



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Fisheries**

Miaboolya Beach

*Fish Habitat
Protection Area
(FHFA)*



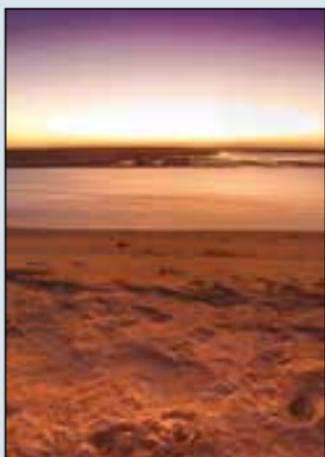
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Cover

Miaboolya sunset

Photo: Peter Jecks

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 fish habitat protection area (FHPA)?

An FHPA is a location declared by the Minister for Fisheries as having exceptional ecological and community significance and so deserving special management to ensure its long-term sustainability.

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

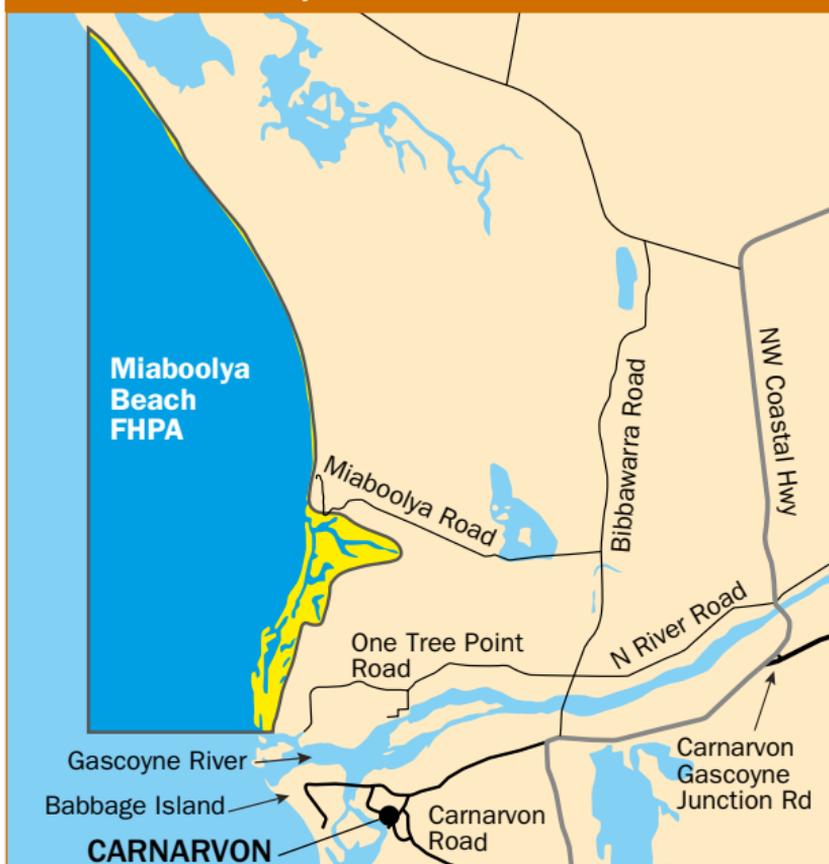
Photo: Matt Stadler



Where is Miaboolya Beach FHPA?

Miaboolya Beach FHPA is 16 kilometres 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 Bejalong Hill, south to the Gascoyne River mouth.

Location of Miaboolya Beach FHPA



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 Western Australia's 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 Department of Fisheries scientists 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.

Photo: Matt Stadler



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.

Photo: Craig Williams



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	 A side view of a mulloway fish, showing its elongated body, light blue-grey coloration, and a prominent dorsal fin.
Mangrove jack	 A side view of a mangrove jack fish, characterized by its vibrant reddish-pink color and a spiny dorsal fin.
Giant threadfin	 A side view of a giant threadfin fish, featuring a slender, silver body and a long, thin dorsal fin.
Goldspotted rockcod	 A side view of a goldspotted rockcod fish, showing its dark, mottled pattern and a robust, stocky body.
Western yellowfin bream	 A side view of a western yellowfin bream fish, displaying its silver-grey scales and a prominent dorsal fin.

Protecting Miaboolya

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

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.

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.

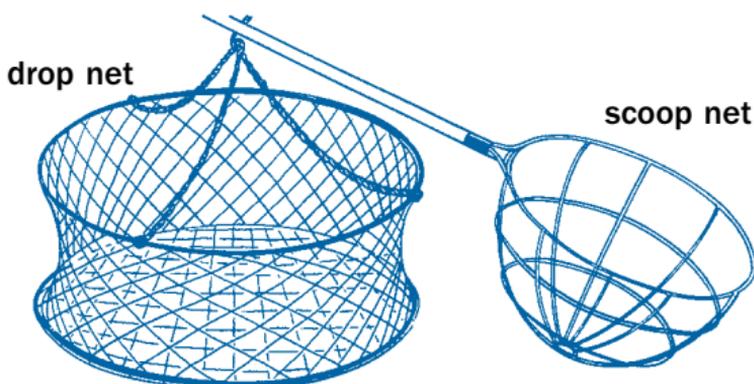
- Tread lightly in the mangroves and don't destroy mangrove habitats.
- Do not walk or drive on the sand dunes – keep to existing tracks and drive vehicles on approved tracks only.

