

code of conduct

for recreational fishing in the pilbara



Further Information: **Recfishwest** www.recfishwest.org.au **Department of Fisheries Western Australia** www.fish.wa.gov.au
Department of Parks and Wildlife WA www.dpaw.wa.gov.au **Recfishing Research** www.recfishingresearch.org
Chevron Australia www.chevronaustralia.com **Photos courtesy of Paul Cunningham** www.facebook.com/paulcunninghamphoto
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fish today for tomorrow



fishing in the pilbara

The Pilbara region boasts an abundance of marine and estuarine species and some of the world's most unique coral reefs, seagrass meadows, mangrove forests and sponge gardens. As a result, the region offers world-class boating, fishing, diving and snorkelling. This Code of Conduct for Recreational Fishing in the Pilbara (the Code) has been developed to help sustain our precious fish resources and minimise the human footprint on this special place. By following the Code you will not only help to protect the environment, but also enhance your fishing experiences.

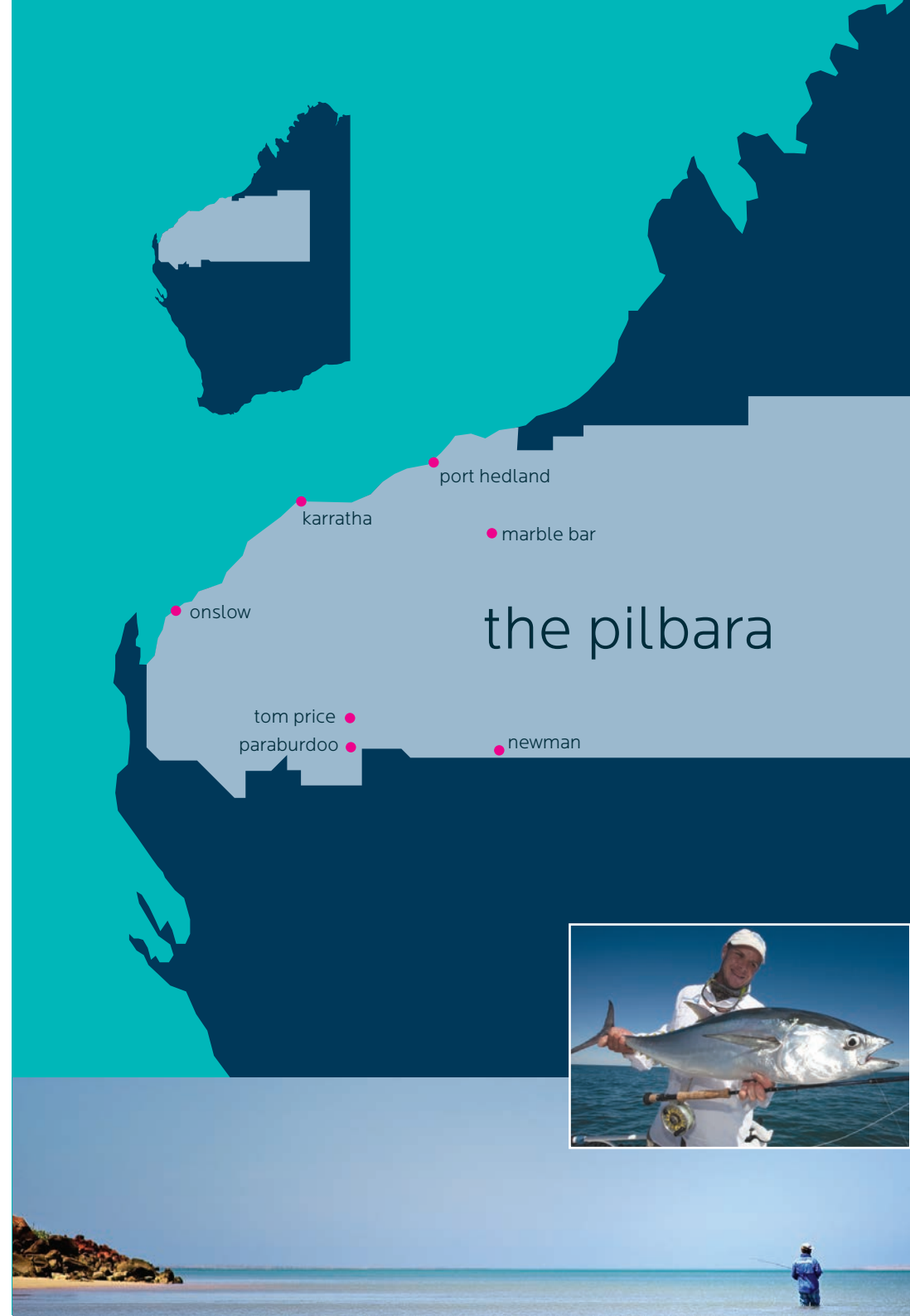
The Pilbara is one of the driest regions in Western Australia, lashed with fierce tropical cyclones over the summer. These two extremes combine to create a productive, yet harsh and demanding environment. The Pilbara covers an area of over 500,000km², which includes some of Earth's oldest rock formations. Landscapes of coastal plains and mountain ranges with cliffs and gorges, make this region one of Australia's most stunning natural assets.

