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Shark Bay, Western Australia  
World Heritage since 1991

# Shark Bay marine reserves

Shark Bay Marine Park and  
Hamelin Pool Marine Nature Reserve



**Marine parks...  
WA's submerged  
wonders**

## Visitor guide



Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

**Download this guide and take it with you.**



**Front cover** Fish community, Surf Point.

**Above** Soft coral – off Dirk Hartog Island.

Welcome to Shark Bay, a place of exceptional natural beauty, diverse ecosystems, rare and endemic species, the world's largest communities of seagrasses and living fossils that offer a glimpse into the planet's evolutionary past.

The marine reserves support a mixture of tropical and temperate fish species, an abundance of turtles, dugongs, sea snakes and sharks and communities of seagrasses, corals and sponges. As you explore this remarkable environment, make sure you know what you can do in the different zones that you visit and help preserve the area's natural and cultural heritage.

## **Marine protected areas**

Shark Bay's marine reserves are part of a network of marine protected areas along the coast of Western Australia. This network protects key areas and values including assets important to commercial and recreational fishers, such as schooling sites, nursery areas, spawning and breeding grounds, and culturally significant places from Aboriginal sites to historic shipwrecks.

The marine reserve network also supports tourism activities like whale watching, dolphin viewing, scuba diving, snorkelling, kayaking, and boat tours. It provides opportunities for scientific research and education about marine conservation, marine ecology and marine park management.



**Above** Seagrass in Shark Bay.

## World Heritage

Shark Bay Marine Park and Hamelin Pool Marine Nature Reserve lie within the Shark Bay World Heritage Area, which is valued internationally for its rich and abundant marine life and spectacular scenery where the desert meets the sea.

Shark Bay is in a transition zone between temperate and tropical waters. There are at least 320 fish species, many of them tropical, and more than 80 coral species in Shark Bay.

Extensive seagrass meadows support over 10,000 dugongs and create environments that favour stromatolites, fragum cockles and a pink snapper unique to Shark Bay.

Also noted in the World Heritage values of Shark Bay is the huge number of humpback whales visiting the bay during their southward migration in spring.



**Above** Emus bathing in Monkey Mia.

## Extraordinary ecosystems

Covering over 4000km<sup>2</sup>, seagrass meadows are the foundation of Shark Bay marine ecosystems. They provide shelter and food for hundreds of species from molluscs and crustaceans to fish and sea snakes.

Seagrasses also create unusual salinity gradients by trapping sediment and building sills that restrict water flow. The work of seagrasses is so important that these processes are among the reasons Shark Bay is World Heritage listed.

## Aboriginal connection

The Malgana name for Shark Bay is Gathaaguda. The majority of the Shark Bay Marine Park is Malgana Sea Country, with the north eastern section in Yinggarda Country. Aboriginal people have a long history of connection to the land and sea of Shark Bay. There are many significant Aboriginal heritage sites within the marine reserves, including more than 80 recorded shell middens. These middens were built up over hundreds, sometimes thousands, of years. This continued use is evidence of the ongoing importance of the area to Aboriginal people.



**Above** Green turtle.

## Things to see and do

### **Marine wildlife viewing**

Boating is popular in Shark Bay, although not the only way to see marine wildlife. Kayaking, canoeing and stand-up paddle boarding are other ways to enjoy the scenery and wildlife.

You can also view marine wildlife from lookouts at Eagle Bluff and Skipjack Point. Sea snakes, turtles, dugongs and fish are also seen from the jetties at Denham and Monkey Mia.

### **Fishing**

Fishing enthusiasts drawn to Shark Bay Marine Park must follow the fishing rules for the Gascoyne Coast Bioregion. Current updates are available at [fish.wa.gov.au](http://fish.wa.gov.au). It is important to note that other restrictions apply in addition to these rules.

Specific fishing allowances for each marine park zone are outlined on the map in this guide. Not all types of fishing gear can be used in all zones and fishing is prohibited in sanctuary zones and in Hamelin Pool Marine Nature Reserve.

