



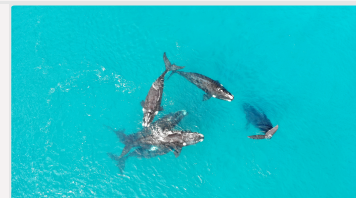
Issue 30 - Winter 2026

Welcome to the 30th issue of *Ngari Capes Marine Park News*

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Image right: By Blair Ranford (Sharky Aerials) clear whale tangle.



Marine Park update



Welcome to the winter edition of the Ngari Capes Marine Park newsletter. As the cooler months settle in, the marine park comes alive with seasonal activity. The annual whale migration is now well underway along our coastline, while seal colonies at key haul-out sites are building in number as they move into the breeding season. It's a great time to get out and experience the park, with plenty happening both on the water and along the coast.

Image left: By Blair Ranford (Sharky Aerials). Southern right whales both belly up.

Behind the scenes, marine rangers have also been staying busy preparing for and responding to seasonal challenges. The team recently took part in large whale disentanglement refresher training, including familiarisation with point boat storage and lifting operations onboard PV Wattern (pictured below), and have also been refreshing their skills to prepare for potential avian influenza responses. Recent storms have kept the team on their toes, with cleanup efforts underway across the coast, including the removal of storm-damaged vessels at Kilcarnup Beach.



Image above left: Large whale disentanglement exercise. **Above right:** Removal of storm-damaged vessels at Kilcarnup Beach.

Peak season for fur seals at Cape Naturaliste

By Parks and Wildlife Service, Blackwood District

Winter marks peak season for the long-nosed fur seal colony at Cape Naturaliste, with numbers building from June to September. District staff have been monitoring this well-known haul-out site using drones since 2022, helping build a clearer picture of how seals use the marine park. Surveys show the colony can grow to **over 200 seals in August**.

The colony spans two nearby islands that function together. The main (west) island supports a steady population of around 30–40 seals year-round, while the eastern island is only used during peak periods, when numbers increase during breeding season.

Ongoing monitoring will help guide management and provide important baseline data, ensuring the colony's health and resilience. Continued observation is also important given the first detected cases of avian influenza in Western Australia and its potential risk to marine wildlife. Declines in some seal species globally, such as southern elephant seals, highlight the importance of ongoing monitoring and protection ([BBC Future, 2025](#)).

If you'd like to spot the seals, the [Cape Naturaliste Walk Trails](#) are a great option, offering a range of bushwalking experiences with several scenic lookout points throughout Leeuwin–Naturaliste National Park. Just be sure to check the weather, as the area's exposure can make for severe weather conditions.



Image Above: Long-nosed fur seals at the Cape Naturaliste colony during peak season, when numbers can swell into the hundreds across the two nearby islands.

Lighthouse camera to capture whale movements

By the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) is trialling a new thermal imaging camera off the coast of Augusta to gather more information on humpback whale migration patterns. The trial is part of DPIRD's Working for Whales project which is engaging with businesses and industries across the State that operate in whale migratory areas to develop new ways to collect data and information on whale movements and behaviours.

This data will be used by DPIRD researchers to refine management measures to protect migrating humpback whales and mitigate potential entanglements, while also minimising impacts on fishers and other water users. DPIRD Principal Research Scientist Jason How said the thermal imaging camera was currently located on the Leeuwin lighthouse, which due to its height above sea level and proximity to migrating whales, provided a great vantage point to detect whales.



Image Above: The thermal imaging camera located on the Leeuwin lighthouse provides a great vantage point to collect data and information on whale movements and behaviours. Photo credit: Coasting Outback.

“DPIRD worked with Capes Foundation, part of the Margaret River Busselton Tourism Association, to install the camera on the lighthouse which will stay in place until August to capture the northern whale migration season,” he said. “The camera system uses thermal imaging to detect whale blows, which have distinct thermal signatures, coupled with AI processing of the data to record the sighting. “The data will be analysed to produce a daily count of whales detected. This information will then be used to determine the peak migration period for humpback whales heading north and south to help inform fisheries management arrangements to mitigate whale entanglements.”

