



Code of Conduct



For Recreational Fishing in Shark Bay



Fishing in Shark Bay

Shark Bay encompasses some of Australia's most impressive and significant natural treasures; so much so that it has been rated as one of the world's most important natural sites; a World Heritage site.

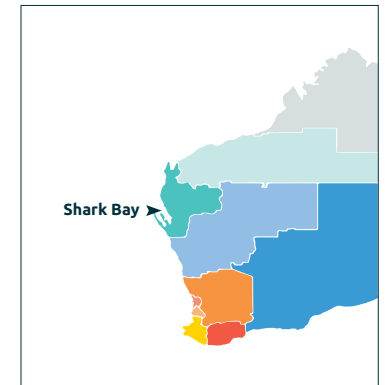
The spectacular Shark Bay region offers world-class boating, fishing, diving and snorkelling. The great variety of marine species in the region presents a wealth of exciting fishing opportunities, including chasing Mackerel, Tuna and Red Emperor in the blue water, battling world-class Pink Snapper in the gulfs and stalking Yellowfin Whiting from shore.

Shark Bay waters, islands and peninsulas cover a large area of some 2.2 million hectares which includes an abundance of marine species and some of the world's most unique coral reefs, seagrass beds and sponge gardens as well as historical marine stromatolites.

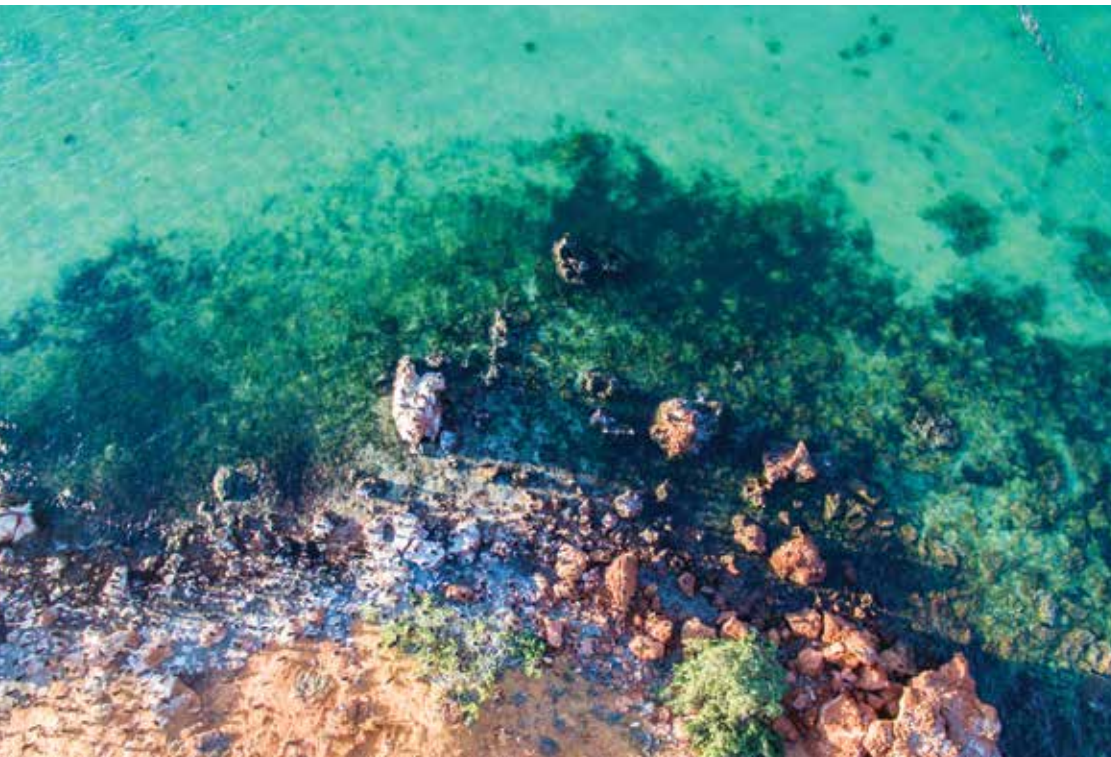
This Code of Conduct for Recreational Fishing in Shark Bay (the Code) has been developed to help sustain our precious fish resources and minimise the human footprint on this special place. By following the Code you will not only help to protect the environment but also enhance your fishing experiences.