The great variety of marine and estuarine species in the Pilbara presents a wealth of exciting fishing opportunities, including chasing mackerel, tuna, sailfish and red emperor in the ocean, battling with mangrove jack in the rivers and stalking trevally from shore and tarpon in freshwater creeks.

Sheltered bays along the coast and offshore islands cradle clean, empty beaches leading into colourful coral lagoons for snorkelling at its best. At certain times of the year, turtles can be spotted lumbering up the beach to lay their eggs, and the migration of humpback whales can be witnessed.

The Code focuses on fishing best practice and fishing responsibly. It's both a philosophy for fishing and a practical way of ensuring there will be fish for future generations to catch.

The Code has been developed by Recfishwest working closely with local recreational fishers, funded by a grant from Chevron Australia's Onslow Community Spirit Fund.



code of conduct for recreational fishing in the pilbara

Recreational fishers are increasingly aware of the need to practise and promote responsible actions when to targeting and catching fish.

The Code describes best practices and procedures to ensure that we all fish today, for tomorrow.



use appropriate equipment

Using the right tackle for the species you are targeting decreases stress on the fish, increases their survival if released and produces a better eating quality for those you keep. We recommend you use the following gear to ensure fish are released in the healthiest condition possible:

- Always use barbless hooks on lures, or crimp down the existing barbs. Barbless hooks cause less damage to fish than conventional barbed hook.
- Use circle hooks when fishing with bait. Circle hooks are more likely to hook fish in the corner of the jaw, increasing both catch rates and post release survival.
- Single hooks on lures reduce fish injuries. If trebles have been used and become entangled, they should be cut with side cutters.
- Use biodegradable tackle products whenever possible. Leader and line that break down within five years are now available.
- Use appropriately sized line class. Using light line will increase fight time, placing undue stress on fish.
- Use fish-friendly, knotless landing nets. Knotless landing nets remove less slime from fish, increasing post release survival.



If you don't have barbless hooks available, crimp down the barbs on your existing hooks.



Knotless landing nets remove less protective slime from fish than traditional landing nets.



Circle hooks lodge in the corner of a fishes jaw, reducing the impact of hook related injuries.



handling techniques

- Minimise the time that the fish spends out of the water.
- Always support the body of the fish; never support a fish by its mouth or gills. Recent studies have shown significant damage to fish held by their gills or jaws.
- Use wet hands, or wet gloves to handle fish. This will prevent the loss of protective slime from the fish's scales. The slimy coating found on fish is its main deterrent against infection and disease. Removing this coating can leave a fish susceptible to infection.
- Keep fingers and hands clear of fish eyes and gills. Fish gills contain fragile blood vessels which are easily damaged by human hands.
- Never lay fish on the hot deck of a boat.



Fish should be supported along the length of their body.



Removing fish from the water places them under added stress after capture. Where possible, keep fish in the water while removing the hook prior to release.



releasing fish

- Remove hooks quickly, but carefully.
- Where possible, release the fish while it is still in the water.
- When a hook is deep within a fishes' throat, it is often better to cut the line close to the mouth than to try and retrieve the hook.
- If you wish to take a photo of your capture, have the camera set up before the fish is taken from the water.
- Demersal (bottom-dwelling) species should be returned with the aid of a release weight.
- Revive fatigued fish by gently supporting them in the water and moving the fish forward to allow water to flow over the gills.



