

NINGALOO MARINE PARK

COMMONWEALTH WATERS



Australian Government

Director of National Parks

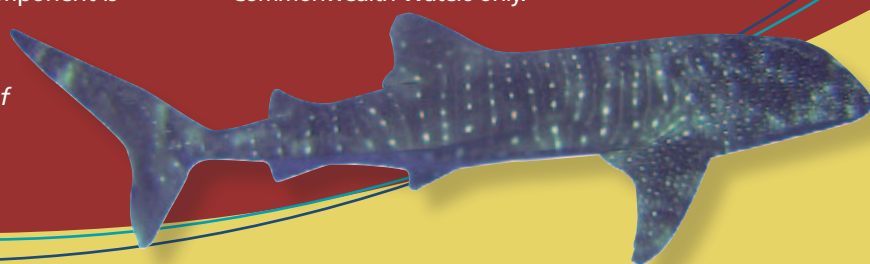
NINGALOO MARINE PARK

Located along the coast of Western Australia, Ningaloo Marine Park stretches 300km northwards from just below the Tropic of Capricorn. It was declared a Marine Park in May 1987 and includes both Commonwealth and State waters covering a total area of 5 076km² (see map). The Commonwealth boundaries have been extended twice, most recently in April 2004 to incorporate two relinquished petroleum exploration leases.

The Commonwealth component of the Park is assigned an IUCN (World Conservation Union) *Category II - National Park: Protected Area Managed Mainly for Ecosystem Conservation and Recreation*. The State component is classified as *IUCN Category VI - Managed Resource Protected Areas: Protected Area Managed Mainly for the Sustainable Use of Natural Ecosystems*.

Ningaloo Marine Park is managed under a cooperative arrangement between the Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH), the Western Australian Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) and the Western Australian Department of Fisheries. Management arrangements are outlined in the *Ningaloo Marine Park (Commonwealth Waters) Management Plan*, and the *Management Plan for the Ningaloo Marine Park (State Waters) and Muiron Islands Marine Management Area*.

This brochure describes the values of the entire Marine Park, but sets out the management arrangements for the Commonwealth Waters only.



WHY IS NINGALOO MARINE PARK SO SPECIAL?

Ningaloo Reef, included on the IUCN list of coral reefs of international significance, is one of the longest fringing barrier reefs in the world and the only fringing reef located on the western side of a continental land mass. While human impacts such as pollution and overfishing are degrading other reefs around the world, most of Ningaloo Reef is still in pristine condition due to the clear oceanic waters and low levels of land-based pollution.

Another major feature of Ningaloo Marine Park is the rapid drop-off in bottom depth in the Park's north. With depths of 100m occurring within 6km of the coastline, oceanic species such as migrating whales and migratory pelagic fish are found unusually close to the shore.

DIVERSE HABITATS

The habitats found in Ningaloo Marine Park include the open ocean, the seabeds of the continental slope and shelf, the coral reef and lagoon, and the intertidal coastal

environments. They support a diverse marine fauna of over 200 recorded species of coral, 600 species of mollusc and 500 species of fish including sharks, manta rays and migratory fish. The Park is also important for marine mammals such as dugongs, dolphins and whales. Migratory birds are regular visitors to the area, and turtles are also common, feeding in the Park's waters and nesting on many of its beaches.

ATTRACTIONS

Visitors are attracted to Ningaloo Marine Park as a unique destination for beach recreation, wildlife viewing, snorkelling, diving, boating, and recreational fishing (outside sanctuary zones). Wildlife interaction tours seasonally seek out whale sharks, whales, dugong, manta rays and turtles. Some of the fauna found in Ningaloo Marine Park is protected under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). The blue whale, southern right whale and loggerhead turtle are listed under the EPBC Act as endangered, while

the whale shark, the humpback, fin and sei whales and the flatback, green and hawksbill turtles are listed as vulnerable. Coral reefs are a major attraction in the State Waters of the Park, with coral cover and species richness changing within short distances.

GAME FISHING

Ningaloo Marine Park is regarded as one of the best areas in the world for catching small individuals of billfish species. Tuna, marlin and sailfish are highly valued by game fishers as tag and release catches. While recreational fishing is permitted in the Commonwealth Waters of the Park, remember:

- no underwater breathing devices such as SCUBA may be used; and
- no spear guns may be possessed or used.

In the State Waters, recreational fishing is not permitted in sanctuary zones. For more information on sanctuary zones in the State Waters, contact the CALM office in Exmouth (details on back page).

THE WHALE SHARK

Australia is visited annually by significant numbers of the largest fish species in the world, the whale shark. Ningaloo Marine Park is one of the world's most reliable locations to find these enigmatic filter feeders. Following the mass coral spawning around March or April each year, they aggregate in the Park and stay to feed on plankton, small fish or squid until June or July. Although appearing gentle, and often seen close to other fish, whale sharks invariably react to physical contact. To ensure the safety of swimmers, divers and the animals themselves, a Code of Conduct applies when interacting with whale sharks. For more information, contact the CALM office in Exmouth (details on back page).

SPONGE GARDENS

Depths in the Park's Commonwealth Waters range from about 30m to below 500m. A recent survey of the seabed has revealed a wide variety of bottom dwelling species, including many previously unrecorded in Australia. This deep water community is dominated by sponges. The high numbers of species and unusual forms found in the diverse sponge garden habitats add to the region's uniqueness. These filter feeding organisms play an important role in the marine nutrient cycle by filtering seawater and converting plankton into inorganic nutrients. Toxic chemicals excreted by other plants and animals are also pumped through the sponges to be modified and reused for their own purposes.

