GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Department of
Primary Industries and
Regional Development

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Cottesloe Reef

Fish Habitat Protection Area (FHPA)

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Cover photo:
Cottesloe reef

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Cottesloe FHPA

Cottesloe Reef, located in Perth's western suburbs, sits on a limestone shelf, known locally as the Cottesloe Fringing Bank. The shelf extends approximately 1.5 km offshore from the beach. Comprised of limestone-elevated platforms, water-eroded outcrops and pinnacles; the depth of the reef system varies according to the contours of the underwater landscape.

It is a healthy, flourishing marine system, considered by marine scientists to have attributes unique to the Perth metropolitan area. The reef is a valuable and inspiring natural resource, however due to its accessibility and popularity, it is vulnerable to human impact, which is the underlying reason to declare it a Fish Habitat Protection Area (FHPA).

What is a FHPA?

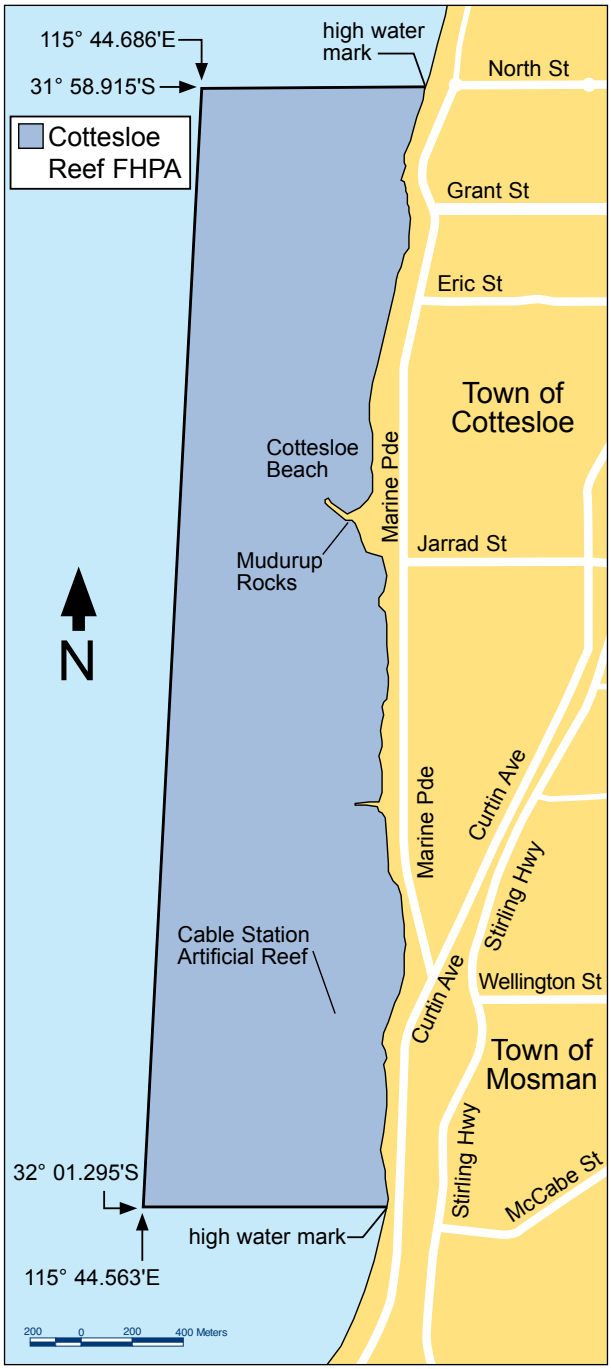
A Fish Habitat Protection Area (FHPA) is a location declared by the Minister for Fisheries as having special ecological and community significance and thus deserving special management to ensure its long-term sustainability.

Its principal aim is to preserve valuable fish and marine environments for the future use and enjoyment of all people.

Special rules regarding fishing and other activities apply in most FHPAs.

Where is Cottesloe reef

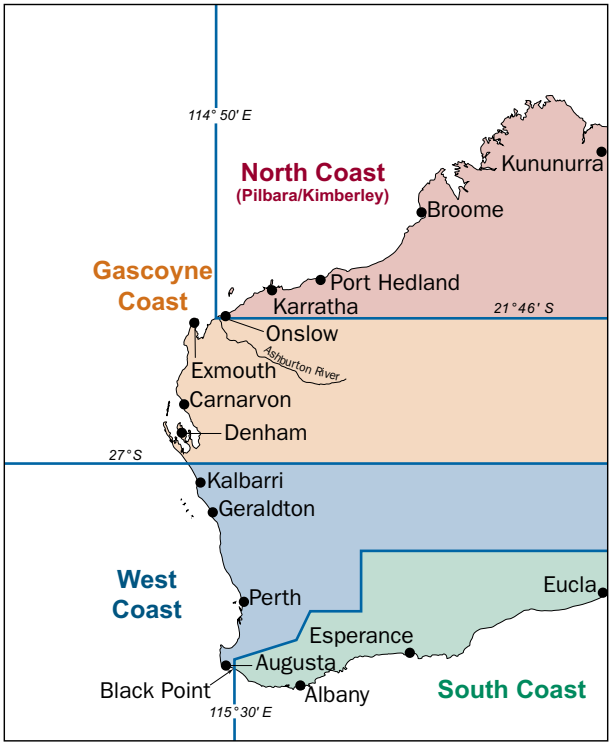
The Cottesloe reef system stretches for approximately 4.4 km from a point 300 m south of the artificial surfing reef at the Cable Station to the southern boundary of North Street, Cottesloe, and westwards to 800 m from the high watermark.