The effect of barotrauma on this fish can be seen clearly. The fish is suffering from exophthalmia, which is the bulging of the eyes from their sockets due to changes in water pressure as they are captured. Other indicators are distended stomachs and inflated swim bladders.



The release weight is a device designed to return fish to the depth at which they were caught, in order to minimise the effects of barotrauma. It is a large sinker to which is attached a large barbless hook with a line attachment point on its bend. The weight is attached to a hand-line or rod and reel (preferably already set up and specifically used for this purpose). The hook is then placed in the jaw of the fish and the fish released, the weight quickly takes the fish to deeper water, compressing the swim bladder as it descends. Once the fish has reached its capture depth a series of sharp tugs on the line frees the fish.

care for your catch

- When a fish is being kept for consumption, it should be dispatched by use of a quick spike to the brain or by slitting the gills and bending the head back to sever the spine.
- Store fish in an ice slurry. This will improve the eating quality of the flesh.
- When keeping fish for consumption, avoid filleting them at the water's edge to minimise attraction of sharks and crocodiles.
- Stay within bag limits and, keep only what you plan to eat that day.



protect the environment

Be aware of your impact on the environment when you're fishing. When fishing remote areas it is particularly important to ensure minimal disturbance to the environment.

- Correctly identify and avoid interaction with protected species. If accidentally caught, protected species must be returned to the water immediately.
- Always leave an area as you found it. Take away all rubbish with you when you leave.
- Avoid trampling corals; reef walking damages the structure of coral reefs.
- Avoid anchoring on reef; place your anchor on a sandy bottom.
- Use established roads and tracks to access your destination.
- Always observe fire bans, and ensure fires are extinguished before leaving camp.

recreational fishing compliance

- Observe all relevant size and bag limits. Information can be obtained from the Department of Fisheries through their website www.fish.wa.gov.au
- Always be in possession of relevant fishing licences.
- Report illegal activities to FishWatch.

fishing research and education

- Promote sustainable fishing practises to your fellow fishers.
- Assisting the Department of Fisheries with research projects will help researchers and managers gain a better understanding on how to keep our fish stocks sustainable.



Reports are most useful if they are accurate. Before you call, make a note of:

- **HOW** many people you saw
- **WHO** they were
- **WHAT** they were doing
- **WHERE** it happened
- **WHEN** it happened

access through pastoral leases

- Gain landholder's permission before accessing fishing areas through pastoral leases.
- Always leave gates as you found them.
- Do not damage or destroy fences.
- Avoid camping at stock watering points.

culturally important sites



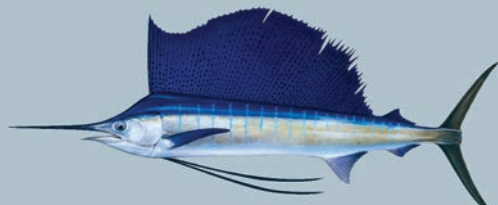


- Avoid disturbing sites of cultural importance
- Always seek permission before entering culturally important sites, including land recognised under native title.



