

Zoning in Western Australia's marine parks



Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions



**PARKS AND
WILDLIFE
SERVICE**

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Front cover Rowley Shoals Marine Park. *Photo – AIMS*

Above Anemone fish. *Photo – Cathy Zwick*

Western Australia's marine areas are unique and irreplaceable. Our coastline spans more than 13,500km and is home to some of the world's most remarkable ecosystems and marine wildlife, including massive whale sharks, humpback whales and several threatened sea turtle species.

Like national parks on land, our world-class marine reserves are created to protect the most special and representative examples of Western Australia's ecosystems and biodiversity, so everyone can continue to appreciate and enjoy healthy marine ecosystems into the future.

Marine parks and reserves

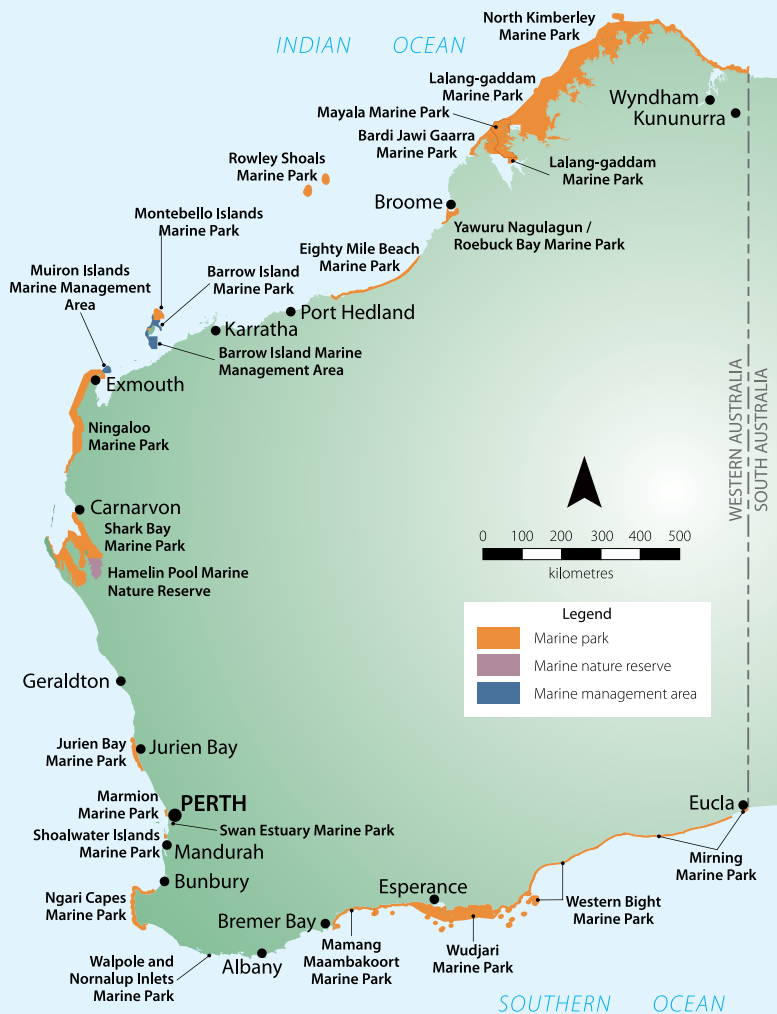
Western Australia's 24 marine reserves (marine parks, marine nature reserves and marine management areas) are managed by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) and have been progressively established in Western Australia since 1987. Many marine parks are now jointly managed with the Traditional Owners.

Marine reserves protect natural features and wildlife. Marine parks use multiple-use zoning schemes where recreational and commercial fishing, recreation, tourism operations and other compatible activities can continue in appropriate areas.

Marine reserve design must also protect Aboriginal cultural values, ensure customary use of biological resources and respect Traditional Owner aspirations for Country.

DBCA undertakes research and monitoring to ensure management of marine reserves is based on sound science.

Marine reserves also confer economic benefits. They stimulate local economies by raising the profile of marine values, increasing eco and cultural tourism opportunities and creating jobs. For example, a 2020 study by Deloitte on the economic contribution of Ningaloo Marine Park found it added \$110M annually to the local economy.



Know your zones

While most water-based activities can be enjoyed in Western Australia's marine parks, they have zones that provide for different uses: some sanctuary zones (no take areas) within each park are set aside for conservation and allow low impact activities, such as snorkelling and diving; whereas other zones provide opportunities for sustainable extractive activities and uses, such as fishing.

Each marine park has its own zoning scheme: before visiting a marine park, always find out what you can do in each zone and where they are (see the [Explore Parks WA website](#)).



Scan to learn more about WA's marine parks.