To maintain a safe environment avoid discarding bait, fish remains or offal near the shore as it can attract predators like sharks. Please also refrain from offering bait or fish to dolphins or sea birds, as this can create dependency and have adverse effects on their well-being.



**Above** Stonefish are venemous and hard to see.

## Boat launch facilities

Boat launch facilities are located throughout Shark Bay, including sealed boat ramps at Denham, Monkey Mia and Carnarvon. For other boat launch and beach access sites see the brochures for Francois Peron National Park, Dirk Hartog Island National Park and Edel Land National Park (proposed).

## Camping and facilities

Parks and reserves adjacent to Shark Bay Marine Park have visitor facilities and campsites. For more information see the visitor guides for Monkey Mia Reserve, Francois Peron National Park, Dirk Hartog Island National Park and Edel Land National Park (proposed).

Visitor facilities are also provided at Shell Beach Conservation Park and Hamelin Pool Marine Nature Reserve. Bush camping is not permitted within these reserves, although there are commercial camping and accommodation facilities at Hamelin Pool.

For more information about site facilities and activities please visit: [exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au](http://exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au)



**Above** Tubeworm.

## Shark Bay Marine Park zones

Shark Bay Marine Park is zoned to enable multiple use – recreation, commercial and biodiversity conservation. The location and coordinates of these zones are shown on the map in this brochure alongside the recreation guide, which lists the activities permitted in each zone.

### Sanctuary zones

Sanctuary zones are ‘look but don’t take’ areas managed for nature conservation and appreciation. You may boat, swim and dive in sanctuary zones, but fishing is not permitted.

The Gudrun Wreck Sanctuary Zone is the largest wooden shipwreck found off Western Australia. The Gudrun sank at Shark Bay in 1901 carrying timber from Bunbury to England. It now lies in about six metres of water north of Cape Peron and is inhabited by a rich variety of marine life.

Other sanctuary zones are at Surf Point, Sandy Point, Mary Anne Island, Eighteen Mile, L’haridon Bight, Big Lagoon and Disappointment Reach.

### Recreation zones

Recreation zones are for activities like fishing, diving and swimming. Commercial fishing and activities like aquaculture and pearling are not permitted in recreation zones.

Monkey Mia Recreation Zone has extra measures to protect the visiting dolphins. Motorised water sports, spearfishing, netting and crabbing are not permitted in the recreation zone. Also, no corals, shells, fish or other marine specimens may be collected (alive or dead). Line fishing is one exception and is permitted outside the dolphin experience area.

Little Lagoon and Dubaut Inlet are other recreation zones in Shark Bay.



**Above** Humpback whale.

## Special purpose zones

Special purpose zones are areas protected for their high priority conservation values. Only activities compatible with each special purpose are permitted in these zones. The special purpose zones are for:

- wildlife viewing and protection at Cape Peron
- seagrass protection at Wooramel
- dugong protection at Gladstone
- nursery protection at Big Lagoon
- habitat protection in the south of Henri Freycinet Harbour.

## General use zone

The general use zone is the largest and enables a wide range of commercial and recreational activities, including boating, swimming, diving, fishing, aquaculture and pearling.





**Above** Stromatolites.

## Hamelin Pool Marine Nature Reserve

Hamelin Pool Marine Nature Reserve is a 'look but don't take' area managed solely for conserving internationally significant marine life.

The diversity of cyanobacteria and other microbes in Hamelin Pool rivals the biodiversity of rainforests. They grow in colonies forming microbial mats and microbialites, including stromatolites, which are known as living fossils.

These mats and structures are an important part of Shark Bay's World Heritage listing. They are also fragile and can take hundreds of years to recover if damaged.

### Protect Hamelin Pool

- Due to severe damage from Tropical Cyclone Seroja, the stromatolite viewing boardwalk at Hamelin Pool is unsafe and closed until further notice.
- Do not walk on the beach below the high tide mark.
- Boating, swimming, diving and snorkelling are not permitted over stromatolites or within 300m of the shore.
- Boat anchoring is not permitted over stromatolites throughout the reserve.
- Do not run boats ashore over marine mats or stromatolites.



