

Department of
Parks and Wildlife



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NINGALOO COAST

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Ningaloo Marine Park – celebrating 30 years!

Celebrating 30 years of Ningaloo Marine Park

Ningaloo, Western Australia's second marine park, celebrates its 30th anniversary this year.

The marine park contains the largest fringing coral reef in Australia and diverse marine animals such as endangered sea turtles, dugongs, dolphins, killer whales, endangered shore birds and world-renowned whale sharks.

The park is a critical migration habitat for one of the world's largest population of humpback whales.

Ningaloo was declared a marine park by the WA Government on 3 April 1987 and is now enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of visitors from around Australia and the world each year.

Forming part of a marine conservation network that stretches from the Kimberley to Walpole, the park protects the natural features of the coastal area while allowing for recreational and commercial use without compromising conservation values.

The entire Ningaloo Coast, including the marine park, was granted protection with the 2004 extension to Red Bluff and the park achieved further international recognition when it was granted World Heritage status in 2011.

It continues to be one of Australia's premier marine conservation icons.

Planning for joint management

The Gnulli Native Title Group and Parks and Wildlife are working towards managing reserves along the Ningaloo Coast as part of joint management plan being drafted for the area. Recently, traditional owners and Parks and Wildlife undertook planning workshops and a series of on-country field trips to look at the important cultural landscape of the coast, the natural and recreational values and how the coast should be managed sustainably.

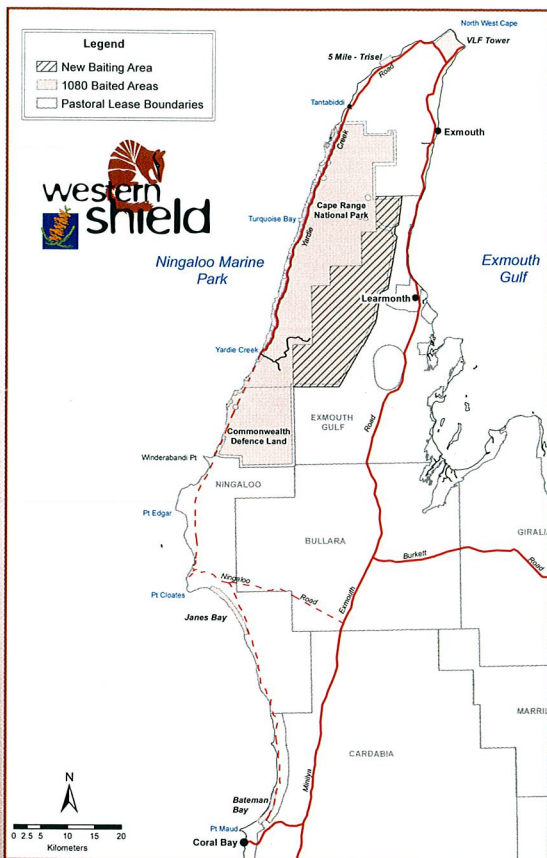
Following in-depth interviews of campers along the coast, Parks and Wildlife released a public survey in October 2016 seeking more information on what they valued about the Ningaloo Coast and what services and facilities they would like to see provided. The survey closed at the end of February 2017 after an active campaign to reach stakeholders resulting in more than 1100 responses.

Results of the survey, workshop and field trips will be released in the next few months and will contribute to the preparation of the draft joint management plan, which will be available for public consultation later this year. Public submissions will then be considered to finalise the joint management plan and guide the future management of the coastal reserves.

Left: Ningaloo planning trip in January 2017.



Wildlife recovery – baiting expanded to lands adjoining Cape Range National Park



Above: *Western Shield* 1080 baiting map, indicating existing baited areas and the 2017 expansion.

Parks and Wildlife's flagship wildlife recovery program, *Western Shield*, is one of the biggest wildlife conservation initiatives ever undertaken in Australia. It aims to control introduced predators including foxes and feral cats through baiting to assist in the recovery of native animal populations.

