



Shoalwater Islands Marine Park

This overview provides information about the Shoalwater Islands Marine Park, a priority site for H5 bird flu preparedness and response in Western Australia.

About the site

Shoalwater Islands Marine Park is a 6,658 hectare Class A marine reserve located approximately 50 km south of Perth, adjacent to the City of Rockingham. The marine park includes a chain of limestone islands and reefs, including Penguin Island, Seal Island, Bird Island and Shag Island.

The marine park supports a diverse range of marine, coastal and island habitats, including seagrass meadows, reefs, beaches and sheltered marine waters. The area supports a mix of tropical and temperate marine species, reflecting the influence of both warm and cool ocean currents along the Western Australian coast, and provides important habitat for marine mammals, seabirds and a wide variety of fish and invertebrates.

Why is this site a priority for H5 bird flu preparedness and response?

The Shoalwater Islands Marine Park has been identified as a very high priority area for H5 bird flu preparedness and response in Western Australia. The marine park is recognised for its biodiversity values and supports a diverse assemblage of wildlife that may be vulnerable to H5 bird flu, including seabirds, shorebirds, waterbirds and marine mammals.

Species of particular concern include the little penguin, endangered Australian sea lion, vulnerable fairy tern and a range of breeding and migratory seabirds and shorebirds. Penguin Island supports one of Western

Australia's best-known little penguin colonies, while the wider marine park provides important breeding, feeding and roosting habitat for numerous resident and migratory bird species. The marine park also includes important haul-out sites for Australian sea lions, particularly on Seal Island. National and state risk assessments indicate that little penguins may be particularly vulnerable to population-level impacts from H5 bird flu.

Large numbers of resident and migratory birds gather throughout the marine park for breeding, roosting and feeding. The movement of migratory birds through the region, together with the concentration of wildlife at seabird colonies, roosting sites and haul-out areas, may increase opportunities for H5 bird flu introduction and spread. Scavenging species, including silver gulls and Australian ravens, may also be exposed through contact with infected wildlife or carcasses. Australian sea lions may be at risk through interactions with infected birds in shared coastal habitats. For some species and populations, impacts from H5 bird flu may occur alongside other pressures already affecting population health and recovery.

The Shoalwater Islands Marine Park holds deep cultural and spiritual significance for the Binjareb/Pinjarup people, the Traditional Owners of the area.

The area is also valued for tourism, conservation, recreation, research and education, making the protection of wildlife and biodiversity especially important.



AVOID



RECORD



REPORT 1800 675 888

Current conservation and management actions

Current conservation, research and management activities in the Shoalwater Islands Marine Park include:

- restoration and management of island habitats through revegetation, weed control and habitat enhancement programs on islands such as Penguin and Seal Islands
- management of visitor access and disturbance through boardwalks, designated paths, signage, restricted access areas and seasonal closures of Penguin Island during the little penguin breeding season
- maintenance of eight-knot vessel speed limits in designated areas to reduce disturbance and minimise the risk of boat strike to wildlife, including little penguins and Australian sea lions
- monitoring of seabird, little penguin and Australian sea lion populations, including long-term studies of breeding success, population trends and habitat use
- maintenance of the rat-free status of Penguin Island through ongoing rodent surveillance and rapid response to incursions
- management of Australian sea lion interactions through prescribed separation distances, regulated wildlife tourism activities, protection of important haul-out areas and closure of Seal Island to visitors.

What response actions may be implemented?

If H5 bird flu is detected in the Shoalwater Islands Marine Park or nearby areas, response actions may be implemented based on a risk assessment of the situation.

Actions may include:

- temporary restrictions on public access or activities involving wildlife to minimise biosecurity risks, reduce disturbance to wildlife and support response activities
- removal and disposal of wildlife carcasses where required
- additional biosecurity measures, including cleaning and disinfection of footwear and equipment
- increased surveillance and monitoring of birds and other wildlife
- investigation of reports of sick or dead wildlife, including collecting samples where required
- supporting the welfare and protection of affected wildlife
- vaccination may be considered where feasible for priority species
- providing information and updates to increase awareness.

What additional actions may help wildlife in the Shoalwater Islands Marine Park?

A range of actions may help reduce disease impacts and improve the resilience of wildlife populations in the Shoalwater Islands Marine Park. Supporting healthy populations, reducing disturbance and addressing key threats may support wildlife to better withstand and recover from H5 bird flu outbreaks.

Actions may include:

- expanding habitat restoration and revegetation programs to provide shelter, food and nesting sites
- reducing disturbance at important breeding, roosting and haul-out areas
- supporting responsible visitor behaviour around wildlife
- expanding invasive species management programs, including investigating opportunities to eradicate house mice from islands within the marine park
- expanding measures to reduce heat stress on little penguins, including improving shade and shelter around nesting areas
- considering vaccination opportunities for managed little penguin populations, including on Penguin Island, where feasible and supported by relevant approvals.

How you can help

AVOID. RECORD. REPORT.

If you see sick or dead wildlife:

- **Avoid** contact with wildlife and do not touch sick or dead animals.
- **Record** what you see, including the location and take photographs where safe to do so.
- **Report** unusual wildlife illness or deaths to the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.

You can also help wildlife in the Shoalwater Islands Marine Park by following signs and management advice, observing wildlife from a distance, reducing disturbance at breeding, roosting, feeding and haul-out areas, disposing of rubbish appropriately and avoiding feeding wildlife, and cleaning footwear and equipment when moving between wildlife areas.

Important: This document describes how authorities may prepare for and respond to H5 bird flu in Western Australia. Response measures will depend on the circumstances and may change over time. Additional measures may be implemented where required to protect wildlife, livestock, people and the environment.



Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions

www.wa.gov.au/avian_influenza