteers! We also take a look back on the seagrass monitoring project run by DBCA's Marine Science Program and Edith Cowan University. This ongoing monitoring program highlights the importance of preserving seagrass, which are essential for food, and also provide an important nursery for breeding. The seagrass beds that are found in Ngari Capes Marine Park are the second largest in Western Australia. To assist with its conservation, we have provided some tips on maintaining seagrass friendly

moorings. And finally, we touch on the importance of separation distances to marine mammals when out on the water. The intent of these guidelines is to provide a framework that allows people to observe and interact with whales in a way that does not cause harm to the animals.

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## Disentanglement team are gearing up for whale season

*By Parks and Wildlife Service, Blackwood*

As we see increased numbers of whales visiting our coastline through their northern migration from Antarctica, the large whale disentanglement team have been gathering to strengthen their skills aiming to safely free whales that may find themselves entangled. The team safely practiced their cutting techniques equipped with specialised tools.



As some team members have completed several successful disentanglements over past seasons, the crew were able to share their invaluable stories and skills learnt, reflecting on what worked well and what can be improved moving into this whale season. Additionally, the new purpose-built patrol vessel PV Wattern provides stowage of the disentanglement point boat over the stern rather than towing the smaller vessel. Rangers have worked closely with vessel builder Westerberg and local fabricators to design and construct a safe cradle and davit system to ensure the marine vessel is equipped and ready for immediate response.

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## Coastal creature feature: The Australian sea lion

*By Parks and Wildlife Service, Blackwood*

Australia's coastline is home to the rarest species of sea lion in the world, the Australian sea lion (*Neophoca cinerea*). Found only in South Australian and Western Australian waters, these charismatic creatures are not only unique in their biology but also vital indicators of ocean health. Yet despite their charm and ecological importance, Australian sea lions face mounting pressures that place have resulted in them being listed as threatened species.



Australian sea lions are the only pinniped (seals, sea lions and walruses) endemic to Australia. Unlike most other seals that have an annual breeding cycle, their cycle can extend up to 18 months, making population recovery particularly slow. This slow pace, coupled with their fidelity to specific breeding colonies, means even small disturbances can have long term impacts. Marine rangers recently took a visit to Margaret River Primary School to talk to students about Australian sea lions, aligning with their current research topic on threatened species.



We have been delighted to have some recent visits from an Australian sea lion to Ngari Capes Marine Park. Seals and sea lions spend a great deal of time out of water resting or moulting and should be left undisturbed during this process. They may stay in the area for several days without movement. This is normal behaviour and does need to be reported, however if you see a seal or sea lion in a busy location such as near a boat ramp or on a dog beach, you can report it to Wildcare (08) 9474 9055. Dogs may disturb seals from resting and recuperating. If a seal feels threatened, it may attack your dog. Some diseases may also be transferred between dogs and seals. If you come across a seal when walking your dog, please put the dog on a leash and keep the recommended 30 metres away.



Above: A recent visit from an Australian sea lion to Quindalup beach in Dunsbrough.



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## Hamelin Bay stingrays

*By Parks and Wildlife Service, Blackwood*

If you have ever dived or snorkled through Ngari Capes Marine Park, chances are you may have witnessed a shadow gliding along the seafloor. The smooth stingray (*Dasyatis brevicaudata*) is a local inhabitant of Ngari Capes Marine Park and is the largest species of stingray to live in Australian waters. The smooth stingray can grow up to 4.3 metres in length, with the largest of this species found weighing 350kg! However, the smooth stingray is not the only stingray species we are lucky enough to have visit Ngari Capes Marine Park. The black stingray (*Dasyatis thetidis*), and the eagle ray (*Myliobatis australis*) also inhabit our coastal waters. All three species can be seen swimming in the shallows at Hamelin Bay beach. On calm clear days, stingrays are easily visible as they search for food around the old jetty pylons and in the shallows along the beach. Stingrays aren't just flat fish lying in the sand, they play an important ecological role by stirring up sediment as they feed, which helps maintain healthy seabeds. Look but don't touch and stay several metres away. These gentle giants are generally calm in nature, but like to be left alone, although not normally aggressive, these animals are wild and will defend themselves with a dangerous barb on their tail if disturbed. This is a defense mechanism only used when threatened. As with all marine creatures, a respectful distance is key, especially when snorkeling or diving.