pilbara top 10 catches

 <p>Barramundi: (<i>Lates calcarifer</i>)</p>	<p>habitat Freshwater creeks Tidal rivers Estuarine waters</p> <p>reproduction Matures as male at about 50 to 55cm Changes sex to female at about 80cm</p>	<p>grows to About 150cm and 30kg</p> <p>fish using Trolled lures Cast lures</p>
 <p>Mangrove Jack: (<i>Lutjanus argentimanulatus</i>)</p>	<p>habitat Mangrove Estuaries Tidal rivers Sheltered inshore coral reefs</p> <p>reproduction Matures at about 54 to 55cm and five to six years old</p>	<p>grows to About 80cm and 7kg</p> <p>life span At least 52 years</p> <p>fish using Cast lures</p>
 <p>Northern Mulloway (Black Jewfish): (<i>Protonibea diacanthus</i>)</p>	<p>habitat Tidal rivers Estuaries Coastal waters over muddy bottom</p> <p>reproduction Matures at about 75cm and three years old</p>	<p>grows to About 150cm and 25kg</p> <p>fish using Trolled lures Cast lures Baits</p>
 <p>Spanish mackerel (<i>Scomberomorus queenslandicus</i>)</p>	<p>habitat Offshore and coastal reefs</p> <p>reproduction Matures at 80cm and two years old</p>	<p>grows to About 240cm and 40kg</p> <p>fish using Trolled lures</p>
 <p>Coral Trout (<i>Plectropomus</i> sp.)</p>	<p>habitat Near shore turbid waters to offshore reefs Sand and rubble bottoms</p> <p>reproduction Matures at about 50cm and three to four years old</p>	<p>grows to About 100cm and 15kg</p> <p>fish using Trolled lures Deepwater jigs Baits</p>

pilbara top 10 catches

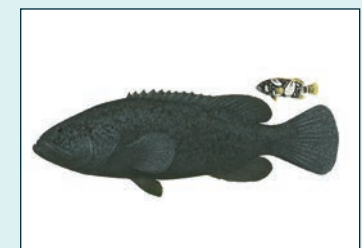
	<p>habitat Coastal waters and offshore waters near reef</p> <p>reproduction Matures at about 95 to 96cm and five years old</p>	<p>grows to About 170cm and 70kg</p> <p>fish using Trolled lures Cast lures</p>
<p>Giant Trevally (<i>Caranx ignobilis</i>)</p>	<p>habitat Near shore turbid waters to offshore reefs Sand and rubble bottoms</p> <p>reproduction Matures at about 50cm and three to four years old</p>	<p>grows to About 116cm and 20kg</p> <p>fish using Baits Deepwater jigs</p>
	<p>habitat Near shore turbid waters to offshore reefs Sand and rubble bottoms</p> <p>reproduction Matures at about 50cm and three to four years old</p>	<p>grows to About 116cm and 20kg</p> <p>fish using Baits Deepwater jigs</p>
<p>Red Emperor (<i>Lutjanus sebae</i>)</p>	<p>habitat Oceanic waters generally well offshore</p> <p>reproduction Matures at about 150cm</p>	<p>grows to About 300cm and 70kg</p> <p>fish using Trolled lures Baits</p>
	<p>habitat Oceanic waters generally well offshore</p> <p>reproduction Matures at about 150cm</p>	<p>grows to About 300cm and 70kg</p> <p>fish using Trolled lures Baits</p>
<p>Sailfish (<i>Isotophorus platypterus</i>)</p>	<p>habitat Tropical waters over the Continental Shelf Often in very shallow water</p> <p>reproduction Matures at about 63cm</p>	<p>grows to About 120cm and 16kg</p> <p>fish using Cast lures Trolled lures</p>
	<p>habitat Tropical waters over the Continental Shelf Often in very shallow water</p> <p>reproduction Matures at about 63cm</p>	<p>grows to About 120cm and 16kg</p> <p>fish using Cast lures Trolled lures</p>
<p>Queenfish (<i>Scomberoides commersonianus</i>)</p>	<p>habitat Warm temperate and tropical waters</p> <p>reproduction Matures between 60-70cm</p>	<p>grows to 140 cm and 30kg</p> <p>fish using Cast lures Trolled lures</p>
	<p>habitat Warm temperate and tropical waters</p> <p>reproduction Matures between 60-70cm</p>	<p>grows to 140 cm and 30kg</p> <p>fish using Cast lures Trolled lures</p>
<p>Longtail Tuna (<i>Thunnus tonggol</i>)</p>		

protected species (must be released)

- Sawfish
- Speartooth shark
- Queensland Grouper
- Potato Cod
- Humphead Maori Wrasse
- Whale Shark



Sawfish are a totally protected species due to major declines in their numbers globally. Chevron funds Murdoch University research into sawfish populations in the Onslow area. As little is known about these endangered fish, this research is vital to help scientists gain a better understanding of their abundance and biology.



Species such as the Queensland Grouper are totally protected under state and commonwealth legislation. The species can grow to at least 2.7 m in length and over 400 kg.