



Government of Western Australia
Department of Fisheries



RECREATIONAL FISHING GUIDE

GASCOYNE REGION



YOUR LICENCE FEES AT WORK

PUBLISHED MARCH 2011

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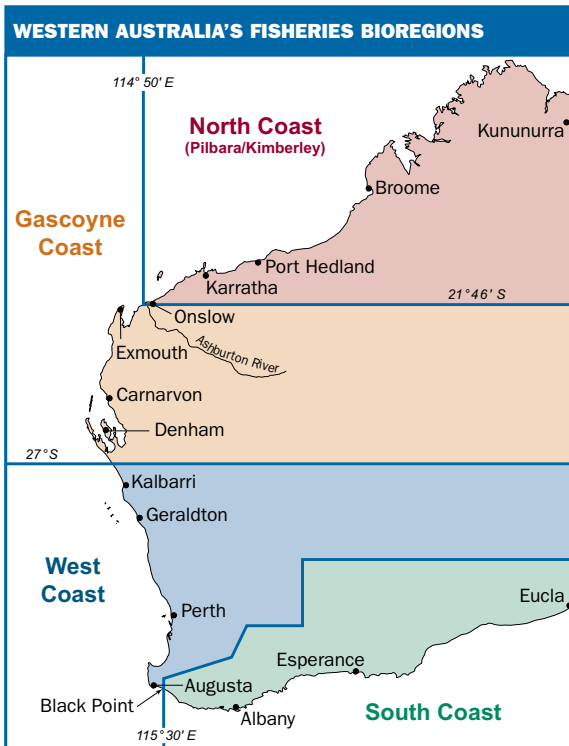
On the cover

South Passage, Shark Bay. To the west lie the high limestone cliffs of Steep Point, with some of the best, but potentially dangerous, shore-based game fishing in Australia. To the east is Dirk Hartog Island. Boating can be treacherous in South Passage, owing to strong currents and tidal movements.

Photo: Tourism Western Australia

Western Australia's fisheries management strategies have one primary goal – *Fish for the future*. This means ensuring our fisheries are ecologically sustainable.

These strategies are part of an integrated approach to management that not only takes into account the impact of fishing by recreational, commercial and indigenous sectors – but also the effect of other human activities on the State's ecosystems.



In Western Australia, all marine fishing is managed in four broad biological regions – the North Coast, Gascoyne Coast, West Coast and South Coast.

This publication provides a guide to the rules that apply to recreational fishing in the Gascoyne Bioregion – which runs from the Zuytdorp Cliffs, north of Kalbarri to the Ashburton River, south of Onslow (27° South latitude to 21°46' South latitude).

BAG AND SIZE LIMITS

HIGH RISK SPECIES

Mixed daily bag limit – 7 per angler

The species in this group are generally long-lived, slow-growing, mature at four-plus years, form semi-resident populations, are vulnerable to localised depletion due to their life history, or are of low abundance or highly targeted. (FRMR Schedules 2 and 3)

SPECIES	SCIENTIFIC NAME	MINIMUM LEGAL SIZE	BAG LIMIT
Barracuda	<i>Sphyaena barracuda</i>	Not applicable	4
Barramundi – State-wide	<i>Lates calcarifer</i>	550 mm	2*
Billfish (sailfish, swordfish, and marlins) – combined	Families Istiophoridae and Xiphiidae	Not applicable	1
Bonefish	<i>Albula</i> spp.	Not applicable	2
Cobia	<i>Rachycentron canadus</i>	750 mm	2
Cods – combined (including Chinaman cod or ‘Charlie Court’) Note: within this bag limit you may not take more than two estuary or Rankin cod combined.	Family Serranidae	<i>Epinephelus</i> sp. over 1,000 mm or 30 kg are protected. (except grey banded rock cod)	4
		Breaksea – 300 mm	
Cod, Estuary – inner gulfs of Shark Bay	<i>Epinephelus coioides</i>	400 mm. Maximum size 1,000 mm. Maximum weight 30 kg	1
Coral trout and coronation trout – combined	<i>Plectropomus</i> spp. and <i>Variola louti</i>	Coral – 450 mm	1
Dhufish, Western Australian and pearl perch – combined	<i>Glaucosoma</i> spp.	Dhufish – 500 mm	2
Emperors and seabream – combined (including spangled emperor/nor’ west snapper and Robinson’s seabream)	Family Lethrinidae	Spangled – 410 mm. Blue-lined (black snapper) – 320 mm. Other emperors – 280 mm	4
Groper, baldchin and tuskfish – combined	<i>Choerodon</i> spp.	Baldchin, blackspot & blue tuskfish – 400 mm	4
Groper, baldchin and tuskfish – combined (inner gulfs of Shark Bay)	<i>Choerodon</i> spp.	Baldchin, blackspot & blue tuskfish – 400 mm	2

 Special risk species must be landed whole.

* Possession limit – 2 per angler. May only be taken by line.

Note: Special filleting rules apply in Shark Bay - see page 13.

