



Department of
Primary Industries and
Regional Development

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Western Australia.*

Marine protected species identification guide




June 2021

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Prepared by K. Travaille and M. Hourston

Cover: Hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*). Photo: Matthew Pember.

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About this guide

The Western Australian marine environment is home to a number of species that are protected under international agreements and national or state legislation. Many of these species occur in areas where fishing takes place, sometimes resulting in interactions between fishers and protected species. An interaction is considered to be any physical contact between a person, fishing vessel or fishing gear and a protected species, including captures, entanglements and collisions.

This guide has been developed to help you identify some common marine protected species in Western Australia that you may encounter while fishing.

It has been divided into five sections:

- Marine mammals, including whales, dolphins, dugongs, seals and sea lions.
- Marine reptiles, including marine turtles and sea snakes.
- Bony fish and elasmobranchs, including sea horses, pipefish, sharks and rays.
- Sea birds.
- Shore birds.

Please note that this guide is not an exhaustive list of marine protected species in WA. All marine mammals, turtles, sea snakes, seahorses and pipefish, sea birds and shore birds are protected under the legislation detailed on the next page, as are many species of sharks and rays.

For the special rules that apply to whaler sharks in WA, see page 25.

About this guide (continued)

Throughout this guide, you will see all or some of the following coastal bioregion symbols with each species illustration, indicating where the species is most often reported.

NC North Coast

GC Gascoyne Coast

WC West Coast

SC South Coast



Protected species legislation and international agreements

Marine protected species have been identified based on their listing under the following international agreements, national and/or state legislation:

- the *Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals 1979* (Bonn Convention);
- the *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora* (CITES);
- the *Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of Japan for the Protection of Migratory Birds in Danger of Extinction and their Environment 1974* (JAMBA);
- the *Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the People's Republic of China for the Protection of Migratory Birds and their Environment 1986* (CAMBA); and
- the *Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Republic of Korea on the Protection of Migratory Birds 2007* (ROKAMBA);
- the *Australian Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act);
- the *Western Australian Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (BC Act); and
- the *Western Australian Fish Resources Management Act 1994* (FRMA).

Reporting interactions

Fishers are asked to report all interactions that occur between their fishing gear and a protected species through the channels below.

Recreational fishers should report all interactions to the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions through the Wildcare Helpline. Recreational fishing interactions that occur outside state waters should be reported to the Australian Government Department of Environment and Energy within seven (7) days.

Commercial fishing operators are required to report protected species interactions to the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development through their statutory fishing log books.

When reporting an interaction with a protected species please record as many details as possible, including:

- time and date of the event;
- species name and description (take a picture if possible);
- number of animals;
- location (use a GPS if available);
- incident type, for example, caught on hook, entangled in a pot line or collision with fishing boat;
- status of the animal when returned to the water, for example, alive and swam away, injured or dead; and
- any additional comments you may have about the interaction.

Contact and Reporting Details

Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

Hillarys District Office: (08) 9203 0110

Perth Head Office: (08) 6551 4444

dpird.wa.gov.au

Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

Wildcare Helpline: (08) 9474 9055

Perth Head Office: (08) 9219 9000

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions marine species guides and other information on marine species are available at: dpaw.wa.gov.au/management/marine/marine-wildlife

Australian Government Department of Environment and Energy

1800 641 806

protectedspecies@environment.gov.au

environment.gov.au

Relative size of cetaceans

Baleen whales

Southern right whale

Up to 16 m



Humpback whale

Up to 15 m



Toothed whales

Killer whale (orca)

5.5 – 9.8 m



Long-finned pilot whale

3.8 – 6 m



False killer whale

4.3 – 6 m



Short-finned pilot whale

3.6 – 6.5 m



Bottlenose dolphin

1.9 – 3.9 m



Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin

2 – 2.8 m



Australian snubfin dolphin

2.1 – 2.6 m



Common dolphin

1.7 – 2.4 m



Marine mammals

Baleen whales



NC GC WC SC

Minke whale

Balaenoptera acutorostrata



NC GC WC SC

Fin whale

Balaenoptera physalus



NC GC WC SC

Sei whale

Balaenoptera borealis



NC GC WC SC

Humpback whale

Megaptera novaeangliae



NC GC WC SC

Blue whale

Balaenoptera musculus



NC GC WC SC

Southern right whale

Eubalaena australis

Marine mammals

Large toothed whales



NC GC WC SC

Short-finned pilot whale

Globicephala macrorhynchus



WC SC

Long-finned pilot whale

Globicephala melas

Marine mammals

Large toothed whales (continued)



