Enjoying the marine park

The Swan Estuary Marine Park

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Department of Environment and Conservation
Our environment, our future

WA's submerged wonders

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Enjoying the marine park

All three localities within the Swan Estuary Marine Park lie within 20 minutes drive from the centre of Perth. Depending on which area you are visiting, you can drive to the nearest car park and walk to the foreshore. The most popular activities are walking and cycling along the scenic riverside. There are dual use paths (for the shared use of pedestrians and cyclists) adjacent to the Como foreshore and Kwinana Freeway. These areas encompass mudflats, seagrass beds and intertidal vegetation such as sedges and saltmarsh, which provide many different habitats for a host of animals. The most important of these, due to their international significance, are the migratory wading birds. They come from as far afield as Asia, Mongolia and Siberia. About 33 of these species are protected under the Japan-Australia and China-Australia Migratory Bird Agreements. Most notable among these are the tiny red-necked stints. Although only 30-40 grams, these birds regularly fly thousands of kilometres from their breeding areas in Arctic Siberia to the warm mudflats of the Swan Estuary.

The transsequatorial waders are fascinating birds. The ability to fly great distances and to navigate with such pinpoint accuracy has been the subject of much study and research, particularly in the northern hemisphere. It seems the urge to migrate is triggered by the changes in the length of daylight and it is further suggested that birds use the sun, stars and perhaps even the earth’s magnetic fields for navigation.

Different species of waders arrive at varying times between August and November. Because other wetlands are too full of water at this time of the year, the Swan Estuary Marine Park (and the coast) are used as the first resting and feeding spots. The estuarine mudflats contain high concentrations of food which replenish the energy of the exhausted birds after their long flight south. Some of the birds will be sporting their breeding plumage when they arrive. Others will moult to their winter plumage.

The semi-enclosed waters of Alfred Cove hide mussels dating back 6000 years, as well as considerably younger, more juicy prawns. The seagrass-beds adjacent to the mudflats are a primary link in the food chain for the animals on which waders depend for food, as well as an important nursery area for fish and prawns.

Miuly is the Aboriginal name for sapphire, and the main physical feature of the reserve is a small peninsula vegetated with sedges and sapphire. Despite its proximity to the freeway, this area provides equally good feeding and resting areas for both the waders and other waterbirds.

The Swan Estuary Marine Park protects three biologically important areas of Perth’s beautiful Swan River. The Swan Estuary Marine Park encompasses Alfred Cove, 200 hectares adjacent to the suburbs of Attadale and Applecross; Pelican Point, a 45 hectare area in Crawley; and Miuly, 95 hectares adjacent to the Como foreshore and Kwinana Freeway.

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However, the actual mechanisms remain unknown.
Caring for the marine environment

- The mudflats and fringing vegetation of the Swan Estuary Marine Park are extremely important for several species of waterbirds, including migratory waders that have flown from as far away as Siberia. Please don’t bring dogs into these special areas. Dogs can disturb wildlife and the scent of a dog can linger and result in native birdlife flying off.
- Windsurfing and kite surfing are highly disturbing to migratory waders and other shorebirds. To a small bird, for example, the shadow cast by a kite looks like a predator. Windsurfers and kite surfers should therefore avoid entering the waters surrounding Pelican Point, which are delineated by in-water markers.
- Fish for the future. Observe size, bag and possession limits. See ‘Recreational Fishing Guide: West Coast Region’, available from the Department of Fisheries.
- The Swan River once boasted magnificent wetland vegetation such as paperbarks but very little of it remains. The fringing vegetation in Alfred Cove Nature Reserve, Milyu Nature Reserve and Pelican Point Nature Reserve is very fragile and provides important wildlife habitat. Please stay on paths.
- Dispose of litter thoughtfully, especially plastics and fishing line.
- You can join bushland rehabilitation groups such as Friends of Attadale Foreshore (http://www.sercul.org.au/foattadale.html) to help care for these precious areas. Contact the nearest local authority to find out more information.

Protecting WA’s marine areas

Western Australia’s marine areas are globally significant. Western Australia’s coastal waters are considered to be among the least disturbed in the world.

The Western Australian coast boasts a big area of biogeographic overlap, between the tropical north (of Ningaloo Marine Park) and the temperate south (east of Cape Leeuwin), where tropical and temperate species co-exist. The Indian Ocean is also the only ocean in the world that has an eastern boundary current (the Leeuwin Current) that transports warm waters from the equator to the southern coast of a continent.

Our coastal waters are valued by Western Australians. The wide range of environmental, cultural, commercial and recreational values they offer generate employment and revenue and provide people with a source of pleasure and recreation.

The Western Australian government is committed to conserving our marine environment and the sustainable use of our natural resources. A major component of the State Government’s marine conservation and management strategy is the establishment of a statewide system of marine parks and reserves. Approximately 1,538,294 hectares of State waters are currently included in marine parks and reserves. This equates to 12.2 per cent of State waters, of which 2.5 per cent is in sanctuary (‘no take’). The conservation and sustainable use of Western Australia’s marine environment is everyone’s responsibility. By working together to reduce human impacts on the marine environment we can pass it on to future generations in similar condition to what it is in today.

The coordinates shown on this brochure are referenced to the Geocentric Datum of Australia (1994) and will differ by approximately 200 metres from the same points shown on charts referenced to the Australian Geodetic Datum 1994 (AGD94).

This map is for illustration purposes and not for navigation.