HIGH RISK SPECIES (Continued)

Mixed daily bag limit – 7 per angler

SPECIES	SCIENTIFIC NAME	MINIMUM LEGAL SIZE	BAG LIMIT
Mackerel – shark	<i>Grammatocynus bicarinatus</i>	500 mm	4
Mackerel, Spanish – broad-barred (grey) and narrow-barred – combined	<i>Scomberomorus semifasciatus</i> and <i>S. commerson</i>	Narrow-barred – 900 mm Broad-barred – 750 mm	2
Mackerel – wahoo	<i>Acanthocybium solandri</i>	900 mm	2
Mahi mahi (dolphinfish)	<i>Coryphaena hippurus</i>	500 mm	4
Mulloway and northern mulloway	<i>Argyrosomus hololepidotus</i> and <i>Protonibea diacanthus</i>	Mulloway 500 mm Northern – 700 mm	2
Parrot fish – combined	Family Scaridae	Not applicable	4
Pink snapper	<i>Pagrus auratus</i>	410 mm	4
Pink snapper – inner gulfs of Shark Bay	<i>Pagrus auratus</i>	500 mm 700 mm maximum size	1
Queenfish	<i>Scomberoides commersonnianus</i>	Not applicable	4
Red emperor	<i>Lutjanus sebae</i>	410 mm	2
Samson fish/amberjack/yellowtail kingfish – combined	<i>Seriola</i> spp.	600 mm	2
Sharks and rays – combined	Class Chondrichthyes	Not applicable	2
Trevally, giant and golden – combined	<i>Caranx ignobilis</i> and <i>Gnathanodon speciosus</i>	Not applicable	2
Tropical snappers and sea perch (mangrove jack, fingermark, job fish, stripey sea perch etc.) – combined	Family Lutjanidae	Fingermark, mangrove jack and stripey sea perch – 300 mm	4
Tuna – southern bluefin, yellowfin, bigeye – combined	<i>Thunnus maccoyii</i> , <i>T. albacares</i> and <i>T. obesus</i>	Not applicable	2

Special risk species must be landed whole.

Note: Special filleting rules apply in Shark Bay - see page 13.

MEDIUM RISK SPECIES

Mixed daily bag limit – 16 per angler

Species generally mature at two to three years, are of moderate abundance, are highly targeted, and often use estuarine and inshore habitats extensively.

SPECIES	SCIENTIFIC NAME	MINIMUM LEGAL SIZE	BAG LIMIT
Bonito – leaping and oriental, and other tunas – combined	Family Scombridae	Not applicable	8
Bream – north-west, black and yellowfin – combined	<i>Acanthopagrus</i> spp.	250 mm. Yellowfin – 300 mm	8
Flathead and flounder – combined	Family Platycephalidae and <i>Pseudorhombus</i> spp.	Flathead – 300 mm Flounder – 250 mm	8
Goatfish	Family Mullidae	Not applicable	8
Leatherjacket	Family Monacanthidae	250 mm	8
Mackerel – Queensland school and spotted – combined	<i>Scomberomus queenslandicus</i> and <i>S. munroi</i>	500 mm	4
Snook and pike – combined	<i>Sphyaena</i> spp. and <i>Dinolestes</i> spp.	300 mm	8
Tailor	<i>Pomatomus saltatrix</i>	300 mm	8
Tarwhine	<i>Rhabdosargus sarba</i>	250 mm	16
Threadfin salmon – giant, northern and Gunter's combined	<i>Polydactylus</i> and <i>Eleutheronema</i> spp.	Giant – 450 mm	8
Trevally – combined	Family Carangidae	Skipjack – 250 mm	8
Whiting, yellowfin	<i>Sillago schomburgkii</i>	Not applicable	16

LOWEST RISK SPECIES

Mixed daily bag limit – 40 per angler

Species generally mature at one to two years, are of high abundance, distributed widely and generally pelagic. Species not listed have little known about their biology or abundance and are generally not targeted by anglers.

SPECIES	SCIENTIFIC NAME	BAG LIMIT
Australian herring	<i>Arripis georgianus</i>	You can only take a combined maximum of 40 lowest risk fish. No size limits apply.
Dart	<i>Trachinotus</i> spp.	
Garfish	Family Hemiramphidae	
Longtom	Family Belonidae	
Mackerel, blue (common)	<i>Scomber australasicus</i>	
Milkfish	<i>Chanos chanos</i>	
Mullet – sea and yellow-eye	Family Mugilidae	
Whiting, sand and school	<i>Sillago</i> spp.	
All other unlisted species of fish		