NC GC WC SC

Killer whale
Orcinus orca



NC GC WC SC

False killer whale
Pseudorca crassidens



NC GC WC SC

Sperm whale
Physeter macrocephalus

Marine mammals

Dolphins



NC GC WC SC

Common dolphin
Delphinus delphis



NC GC WC SC

Risso's dolphin
Grampus griseus



NC GC WC

Fraser's dolphin
Lagenodelphis hosei



WC SC

Dusky dolphin
Lagenorhynchus obscurus



WC SC

Southern right whale dolphin
Lissodelphis peronii



NC

Australian snubfin dolphin
Orcaella heinsohni



NC GC

Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin
Sousa sahalensis



NC GC WC

Spotted dolphin
Stenella attenuata



NC GC WC SC

Striped dolphin
Stenella coeruleoalba



NC GC WC

Long-snouted spinner dolphin
Stenella longirostris



NC GC WC

Rough toothed dolphin
Steno bredanensis



NC GC WC SC

Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin
Tursiops aduncus

Marine mammals

Dolphins (continued)



NC GC WC SC

Bottlenose dolphin
Tursiops truncatus

Marine mammals

Dugong



NC GC

Dugong
Dugong dugon

Marine mammals

Seals and sea lions



GC WC SC

New Zealand fur seal
Arctocephalus forsteri



SC

Southern elephant seal
Mirounga leonina



GC WC SC

Australian sea lion
Neophoca cinerea

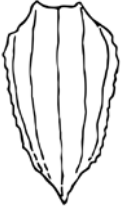


SC

Leopard seal
Hydrurga leptonyx

Indo-Pacific marine turtle ID key

- Carapace with
- 5 distinct ridges
- no large scales



Leatherback turtle
Dermochelys coriacea

- Carapace with
- no distinct ridges
- large scales

- 4 pair costal scales



- 6 pair or more costal scales
- carapace approx. circular
- colour grey-green
- pores in scales of bridge



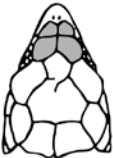
Pacific (Olive) ridley turtle
Lepidochelys olivacea

- 5 pair (rarely 6) costal scales
- carapace longer than wide
- colour red-brown to brown
- no pores in scales of bridge



Loggerhead turtle
Caretta caretta

- 2 pair prefrontal scales
- thick overlapping carapace scales



Hawksbill turtle
Eretmochelys imbricata

- 1 pair prefrontal scales
- no thick overlapping carapace scales



- carapace low domed with upturned edges
- preocular scale
- colour olive-grey



Flatback turtle
Natator depressus

- carapace high domed
- no preocular scale
- colour light to dark green with dark mottling