Dr How said DPIRD was also exploring working with other businesses including charter flight operators and whale watching companies to gather whale migration data. “Much like ferries, charter flights often fly the same routes enabling them to potentially conduct 'surveys' which record where whales were sighted but also where they weren't seen, which can be equally as valuable,” he said.

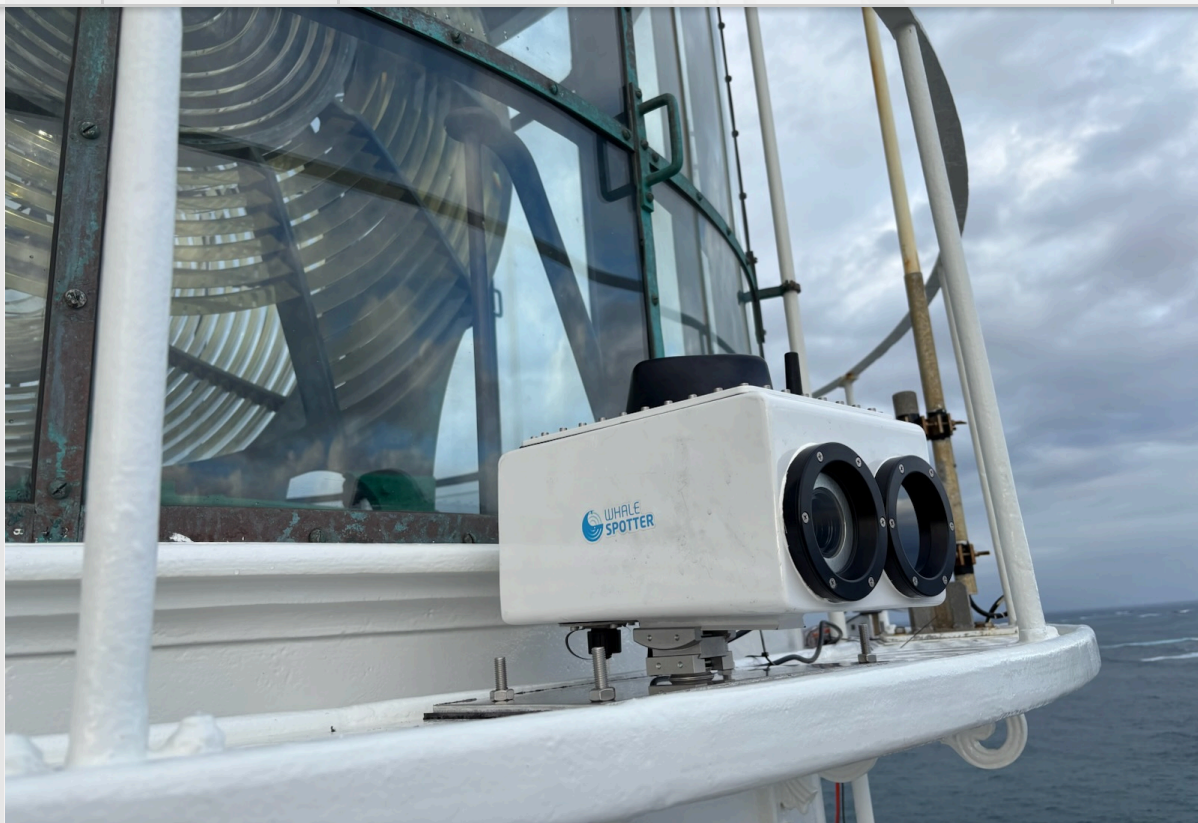


Image Above: The camera located on the Leeuwin lighthouse.

Dr How said reporting sightings of whales via the revamped Marine Fauna Sightings app was another great way for the community to contribute to important fisheries research by providing more specific and timely information on whale movements along our coast. “If you sight a whale, it only takes a couple of minutes to use the app and make a report,” he said. “The app automatically adds the GPS location, date and time from the phone or device to pinpoint the location of the sighting and then you can take a photo and upload as part of the report if you like.”

The Marine Fauna Sightings app was developed with the support of the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation and Western Rock Lobster, led by DPIRD in partnership with Australian Antarctic Division and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.