The 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 and fishing clubs and has been funded by the Recfishwest Community Grant Program.



Shark Bay is located on the westernmost point of the Australian continent and boasts some of the world's greatest wilderness treasure.



Download the **FREE** Recfishwest app today!



Code of Conduct for Recreational Fishing in Shark Bay

Recreational fishers are increasingly aware of the need to practice and promote responsible actions when targeting and catching fish. The Code describes best practices and procedures to ensure that we maintain fantastic fishing experiences in Shark Bay.



1 | 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 or crimp down the existing barbs. Barbless hooks cause less damage to fish than conventional barbed hooks.
- 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.
- Use plain carbon-steel hooks. Unlike stainless steel alternatives, carbon-steel hooks corrode and don't remain in the environment for many years.
- Use lead-free sinkers. Steel sinkers are good alternatives to environmentally unfriendly lead.



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 fish's jaw, reducing the impact of hook-related injuries.

2 | Handling techniques

By handling fish appropriately you can reduce their level of stress and decrease the chances of injury, ensuring a better chance of survival if they are released.

We recommend using the following techniques:

- Minimise the time that the fish spends out of the water.
- Handle your catch as little as possible.
- 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.
- Lay fish on a wet towel, brag mat or ruler guide; never lay fish on the hot deck of a boat or on the sand.
- Lift fish clear of boat sides.
- If fishing from land, walk to the water's edge to meet the fish.



3 | Releasing fish

By using appropriate techniques to release fish you increase their chances of survival by reducing damage to vital organs and getting oxygen to the gills as quickly as possible.

Techniques include:

- Remove hooks quickly, but carefully. Using long-nosed pliers or dedicated hook extractors to remove hooks minimises damage to the fish and keeps your fingers safe from teeth and spines.
- Release fish as soon as possible after capture.
- Where possible, release the fish while it is still in the water.
- When a hook is deep within a fish's 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 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.
- Return all unwanted 'by-catch' in prime condition. By-catch is the accidental capture of unwanted or non-targeted species.



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. If releasing your fish, use a release weight.



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 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.



4 | Care for your catch

Fish being kept for consumption should be handled carefully.

- 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.
- Fillet fish at suitable fish cleaning facilities away from water's edge, sharks and seagulls.
- Stay within bag limits and keep only what you plan to eat that day.
- Don't catch crayfish by hand, use a snare. Be aware of females 'in berry' with a tar spot (fertilised).



5 | Protect the environment

When you are fishing it is important to:

Keep a lookout for large marine animals on the surface; turtles, sea snakes, dolphins, dugong and whales and if you come across a marine animal that is injured contact the nearest Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA).

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 all rubbish with you when you leave.

Avoid trampling corals and stromatolites; reef walking damages the structure of coral reefs and stromatolites.

Avoid anchoring on reef; place your anchor on a sandy bottom.

When camping always observe fire bans and ensure fires are extinguished before leaving camp.

Know your marine park zones; make sure you have the correct information before you go fishing.

Sharks are common and are a part of the Shark Bay environment. We recommend you move boating locations if they take your fish. Also restrict the amount of burley used.



6 | Fishing research and education

Through a greater awareness and understanding of our fish stocks we can all contribute towards ensuring there will be 'fish for the future'.

You can play your part by:

- Promoting sustainable fishing practices to your fellow fishers.
- Assisting the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (Fisheries) with research projects to help researchers and managers gain a better understanding of how to keep our fish stocks abundant.



photo credit: Coral Coast Photo Library



7 | Access fishing spots appropriately

Not all fishing spots are in areas of general public access – some may only be accessible through private property or land that is culturally significant.

Make sure you:

- Use established roads and tracks.
- Gain the landholder's permission before accessing fishing areas through pastoral leases – Tamala Station, Carrang Station.
- Always leave gates as you found them.
- Do not damage or destroy fences.
- Know your National Parks – Francois Peron National Park, Steep Point, Dirk Hartog Island (4WD only access).
- Avoid disturbing sites of cultural importance.
- Always seek permission before entering culturally important sites, including land recognised under native title.