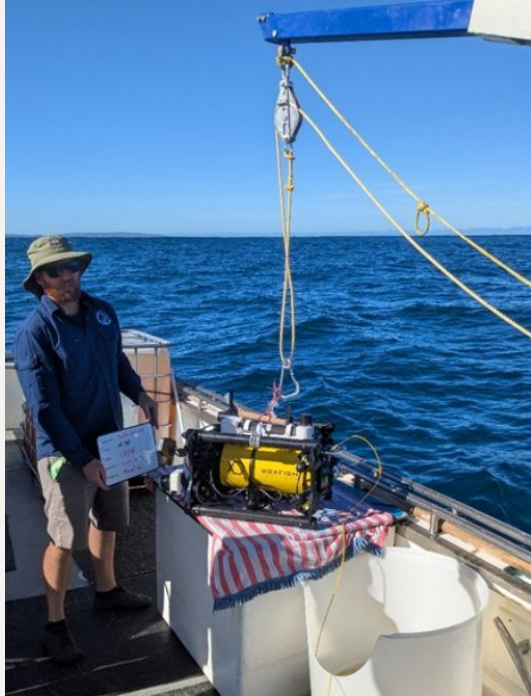
Above: Parks and Wildlife and DPIRD delivering community education.

Parks and Wildlife and DPIRD (Fisheries) delivered community education during the Easter school holidays about our local stingray residents to visitors of our beautiful Hamelin Bay beach. Our key messaging to the public is to keep them wild and to please not feed the stingrays. Stingrays have evolved extremely well and are equipped with an array of adaptations that allow them to easily sense their food. They use their electroreceptors called ampullae of Lorenzini, to detect food, consuming a diet of molluscs, crustaceans, and small fish.

Feeding the stingrays can alter their natural behaviour and any uneaten food can attract other fish and sharks. If you are coming back into shore on the boat, please discard fish waste at least 500m from shore or take it with you. Alternatively, you can donate your fish skeleton research. Visit [Send us your fish skeletons | Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development](#)

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## Drones in the Deep: ROV Surveys in South-west Corner Marine Park



The South-west Corner Marine Park, located off southern Western Australia, spans a vast and ecologically diverse stretch of ocean. In May, researchers from the University of Tasmania and the University of Western Australia, alongside Wadandi Cultural Custodians and Parks Australia staff, embarked on a collaborative research voyage aboard the vessel Kamikaze.

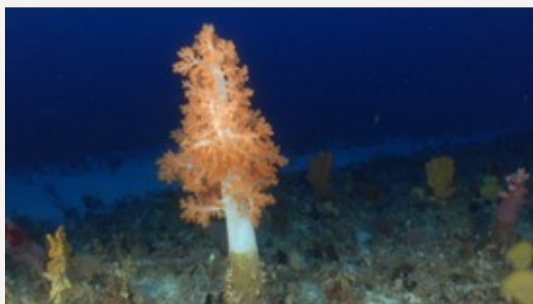
The trip formed part of [National Environmental Science Program \(NESP\) Project 4.21](#), aimed at collecting baseline data on fish communities and benthic habitats to assess natural values and inform management across temperate marine parks. Researchers surveying ocean biodiversity joined the voyage to South-west Corner Marine Park, piloting cutting-edge technology to explore deep marine environments. Their project is also supported by the Australian Government Our Marine Parks Grant program.

A highlight of the voyage was the deployment of the Boxfish ROV, a compact, high-resolution Remote Operated Vehicle. The ROV was used to survey deep reef features across multiple 1km long transects within the marine park. This technology lets researchers direct the ROV to see the habitats in real time and captures high resolution 4K footage of fish communities and benthic habitats on the seafloor within the South-west Corner's National Park Zone.