Download the Marine Fauna Sighting app:
The app can be downloaded from the Apple or Google Play stores or by visiting the [DPIRD website](#)

Celebrating Wadandi connections to sea Country across Australian marine parks

At Surfers Point in Margaret River, visitors are now invited to see the coastline through a deeper lens—one shaped by thousands of years of Wadandi connection to sea Country. Three newly installed cultural interpretive signs share traditional knowledge of Wadandi Boodja, the Saltwater People's Country. Positioned along the iconic boardwalk, the signs highlight powerful cultural stories, including Mammung Biddi-wah (the Whales' Path), Ngari (Salmon), and Wooditj Kaarbin Kwala (Old Man Groper). Together, they trace songlines that connect land and sea, offering insight into cultural species, seasons, knowledge systems, and the living relationships between people and place.



Image credit: Parks Australia

The signs reflect a partnership with Wadandi Traditional Owners, built on years of collaborative research and cultural mapping bringing together traditional ecological knowledge and western science to support Australian marine park management and education.

Led by the Undalup Association, the project was supported by Parks Australia through the Australian Government's Our Marine Parks Grants program, in partnership with the National Environmental Science Program's Marine and Coastal Hub, The University of Western Australia, and the Shire of Augusta Margaret River.

More information on the history of these projects can be found here: [Guiding surveys on Wadandi Saltwater Country](#).



Image credit: Parks Australia

H5 avian influenza (bird flu) update

By Parks and Wildlife Service, Blackwood District

Avian influenza (H5 bird flu) is a serious and highly contagious disease being closely monitored in Australia. As of 1 July 2026, five cases have been confirmed in wild birds (four in WA and one in SA), with no evidence of mass deaths or impacts to agriculture, and the risk to human health remains low. DBCA is working closely with DPIRD (the hazard management agency in WA) and other agencies to respond and protect wildlife. If you encounter sick or dead birds, do not handle them—keep your distance, record details such as location and time (and photos if safe), and report it to the 24-hour Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on **1800 675 888**.

AVOID

Stay a safe distance away from the animal and do not touch



RECORD

Take a photo or video and record the date, time and location



REPORT

Phone the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888



about what makes our marine parks so special throughout this time of the year.

Keeping connected and up to date

Understanding the designated zones and permitted activities is key to a safe and enjoyable visit to Ngari Capes Marine Park. Visitors can stay informed by visiting the [Explore Parks WA](#) website. And don't forget to check out these great apps provided by Recfishwest, DTMI and Surf Life Saving Australia which offer up-to-date regulations and guidance for safe and responsible enjoyment of Western Australia's coastline.

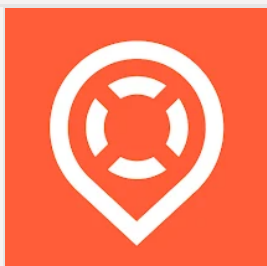


Recfishwest app:

Access all WA fishing rules, fish ID, GPS marine park info, and safety locations offline! High-quality illustrations and details on hundreds of species available on this free app. Stay updated on fishing seasons, bag limits, and easily identify catches with Recfishwest's three-step fish ID.

App for Apple: [recfishwest on the App Store](#)

App for Android: [Recfishwest – Apps on Google Play](#)



Deckee boating app

Deckee is a comprehensive boating assistant with features including on-water location sharing, automated logbooks, marine weather, safety alerts, and more, ensuring confident navigation for users. It offers automatic on-water detection, global member visibility, risk forecasting, activity logging, local knowledge heatmaps, interactive chart info, and worldwide vessel tracking, catering to both novice and experienced boaters.

App for Apple: [DECKEE Boating on the App Store](#)

App for Android: [DECKEE Boating – Apps on Google Play](#)

