



Department of
Primary Industries and
Regional Development

Protect
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Miaboolya Beach

**Fish Habitat Protection Area
(FHPA)**



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Cover photo:

Miaboolya sunset (photo: Peter Jecks)

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Miaboolya Beach FHPA

Miaboolya Beach is part of the Gascoyne River delta and home to a rich array of species and habitats – including an important fish nursery. Popular with locals and tourists for recreational fishing, crabbing and swimming, it is also culturally significant to Aboriginal people.

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 Miaboolya Beach?

Miaboolya Beach FHPA is 16 km by road north of Carnarvon (see map below). It includes nearshore waters, mangroves, seasonal creeks and salt marshes up to the high water mark from South Bejaling Hill, south to the Gascoyne River mouth.



Location of Miaboolya Beach

Gascoyne Coast bioregion

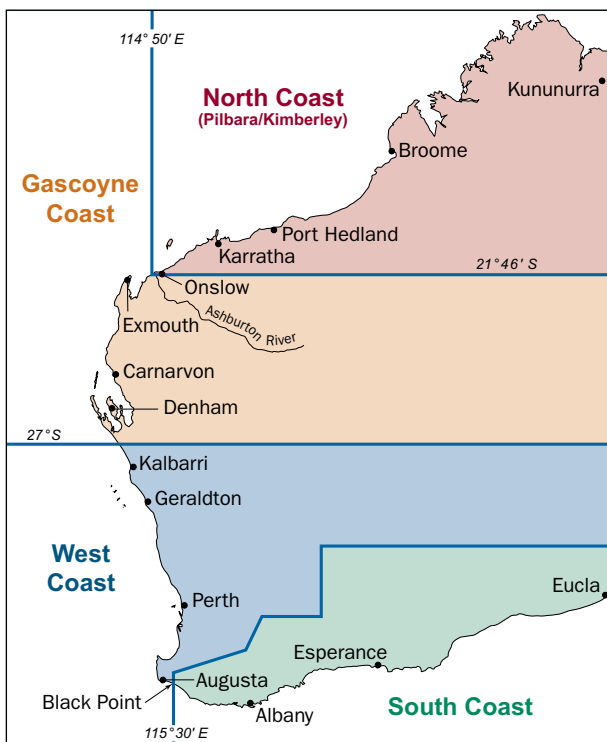
Miaboolya Beach is part of the Gascoyne Coast bioregion (see map right).

In this area, a mix of tropical and temperate marine conditions is reflected in the local fish species.

To the north, near Exmouth, tropical species such as emperors and mackerel dominate. Farther south, temperate species such as tailor and whiting occur.

A major influence in the distribution of species and their spawning success is the Leeuwin Current. This warm, tropical current flows south from Indonesia and down the Western Australian (WA) coast.

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 Miaboolya Beach

History

In the 1990s, joint research by Carnarvon Senior High School students and scientists from the then Department of Fisheries showed that Miaboolya was a major nursery for fish, including many species important to commercial and recreational fishers.

Following concerns about the environmental degradation of the mangroves and possible overfishing, the school proposed that the area be conserved.

After extensive consultation, Miaboolya Beach FHPA was created on 17 April 2003. School students and other community members have continued to help conduct useful research to oversee and implement sustainable management of the FHPA.



Cultural importance

Local Aboriginal people value Miaboolya Beach as a traditional place for social occasions and collecting food.

The enriching waters of Miaboolya's creeks

More than 130 marine species inhabit the Miaboolya Beach FHPA. One reason for such diversity is that Miaboolya's main creek is the only creek in the Gascoyne that is cut off from the ocean by a sand bar for months at a time, creating a coastal lagoon.

In addition, the Gascoyne River drains a vast catchment covering tens of thousands of square kilometres. When it floods, large amounts of fresh water, sediment and nutrients flow through the delta and Miaboolya Creek. This increases plant growth in the mangroves, algal mats and salt marshes, enriching habitats and food sources for aquatic life.

Sediments in the river water also cloud seawater in nearshore areas, enabling young fish to hide from predators. This has further helped Miaboolya to become an important fish nursery and habitat.

Species to look for

The nearshore waters of Miaboolya Beach are the only known nursery for tailor in the Gascoyne. At Miaboolya, you may also see mulloway, flathead, giant threadfin, goldspotted rockcod, mangrove jack, western yellowfin bream, dart, yellowfin whiting and goldenline whiting – as well as crustaceans such as crabs, prawns and shrimp.



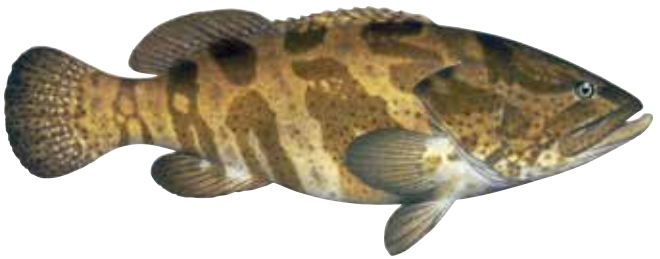
Mulloway



Mangrove jack



Giant threadfin



Goldspotted rockcod



Western yellowfin bream

Protecting Miaboolya

The Miaboolya Beach FHPA includes a fragile ecosystem but there are some simple rules that can help protect it for future generations.