Despite rough conditions departing Augusta Marina, the team was rewarded with calm seas and a humpback whale sighting near Hamelin Bay. The data and imagery collected will be analysed and added to publicly-accessible national data portals including GlobalArchive, [Squiddle+](#) and [Seamap Australia](#), contributing to management and long-term monitoring of Australian Marine Parks. Analysis of the ROV imagery will test whether this technology can reliably and cost-effectively map deep biodiversity within Australian Marine Parks.

Have a look below at the images showcasing the diverse life and beauty of the South-west Corner Marine Park! This technology is being used in other Australian Marine Parks with plans to deploy the ROV on an expedition to the Eastern Recherche Marine Park later this year, in collaboration with Wudjari Cultural Custodians.

Image above: The Boxfish Remote Operated Vehicle being deployed by Dr. Jacquomo Monk in the South-west Corner Marine Park – National Park Zone off Hamelin Bay, WA.



Images above: Cup sponge (top left), Gorgonian fan coral (top right), Cauliflower coral (bottom left), Western King Wrasse (bottom right)

## Marine Industry Mentoring (MIM) Network beach clean-up

*By Parks and Wildlife Service*

On the 13th of April MIM network organised a beach clean-up on the Busselton Foreshore. This event was attended by 40 enthusiastic volunteers who were able to remove 112.1kg of waste. Additionally, as part of the process MIM Network sorted a subset of the debris for entry into the Australian Marine Debris Initiative (AMD) database with Tangaroa Blue. The top three items recorded included 1,006 cigarette butts and filters, 538 plastic food wrappers, and 296 pieces of broken glass and ceramics. The Ngari Capes marine team would like to say a big thank you to the MIM Network for helping to keep trash out of the ocean. And please remember if you would like to organise a beach clean-up near you, you can register with Tangaroa Blue and record the debris in the AMDI database.





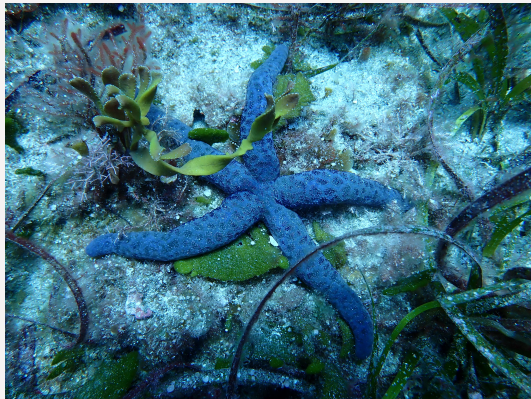
Above: Some of MIM Network and their volunteers with Tangaroa crew and 112.1kg of waste (top). Sorting through the waste (bottom left). Tangaroa crew and MIM co-founder Emily Evans (bottom right). Photos by Frankie Ixfeld.

## Seagrass monitoring

*By Tanika Shalders, Parks and Wildlife Service*

In February 2025, seagrass monitoring in the Ngari Capes Marine Parks was completed by DBCA regional staff with researchers from DBCA's Marine Science Program and Edith Cowan University. The team sampled several annual and biannual sites within Geographe Bay to determine the health and condition of shallow, mid- and deep water *Posidonia sinuosa* meadows. By measuring seagrass density, height and cover over time we have been documenting the condition of seagrass meadows within the bay since 2013. When compared to seagrass condition from previous years we are able to observe natural fluctuations, long-term trends and responses to pressures (e.g. local water quality or

ocean warming). While sampling these sites we were lucky to observe a number of other organisms that live within and rely on these meadows including starfish, urchin, nudibranch, sea fans, sponges and corals.



Above: Photos captured by the seagrass monitoring crew from top left clockwise direction: starfish, coral, macroalgae caulerpa, sea lace bryozoan. Credit: Tanika Shalders.

## Seagrass and seagrass friendly moorings

*By Parks and Wildlife Service, Blackwood*

Here, in Ngari Capes Marine Park, stretching from Busselton to Augusta, we are fortunate to have some of the most beautiful seagrass meadows. As aforementioned, our dedicated team of DBCA staff along with ECU staff and students conduct extensive monitoring of seagrass in Geographe Bay. This monitoring provides valuable insights into the health of our seagrass meadows.