**Above** Bar-bellied sea snake.

## Look after marine wildlife

- Dispose of all litter properly.
- Be especially careful with fishing line and plastics as birds and marine animals can die from eating plastics or becoming entangled in lines, nets and ropes.
- Slow down in your boat if you see turtles or dugongs. Avoid hitting these animals.
- Drive slowly and navigate within marked channels to avoid hitting marine animals.
- If a dolphin approaches you while fishing, please take your line out of the water.
- Do not take a boat within 100m of a dolphin or whale.
- Do not cross seagrass banks at low tide.
- Protect birds by not feeding them or leaving baited lines exposed.
- Current fishing regulations are available from [fish.wa.gov.au](http://fish.wa.gov.au)
- Observe fishing regulations and fish for a feed, not the freezer.
- Anchor in sand to protect fragile reef, sponge and seagrass communities.



# Boat safely in Shark Bay Marine Park

- Plan your trip well and observe standard safety precautions.
- Always check the weather forecast before you leave.
- Boat according to your skills, experience and the conditions.
- While on the water keep an eye on the weather and the water at all times. Boats have been swamped and lives lost by unexpected waves.
- Carry the safety equipment relevant to your vessel and one life jacket for each person on board.
- Ensure your boat is in good working order and has extra fuel.
- Carry enough water, food supplies and sun protection for your trip.
- Let a responsible adult know about your trip.
- Keep at least 50m clear of dive flags.
- Avoid anchoring close to cliff edges.

## Take care when diving or snorkelling

- Only dive and snorkel on a slack tide.
- Stay alert for boat traffic.
- Display a dive flag when diving. The minimum flag size is 750mm by 600mm.
- It is recommended that a dive flag is displayed when snorkelling more than 200m from the shore.
- Act responsibly when interacting with marine plants and animals.
- Make sure your diving gear is secured, not dangling, and be careful where you kick.
- Always leave someone onboard when diving or snorkelling from a boat.
- Many marine animals use venom or toxins for catching prey or defending themselves. Some can cause serious harm to people.
- Shipwrecks are protected and the removal of artefacts is prohibited. Please help preserve our maritime heritage by leaving wrecks undisturbed.

# More information

## Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions Parks and Wildlife Service – Shark Bay District

Knight Terrace, Denham WA 6537

Phone (08) 9948 2226

[sharkbay.org](http://sharkbay.org)

[dbca.wa.gov.au](http://dbca.wa.gov.au)

## Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development - Fisheries

[fish.wa.gov.au](http://fish.wa.gov.au)

## Bureau of Meteorology

[bom.gov.au/marine](http://bom.gov.au/marine)

## Shark Bay Volunteer Marine Rescue

VHF 16

*Photos – Holley, Whitelaw, Reinhold, Vasyli, Strydom*



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could save  
your life**



[emergencyplus.com.au](http://emergencyplus.com.au)

Download the free Emergency+ app before your visit. Use the app in an emergency to call for assistance. If there is no mobile phone coverage you **WILL NOT** be able to call **000** but the app will provide you with your GPS location.

Check for alerts and updates directly related to parks and major trails at [alerts.dbca.wa.gov.au](http://alerts.dbca.wa.gov.au) and for all emergency information in Western Australia at [emergency.wa.gov.au](http://emergency.wa.gov.au).

Find more park visitor information, book campsites and share your experiences at [exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au](http://exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au).



Information current at September 2024.  
Publication available in alternative format on request.