Above Southern right whale mother and calf. *Photo – Peter Nicholas*

Sanctuary zones

Sanctuary zones are areas within marine parks where all forms of fishing and collecting are prohibited. They provide the highest level of protection for important species and habitats.

Everyone is encouraged to visit and enjoy low impact activities in sanctuary zones, with the following activities very welcome:

- swimming
- snorkelling
- scuba diving
- beach walking
- boating
- water sports such as surfing, kayaking, windsurfing, kite surfing and stand-up paddle boarding
- whale watching, sea lion viewing and other low impact tourism.

Sanctuary zones:

- are fantastic places to enjoy snorkelling or diving, as they have abundant marine wildlife
- protect the full range of marine plants and animals in a particular area
- protect important habitats, such coral reefs, seagrass meadows, mangroves, rocky shores and sandy sea floors, and are often adjacent to islands where seabirds, turtles, sea lions and penguins go ashore to rest and breed
- provide safe places for threatened marine animals and protect nursery areas for rock lobsters, fish and other species
- help us to understand the impacts of human activities on marine environments by providing protected areas free of extractive activities
- benefit fisheries through spillover into fished areas when well designed, by protecting large, older fish that produce more eggs.



Above Sea star. Photo – Ocean Imaging

General use zones

All kinds of recreational activities, and sustainable commercial activities such as fishing, aquaculture, pearling and petroleum exploration and production, are allowed in general use zones.

General use zones generally make up the largest areas of most marine parks in Western Australia.

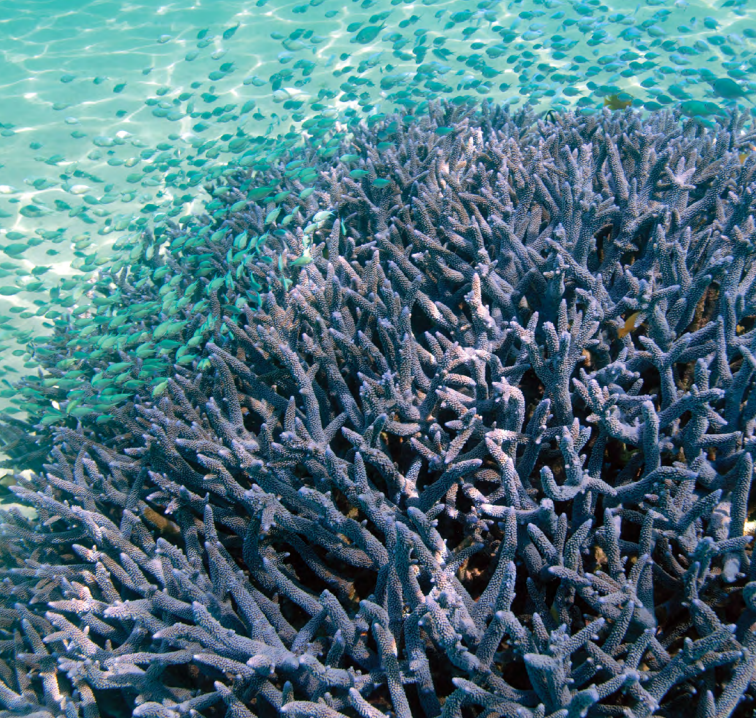
Some parks may have additional restrictions in their general use zones, so always check with the local DBCA office or download the park brochure from the Explore Parks WA website before visiting a particular park.

Special purpose zones

Uses compatible with the identified conservation or cultural purpose are allowed in special purpose zones.

Special purpose zones are managed for a particular conservation purpose, such as protection of an important habitat, a seasonal event, such as wildlife breeding or protection of Aboriginal cultural sites. For example:

- special purpose zones in many marine parks have been established to protect sites that are culturally important to the Traditional Owners
- a special purpose zone for wildlife conservation in Shoalwater Islands Marine Park has an 8-knot speed limit to minimise the risk of boats striking Australian sea lions, penguins and dolphins, and to reduce disturbance to nesting seabirds.
- special purpose zones in the Mamang Maambakoort Marine Park along the south coast are designed to protect significant southern right whale breeding and calving areas. They allow commercial and recreational fishing but exclude mining and petroleum activities and aquaculture.



Above Staghorn coral and fish. *Photo – DBCA*

Recreation zones

- Recreation zones provide for all activities that are compatible with conservation and recreation
- Some types of sustainable recreational fishing may be permitted in these zones where they are compatible with the recreation purpose of the zone.
- Commercial fishing, aquaculture and pearling are not permitted in recreation zones.

For more information

For more information on the criteria that planners use to decide where to place zones in each marine park – which is done in consultation with the community and other stakeholders to maximise community support for the new park – see DBCA's brochure *Summary of design principles guiding Western Australia's marine park network*, which can be downloaded from dbca.wa.gov.au/management/marine-planning

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Publication available in alternative format on request.