Parks and Wildlife has expanded the program's aerial baiting in Cape Range National Park to include a large portion of unallocated Crown land to the east. This is to protect endangered mammals found in the region including the black-flanked rock-wallaby (see article *Where's wallaby?*).

The baits contain a toxin found in the native plant genus *Gastrolobium*, commonly known as poison peas. Native animals have evolved with these plants and have a high tolerance to the toxin, but it is lethal to introduced species like the fox and feral cat.

Over the past 100 years, more mammals have become extinct in Australia than anywhere else in the world. On the North West Cape, 26 species of mammal are now presumed locally extinct, including bilbies, chuditch, mulgara, and burrowing bettongs. Effective control of foxes and feral cats in Cape Range National Park and surrounding areas will help secure its future as a mainland site for potential reintroductions of locally extinct mammals.



ATTENTION PET OWNERS: These baits will kill domestic cats and dogs. Please observe warning signs and leave your pets at home or prevent them from entering these areas.

Remember that pets are prohibited in Cape Range National Park. For more information please contact Derek Sandow on (08) 9947 8000 or browse information about *Western Shield* at dpaw.wa.gov.au/westernshield



Beach access paths to Turquoise Bay Drift circa 2003 (left) and 2017 (right). Note the increase of vegetation cover over eroded dune.

Minimising human impacts at Turquoise Bay

It is important to remember the effect visitor activities can have on the environment as the popularity of visiting the Ningaloo Coast increases. Coastal management helps to minimise human impacts to ecological sensitive areas. Disturbance to the fragile ecosystems can affect dune stability, regeneration of flora and have flow-on effects to local fauna and marine environment. The construction and management of access paths and tracks to popular locations is an example of how Parks and Wildlife manage visitor flow to prevent damage to the fragile dune systems.

In 2003, Turquoise Bay was redeveloped as part of a recreational master plan to ensure protection of the area and to enhance the visitor experience. Over the last decade, the dune system has stabilised thanks to coastal management, feral animal control as well as fantastic public appreciation and support.



Where's wallaby?

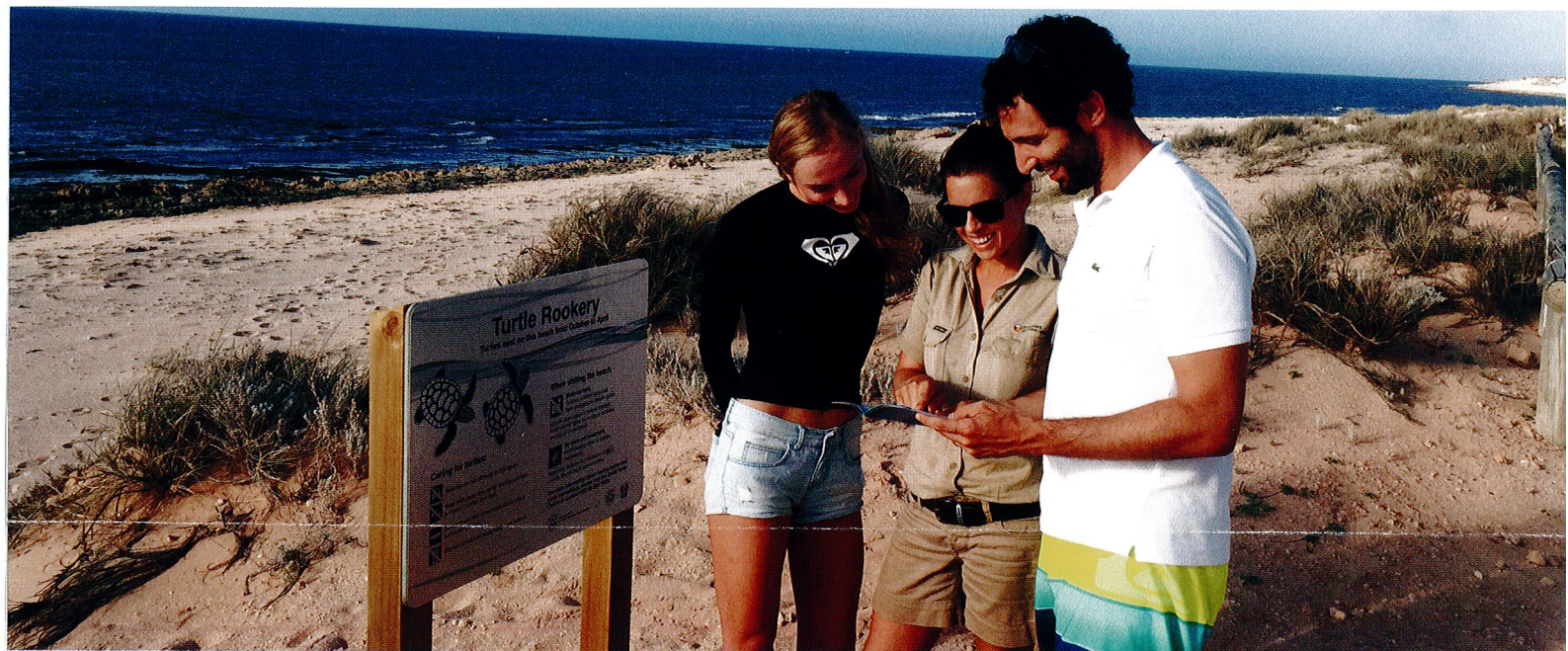
The black-flanked rock wallaby (*Petrogale lateralis lateralis*) is listed as endangered under *Western Australia's Wildlife Conservation Act 1950* and the *Federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. In many areas across WA this shy species no longer occurs, but in Cape Range the populations are relatively stable, with a number of small colonies scattered along the range.