THREATS TO THE PARK

Ningaloo Marine Park is managed to reduce the threat of pollution. Plastic bags, discarded fishing lines, ropes and bait straps can cause death or injury to marine fauna. Fuel and oil discharges or spills, sewage and other wastes from vessels or contaminants from coastal developments affect water quality.

High levels of fishing can reduce the distribution and abundance of both target and non-target species. Human presence may also disturb roosting sea birds, while inappropriate interactions between tourists and fauna such as whales, whale sharks and turtles cause stress to these animals. Introduced foxes are known to prey on the eggs and juveniles of green and loggerhead turtles which nest on some beaches in the Park.

MANAGEMENT OF ACTIVITIES IN NINGALOO MARINE PARK (COMMONWEALTH WATERS)

Please note that different regulations apply in the State Waters of Ningaloo Marine Park. For information on State zoning and restrictions, contact CALM (details on back page).

Recreational activities

Fishing	✓ No underwater breathing devices (SCUBA), spear guns or fish attracting devices to be used whilst fishing. Observe bag limits and size limits.
Scuba diving and snorkelling	✓
Collecting	✗
Photography	✓

Commercial activities

Fishing	✗
Charter (tourism) fishing tours	✓ permit*
Filming and photography	✓ permit*
Mining and petroleum exploration	✗
Other commercial activities	✓ permit*
Scientific research	✓ permit*

✓ activity allowed

✗ activity not allowed

*A permit under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2000* is required. For further information please refer to contact details on back page of brochure.



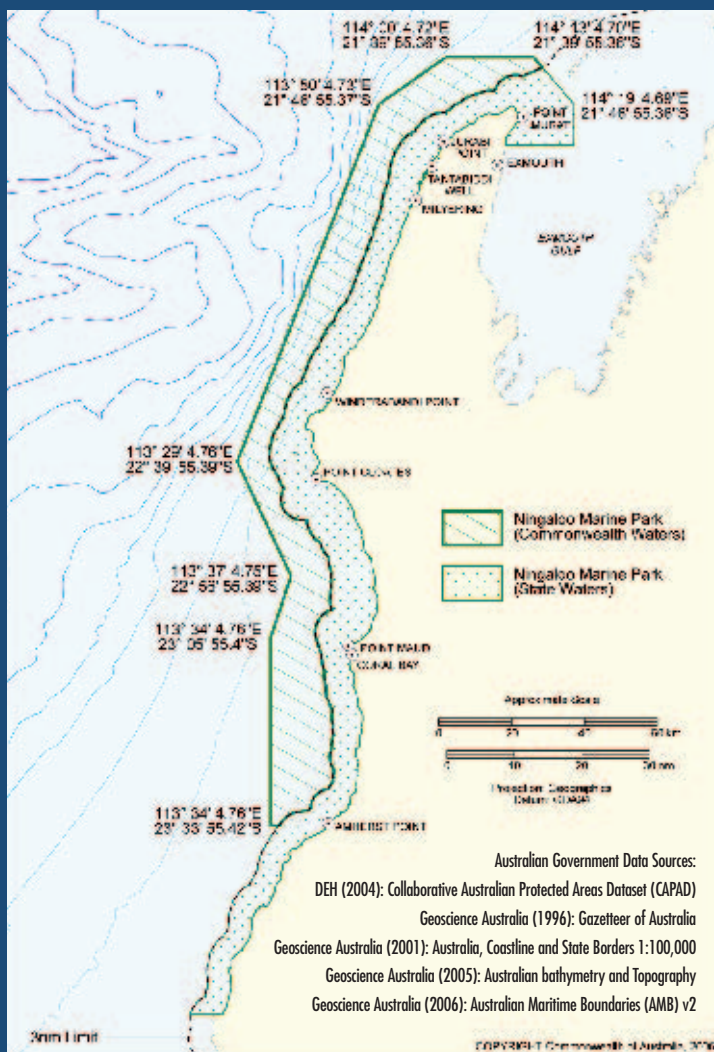


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Hammerhead - Clay Bryce, Nudibranch - Clay Bryce, Sponge - Clay Bryce,
Green turtle - Tony Howard, Humpback fluke - Centre for Whale Research (WA)

YOU CAN HELP PROTECT
NINGALOO MARINE PARK
AND KEEP IT BEAUTIFUL
FOR CURRENT AND FUTURE
GENERATIONS

- Take care when snorkelling or diving, as coral can be easily damaged by flippers or hands.
- Do not release waste, litter or pollutant liquids such as sewage into the Park.
- Observe fishing restrictions, bag limits and size limits.
- Do not feed birds, fish or other marine animals as it changes their natural behaviour and diet.
- Ensure you follow the environmental regulations in Ningaloo Marine Park and be aware of the different management zones and restrictions in the State Waters. A separate brochure on the State Waters is available from CALM:

Exmouth District Office
WA Dept of Conservation and Land
Management
22 Nimitz Street
Exmouth WA 6707

Tel: (08) 9949 1676
Email: exmouth@calm.wa.gov.au
Website: www.naturebase.net

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

The Director
Marine Protected Areas Management Section
Department of the Environment and Heritage
GPO Box 787
Canberra ACT 2601

Telephone (02) 6274 1111

INFORMATION CAN ALSO BE FOUND
ON OUR WEB SITE

For permit application forms go to:
www.deh.gov.au/epbc/permits/parks

For copies of the Ningaloo Marine Park
(Commonwealth Waters) Management Plan go to:
www.deh.gov.au/coasts/mpa/ningaloo/plan

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