

# Shoalwater Islands Marine Park



## Shoalwater Islands Marine Park – seagrass, sealions and shipwrecks

Shoalwater Islands Marine Park and its adjacent island nature reserves host an exceptional diversity of marine plants and animals, and is within easy reach of Rockingham.

Swimming, snorkelling, scuba diving, fishing, boating, surfing, kayaking, water skiing, kite surfing, wind surfing and paddle boarding are all enjoyed in the marine park.

The area is culturally important to local Aboriginal people who have a long history of connection to the land and sea. The Gnaarla Karla Booja people are the traditional custodians of Shoalwater Islands Marine Park.

The marine park is one of Perth's most important aquatic playgrounds. Its clean accessible beaches and clear shallow waters support marine life that can often only be viewed in more remote areas of Australia.



## More information

**Parks and Wildlife Service  
Swan Coastal District Office**  
5 Dundee Road  
Wanneroo WA 6065  
Ph (08) 9303 7700  
exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au

**Department of Transport**  
Marine Safety Hotline:  
1300 863 308  
transport.wa.gov.au/imarine

**Department of Primary  
Industries and Regional  
Development  
Fisheries  
Division**  
Rockingham  
Office  
Ph (08) 9527 3699  
fish.wa.gov.au



**Bureau of Meteorology**  
bom.gov.au/weather/wa/  
forecasts  
Weather call 1900 926 150

**Rockingham Sea  
Rescue (VN6KC)**

**Emergency contact**  
Ph (08) 9528 2222  
Radio Frequencies:  
27 MHz:

Ch 90 – Working and calling  
frequency  
Ch 88 – Emergency calling  
Ch 86 – Alternate emergency  
calling

VHF:  
Ch 73 – Working and calling  
frequency  
Ch 16 – Emergency calling

HF: 4125 KHz – Working  
and emergency  
calling



Department of **Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions**  
Department of **Primary Industries and Regional Development**



*Photos Michael Clitheroe, Ian Beattie, Rockingham Wild Encounters,  
Barb Green and John Huisman/Parks and Wildlife*

Image of boat strike taken under United States National Marine Fisheries Service  
Scientific Research Permit No. 15543. Photo – Chicago Zoological Society's  
Sarasota Dolphin Research Program.

Information available in alternative formats on request.  
Information current at December 2017.

## Visitor guide



Department of **Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions**  
Department of **Primary Industries and Regional Development**



## Know your zones

**Shoalwater Islands Marine Park** is zoned to help ensure the biodiversity values of the marine park are conserved and protected, while providing managed opportunities for recreational use and enjoyment. There are three sanctuary zones, two special purpose zones and a large general use zone in the park. The location and coordinates of each zone are displayed on the map in this brochure, along with the activities permitted in each zone type.

**Sanctuary zones** are 'look but don't take' areas and provide the highest level of protection for marine habitat and wildlife. Sanctuary zones are managed for nature conservation and allow non-extractive activities such as boating, swimming, scuba diving, snorkelling and nature appreciation. Fishing is not permitted in sanctuary zones.

**Special purpose zones** are areas where a priority purpose has been designated. In Shoalwater Islands Marine Park the special purpose zones provide a high level of protection for wildlife conservation in Shoalwater Bay encompassing the island nature reserves, and for scientific reference over the Murray Reef south of The Sisters rock formation. Only activities that are compatible with the purpose of the zones are permitted.

The **general use zone** of the marine park is the largest zone and enables a wide range of commercial and recreational activities to occur such as boating, swimming, scuba diving, snorkelling, fishing and aquaculture.

## Zone markers

Sanctuary zones are marked by yellow buoys that extend over 1m above sea level. The markers can be used as an aid to line up the zone boundary. They are not designed to be used as moorings and it is an offence to do so.