Building on historical datasets including several Cape Conservation Group surveys in 2005, Parks and Wildlife has recently been targeting areas to identify new colonies of wallabies. Remote cameras, in conjunction with field surveys, have identified a number of new colonies along both the eastern and western edges of the range, including sites near Exmouth town site and in the Learmonth Air Weapons Range.

In addition to mapping new colonies, biannual site monitoring is also undertaken at key sites to better understand the fluctuations related to climate conditions over time.

The operators of Yardie Creek Boat Tours also gather data about wallabies spotted during their tours. If you are interested in finding out more, getting involved in monitoring, or you have spotted a rock wallaby – please get in touch with conservation officer Heather Barnes at heather.barnes@dpaw.wa.gov.au.

Can you guess how many black-flanked rock wallabies are hiding? (*answer on back page*)



Above: Parks and Wildlife staff chatting with visitors on how to minimise disturbance to turtle hatchlings as they make their way down to the ocean.

Turtle hatchlings enchanting visitors to Ningaloo

Record numbers of visitors have been enjoying the wonderful, natural spectacle of turtle hatchlings emerging from their nests and making their way to the ocean. Female turtles have been very busy laying nests, with many hatchling sightings along the Jurabi Coast. Parks and Wildlife has also been busy patrolling beaches and talking with visitors about how best to interact with hatchlings without disturbing them.

Once turtle hatchlings emerge from the nest they are focussed on making their way to the ocean. They need this time to get their flippers and lungs working and their heart pumping so when they reach the water's edge they are ready to dive deep to avoid predation. By 'helping' hatchlings to the shore you are inhibiting their chance to survival out in the ocean. Turtle hatchlings also take a natal imprint of their surroundings when

making their way to the beach; they cannot do this if they are not touching the sand. So please don't pick up the hatchlings and carry them to the water.

The green, loggerhead and hawksbill turtles that hatch along the Ningaloo Coast may not return for 30 to 50 years and it is estimated as little as one in 1000 may survive to breed and nest. We need to ensure we give them the best chance of survival from the day they emerge from the nest.

Parks and Wildlife has also been talking with visitors about other turtle matters such as turtle biology and ecology. If you come across a staff member be sure to ask them about the turtles that visit Ningaloo.



How many black-flanked wallabies did you see?

ANSWER: 8!
Six adults and two pouch young.

Did you know?

Ningaloo was the first marine park in Western Australia to use sanctuary zones. They were put in place to help protect our wonderful marine life.

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