Seagrass faces various pressures, including changes in seawater temperature, nutrient levels, and turbidity. Human activities, such as moorings, can also impact seagrass health. With one of the largest concentrations of moorings in the state, it's essential to use seagrass-friendly moorings and ensure they are serviced annually. The adoption of seagrass friendly moorings is an essential step in balancing recreational boating with the need to safeguard marine ecosystems for future generations.





Let's celebrate and protect these underwater treasures. Together, we can ensure a healthy marine environment for future generations. Please remember it is an offence to install a mooring without permission or to use another person's mooring without their permission. Please use designated mooring to protect marine habitats, check mooring conditions and ensure your vessel is securely attached and report any damage or issues with mooring to the relevant authorities. Furthermore, when anchoring, please keep away from sensitive areas like coral reefs or seagrass beds.

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## Whale season in Ngari Capes

*By Parks and Wildlife Service, Blackwood*

Ngari Capes Marine Park is privileged to have several species of whales migrate through the park each year. The abundance of whales provides an incredible opportunity for people to have high quality whale watching experiences. As we have entered into whale season here in Ngari Capes, it is important to keep our distance when watching whales. Approaching whales can disrupt their natural behaviours, cause stress, and even lead to injury or accidents. For your safety and theirs please adhere to guidelines and regulations and stay 100m away when out in your boat. Use binoculars to enjoy whales from afar. Boaters are urged to leave the area if a whale exhibits behaviour such as diving for prolonged periods or swimming evasively as it could mean that the whale is distressed or disturbed. Respecting their space helps ensure these incredible animals stay wild, healthy, and safe. If you are viewing them from shore the best locations to view them are Cape Naturaliste, Cape Leeuwin and Point Piquet.





The diagram above shows the separation distance needed between vessel and whales.

\* Never swim with whales; never touch the whale.

\* Keep to the separation distances in the diagram

You must not restrict the path of a whale or approach from behind.

Remember - it is an offence under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* to approach a whale by vessel or person closer than the separation distances permitted.

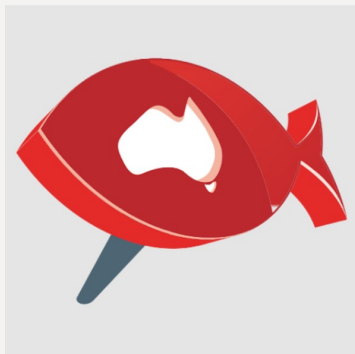
## Have you seen anything unusual above or below the water?



Discover a new word of birding! eBird Australia is a collaborative project managed by the Centre for Biodiversity and Conservation Science. eBird Mobile makes it easy to record the birds you see in the field and seamlessly link these observations with eBird-- a global online database of bird records used by hundreds of thousands of birders around the world. This free resource makes it easy to keep track of what you see, while making your data openly available for scientific research, education, and conservation.

App for Apple: <https://apps.apple.com/au/app/ebird/id988799279>

App for Android: [https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=edu.cornell.birds.ebird&hl=en\\_AU&gl=US](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=edu.cornell.birds.ebird&hl=en_AU&gl=US)



If you are out on the water or diving below and spot a marine species you think is uncommon, you can record it on Redmap (Range Extension Database & Mapping project). Redmap is a citizen science research project that invites the community to spot, log and map marine species that are uncommon in Australia, or along particular parts of our coast. The species identification of these sightings is verified by a panel of Australian expert marine scientists. Over time, Redmap will use this 'citizen science' data to map which Australian marine species may be shifting where they live in response to changes in the marine environment, such as ocean warming/climate change.

App for Apple: <https://apps.apple.com/au/app/redmap/id720634088>

App for Android: [https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=au.com.ionata.redmap&hl=en\\_AU&gl=US](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=au.com.ionata.redmap&hl=en_AU&gl=US)

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Thank you for your continued support and interest in our work. We appreciate you taking the time to read about what makes our marine parks so special throughout this time of the year.

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## 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.