## Caring for the marine park

- To protect important roosting and nesting areas for seabirds, you may not land your boat on nature reserves, which include the islands and rock outcrops.
- Penguin Island Conservation Park is open for day visits from mid-September to early June. Please keep to pathways, boardwalks or sandy beaches to protect bird nests and penguin burrows and avoid disturbing young birds not yet ready to fly.
- Always take litter home with you—remember that plastics and fishing line can harm and potentially kill marine wildlife.
- Go slow for those below. Keep an eye out for Australian sea lions, little penguins and bottlenose dolphins, which spend much of their time in the top 2m of water but are often difficult to see.
- Please do not feed wildlife. Feeding changes their behaviour from hunters to beggars and increases their vulnerability to boat strikes, disease and entanglements in fishing gear. Help keep our marine wildlife healthy, safe and wild.
- Sea lions are wild and unpredictable. Swimming with sea lions can be dangerous and they have been known to bite. There is also a potential risk of airborne disease transfer such as Tuberculosis.
- Quickly and carefully return undersize and unwanted fish to the water. Use wet hands or a wet cloth when handling fish and avoid placing them on hot dry surfaces.
- Anchor in sand to protect fragile reef, algae and seagrass communities as these are important nursery habitats and can take years to recover if damaged.
- Keep off reefs where possible—reef walking can physically damage intertidal reef communities.
- Please admire the caves that fringe the beach from a distance as they are rock fall risk areas.
- If you find a stranded, sick or injured dolphin, sea lion, little penguin, whale, turtle or seabird please call DBCA's 24-hour Wildcare Helpline on (08) 9474 9055.





## Enjoying the marine park

Shoalwater Islands Marine Park is one of three marine parks in the Perth metropolitan area. Shoalwater Islands, Marmion and the Swan Estuary marine parks were established to help ensure biodiversity values are protected and conserved for all to enjoy, now and in the future.

Rocky limestone shores fringe the marine park at Cape Peron with limestone pinnacles being the only remaining evidence that a forest once stood. Rock platforms underlie many of the beaches throughout the marine park and be sure to keep your eye out for fossilised cone shells cemented into the rocky shores found only in the south-west.

The many jagged-edged islands and rocky islets of the marine park provide important roosting and nesting areas for numerous bird species. Some of these birds migrate annually from the northern hemisphere, while others such as the regal pelican live there year-round. Seabirds are constantly moving around the marine park. Look up and you can see pelicans riding thermal uplifts, cormorants flying in a 'V' formation, crested terns and gannets dive bombing from great heights to snatch small fish and bridled terns dancing in the wind around Penguin Island.

Cavernous reefs around the islands are good spots for snorkelling and diving, depending on daily weather. Popular sites include Cape Peron and The Sisters. The *Saxon Ranger* dive wreck in Warnbro Sound lies in 25m of water and a permit from the Rockingham Visitor Centre is needed to dive it. Recreational boating, swimming, and windsurfing are also popular. The west side of Penguin Island provides good surfing and there is a water ski area within Warnbro Sound.

The Australian sea lion is the rarest sea lion in the world and is only found in southern Australia. Sea lions can be seen basking on the shores of Penguin and Seal islands or swimming through the waters of the marine park as they hunt for prey and investigate their surroundings. Sea lions found near Perth are all males. Most of them vacate the area every 18 months to travel to breeding islands about 200km north of Perth.

The little penguin is the smallest of 17 penguin species and is the only one that nests along Australia's mainland coast. Penguin Island has the largest breeding colony on the west coast of Australia. These flightless seabirds are superbly adapted to the marine environment as their wings have evolved into flippers with which they use to propel themselves, 'flying' underwater. On land they stand upright, walking or waddling awkwardly.

Bottlenose dolphins are common in Perth metropolitan waters. Their playful and intelligent nature makes them a favourite marine mammal for many. More than 60 dolphins have been recorded in Shoalwater Islands Marine Park, primarily spending their time rearing young, frolicking and hunting along the shoreline and in the offshore reef system.