Line fishing

- Take only what you need and stay within the recreational bag and size limits.
- Return all undersize or unwanted fish to the water carefully and quickly.
- If you intend to keep a fish, kill it quickly and humanely.

Crab fishing

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



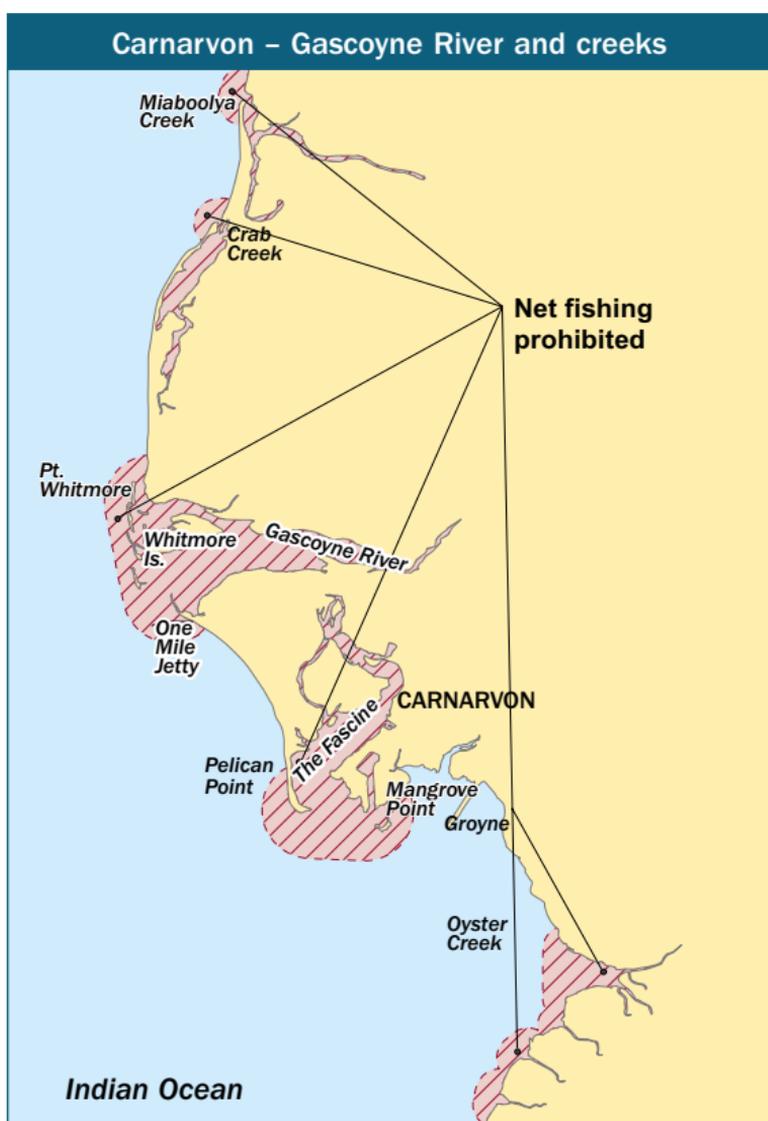
- It is illegal to use crab traps, pots or any dilly nets that entangle the catch. These are strictly prohibited in all WA waters.
- Hooks must not be capable of piercing the crab.
- There is a maximum limit of 10 drop nets per person, or 10 drop nets per boat, regardless of how many people are on board.
- The use of chemicals to help catch or kill fish, including crabs, is strictly prohibited.

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 metres of each of its entrances into the ocean are closed to netting at all times.
- All creeks from 10 kilometres north of Point Whitmore (including all of Miaboolya's creeks) to five kilometres south of Mangrove Point, including waters within a 400-metre radius of their mouths, are closed to netting at all times.



Fish for the future

Fisheries are managed in Western Australia with one main goal – *Fish for the future*. This means ensuring our fisheries are ecologically sustainable.

The Department of Fisheries takes an integrated management approach, taking into account the impact of fishing and other human activities on ecosystems. This is underpinned by a scientific research and monitoring program to build our understanding of the biology, productivity, abundance and vulnerability of the different species.

Detailed information can be found in the *Status Reports of the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources of Western Australia* available at the Department of Fisheries website at www.fish.wa.gov.au

FishWatch – 1800 815 507

The FishWatch phone line provides a quick and easy way to report sightings or evidence of:

- illegal fishing;
- aquatic pests; and
- aquatic diseases (including fish kills).

Further information

For the most up-to-date information on fishing rules, see the Statewide recreational fishing guide, available at www.fish.wa.gov.au or contact your local Department of Fisheries office.

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Fish for the future