ACTIVITIES	HAMELIN POOL MARINE NATURE RESERVE <sup>3</sup>	SHARK BAY MARINE PARK			
		SANCTUARY ZONE	SPECIAL PURPOSE ZONE	RECREATION ZONE	GENERAL USE ZONE
Fishing from guided charter vessels <sup>2</sup>	X	X	Only at Freycinet SPZ and Wooramel SPZ	X <sup>2</sup>	✓
Line fishing	X	X	✓	✓ <sup>1</sup>	✓
Crabbing	X	X	✓	X	✓
Rock lobster fishing	X	X	✓	✓	✓
Netting (Note: Department of Fisheries licence is required for the use of all nets)	X	X	See 5	X	✓
Spearfishing - breath-hold only (No SCUBA or hookah) <sup>8</sup>	X	X	Only at Gladstone SPZ, Freycinet SPZ and Wooramel SPZ	X	✓
Coral, shell and specimen collecting (alive and dead)	X	X	X	X	X
Aquarium fish collecting	X	X	X	X	X
Diving	✓ <sup>4</sup>	✓	✓	✓ <sup>1</sup>	✓
Snorkelling	✓ <sup>4</sup>	✓	✓	✓ <sup>1</sup>	✓
Motorised water sports	X	X	X	X	✓
Boating, yachts and non-motorised water sports <sup>9</sup>	✓ <sup>4</sup>	✓	See 6	✓ <sup>1</sup>	✓

1. This table is for recreational activities only. For information on permissible commercial activities contact the numbers below.

2. Charter vessel fishing is not permitted in recreation zones.

3. Public access to view the stromatolites via the boardwalk at the Hamelin Pool Telegraph Station is currently unavailable.

4. Boating, anchoring, swimming, diving and snorkelling is not permitted over stromatolites or within 300 metres of the shore in the Hamelin Pool Marine Nature Reserve. Boats are not to be run ashore over marine algal mats or stromatolites in the reserve.

5. Set netting is permitted in Freycinet and Wooramel special purpose zones all year round. Set netting is permitted in Gladstone Special Purpose Zone only when these waters are open to boating (see inset 13 below for closed boating periods). Set netting is not permitted in Big Lagoon, Boorabuggatta or Cape Peron special purpose zones. Haul netting is permitted in all special purpose zones, but only in Gladstone Special Purpose Zone when these waters are open to boating.

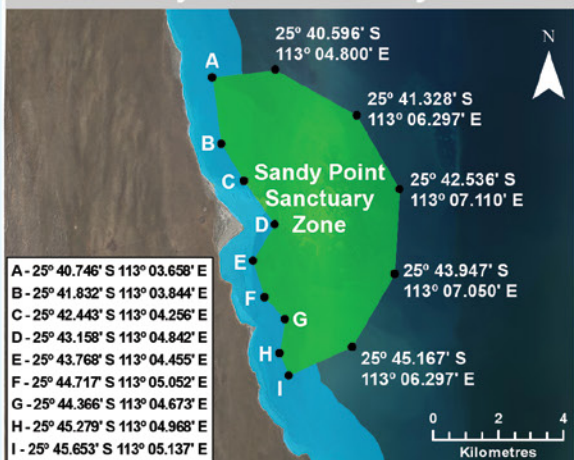
6. Permitted in all special purpose zones, but only in Gladstone Special Purpose Zone when these waters are open to boating (see inset 13 below for closed boating periods).

7. Except in Monkey Mia dolphin interaction area.

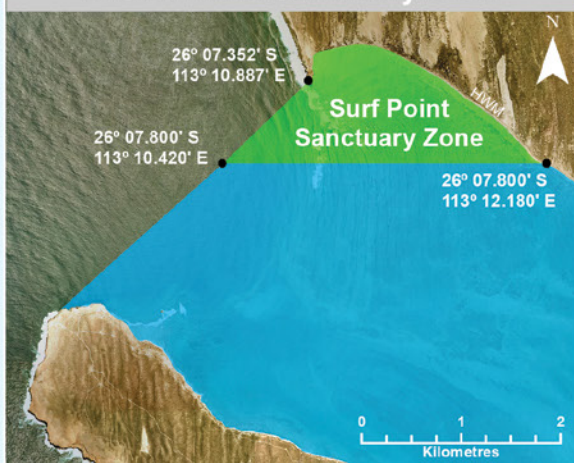
8. No spearfishing using SCUBA or hookah allowed in Hamelin Pool Marine Nature reserve or Shark Bay Marine Park.