CRUSTACEANS AND SHELLFISH

CRUSTACEANS	SCIENTIFIC NAME	MINIMUM LEGAL SIZE	BAG LIMIT	BOAT LIMIT [#]
Crab, blue swimmer (manna)	<i>Portunus pelagicus</i>	127 mm (carapace)	20	40
Crab, mud – all species combined	<i>Scylla</i> spp.	Green – 150 mm Brown – 120 mm (carapace)	5	10
Crab, Champagne	<i>Hypothalassia acerba</i>	92 mm	†	N/A
Crab, Crystal	<i>Chaceon</i> spp.	120 mm	†	N/A
Crab, Giant	<i>Pseudocarcinuss gigas</i>	140 mm	†	N/A
Prawns, school and king	Family Penaeidae	N/A	9 litres	N/A
Rock lobster – all species combined.	<i>Panulirus</i> spp.	See separate brochure		
All species not specifically mentioned – combined			40†	
MOLLUSCS AND OTHER REEF ANIMALS	SCIENTIFIC NAME	MINIMUM LEGAL SIZE	BAG LIMIT	BOAT LIMIT [#]
Abalone, Roe's and tropical	<i>Haliotis</i> spp	See separate brochure		
Ark shells, cockles, pipis, venus clams and all other species of edible molluscs not specifically mentioned – combined	Families Arcidae, Cardiidae, Donacidae and Veneridae	Trochus – 65 mm	2 litres (Shell on)	N/A
Mussels	Family Mytilidae	N/A	9 litres (Shell on)	N/A
Oysters	Family Ostreidae	N/A	20	N/A
Razorshell	Family Pinnidae	N/A	20	N/A
Scallops	Family Pectinidae	N/A	20	N/A
Squid, cuttlefish and octopus – all species combined	Class Cephalopoda	N/A	15	30

 Licence required – see separate brochure for details of fishing rules.

Only applies when two or more fishers aboard.

† Denotes species with a combined bag limit of 40.

N/A – Not applicable.

PROTECTED SPECIES

These species are totally protected and may not be taken.

(FRMR Schedule 2, FRMA Section 43)

SPECIES	SCIENTIFIC NAME
Coral and live rock	Order Scleractinia <i>See Order No.11 of 2007</i>
Great white shark	<i>Carcharodon carcharias</i>
Humphead Maori wrasse	<i>Cheilinus undulatus</i>
Leafy seadragon	<i>Phycodurus eques</i>
Potato cod	<i>Epinephelus tukula</i>
Queensland groper	<i>Epinephelus lanceolatus</i>
Sawfish – all species	Family Pristidae
Speartooth shark	<i>Glyphis</i> spp.
Whale shark	<i>Rhiniodon typus</i>

Species with no bag limit:

Baitfish (Families Atherinidae, Clupeidae and Engraulidae – pilchards, scaly mackerel, whitebait, anchovies and hardyheads) and feral freshwater species including carp, tilapia, goldfish and redfin perch have no bag limit.

Prohibitions on the take of totally protected species apply to both commercial and recreational fishers. Some species may also be protected under Commonwealth legislation – visit www.environment.gov.au for further information.

Boat fishers are encouraged to use an appropriate ‘release weight’ device when line fishing for demersal scalefish in the Gascoyne Bioregion. A release weight can help reduce the effects of barotrauma and maximize the fish’s chance of survival upon release.

What is barotrauma?

Barotrauma results from the sudden expansion of gases in the swim bladder and other organs when a fish does not have time to adjust to the rapid changes in water pressure as it is pulled to the surface.

Demersal, or ‘bottom-dwelling’, species such as baldchin groper and cods, are particularly susceptible to pressure changes when pulled to the surface from depths of around 20 metres or more, and frequently succumb to the effects of barotrauma.

The most obvious symptoms of barotrauma include a bloated stomach, bulging or ‘popped’ eyes, the stomach protruding from the mouth or gills, and distended intestines. Even if released quickly, fish suffering from barotrauma may not be able to return to the bottom if their swim bladder remains inflated.

A release weight is designed to assist their return to the seabed and increase the survival rate of released fish.

What is a release weight?

A commonly used release weight is a weighted barbless hook attached either to an existing fishing rig, or used on a rod and reel or handline specifically set aside for releasing deep-water fish. The release weight is used to return deep-water species such as cod back to the seabed as quickly as possible, helping to reverse the effects of barotrauma.

How do I use a release weight?

The release weight is attached to the upper jaw of the fish and is designed to be easily detached by tugging the line once the fish is back on the seabed.



Photo courtesy of Recfishwest

Single operator – small fish only

- Attach the release weight through the upper jaw of the fish.
- Hold the body of the fish in one hand and in the other hold the rod or handline (with the release weight attached) ready for free spool.
- Gently but quickly lower the fish into the water and let the attached line run free as the fish is released.
- Once the fish reaches the bottom, tug the line to detach the release weight.

Two operators – recommended for large fish

- Whilst one person supports the body of the fish, the other attaches the release weight to the upper jaw.
- Gently lower the fish into the water and operate the rod or handline as the fish is released.
- Additional weights (e.g. dive weights) may be required to return large cods to the sea bed.

! **Note:** *in order to maximise survival rates of released fish, it is strongly recommended that handling be kept to a minimum and contact with the fish's eyes and gills is avoided. More information on release weight usage and details on proper fish handling can be found at www.recfishwest.org.au*

Where can I buy a release weight?

There are several stockists of release weights in Western Australia, including boating, fishing and camping stores. For a full list of retail outlets, go to www.recfishwest.org.au or phone Recfishwest on **(08) 9246 3366**.