Green turtle
Chelonia mydas

Marine reptiles Marine turtles



NC GC WC SC

Loggerhead turtle
Caretta caretta



NC GC WC

Hawksbill turtle
Eretmochelys imbricata



NC GC WC SC

Green turtle
Chelonia mydas



NC GC WC

Olive ridley turtle
Lepidochelys olivacea



NC GC WC SC

Leatherback turtle
Dermochelys coriacea



NC GC WC

Flatback turtle
Natator depressus

Marine reptiles Crocodiles



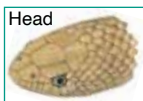
NC

Saltwater crocodile
Crocodylus porosus



NC

Freshwater crocodile
Crocodylus johnstoni



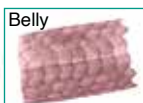
NC GC

Short-nosed sea snake
Aipysurus apraefrontalis



NC GC

Dubois' sea snake
Aipysurus duboisii



NC

Leaf-scaled sea snake
Aipysurus foliosquama



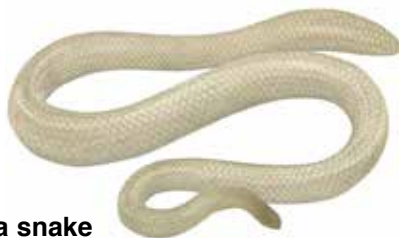
NC GC

Brown-lined sea snake
Aipysurus tenuis



NC GC

Olive sea snake
Aipysurus laevis



NC

Spine-bellied sea snake
Hydrophis curtus





NC GC

Elegant sea snake
Hydrophis elegans



NC GC

Horned sea snake
Hydrophis peronii



NC

Dusky sea snake
Aipysurus fuscus



NC GC

Mosaic sea snake
Aipysurus mosaicus



GC WC

Shark Bay sea snake
Aipysurus pooleorum



NC GC

Stokes' sea snake
Hydrophis stokesii



NC GC WC

Spectacled sea snake
Hydrophis kingii



NC GC WC

Olive-headed sea snake
Hydrophis major



NC GC

Turtle-headed sea snake
Emydocephalus annulatus



NC GC

North-western mangrove sea snake
Ephalophis greyae



NC

Black-ringed mangrove snake
Hydrelaps darwiniensis



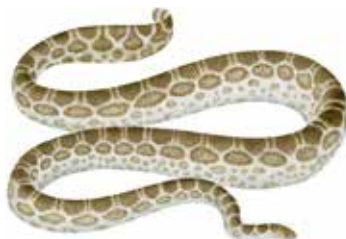
NC GC

Geometrical sea snake
Hydrophis czeblukovi



NC GC

Small-headed sea snake
Hydrophis maccowelli



NC GC

Ocellate sea snake
Hydrophis ocellatus



NC GC WC

Yellow-bellied sea snake
Hydrophis platurus

Guide to the Sea Snakes of the Kimberley Coast of Western Australia. Department of Parks and Wildlife occasional publication.

The Guide can be obtained on request through the Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions or Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development



NC GC

Winged seahorse
Hippocampus alatus



NC GC WC

Spiny seahorse
Hippocampus histrix



NC GC WC

Western spiny seahorse
Hippocampus angustus



NC GC

Spotted seahorse
Hippocampus kuda



GC

False-eyed seahorse
Hippocampus biocellatus



NC

Montebello seahorse
Hippocampus montebelloensis



WC SC

Short-headed seahorse
Hippocampus breviceps



NC GC WC

Flat-faced seahorse
Hippocampus planifrons

Fish Seahorses (continued)