9. Contact Department of Transport for further boating details.

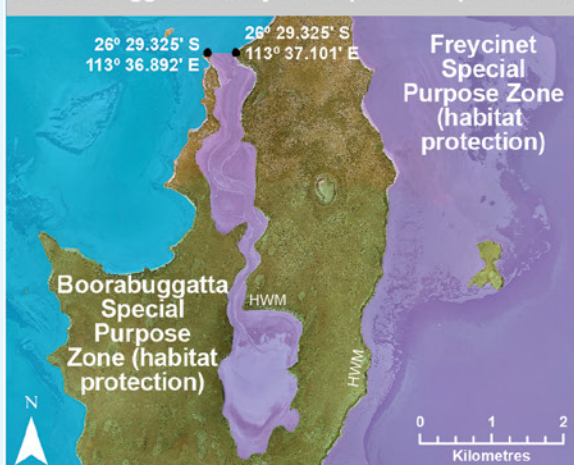
## 1. Sandy Point Sanctuary Zone



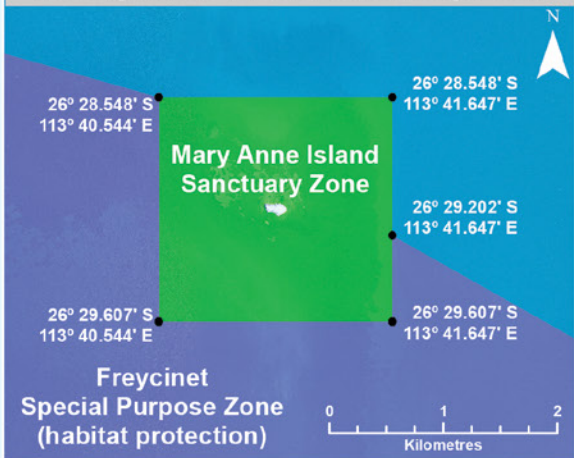
## 2. Surf Point Sanctuary Zone



## 3. Boorabuggatta & Freycinet Special Purpose Zone



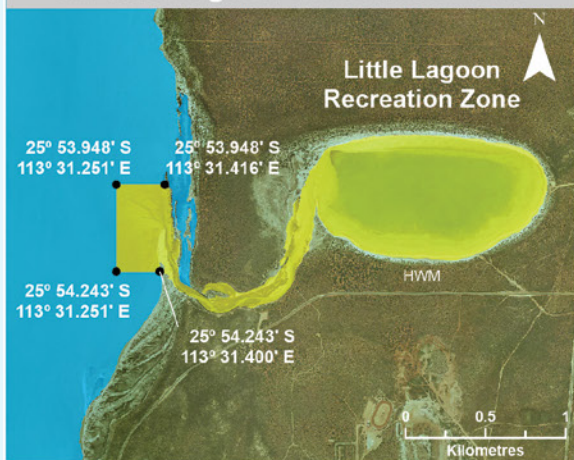
#### 4. Mary Anne Island Sanctuary Zone



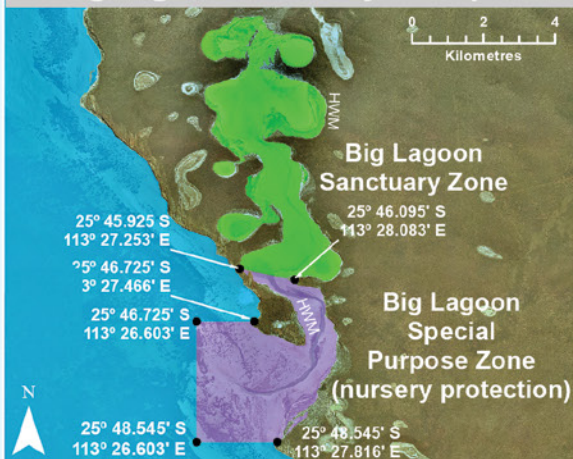
#### 5. Eighteen Mile Sanctuary Zone



#### 6. Little Lagoon Recreation Zone



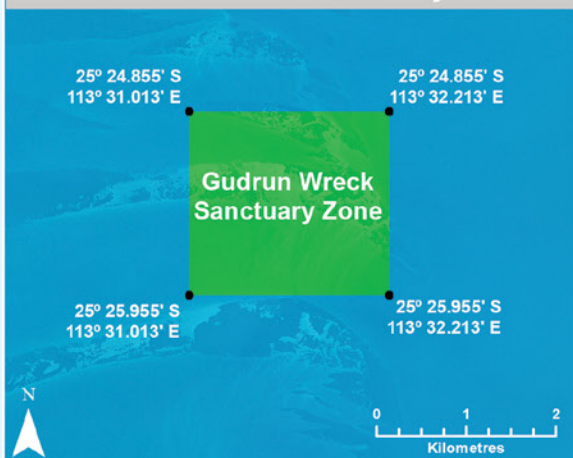
## 7. Big Lagoon Sanctuary and Special



## 8. Cape Peron Special Purpose Zone

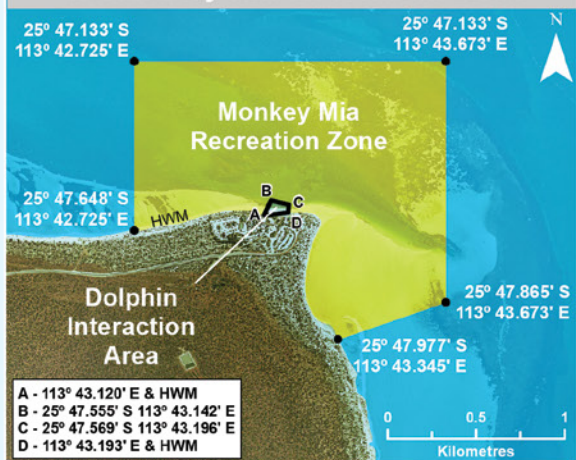


## 9. Gudrun Wreck Sanctuary Zone

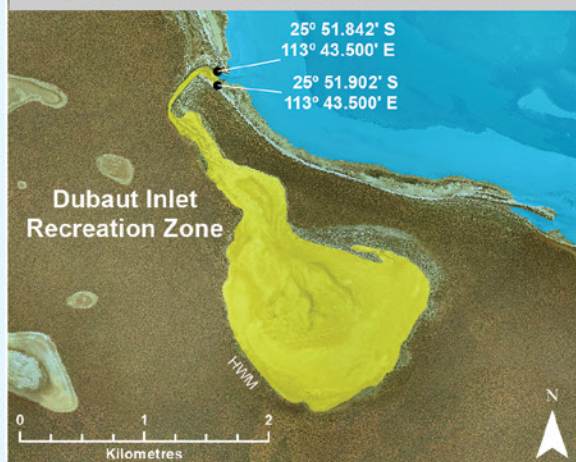