In WA, licences are required for the following:

- Recreational Fishing from Boat – **NEW 2 March, 2010**;
- Rock Lobster;
- Abalone;
- Marron;
- South-West Freshwater Angling; and
- Net Fishing (set, haul and throw nets)

The rules for fishing under a Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence in the Gascoyne region can be found in this guide. See separate brochures for details of fishing rules for the remaining licensed recreational fisheries listed above.

You may apply for a licence at Department of Fisheries' offices or Australia Post. Alternatively, you can purchase or renew your licence online, 24 hours a day, seven days a week at **www.fish.wa.gov.au**

All revenue from recreational fishing licences is placed in a recreational fishing trust fund and used to protect and conserve our vulnerable fish stocks, helping ensure a healthy future for recreational fishing throughout the state.

Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence

To help improve the management of WA's recreational fisheries, a Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence will be required from 2 March, 2010 to undertake any general fishing activity carried out with the use of a powered vessel. A 'powered vessel' is any boat fitted with a propulsion motor, including motorised yachts.

You must produce your licence if fishing from a powered vessel when requested by a Fisheries and Marine Officer.

The expanded licensing system will provide a database of boat fishers across WA which will assist in determining who is fishing, where they are fishing and what they are catching. Through the new licensing system, recreational fishers will be making an added contribution to the effective management of the resource that they so highly value.

Examples of where the new licence is required when fishing from a powered boat include:

- line fishing (handline, rod and line, squid jigging);
- catching crabs;
- spearfishing;
- catching octopus; and
- dip-netting for prawns.

In addition, you will be required to have a licence where fish, crabs or shellfish are taken by wading or other non-boat based activities but when you have used a powered boat to reach your immediate fishing location.

What activities don't require a Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence?

A person fishing from a boat without a motor fitted (such as a kayak or dinghy without a motor) will not need a Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence.

A Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence will not be required when an existing licensed fishing activity (such as rock lobster or abalone fishing) is the only activity undertaken on that trip. If, however, for example a rock lobster fisher also fishes by line on the same trip, a Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence would be required to cover the line fishing activity.

Unlicensed fishers can fish in the company of a licensed boat fisher provided they stay within the licensed fisher's bag limit. The take of fish by all persons on a boat must not exceed the total bag and boat limits of fishers holding Recreational Fishing from Boat Licences.

It is the licensed boat fishers' responsibility to ensure that the total take of fish on a boat does not exceed their bag limit.

Fishing from Charter Boats

Fishers are currently not required to hold a Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence when fishing from a licensed charter boat. The charter sector contributes to the cost of managing recreational fishing through licence fees and charter catch and participation information is provided through compulsory log book returns.



FISHING FOR PINK SNAPPER

Pink snapper

Pink snapper are tough members of the sea bream family. These predatory fish can live for over 30 years and reach more than a metre in length and 10 kilograms in weight. Adult fish hang around a 'home' area, but are known to roam 50 nautical miles or more as they search for food and mates.

In Western Australia, pink snapper are found from the cool waters of the Great Australian Bight to the warm waters of Shark Bay – living much of their lives in the mid- to lower water levels.

In Shark Bay, pink snapper gather in large schools or 'aggregations' to spawn during winter, when the water temperature falls. During the spawning period, female pink snapper release millions of eggs in a series of batches over several weeks.

Shark Bay inner gulfs

The following rules apply when fishing for pink snapper in the inner gulfs of Shark Bay.

Daily bag limit: One, minimum size 500 mm, maximum size 700 mm.

Eastern Gulf: Closed season 1 May – 31 July.

Denham Sound: Open each year until the 15 tonne Total Allowable Catch (TAC) is reached.

Freycinet Estuary: Closed season 15 August – 30 September. Anglers must have a pink snapper tag to take pink snapper in the Freycinet Estuary. A limited number of tags are issued each year. Contact the Department of Fisheries for details.

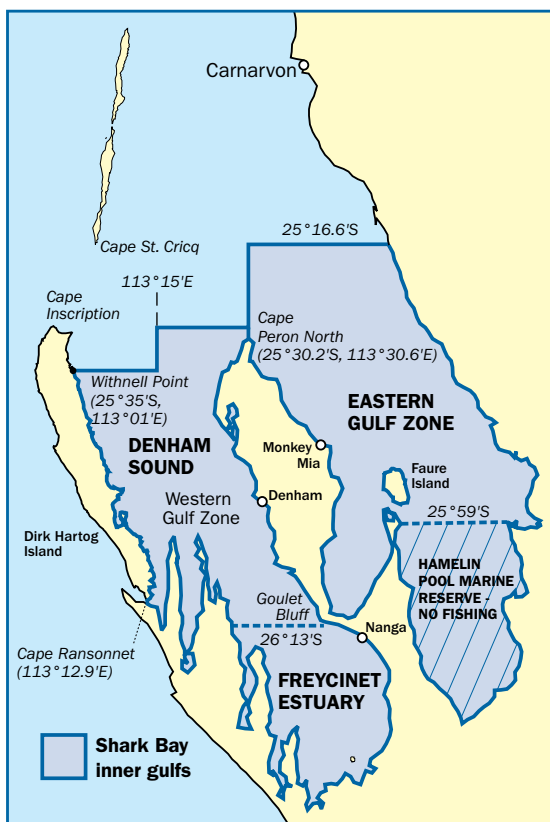
Other Species: Estuary cod, baldchin groper and tuskfish have been identified as being highly vulnerable to overfishing in the inner gulfs of Shark Bay. To protect these species, a reduced bag limit of one estuary cod and two baldchin groper and tuskfish (combined) applies when landed in the inner gulfs of Shark Bay.