8 | Recreational fishing compliance

Recreational fishing rules and regulations are designed to help ensure our fisheries are sustainable.



Report illegal fishing activities to **FishWatch** by calling **1800 815 507**

When diving in Shark Bay it is important that you follow these procedures:

It is important to be aware of these before every fishing trip:

No fishing or other extractive activities are allowed in Hamelin Pool Marine Nature Reserve.

Shark Bay Marine Park consists of four zone types: 'no-take' sanctuary zones, special purpose zones, recreation zones and a general use zone. Recreational fishing can be enjoyed in most areas of the marine park, but special rules apply in some zones. Ensure you know your zones before you go fishing.

Closures are in place for certain areas and species depending on the time of the year i.e. spawning periods in the Eastern Gulf (Monkey Mia).

Observe all relevant size and bag limits. Shark Bay has special size regulations for Pink Snapper. Information can be obtained from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (Fisheries) through their website www.fish.wa.gov.au or download the Recfishwest App.

Special fishing rules also apply when fishing for Pink Snapper in the Inner Gulfs of Shark Bay.

Always be in possession of relevant fishing licences – recreational skippers ticket and boating licence (not required on Fishing Charter Vessels).

Report illegal fishing activities to FishWatch.

Undersize fish must be returned to the water as soon as possible and must not be used as bait.

Respect other people's fishing gear.

Respect other people's right to fish (including commercial and Aboriginal fishers).

Marine parks, islands and other areas across Shark Bay including Big and Little Lagoons have boating restrictions.

Regulations are in place for net fishing – check www.fish.wa.gov.au or download the Recfishwest app to find out the rules.

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



- Always use an anchor when diving from a boat.
- Always have a person remain on board the boat whilst divers are in the water.
- Use dive flags for both off and onshore diving.
- Scuba diving and spearfishing at the same time is prohibited within the Shark Bay Marine Park.
- Don't dive deeper than you are capable of.



9 | Commercial fishing operations in Shark Bay

Recreational and commercial fishers have been sharing the Shark Bay resource for decades. The Shark Bay Beach Seine & Mesh Net Fishery operates from Denham in the inner waters of Shark Bay using beach seine and haul net gear. The fishery primarily targets whiting, sea mullet, yellowfin bream and tailor. The Developmental Cockle Fishery also operates in the region, working close to shore using a rake harvest system.

When approaching a commercial fishing operation please:

- Respect and consider the spatial extent that is required for commercial beach seine and haul net operations.
- Please slow down, keep a clear distance from commercial fishing operations and minimise/avoid any disruptions.

10 | Emergency local contacts and information

- Check the weather and tide predictions before you go (WillyWeather, Seabreeze, Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) and Buoyweather).
- Watch out for tides and the weather – summer periods are windy in Shark Bay with low tides.
- Volunteer Marine Rescue Shark Bay (VMR) – 08 9948 1376
- State Emergency Service (SES) – 0429 481 218
- Department of Biodiversity, Conservations and Attractions (DBCA), Denham Office – 08 9948 2226
- Local Fisheries Office – 08 9948 1210



11 | Fishing Safety





FREE loan life jackets are available from the Steep Point Rangers Station.

Angel Rings are installed for your safety at Dirk Hartog Island (Quoin Head, Urchin Point, West Point) and Steep Point (False Entrance, Thunder Bay Blowholes, The Oven, The Fault Line).





Angel Rings are life buoys that are designed to keep someone afloat and away from the rocks until help arrives or a rescue can be organised. Angel Rings are vital pieces of public safety equipment and should not be tampered with or removed unless being used in a rescue.