West Coast bioregion

Marine fishing in Western Australia (WA) is managed in 4 biological regions each with different recreational fishing regulations, known as the North Coast, Gascoyne Coast, West Coast and South Coast bioregions. Cottesloe Reef is part of the West Coast bioregion.

The West Coast bioregion runs from Black Point, east of Augusta, to the Zuytdorp Cliffs, north of Kalbarri (all land and water south of 27° South latitude and west of 115° 30' East longitude).



It is characterised by a limestone coast with temperate waters, influenced by the warm Leeuwin Current and the cool inshore Capes Current, and is the most heavily fished area recreationally due to its accessibility to WA's main population centres.

The Leeuwin Current, a warm, tropical current flowing south from Indonesia and down WA's coast, has significant influence on marine ecology, and the distribution of species and their spawning success.

While the current varies greatly from year-to year, it strengthens in March to April, carrying free-floating larvae, and many tropical species down the west coast.

About Cottesloe reef

The reef contains a unique and diverse range of marine habitats, including sand, seagrass, limestone reef with large kelp and other macroalgae, and sponge beds. Each of these habitat types support many different species of invertebrates, fish, aquatic plants and other organisms.

History

The Cottesloe Marine Protection Group (CMPG) first proposed to nominate the Cottesloe reef system as a FHPA under Section 115 of the *Fish Resources Management Act 1994* (FRMA).

The CMPG was formed in December 1998 by a group of local snorkellers concerned with the impact on Cottesloe reefs and its resident marine life as a result of human activities such as spearfishing, collecting of marine life, and discharge of nutrient-enriched stormwater and groundwater.

The group prepared a draft management plan in consultation with the then Department of Fisheries. The department released the draft plan for review in August 2000, and the final management plan was ratified by the then Minister for Fisheries in September 2001.

Community importance

A popular area for recreational water activities and fishing, Cottesloe Reef is widely regarded as one of the jewels of Perth's metropolitan coastline and is recognised as an important tourist drawcard for WA.

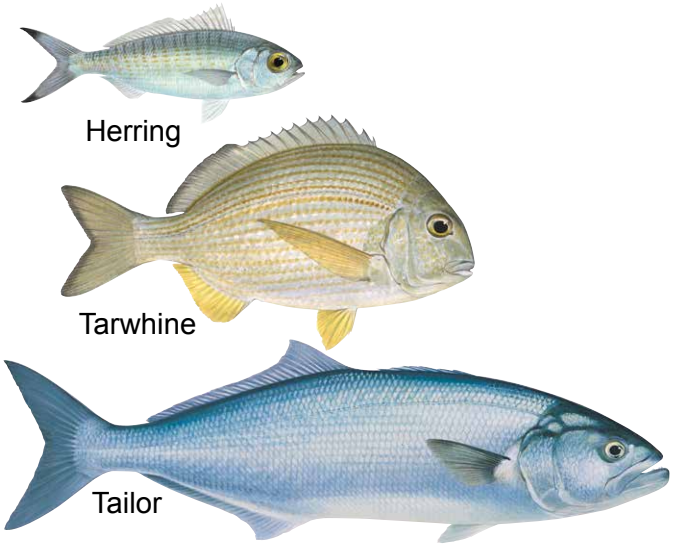
The reef system has strong heritage value for local communities, and is the home of the 194-tonne wooden barque Elizabeth (1830-1839) wreck which is located on the Reef at South Cottesloe (32°00.8'S, 115°44.9'E).

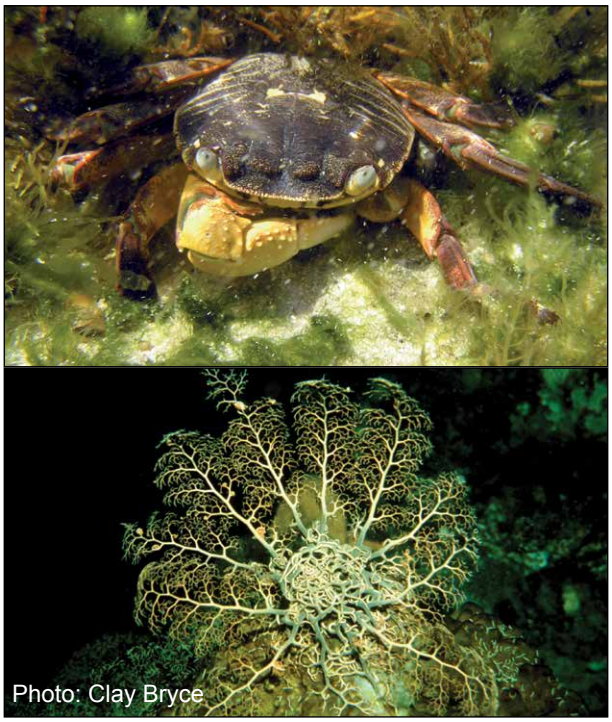
The presence of submerged cables at the southern edge of the Cottesloe Reef system is of heritage significance. They were installed in 1926, and once linked WA to South Africa via the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. The cables provide a historical reminder of Australia's previous international communication links with the world. The site from where the cables were laid is still commonly referred to as 'Cable Station'.