Fishing Oceanic Stocks: Recreational fishers are not allowed to land more than the Shark Bay inner gulf bag limit and inner gulf size limits apply when the fish have been caught in oceanic waters and landed anywhere in the eastern and western gulfs of Shark Bay. Previous exemptions that allowed this no longer apply.

No filleting at sea – Shark Bay

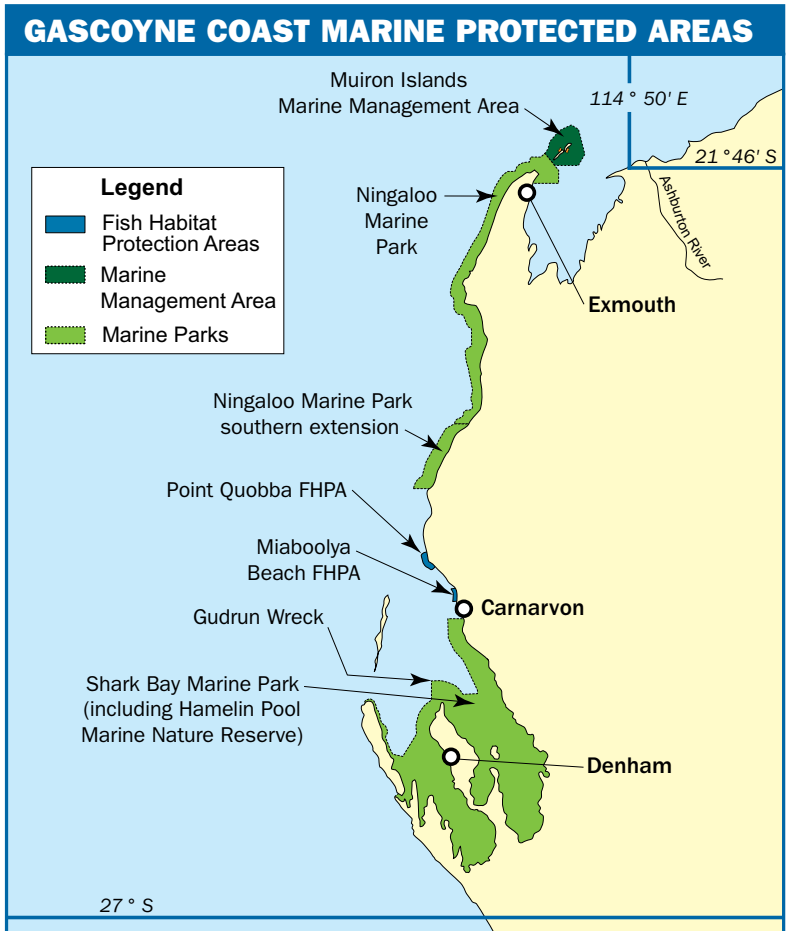
Special rules apply to protect Shark Bay’s vulnerable inner gulf pink snapper stocks. In the inner gulfs of Shark Bay, a person must not be in possession of, or have in a boat, any fish other than whole fish. This applies to all species except mackerel and tuna, which may be filleted at sea provided that only one fillet is taken from each side of the fish, and the skin and pectoral fin (‘wings’) are left attached to each fillet. The only other exception to this rule are fish being prepared

for immediate consumption or for use as bait, however this exception **does not apply** to pink snapper.



MARINE CONSERVATION AREAS

Marine conservation areas play an important part in conserving our marine ecology and protecting biodiversity. These include marine nature reserves, marine parks, fish habitat protection areas and various fishing closures. In addition to the general fishing rules in this guide, most of these areas contain sanctuary zones and have special rules that apply to fishing within them. **It should be noted where reference is made to rock lobster and abalone, seasonal rules apply.**

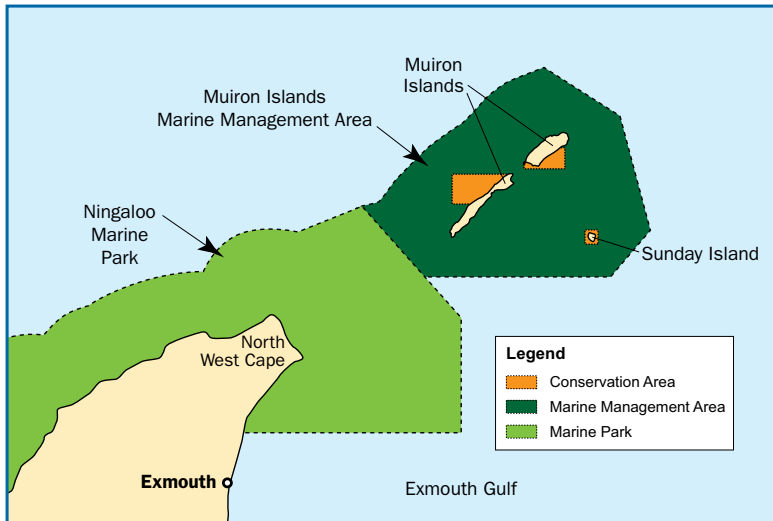


A brief summary of the main fishing rules is provided here. For full details of permitted activities and zones refer to the relevant visitor's guide. Marine Parks guides are available from the Department of Environment and Conservation. Fish Habitat Protection Area information is available from the Department of Fisheries.