The marine park has some of the healthiest seagrass meadows in the Perth metropolitan area, consisting of long lived species such as *Posidonia* spp. and *Amphibolis* spp. that take decades to recover if damaged. Seagrass meadows provide an important habitat and nursery area for a large number of marine species such as fish, rock lobsters, tiny worms, shellfish, sea stars and crustaceans. Fish, sharks and rays also seek camouflage, shelter and prey in the large brown seaweed beds of kelp and *Sargassum* that dominate the offshore reefs of the marine park.

## Going to Penguin Island?

Ferry tours operate hourly from Mersey Point from mid-September to early June. The best place to see little penguins feeding and frolicking in the water is the Penguin Island Discovery Centre as they are often at sea feeding during the day and are not found on the island. Entry into the discovery centre can be purchased in conjunction with the ferry ticket or upon entry.

To help protect the nature of Penguin Island, people may only visit during the day. Visitors are asked to keep to beaches, boardwalks and designated walkways.

Penguin Island closes from early June to mid-September every year to protect the penguins from human disturbance during their breeding season.

For more information on Penguin Island and its inhabitants please pick up a Penguin Island brochure from the Rockingham Visitor Centre or the gift shop at Mersey Point.

## Penguin Island access risk

People have drowned attempting to cross the sandbar to Penguin Island. Strong currents can occur in this area and water depth and conditions vary and change rapidly. Please do not risk your safety on the sandbar when you can keep your feet and belongings dry and take a safe, comfortable ferry ride to the island.



## Fish for the future

Fishing is popular in Shoalwater Islands Marine Park and permitted in appropriate marine park zones. Please refer to the map and its accompanying permitted uses table in this brochure to see where you can fish.

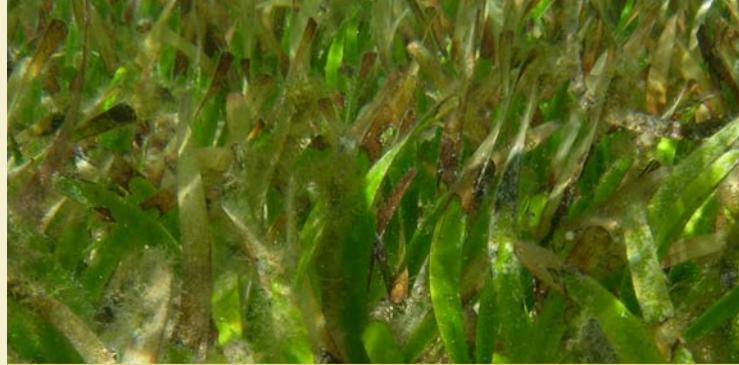
- Fishing is not permitted in sanctuary zones or the *Saxon Ranger Dive Wreck Restricted Area* and not all types of fishing gear can be used in all zones.
- Abalone can only be taken in the special purpose zone (wildlife conservation) and the general use zone, but only during the metropolitan abalone fishing season if you hold a current recreational fishing licence endorsed for abalone.
- Spearfishing using scuba or hookah is not allowed in the marine park. Spearfishing by breath-hold only is permitted in the general use zone.
- Sea urchins and all molluscs (shellfish), including turban shells, whelks, periwinkles and baler shells are protected and cannot be taken from the park. The only exceptions are mussels, abalone (during the season), squid, cuttlefish and octopus.

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development's (DPIRD) Fisheries Division enforces gear, bag, size and possession limits to ensure there will always be fish for the future in Shoalwater Islands Marine Park. Fishers must ensure they are familiar with rules and hold the required fishing and boating licences.

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, (DBCA) Parks and Wildlife Service works collaboratively with the (DPIRD) Fisheries Division and the Department of Transport on enforcement, education and other programs.

## Speed limits

Speed restrictions for all vessels apply in designated sensitive areas to help protect animals from boat strikes. An 8 knot speed limit applies to all motorised vessels in the Seal Island Sanctuary Zone and Shoalwater Bay Special Purpose Zone (wildlife conservation). An 8 knot speed limit applies to all vessels in the *Saxon Ranger Dive Wreck Restricted Area* and anchoring or passing over the wreck is not permitted. No motorised vessels are permitted in the white bait protection area around Becher Point to help protect the aggregation of white bait. For more information contact the Department of Transport on the number listed on the back of this brochure.