## 10. Monkey Mia Recreation Zone



## 11. Dubaut Inlet Recreation Zone



## 12. Lharidon Bight Sanctuary Zone



# Shark Bay marine reserves



## Legend

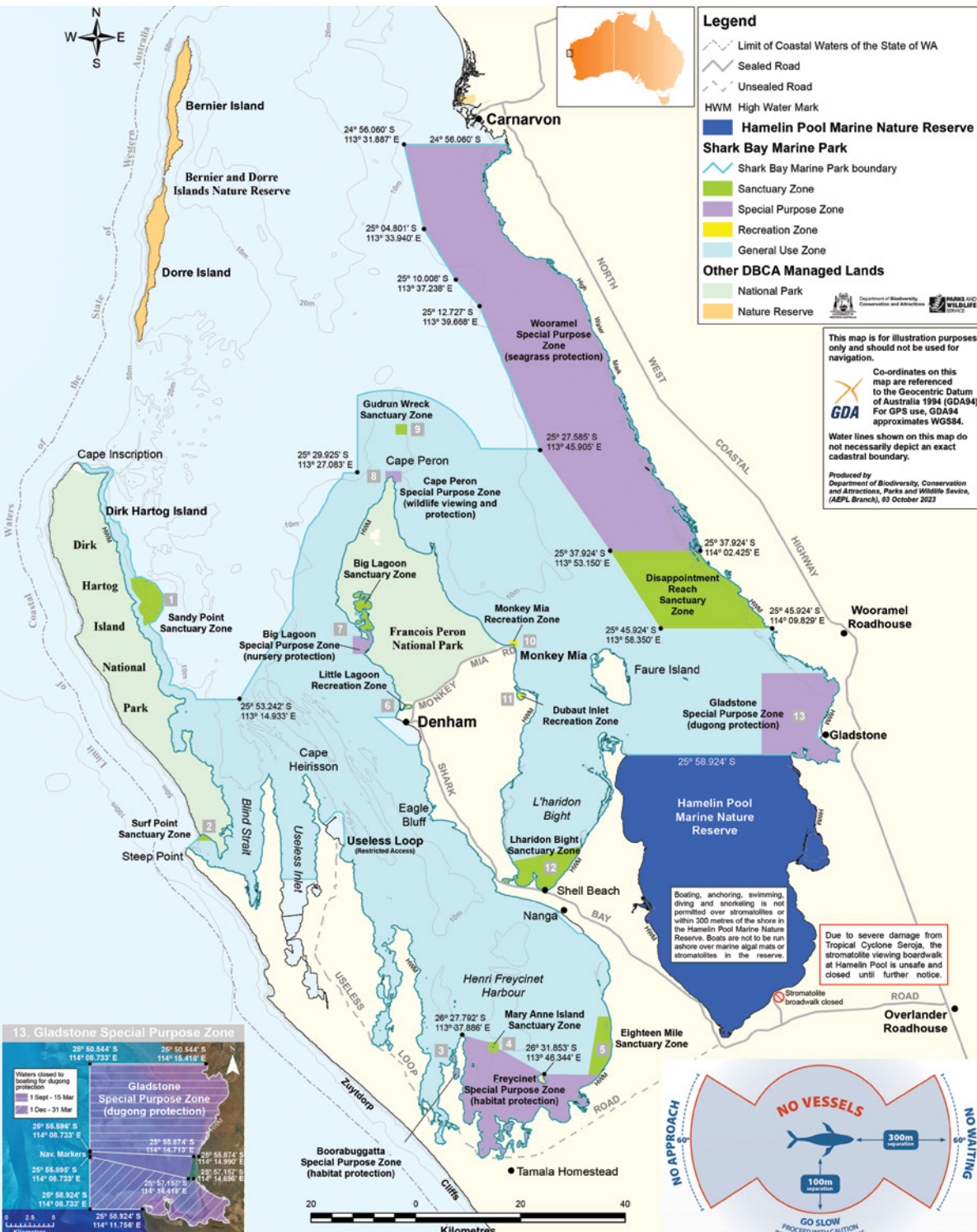
- Limit of Coastal Waters of the State of WA
  - Sealed Road
  - Unsealed Road
  - HWM High Water Mark
  - Hamelin Pool Marine Nature Reserve
  - Shark Bay Marine Park
  - Sanctuary Zone
  - Special Purpose Zone
  - Recreation Zone
  - General Use Zone
- Other DBCA Managed Lands**
- National Park
  - Nature Reserve

This map is for illustration purposes only and should not be used for navigation.

Co-ordinates on this map are referenced to the Geocentric Datum of Australia 1984 (GDA84). For GPS use, GDA84 approximates WGS84.

Water lines shown on this map do not necessarily depict an exact cadastral boundary.

Produced by Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, Parks and Wildlife Service, (AEP/PL Branch), 03 October 2023



Boating, anchoring, swimming, diving and snorkelling is not permitted over stromatolites or within 500 metres of the shore in the Hamelin Pool Marine Nature Reserve. Boats are not to be run ashore over marine algal mats or stromatolites in the reserve.

Due to severe damage from Tropical Cyclone Seroja, the stromatolite viewing boardwalk at Hamelin Pool is unsafe and closed until further notice.