Muiron Islands Marine Management Area

(FRMA Order No. 10 of 2008)

- Conservation Areas at Sunday Island, North and South Muiron Islands are closed to all fishing.
- Fishing with rock lobster pots is prohibited throughout the Muiron Islands Marine Management Area.



Ningaloo Marine Park

(FRMA Order No. 12 of 2005)

Fishing closures

- All sanctuary areas are closed to fishing.
- Shore fishing using rod and line only is permitted in designated areas adjoining some sanctuary zones.

Spearfishing

- No spearfishing between Tantabiddi and Winderabandi Point.
- Cod and wrasse species may not be taken by spearfishing.
- Compressed air may not be used for spearfishing.

! **Note:** *Cods (Family Serranidae) include the coronation and coral trouts. Wrasses (Family Labridae) include the tuskfishes and baldchin groper.*

Bottom fishing

- ‘Special purpose benthic protection areas’ are closed to bottom-fishing from a boat. You may troll in these areas.

Protected species

Within the Marine Park you may not fish for:

- Molluscs (except oysters, cuttlefish, octopus and squid).
- Manta ray.

Netting – Licence required

- Closed to set and haul net fishing in most areas.
- Throw nets may be used to take mullet only.
- See the Recreational Net Fishing guide for details.

Rock lobsters

- Special rules apply – see the *Fishing for Rock Lobster in WA* guide for details.

A separate guide to zoning and activities in the Ningaloo Marine Park and the Muiron Islands Marine Management Area is available from the Department of Environment and Conservation.

Point Quobba Fish Habitat Protection Area

(FRMR Regulation 113E, FRMA Order 2004)

- Fishing is prohibited within the Point Quobba Restricted Area, except for taking oysters by hand and squid using an unbaited jig.
- Using jet skis is prohibited within the Point Quobba Restricted Area.
- See the Point Quobba FHPA guide for details.

Miaboolya Beach Fish Habitat Protection Area

(FRMA Order 2003)

- Net fishing is prohibited in all inland waters and within 400 metres of all creek mouths and within 800 metres of the Gascoyne River mouth.
- Hand-held scoop nets, dip nets (fish landing nets) and drop nets (crab nets) may be used.
- See the Miaboolya Beach FHPA guide for details.

Shark Bay Marine Park

(FRMA Order No. 5 of 2004)

Fishing closures

- All sanctuary areas are closed to fishing.
- The Dolphin Interaction Area at Monkey Mia is closed to line and rock lobster fishing. Crab fishing using a drop net is also prohibited.

Spearfishing

- Spearfishing on compressed air is prohibited in the Marine Park.
- Spearfishing of any kind is prohibited in recreation areas and special purpose areas at Cape Peron, Big Lagoon and Boorabuggatta.

Netting - Licence required

- Closures to set, haul and throw net fishing apply – see the Recreational Net Fishing Guide for details.

Crabbing

- Fishing for crabs using a drop net is prohibited in all recreation areas.

A separate guide to zoning and activities in the Shark Bay Marine Park is available from the Department of Environment and Conservation.

Hamelin Pool Marine Nature Reserve

(FRMA Order No. 6 of 2004)

- Closed to all fishing.

UNDERSTANDING THE FISHING RULES

Each of the four biological regions (bioregions) in WA has its own suite of fishing rules, although some rules such as possession limits and legal sizes may apply Statewide. If you transport fish across a regional boundary, the rules that apply are those which relate to the bioregion in which you are checked by a Fisheries and Marine Officer – not the bioregion in which you caught the fish.

How to measure a fish

(FRMR Regulation 151, Schedule 8)

Fish should be measured in a 'natural' position, i.e. tail not distorted (the tail should be laid flat). Most finfish are measured from the point of the snout to the tip of the tail.



Fishing for crabs

(FRMR Part 4A, Division 2, Reg. 64L)

You may only catch crabs by the following methods:

- **by hand;** or
- **by wire hook:** A hand-held blunt wire hook may be used to catch crabs. Hooks must not be capable of piercing the crab; or
- **by drop net:** Drop nets must not exceed 1.5 metres in diameter. There is a maximum limit of 10 drop nets per person or 10 drop nets per boat, regardless of how many people are aboard; or
- **by scoop net:** Hand-held wire or plastic scoop nets must be hemispherical, constructed of rigid mesh that is not capable of entangling a crab, have an internal diameter no bigger than 375 mm, and a depth of no more than 210 mm.