## Weather or not

The weather and sea conditions in the Rockingham area can change suddenly as a result of strong summer breezes and winter storms. Consider your safety and check the forecast before heading offshore to explore the marine park.



## Marine parks and reserves – help protect our wildlife!

### Go slow for those below

Shoalwater Islands Marine Park is home to some incredible marine life. Little penguins, Australian sea lions and dolphins often swim near the surface and are susceptible to boat strikes which can cause life threatening injuries or may even be fatal. Please go slow for those below.



**INDIAN OCEAN**

32° 15.658' S  
115° 40.089' E

32° 16.277' S  
115° 41.128' E

32° 17.483' S  
115° 41.300' E

32° 17.833' S  
115° 41.300' E

32° 18.727' S  
115° 41.373' E

32° 18.933' S  
115° 41.400' E

32° 19.233' S  
115° 41.400' E

32° 19.550' S  
115° 42.250' E

32° 19.667' S  
115° 42.250' E

32° 21.333' S  
115° 40.683' E

32° 21.333' S  
115° 41.400' E

32° 21.333' S  
115° 42.500' E

32° 22.133' S  
115° 40.683' E

32° 22.133' S  
115° 41.400' E

32° 22.133' S  
115° 42.500' E

32° 22.594' S  
115° 40.089' E

**Sea lions - take care**  
Australian sea lions are rare and protected. They can be found on and around Seal Island for most of the year and they fish and swim in nearby waters. Sea lions are attractive and interesting creatures but can deliver a nasty bite if aggravated. For your safety and the protection of this species, you are required to keep at least 10m away from sea lions at all times. If a sea lion approaches you in the water, move away or remove yourself from the water until the sea lion has swum away.

**Help protect our wildlife - no feeding**  
Do not feed dolphins, sea lions, birds or any other wildlife - this helps to protect their health and wellbeing. Although you may feel you are doing them no harm, feeding changes their behaviour from hunters to beggars and increases their vulnerability to disease, boat strikes and entanglement in fishing line. Please report sick or injured wildlife by phoning the Wildcare helpline on (08) 9474 9055.

**Island access within Shoalwater Islands Marine Park**  
Islands and rock outcrops within the marine park provide important habitats for seabirds and other wildlife. All rock outcrops and islands within the marine park (except Penguin Island) are nature reserves and access is prohibited. Penguin Island is a conservation park and is open for day visitors only.

**Speed restrictions**  
An 8 knot speed limit applies to all vessels in the Seal Island Sanctuary Zone and the Shoalwater Bay Special Purpose Zone (wildlife conservation). In addition there is an 8 knot speed limit within 200m of the shore. For further information, obtain the Rockingham Boating Guide available from the Department of Transport, or visit [www.transport.wa.gov.au](http://www.transport.wa.gov.au).



**Shoalwater Islands Marine Park**

- Marine Park boundary
- Sanctuary Zone
- Special Purpose Zone
- General Use Zone
- Boat ramp
- Nature Reserve
- Conservation Park

Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions  
Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

**PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

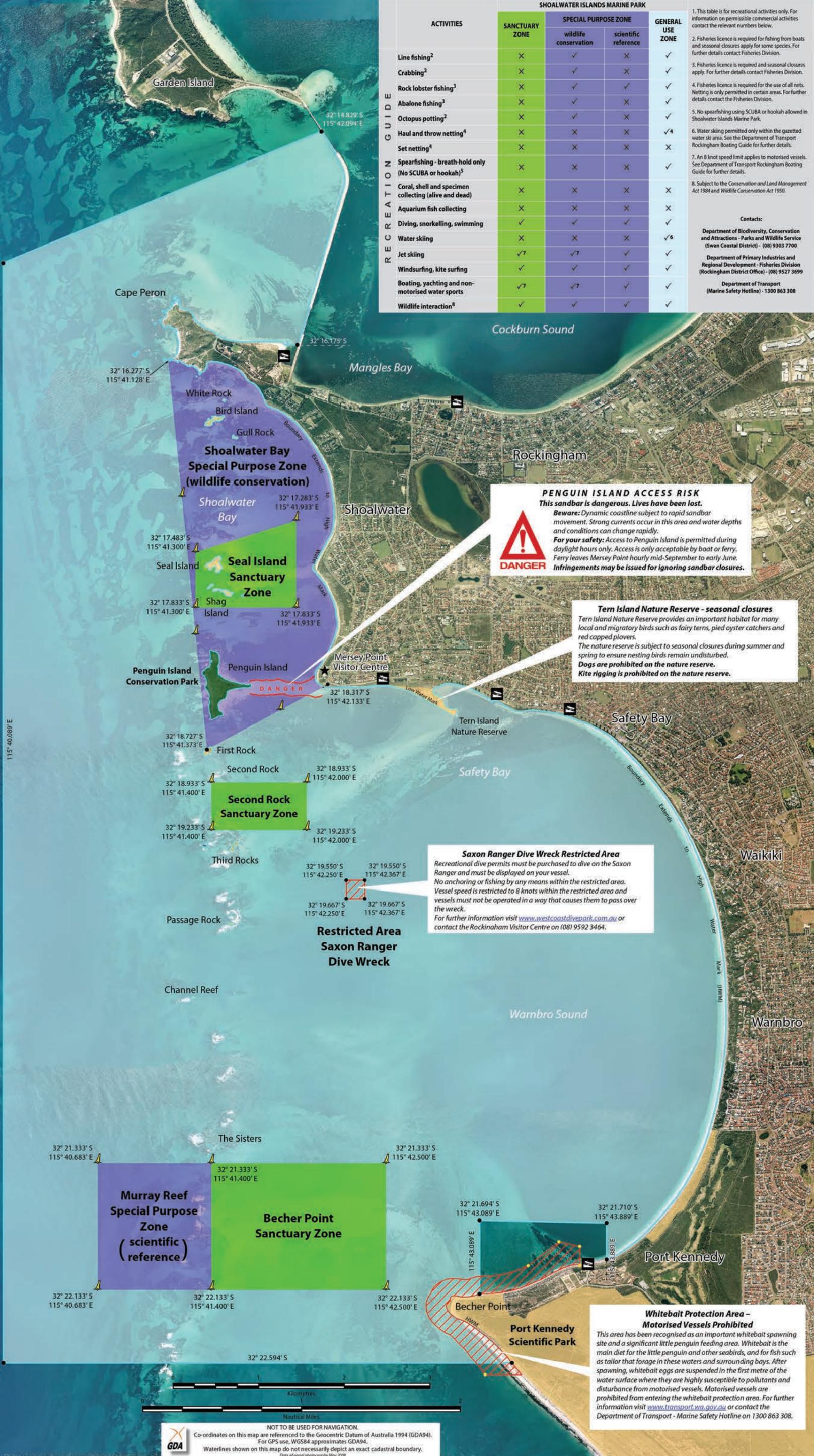
Scan this QR code for more information about Shoalwater Islands Marine Park  
<https://parks.dpaw.wa.gov.au/park/shoalwater-islands>