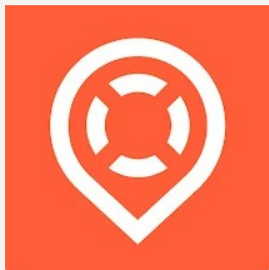
### **Recfishwest app:**

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



### **FishCatch WA app**

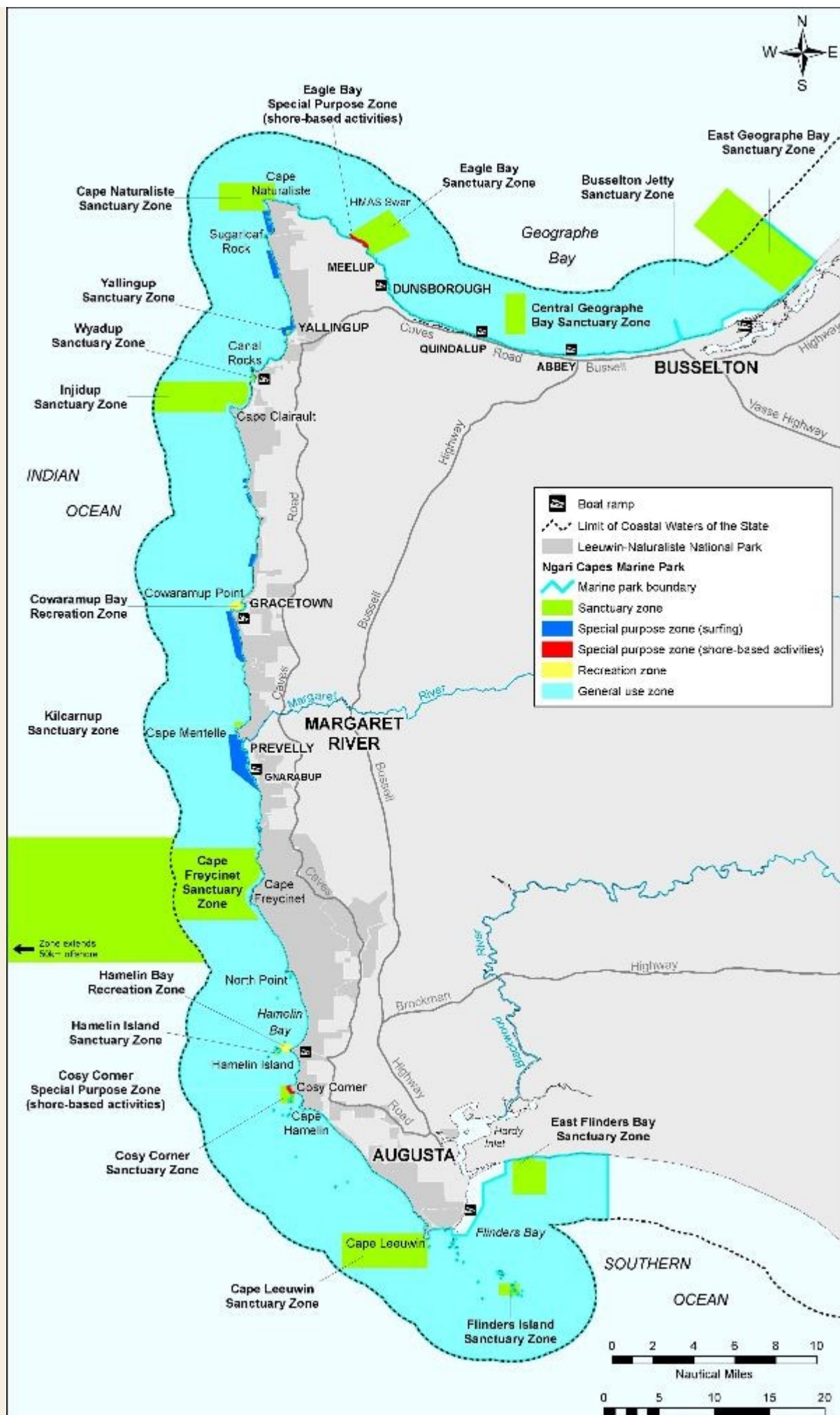
Recreational fishers in Western Australia, exploring the waters from Kalbarri to Augusta, are invited to utilise the innovative FishCatchWA™ tool to document their demersal scalefish catches. Efficiently log your demersal catches and access valuable insights while actively contributing to scientific 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.