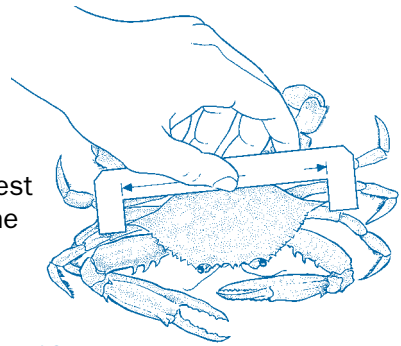
In Western Australia you may not catch crabs by using:

- Crab traps, pots or any dilly nets which trap or entangle the catch; or
- Fishing or prawning nets.

How to measure a crab

(FRMR Regulation 151, Schedule 8)

Crabs are measured across the widest part of the shell, from tip to tip of the carapace spikes.



Totally protected crabs

(FRMR Schedule 2, Part 2, Division 1. Reg. 12)

- Undersize and 'berried' (egg-carrying) crabs are totally protected. They must be returned to the water within five minutes of catching them.
- You may not pull any drop net before protected crabs are released to the waters from which they were taken.



A berried crab displays its clusters of yellow eggs.

Deep sea crabs

(FRMR Part 5, Division 5A)

- Deep sea crabs must be landed whole.
- You may not possess any part of a deep sea crab unless the part is being consumed or being prepared for immediate consumption.

Fishing for prawns

(FRMR Part 4, Division 6, Reg.39)

You may only catch prawns by the following methods:

- Single hand dip net or single hand scoop net.
- Single prawn hand-trawl (drag) net. Nets must not be more than four metres long with a mesh of not less than 16 mm, and must not be attached to a boat or set.

Fishing closures – seasons, areas, gear types

(FRMA S43)

Fishing activities may be prohibited by type, area, time or class of person, for example, many areas of the State are permanently closed to netting. Some areas are closed to line fishing during spawning seasons. Some fisheries are closed at specified times of the year.

Daily bag limits

(FRMA S50)


A daily bag limit is the maximum number of fish of a species, or a group of species, that a person engaged in fishing may take or bring on to land in any 24-hour period commencing at midnight (except for marron, prawns and fish caught by netting – midday to midday). These are shown in the ‘Bag and Size Limits’ section.

Finfish possession limits

(FRMA S51, FRMR Part 4, Division 3)

A finfish possession limit is the maximum quantity of finfish – either whole or in pieces – that you may have in your possession (control/ownership) in WA. This is:

- 20 kg of fillets of fish; or
- 10 kg of fillets of fish and one day’s bag limit of whole fish or fish trunks; or
- two days’ bag limit of whole fish or fish trunks.

 **Note:** *These limits now apply throughout WA, including permanent places of residence. The following baitfish are not included in the finfish possession limit: hardyheads (Atherinidae), sardines/pilchards (Clupeidae), whitebait (Engraulidae), garfish (Hemirhamphidae) and mullet (Mugilida). Commercially purchased fish are not included, but you may be asked for proof of purchase.*

Some species may have a specific possession limit (see bag and size limit tables).

Labelling your stored fish

(FRMR Part 4, Division 4)

You may not exceed the possession limit for any fish. If the quantity of fish stored in a single container/freezer exceeds one person's possession limit, the fish must be clearly labelled with the name of the owner/s.

Labels must be securely attached to each container or package of fish, and be at least 75 mm long and 25 mm wide.

The full name of the owner must be legibly written on the label and be clearly visible for inspection.

Labels are not needed if:

- Fish have been taken on a day-trip.
- The fish are in the possession and under the direct physical control of the person who took the fish, and stored only with fish taken by the same person.



Who 'owns' the fish? *In the absence of evidence to the contrary, a person using or in control of a vessel, vehicle, refrigerator, freezer, icebox, or other storage device in which fish are found is taken to be in possession of the fish. A person who provides payment to a courier business for the transportation of fish, is regarded as being in possession of the fish until the fish are received.*

Landing filleted or processed fish

(FRMR Part 4, Division 2)

The enforcement of fishing rules, such as bag, possession and size limits, relies on the ability of Fisheries and Marine Officers to count and measure fish.

In general, boat anglers returning from a day trip are asked to land their fish whole so that they are in a form that can be measured and counted.

However, for the convenience of anglers, Fisheries' regulations provide for some processing at sea. The way in which fish are processed is linked back to compliance with bag and size limits.

Special Risk species must always be landed whole on a day trip. These are shown in the ‘Bag and Size Limits’ section. They may be filleted after a lawful overnight stay on an island.

High Risk and **Medium Risk** species (see ‘Bag and Size Limits’ section) may be landed as a ‘trunk’ (i.e. with head and tail removed) or as fillets, provided that the skin and scales are attached for identification purposes, and the piece of fish is:

- at least 30 cm in length;
- packaged flat;
- packaged so that it is easily accessible for measurement and identification; and
- where frozen, able to be measured and identified without being thawed.


Low Risk species may be filleted or trunked at sea and the pieces landed, provided the skin is attached.