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ACTIVITIES	SHOALWATER ISLANDS MARINE PARK			GENERAL USE ZONE
	SANCTUARY ZONE	wildlife conservation	scientific reference	
Line fishing <sup>2</sup>	X	✓	X	✓
Crabbing <sup>2</sup>	X	✓	X	✓
Rock lobster fishing <sup>3</sup>	X	✓	✓	✓
Abalone fishing <sup>3</sup>	X	✓	X	✓
Octopus potting <sup>2</sup>	X	✓	X	✓
Haul and throw netting <sup>4</sup>	X	X	X	✓ <sup>4</sup>
Set netting <sup>4</sup>	X	X	X	X
Spearfishing - breath-hold only (No SCUBA or hookah) <sup>5</sup>	X	X	X	✓
Coral, shell and specimen collecting (alive and dead)	X	X	X	X
Aquarium fish collecting	X	X	X	X
Diving, snorkelling, swimming	✓	✓	✓	✓
Water skiing	X	X	X	✓ <sup>6</sup>
Jet skiing	✓ <sup>7</sup>	✓ <sup>7</sup>	✓	✓
Windsurfing, kite surfing	✓	✓	✓	✓
Boating, yachting and non-motorised water sports	✓ <sup>7</sup>	✓ <sup>7</sup>	✓	✓
Wildlife interaction <sup>8</sup>	✓	✓	✓	✓

1. This table is for recreational activities only. For information on permissible commercial activities contact the relevant numbers below.  
2. Fisheries licence is required for fishing from boats and seasonal closures apply for some species. For further details contact Fisheries Division.  
3. Fisheries licence is required and seasonal closures apply. For further details contact Fisheries Division.  
4. Fisheries licence is required for the use of all nets. Netting is only permitted in certain areas. For further details contact the Fisheries Division.  
5. No spearfishing using SCUBA or hookah allowed in Shoalwater Islands Marine Park.  
6. Water skiing permitted only within the gazetted water ski area. See the Department of Transport Rockingham Boating Guide for further details.  
7. An 8 knot speed limit applies to motorised vessels. See Department of Transport Rockingham Boating Guide for further details.  
8. Subject to the Conservation and Land Management Act 1984 and Wildlife Conservation Act 1950.

**Contacts:**  
Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions - Parks and Wildlife Service (Swan Coastal District) - (08) 9303 7700  
Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development - Fisheries Division (Rockingham District Office) - (08) 9527 3699  
Department of Transport (Marine Safety Hotline) - 1300 863 308



**PENGUIN ISLAND ACCESS RISK**  
This sandbar is dangerous. Lives have been lost.  
**Beware:** Dynamic coastline subject to rapid sandbar movement. Strong currents occur in this area and water depths and conditions can change rapidly.  
**For your safety:** Access to Penguin Island is permitted during daylight hours only. Access is only acceptable by boat or ferry. Ferry leaves Mersey Point hourly mid-September to early June. **Infringements may be issued for ignoring sandbar closures.**

**Tern Island Nature Reserve - seasonal closures**  
Tern Island Nature Reserve provides an important habitat for many local and migratory birds such as fairy terns, pied oyster catchers and red capped plovers. The nature reserve is subject to seasonal closures during summer and spring to ensure nesting birds remain undisturbed. **Dogs are prohibited on the nature reserve. Kite rigging is prohibited on the nature reserve.**

**Saxon Ranger Dive Wreck Restricted Area**  
Recreational dive permits must be purchased to dive on the Saxon Ranger and must be displayed on your vessel. No anchoring or fishing by any means within the restricted area. Vessel speed is restricted to 8 knots within the restricted area and vessels must not be operated in a way that causes them to pass over the wreck. For further information visit [www.westcoastdivepark.com.au](http://www.westcoastdivepark.com.au) or contact the Rockingham Visitor Centre on (08) 9592 3464.

**Whitebait Protection Area - Motorised Vessels Prohibited**  
This area has been recognised as an important whitebait spawning site and a significant little penguin feeding area. Whitebait is the main diet for the little penguin and other seabirds, and for fish such as tailor that forage in these waters and surrounding bays. After spawning, whitebait eggs are suspended in the first metre of the water surface where they are highly susceptible to pollutants and disturbance from motorised vessels. Motorised vessels are prohibited from entering the whitebait protection area. For further information visit [www.transport.wa.gov.au](http://www.transport.wa.gov.au) or contact the Department of Transport - Marine Safety Hotline on 1300 863 308.