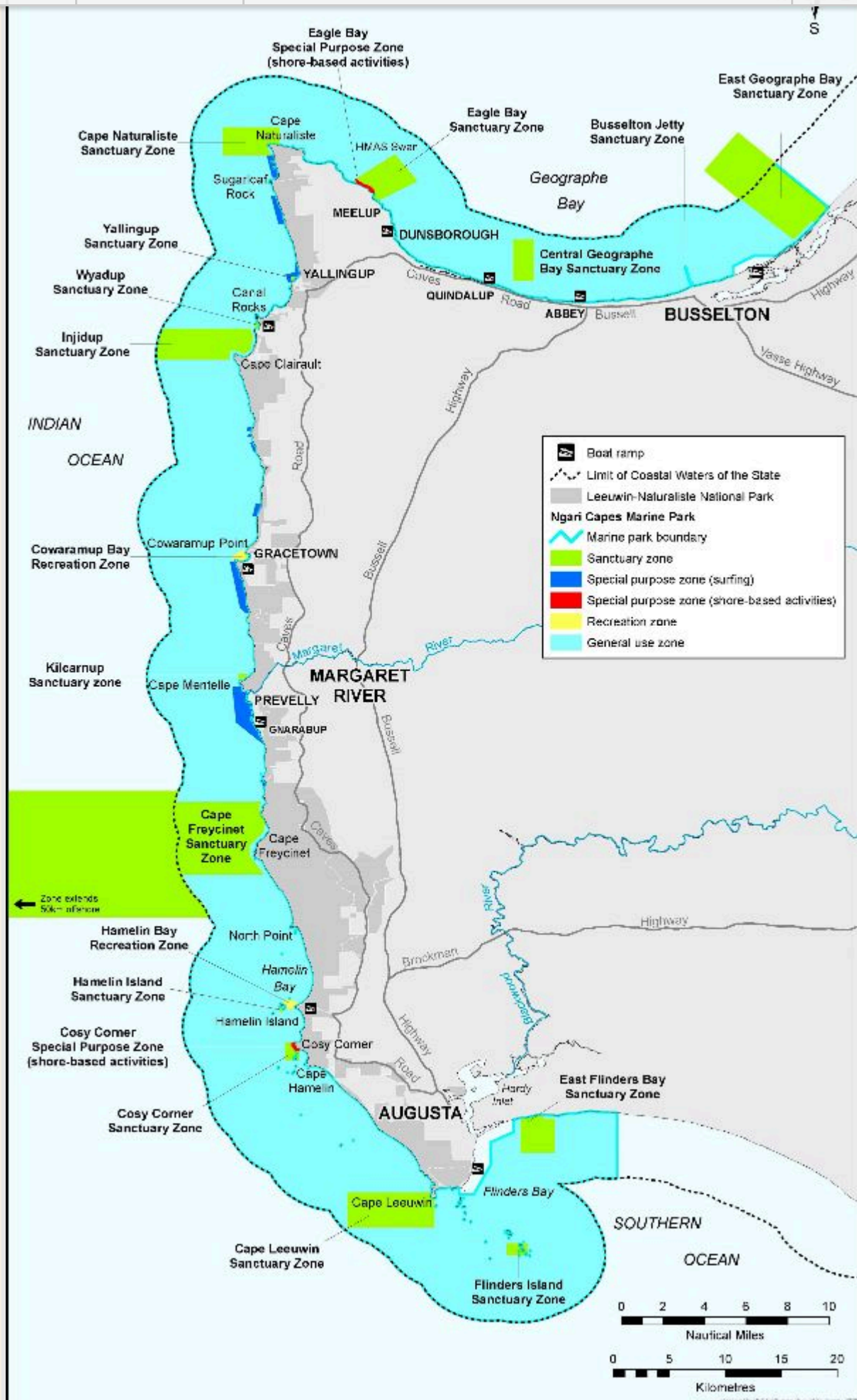


Beachsafe app

Taking a road trip up the coast? On holiday? Or just looking for the right beach for you? Find your nearest beaches in seconds. Brought to you by Surf Life Saving Australia, the Beachsafe app includes the location, weather, surf conditions and hazards plus the local facilities for all Australian beaches. Importantly, the current lifesaving service for each beach is listed to help you find the nearest patrolled beach. Beachsafe also provides expert advice about rip currents, flags and signs, waves, marine creatures, surf skills and more.

App for Apple: [Beachsafe App - App Store](#)

App for Android: [Beachsafe - Apps on Google Play](#)



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Above: Map of Ngardj Ngardj Marine Park showing zones plus national park zones in adjacent Australian marine parks.

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Department of Biodiversity,
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PARKS AND
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