Line fishing

- Take only what you need and stay within the recreational bag and size limits.
- Refer to dpird.wa.gov.au for the most up-to-date recreational fishing rules.
- Return all undersize or protected fish to the water carefully and quickly.
- If you intend to keep a fish, kill it quickly and humanely.

Turtle breeding area

Turtles nest on Miaboolya Beach between October and April.

If you cannot avoid driving on the beach during these times, you can help by:

- Accessing your favourite area via back tracks and walking the remaining distance to the beach.
- Only driving below the high water mark and during daylight hours.

- Lowering the air pressure in your tyres to reduce wheel rut depth (deep wheel ruts can disorientate hatchlings). This also makes driving easier.

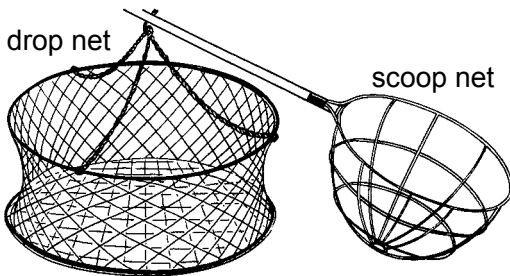
Sand dunes and mangroves

Miaboolya's dune and mangrove systems are especially fragile and need to be protected.

- Tread lightly in the mangroves and don't destroy mangrove habitats.
- Do not walk or drive on the sand dunes
 - keep to existing tracks and drive vehicles on approved tracks only.

Crab fishing

- Only wire or plastic scoop nets, drop nets or hand-held blunt wire hooks may be used to catch crabs.



- It is illegal to use crab traps, pots or any dilly nets that entangle the catch. These are strictly prohibited in all WA waters.
- Hooks must not be capable of piercing the crab.

- There is a maximum limit of 10 drop nets per person, or 10 drop nets per boat, regardless of how many people are on board.
- The use of chemicals to help catch or kill fish, including crabs, is strictly prohibited.
- Refer to dpird.wa.gov.au for the up-to-date recreational fishing rules.

Net fishing restricted

Recreational fishers may use hand-held scoop nets, dip nets (fish landing nets) and drop nets (crab nets).

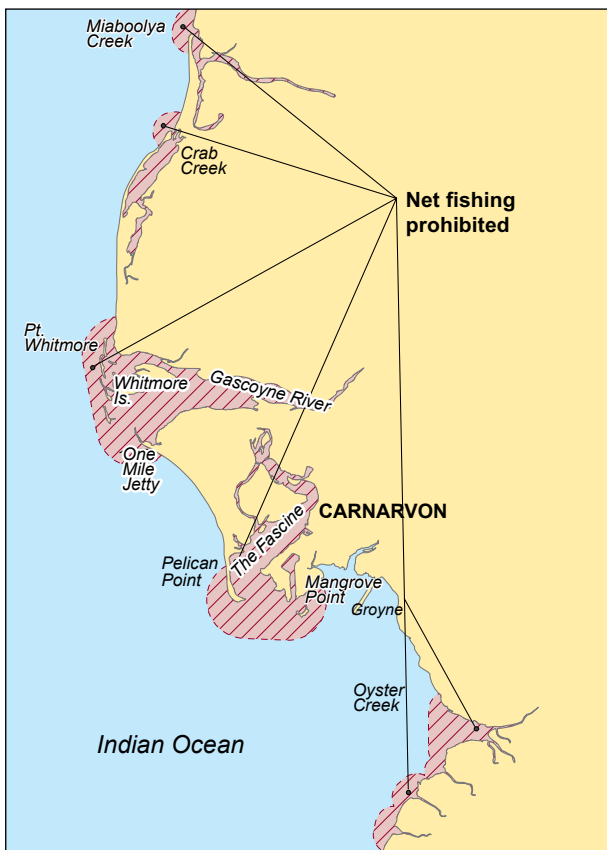
They may also use haul nets, set nets and throw nets in the oceanic waters of the Gascoyne Coast bioregion, provided that they have a recreational net fishing licence, except in the areas listed below:

- All waters of the Gascoyne River, its tributaries and within a radius of 800 m of each of its entrances into the ocean are closed to netting at all times.
- All creeks from 10 km north of Point Whitmore (including all of Miaboolya's creeks) to 5 km south of Mangrove Point, including waters within a 400 m radius of their mouths, are closed to netting at all times.
- Refer to the Recreational Net Fishing Guide at dpird.wa.gov.au for the most up-to-date recreational net fishing rules.



Rubbish

- Take all of your rubbish away with you and dispose of it appropriately.
- Do not throw away fishing line or plastic bait bags – these can kill marine animals, such as turtles and seabirds.



Carnarvon – Gascoyne River and creeks



Photo: Craig Williams

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**

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 office.

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