Shark Bay common catches





<p>*Minimum size limit applies</p> 	<p>Also known as</p> <p>Blue-lined Emperor and Tricky Snapper</p>	<p>Grows to</p> <p>800 mm (15 years)</p>
	<p>Habitat</p> <p>Nearshore waters and reefs</p>	<p>Fish using</p> <p>Soft plastic lures or soft baits such as mulies or squid</p>
	<p>Reproduction</p> <p>Female matures at approximately 230 mm and male at 190 mm</p>	
<p>*Minimum size limit applies</p> 	<p>Also known as</p> <p>Bluebone</p>	<p>Grows to</p> <p>800 mm (17 years)</p>
	<p>Habitat</p> <p>Nearshore waters, flat bottoms and coral reefs</p>	<p>Fish using</p> <p>Soft plastic lures (prawn or crab shapes are best) or baits such as squid or crab legs</p>
	<p>Reproduction</p> <p>Female matures at approximately 252 mm (3 to 4 years); sex change to male at approximately 556 mm (10 years)</p>	
<p>*Minimum size limit applies</p> 	<p>Habitat</p> <p>Nearshore seagrass beds</p>	<p>Grows to</p> <p>65 mm carapace width</p>
	<p>Reproduction</p> <p>Mature at approximately 95 mm</p>	<p>Fish using</p> <p>Scoop nets, drop nets</p>
<p>*Minimum size limit applies</p> 	<p>Habitat</p> <p>Nearshore turbid waters to offshore reefs, sand and rubble bottoms</p>	<p>Grows to</p> <p>Approximately 1000 mm and 15 kg</p>
	<p>Reproduction</p> <p>Female matures at approximately 507 mm and male starts maturing at 322 mm</p>	<p>Fish using</p> <p>Trolled lures, deepwater jigs, baits</p>

Shark Bay common catches

<p>*Maximum and minimum size limit applies</p>  <p>Estuary Cod (<i>Epinephelus coioides</i>)</p>	<p>Habitat Juveniles in nearshore and estuaries. Mature fish in nearshore and offshore waters</p>	<p>Grows to 1000 mm (22 years)</p>
	<p>Reproduction Female matures at approximately 575 mm; sex change to male at 925 mm</p>	<p>Fish using Lures, jigs and bait such as squid or octopus</p>
<p>*Minimum size limit applies</p>  <p>Mulloway (<i>Argyrosomus japonicus</i>)</p>	<p>Habitat From nearshore and estuarine waters to deep offshore reefs</p>	<p>Grows to 1500 mm</p>
	<p>Reproduction Mature at approximately 900 mm</p>	<p>Fish using Soft plastic lures or bait such as mulies and squid</p>
<p>*Minimum size limit applies</p>  <p>Northern Sand Flathead (<i>Platycephalus arenarius</i>)</p>	<p>Habitat Sandy beaches to a depth of 55 metres</p>	<p>Grows to 350 mm - 460 mm</p>
	<p>Reproduction Spawn between late spring and early autumn. Individuals mature by the end of their second year and live to about 9 years</p>	<p>Fish using Soft plastics or soft bait retrieving slowly over the seabed</p>
<p>*No size limit applies</p>  <p>Northern Squid (<i>Sepioteuthis lessoniana</i>)</p>	<p>Habitat Nearshore seagrass beds</p>	<p>Grows to 450 mm tube length</p>
	<p>Reproduction Spawn once during life cycle of 18 months</p>	<p>Fish using Squid jigs</p>

Shark Bay common catches

<p>*Minimum size limit applies</p>  <p>Pink Snapper (<i>Pagrus auratus</i>)</p>	<p>Habitat Juveniles in nearshore waters, sub-adults in nearshore and offshore waters and adults in offshore waters 20 - 250 metres</p>	<p>Grows to 1300 mm (41 years)</p>
<p>*Minimum size limit applies</p>  <p>Stripey Seaperch (<i>Lutjanus carponotatus</i>)</p>	<p>Also known as Spanish Flag</p>	<p>Grows to 300 mm - 400 mm long (20 - 30 years) and approximately 20 kg</p>
	<p>Habitat Near rocky ledges and coral reefs</p>	
	<p>Reproduction Mature at approximately 200 mm</p>	<p>Fish using Small minnows, jigs and plastics</p>
<p>*Minimum size limit applies</p>  <p>Spanish Mackerel (<i>Scomberomorus commerson</i>)</p>	<p>Habitat Offshore and coastal reefs in 15 metres+ depth</p>	<p>Grows to Approximately 2400 mm and 40 kg</p>
<p>*Minimum size limit applies</p>  <p>Red Throat Emperor (<i>Lethrinus miniatus</i>)</p>	<p>Also known as Sweetlip Emperor</p>	<p>Grows to Approximately 900 mm, 9 kgs and at least 22 years</p>
	<p>Habitat Inhabits coral reefs, feeding in small schools over sandy and rubble areas and along reef edges</p>	
	<p>Reproduction Mature at approximately 500 mm</p>	<p>Fish using Fresh bait, soft plastics and diving hard body minnows</p>