NC

Hedgehog seahorse
Hippocampus spinosissimus



WC

West Australian seahorse
Hippocampus subelongatus

Fish Seadragons



WC SC

Leafy seadragon
Phycodurus eques



WC SC

Weedy seadragon
Phyllopteryx taeniolatus



NC GC

Braun's pughead pipefish
Bulbonaricus brauni



NC GC

Pacific short-bodied pipefish
Choeroichthys brachysoma



NC GC

Muiron Island pipefish
Choeroichthys latispinosus



NC

Australian messmate pipefish
Corythoichthys intestinalis



NC

Bluestripe pipefish

Doryrhamphus excisus



NC GC

Spiny-snout pipefish

Halicampus spinirostris



NC GC WC

Ribbioned pipefish

Haliichthys taeniophorus



NC GC

Beady pipefish

Hippichthys penicillus



NC GC

Cleaner pipefish
Doryrhamphus janssi



NC GC WC

Ladder pipefish
Festucalex scalaris



NC GC WC

Tiger pipefish
Filicampus tigris



NC GC WC

Brock's pipefish
Halicampus brocki



SC

Brushtail pipefish
Leptoichthys fistularius



GC WC SC

Sawtooth pipefish
Maroubra perserrata



NC GC WC

Robust ghost pipefish
Solenostomus cyanopterus



NC GC WC

Alligator pipefish
Syngnathoides biaculeatus



NC GC

Tidepool pipefish
Micrognathus micronotopterus



NC GC WC SC

Gunther's pipefish
Solegnathus lettiensis



GC WC SC

Spotted pipefish
Stigmatopora argus



NC GC

Short-tailed pipefish
Trachyrhamphus bicoarctatus



NC GC

Long-nosed pipefish
Trachyrhamphus longirostris

Fish Sharks, general



GC WC SC

White shark
Carcharodon carcharias



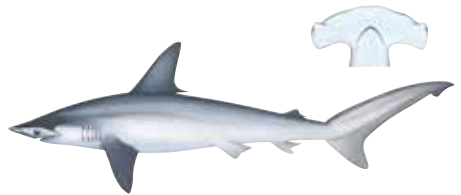
NC GC WC SC

Shortfin mako shark
Isurus oxyrinchus



NC GC WC SC

Grey nurse shark
Carcharias taurus



GC WC SC

Smooth hammerhead shark
Sphyrna zygaena



NC GC WC

Great hammerhead shark
Sphyrna mokarran



NC GC WC

Scalloped hammerhead shark
Sphyrna lewini



WC SC

Southern dogfish
Cetorhynchus maximus



SC

School shark
Galeorhinus galeus

Fish Sharks, general (continued)



NC GC

Blacktip shark
Carcharhinus tilstoni, *C. limbatus*



NC GC WC SC

Spinner shark
Carcharhinus brevipinna

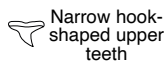


NC GC WC

Whale shark
Rhinconodon typus

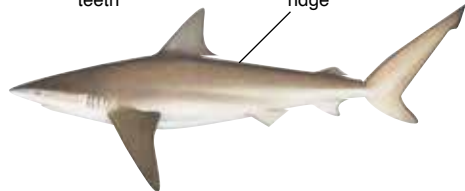
Fish Sharks, whaler

Whaler sharks larger than 700 mm interdorsal length are protected in the SC and WC bioregions, unless taken under specific commercial exemption.



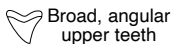
Narrow hook-shaped upper teeth

No interdorsal ridge



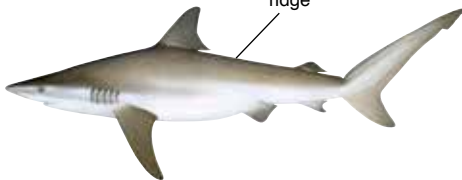
GC WC SC

Bronze whaler shark
Carcharhinus brachyurus



Broad, angular upper teeth

Interdorsal ridge



NC GC WC SC

Dusky (whaler) shark
Carcharhinus obscurus

Fish Sharks, whaler (continued)

Whaler sharks larger than 700 mm interdorsal length are protected in the SC and WC bioregions, unless taken under specific commercial exemption.