Species to look for

Within snorkelling depth, the reef and seagrasses provide a habitat for the weedy seadragon (*Phyllopteryx taeniolatus*) and the rare leafy seadragon (*Phycodurus eques*). In deeper water, corals, sea cucumbers and sponge gardens thrive. Tthe unique slope of the reef platform at Mudurup Rocks provides habitat for delicate animals such as feather stars and small molluscs, which are protected from heat and drying during low summer tides.

An abundance of finfish can be found in and around the reef system including, herring, tailor, skippy (silver trevally), whiting, morwong and tarwhine (silver bream). The reef is also a breeding ground for squid, Port Jackson sharks and other elasmobranchs including stingrays.





Some Cottesloe reef inhabitants – a rock crab and an Astroboa or basket star.

A weird and wonderful weedy seadragon
(photo: Glen Cowens)

Protecting Cottesloe FHPA

The aim of the FHPA is to conserve and protect the fish and habitats within the reef system, and to raise awareness and appreciation of the marine environment.

The colourful and diverse underwater habitats and fish communities of the Cottesloe FHPA are within easy reach of the beach and are popular with snorkellers.

The Cottesloe FHPA is vulnerable to disturbance by human activity. The following rules are here to help you enjoy and protect this special place:

Recreational fishing

In the FHPA, recreational fishers are permitted to use a single rod and line to catch fish such as tailor, herring, whiting, skippy and garfish. Fishing for squid, cuttlefish and octopus by line is also permitted.

Fishers are subject to current recreational fishing rules for the West Coast bioregion.

- Unwanted fish should be carefully released.
- Fishing for sharks and/or rays in the FHPA is prohibited.
- No cleaning of fish and leaving of offal or bait.
- Subject to Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) regulations the taking of rock lobster is permitted (for more information visit dpird.wa.gov.au).
- The take of abalone in the FHPA is prohibited in areas south of the Cottesloe Groyne.

Snorkelling and scuba diving

- The Cottesloe Reef FHPA is a popular snorkelling and scuba diving site, particularly during summer in low swell conditions.
- Snorkelling and scuba diving are ideal ways to observe and appreciate the FHPA's marine habitat. Both activities, pursued safely and responsibly, are fully encouraged within the FHPA.

Prohibited activities

- Spearfishing is prohibited throughout the FHPA. This includes spear guns, gidgees, Hawaiian slings or other similar devices.
- Commercial fishing is prohibited throughout the FHPA.

Collection of live specimens

The collection of aquarium fish specimens and of marine flora and fauna, including live shellfish, coral and live rock (substrate which has living marine organisms attached to it) is prohibited within the FHPA.

Jet skis

The use of jet skis is prohibited within the restricted area.

Anchoring

Anchoring of any craft in the FHPA is prohibited.

- Five yellow moorings have been provided within the FHPA for use by boats up to 12 m. These moorings are removed during winter (April – November) to prevent damage from winter storms.

Rubbish

- Please, take all of your rubbish away with you and dispose of it appropriately.
- Take special care to ensure you do not discard plastic bags – these can kill marine animals, such as turtles, dolphins and seabirds.

FishWatch – 1800 815 507

The FishWatch phone line provides the quickest and most efficient way to report sightings or evidence of:

- illegal fishing
- aquatic pests and diseases
- fish kills.

You can also submit other reports online to **crimestopperswa.com.au/organisation-report/fishwatch/**

Reports made to Crimestoppers are not monitored outside normal working hours or on weekends.

Further information

FHPA information is available on the DPIRD website at **dpird.wa.gov.au** with information on the Cottesloe Coastcare Association at their website **cottesloecoastcare.org**

For the most up-to-date information on fishing rules, see the current Recreational Fishing Guide, available at **dpird.wa.gov.au** or contact your nearest DPIRD office.

Contact us

1300 374 731 (1300 DPIRD1)

enquiries@dpird.wa.gov.au

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South Fremantle WA 6162
08 9432 8000

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dpird.wa.gov.au

FISHWATCH REPORT
Illegal fishing
Pests and diseases
Fish kills
1800-815-507
24 HOUR REPORTING
Scan to report online

ABN: 18 951 343 745