 **Note:** *Two fillets are considered to be equal to one whole fish.*

Extended trips and overnight stays

(FRMR Part 4, Division 2, 3, Regulation 15)

Following a lawful overnight stay on an island, a person may bring fillets of any length onto the mainland provided the fish were brought onto the island and kept there while the person stayed there overnight. A lawful overnight stay on an island is a period of at least five hours, up to and past midnight. Persons, who have been at sea or stayed on any island for more than one day, may land no more than the possession limit of whole (or trunked) fish or filleted fish.

 **NOTE:** *Overnight stays are not permitted on many islands – check with local authorities for details.*

Landing molluscs

(FRMR Part 4, Division 6, Regulation 42)

All edible molluscs (except oysters) must be landed whole and kept in the shell until you are more than 200 metres inland from the high water mark. This does not apply if you are about to eat the mollusc or use it as bait.

Fishing gear

(FRMR Part 4A, Division 2, Regulation 44, 64C, 64E)

Rods, lines and hooks – recreational anglers may have a maximum of three hooks or three gangs of hooks per line. Shore-based anglers may use a maximum of two fishing lines. Rods and lines must be attended.

Spearfishing – is generally permitted in ocean waters, except in marine conservation reserves where fishing on compressed air is often prohibited. See marine park guides (available from the Department of Environment and Conservation) for details. All inland waters (rivers, tributaries and dams) are closed to spearfishing.

Fishing nets – most of the State is closed to set and haul netting. See the ‘Recreational Fishing Guide - Net Fishing’ for details.

Barramundi – may only be taken by means of a single rod, reel and line or a single line held in the hand.

Protecting fish and their habitats

A number of activities are explicitly prohibited in order to protect fish and their habitats in key environments.

Legal recreational fishing gear methods are defined in fisheries regulations (see above). Everything else is illegal (FRMA Notice Numbers 462, 527, 677, Order 11 of 2007. FRMR Regulations 144, 145)

In particular you may not:

- use fish traps or ‘pots’ of any kind (except lobster pots);
- use dredges;
- obstruct any bay, inlet, river, creek or any tidal or inland waters so that fish are enclosed, left stranded, destroyed or wasted;
- be in possession of explosives or noxious substances (for example, fish poisons) on WA waters;
- ‘jag’ fish with baitless hooks;
- use commercial fishing gear of any kind;
- attach fish hooks to lobster pots, anchors and anchor lines or moorings; or
- fish for live or dead coral or ‘live rock’.

! **Note:** Many fishing tackle stores carry gear that is manufactured outside Western Australia and may not conform to WA legal requirements. In particular the use of crab traps, ‘witches hats’, collapsible ‘opera house’ traps or any nets that entangle the catch are illegal in WA waters. Check before you make a purchase.

Illegal selling of fish (FRMA S75 and S222, FRMR S121(2))

The sale of recreationally-caught fish is illegal. Penalties imposed on offenders include monetary fines as high as \$25,000. In addition, a penalty of 10 times the prescribed value of the fish that are the subject of the offence is mandatory.

In some cases, penalties of up to one-year imprisonment may also apply.



Photo: Craig Williams

FISH SAFELY – THE OCEAN CAN BE TREACHEROUS

All fishers need to exercise care when fishing from the shore and be properly prepared when fishing from a boat.

Boat users are also reminded to ensure the seaworthiness of their boats and that they are carrying the correct safety gear. This includes packing life jackets, a distress beacon (EPIRB), marine radio transceiver, flares, an effective anchor and line, bailer or bilge pump, fresh water, first aid kit, rope, tool kit, torch, signalling mirror, a fire extinguisher and an alternative power source/spare motor.

Conditions can change quickly. If you are going to an unfamiliar location, treat the ocean with respect. Carry a chart of the area where you intend to fish, study it, and familiarize yourself with positions of the navigational aids and hazards in the area concerned.

Check the weather forecast and watch out for unexpected changes. Being sensible and doing the right thing will help ensure your fishing trip will be a safer one.

Bureau of Meteorology: **www.bom.gov.au/weather/wa**

Department of Transport – Marine information website: **www.transport.wa.gov.au/imarine**

WA Coastal Marine Warnings: **1300 659 223**

WA Marine Service: **1900 926 150**

Volunteer Sea Rescue groups use VHF channels 16 and 67, 27 MHz channel 88 and HF channel 2182.

Before you leave, tell someone about your boating plans. Notify them immediately if these change during the voyage. Always report in when you return.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The information in this guide is current at the date of printing, but may change. Separate guides are available for licensed fisheries.

For the most up-to-date information on fisheries and fishing rules in plain English, check the Department of Fisheries' website at **www.fish.wa.gov.au** or contact the Department before going fishing. For legislation, a link from the website will take you to the State Law Publisher.

You should be aware that all fishing activities may be subject to optical surveillance by Fisheries and Marine Officers. Breaking recreational fishing rules may result in an infringement notice or legal action being initiated against you. Fines for recreational fishing offences may be as high as \$5,000 plus up to 10 times the dollar value of the species.



FURTHER INFORMATION

Visit the Department's website at www.fish.wa.gov.au or contact:

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