NC GC WC

Bull shark
Carcharhinus leucas



NC

Spoutooth shark
Glyphis glyphis



NC GC WC SC

Blue shark
Prionace glauca



NC

Northern river shark
Glyphis garricki



NC GC

Reef manta ray
Manta alfredi



NC GC

Giant manta ray
Manta birostris



NC GC

Japanese devil ray
Mobula japonica



NC GC

Pygmy devil ray
Mobula eregoodootenkee



WC SC

Smooth stingray
Dasyatis brevicaudata



NC

Largetooth (Freshwater) sawfish

Pristis pristis



NC

Dwarf sawfish

Pristis clavata



NC GC

Green sawfish

Pristis zijsron

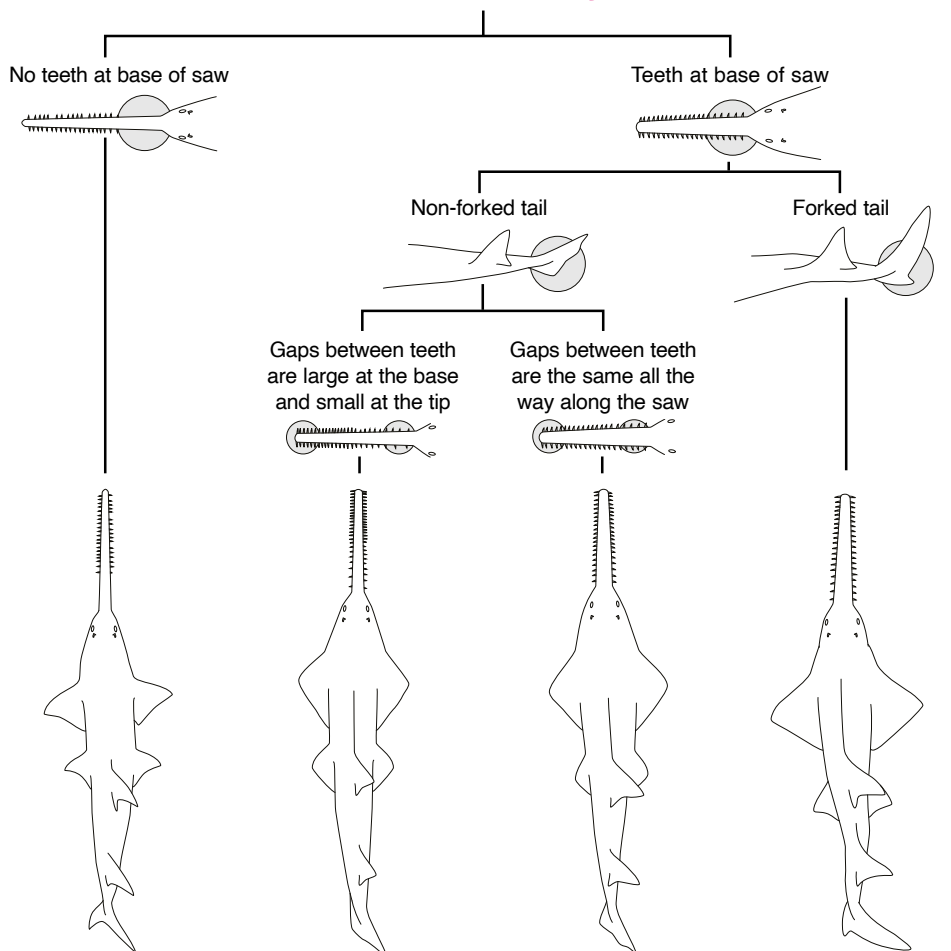


NC GC

Narrow sawfish

Anoxypristis cuspidata

Sawfishes ID key



Narrow Sawfish
Anoxypristis cuspidata

- 16-33 teeth each side
- Teeth triangular
- front & back edge sharp
- Pectorals wider than long
- 1st dorsal fin behind pelvic fins
- Saw with parallel sides

Green Sawfish
Pristis zijsron

- 23-37 teeth each side
- Teeth long near tip
- front edge sharp, grooved back
- Pectorals longer than wide
- 1st dorsal fin behind pelvic fins
- Saw slightly wider near base

Dwarf Sawfish
Pristis clavata

- 18-27 teeth each side
- Teeth long
- front edge sharp, grooved back
- Pectorals longer than wide
- 1st dorsal fin behind pelvic fins
- Saw wider near base

Largetooth (Freshwater) Sawfish
Pristis pristis

- 14-24 teeth each side
- Teeth long
- front edge sharp, grooved back
- Pectorals equal length and width
- 1st dorsal fin ahead of pelvic fins
- Saw wider near base