<p>*Minimum size limit applies</p>  <p>Red Emperor (<i>Lutjanus sebae</i>)</p>	<p>Habitat 60 metres+ depth, offshore reefs, sand and rubble bottoms</p> <p>Reproduction Female matures at 461 mm and male at about 491 mm</p>	<p>Grows to Approximately 1160 mm and 20 kg</p> <p>Fish using Baits and deepwater jigs</p>
<p>*No size limit applies</p>  <p>Rankin Cod (<i>Epinephelus multinotatus</i>)</p>	<p>Habitat Offshore reefs up to 110 m deep</p> <p>Reproduction Begins as a female, matures at approximately 900 mm and becomes male</p>	<p>Grows to 1000 mm and 20 kg</p> <p>Fish using Deepwater jigs and bait such as squid or octopus</p>
<p>*Minimum size limit applies</p>  <p>Yellowfin Bream (<i>Acanthopagrus morrisoni</i>)</p>	<p>Habitat Surf beaches, inshore rocky reefs, estuarine environments, sand flats and structure</p> <p>Reproduction Reaches maturity at approximately 22 cm and 5 years of age</p>	<p>Grows to 500 mm and 20 kg</p> <p>Fish using Fish structure, open sand flats and beaches using soft plastic lures and baits</p>
<p>*Minimum size limit applies</p>  <p>Yellowfin Whiting (<i>Sillago schomburgkii</i>)</p>	<p>Habitat Nearshore sand flats</p> <p>Reproduction Mature at 200 mm</p>	<p>Grows to 400 mm</p> <p>Fish using Soft plastic lures, small poppers or bait such as worms or squid</p>

Not sure what fish you've caught?
Use the Fish ID tool on the free Recfishwest App!

DOWNLOAD TODAY



Available on the
App Store

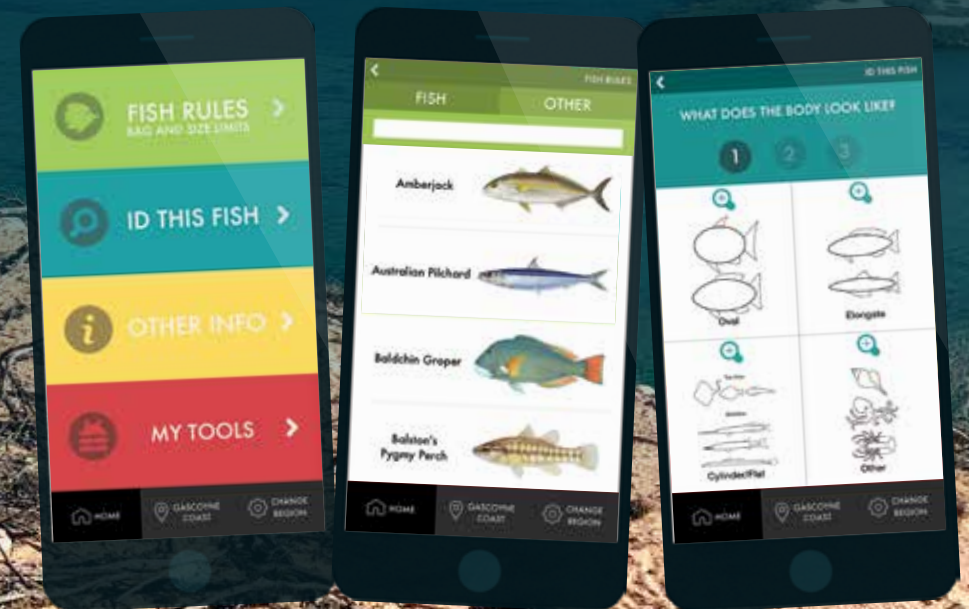
ANDROID APP ON
Google Play

Your Fishing Rules for Western Australia



**NO MORE
RULE BOOKS**

Works in no service areas • Fish ID tool • All WA rules
Fishing safety equipment feature • 240+ species
Edibility rating • Rated 4.5/5 stars ★★★★★



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