Sea birds Albatrosses



Photo: Alan Collins

Wandering albatross
Diomedea exulans



Photo: Frank O'Connor

Black-browed albatross
Thalassarche melanophris



Photo: Robyn Pickering

Shy albatross
Thalassarche cauta



Photo: Frank O'Connor

Yellow-nosed albatross
Thalassarche carteri

Sea birds Boobies and gannets



Photo: Jennifer Sumpton

Australasian gannet
Morus serrator



Photo: Tony Palliser

Brown booby
Sula leucogaster

Sea birds Cormorants and shags



NC GC WC SC

Australasian darter
Anhinga novaehollandiae

Photo: Chris Tate



SC

Black-faced cormorant
Phalacrocorax fuscescens

Photo: Frank O'Connor



NC GC WC SC

Australian pied cormorant
Phalacrocorax varius

Photo: Alan Collins

Sea birds Frigatebirds



NC GC

Lesser frigatebird
Fregata ariel

Photo: Tony Palliser

Sea birds Hawks and eagles



NC GC WC SC

White-bellied sea eagle
Haliaeetus leucogaster

Photo: Frank O'Connor



NC GC

Brahminy kite
Haliastur indus

Photo: Keith Wilcox



NC GC WC SC

Eastern osprey
Pandion cristatus

Photo: Alan Collins

Sea birds Skua



WC SC

Brown skua
Stercorarius antarcticus

Photo: Frank O'Connor

Sea birds Shearwaters and petrels



WC SC

Southern giant petrel
Macronectes giganteus

Photo: Frank O'Connor



WC SC

Great-winged petrel
Pterodroma macroptera

Photo: Alan Collins



WC SC

Flesh-footed shearwater
Ardenna carneipes

Photo: Frank O'Connor



NC GC WC

Wedge-tailed shearwater (muttonbird)
Ardenna pacifica

Photo: Alan Collins

Sea birds Storm petrels



NC GC WC SC

Wilson's storm petrel
Oceanites oceanicus

Photo: Alan Collins



WC SC

White-faced storm petrel
Pelagodroma marina

Photo: Alan Collins

Sea birds Terns, noddies and gulls



NC GC WC

Photo: Tony Palliser

Whiskered tern
Chlidonias hybrida



NC GC

Photo: Tony Palliser

White-winged tern
Chlidonias leucopterus



NC GC WC

Photo: Robin Ashford

Gull-billed tern
Gelochelidon nilotica



NC GC WC SC

Photo: John Anderson

Caspian tern
Hydroprogne caspia



NC GC

Photo: Robin Ashford

Lesser crested tern
Thalasseus bengalensis



NC GC WC

Photo: Frank O'Connor

Crested tern
Thalasseus bergii

Sea birds Terns, noddies and gulls (continued)



NC GC WC SC

Photo: Alan Collins

Bridled tern
Onychoprion anaethetus



NC GC WC

Photo: Frank O'Connor

Sooty tern
Onychoprion fuscata



NC GC WC

Photo: Bruce Greatwich

Roseate tern
Sterna dougallii



NC GC

Photo: Tony Palliser

Common tern
Sterna hirundo



NC GC

Photo: Tony Palliser

Little tern
Sternula albifrons



GC WC SC

Photo: Robyn Pickering

Fairy tern
Sternula nereis

Sea birds Terns, noddies and gulls (continued)



Photo: Jennifer Sumpton

Brown (Common) noddy
Anous stolidus



Photo: Robin Ashford

Lesser noddy
Anous tenuirostris



Photo: Frank O'Connor

Pacific gull
Larus pacificus



Photo: Frank O'Connor

Silver gull
Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae

Sea birds Penguins



Photo: Keith Wilcox

Little penguin
Eudyptula minor



Photo: Frank O'Connor

Australian pelican
Pelecanus conspicillatus

Shore birds



NC GC WC SC

Photo: John Vogel

Ruddy turnstone
Arenaria interpres



WC SC

Photo: Chris Tate

Red-capped plover
Charadrius ruficapillus



NC GC WC SC

Photo: Chris Tate

Pacific reef heron
Egretta sacra



NC GC

Photo: Rod Smith

Beach stone curlew
Esacus magnirostris neglectus



NC GC WC SC

Photo: Robyn Pickering

Sooty oystercatcher
Haematopus fuliginosus



NC GC WC SC

Photo: Robyn Pickering

Pied oystercatcher
Haematopus longirostris

Shore birds (continued)



NC GC WC SC

Black-winged stilt
Himantopus leucocephalus

Photo: Frank O'Connor



WC SC

Hooded plover
Thinornis cucullatus

Photo: Robyn Pickering

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