

Victoria's Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries

-Frequently Asked Questions

What are Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries?

Marine National Parks and their smaller counterparts, Marine Sanctuaries, are highly protected areas of the sea, like National Parks on land. They safeguard a unique and diverse range of marine plants, animals and habitats in their natural state for the benefit of the environment and current and future generations of Victorians, while providing a buffer against potential environmental impacts.

In June 2002, legislation was passed which made Victoria the first jurisdiction in the world to establish an entire system of highly protected marine areas where activities such as fishing, mining of seabed materials and dumping of waste is not permitted.

This system, which is based on a decade of research, consultation and investigation, protects 5.3% of the state's coastal waters and comprises:

- Thirteen Marine National Parks protecting representative samples of Victoria's marine habitats and their associated fauna
- Eleven Marine Sanctuaries (totalling less than 900 hectares) to protect smaller areas with significant natural or cultural values.

Do all the Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries come into existence on 16th November 2002?

YES. All the Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries exist from the date of proclamation - 16th November 2002. In most Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries all forms of extractive activities including fishing will be prohibited from this date.

This will apply in all Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries except for five areas in which fishing will be allowed to continue until 1st April 2004. Existing fishing regulations in these areas will still apply during this period.

The Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuary where fishing is permitted until 1st April, 2004 are:

- Discovery Bay Marine National Park
- Twelve Apostles Marine National Park
- Corner Inlet Marine National Park
- Cape Howe Marine National Park
- Point Cooke Marine Sanctuary (except in the area of the former Point Cook Fisheries Reserve)

What about the existing Marine and Coastal Parks and Reserves?

Some previously existing Marine Reserves and parts of Marine & Coastal Parks will be incorporated into the new Marine National Parks.

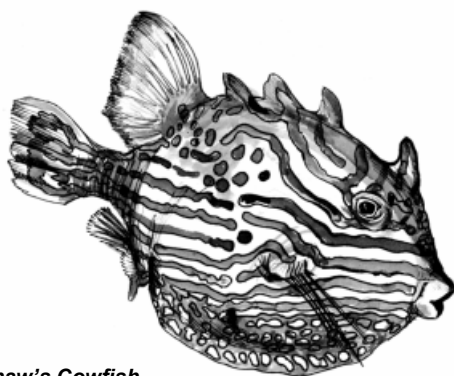
Existing Regulations will continue to apply to all Marine Reserves and Marine and Coastal Parks (Wilson's Promontory, Corner Inlet, Point Cooke and Bunurong) which have not been included in the new legislation. For details on the previously existing Marine and Coastal Parks see the individual Parknote for the area under consideration.



Parks Victoria Ranger

"Victoria's system of Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries provides total protection for their unique inhabitants, offering unlimited opportunities for us all to learn more about this stunning underwater world."

For more information call the Parks Victoria Information Centre on 13 1963 or visit our website at www.parkweb.vic.gov.au



Shaw's Cowfish

Sites for these parks and sanctuaries have been selected across Victoria's five marine bioregions to ensure that the system fully represents Victoria's diverse marine and coastal environments.

Where can I get better information?

For further information on individual Marine Parks and Marine Sanctuaries, as well as background on Victoria's marine national parks system, refer to Parks Victoria's website at www.parkweb.vic.gov.au or by calling the Parks Victoria Information Centre on 13 1963

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment website www.nre.vic.gov.au/**coastsandmarine** is also a good source of information.

Parknotes on each Marine National Park and Marine Sanctuary, including boundaries and permitted and prohibited activities, are available to assist visitors to these areas. Some Parknotes will also be available from NRE Offices in coastal regions.

How do I know when I'm inside a Marine National Park or Marine Sanctuary?

Clear marking of boundaries is important in ensuring that visitors to Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries are able to comply with the legislation and regulations that apply in these areas.

Boundary identification will include:

- On-site signage and maps at key access points
- Parknotes with maps
- Maps and GPS information available on the Parks Victoria and NRE websites
- Use of in-water navigational aids and triangular yellow shore markers that provide a line-of-sight for vessels.

Why do we need Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries?

Marine communities in Australia's southern waters are unique, with more than 90% of most plants and animals found nowhere else on earth. Scientific surveys have also demonstrated that the Victorian coast has some of the highest levels of biodiversity found anywhere on the planet - even higher than places like tropical reefs.

Victoria's marine waters include a wide variety of habitats including kelp forests, rocky reefs, seagrass meadows, sandy beaches, open waters, and highly sensitive mangrove and saltmarsh habitats. Within these habitats is found an amazing diversity of marine plants and animals, from tiny organisms that drift as part of the plankton, to large sea mammals such as Australian Fur Seals and migratory Southern Right Whales.



Gorgonian Coral

Just as National Parks are set aside for the preservation of natural environments on land, we also need protected areas in the sea to conserve our unique marine and coastal environments. Victoria's new Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries system will contribute to the long-term survival of marine, coastal and estuarine systems, by maintaining ecological processes and protecting marine biodiversity.

What are the benefits of Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries?

The benefits of establishing highly protected areas of the sea have been demonstrated both interstate and overseas, and include:

- Maintaining and enhancing species diversity, genetic diversity and habitat complexity
- Protecting rare species or populations, or unique and fragile habitats
- Protecting representative and highly productive areas and the general functioning of marine ecosystems
- Protecting habitats from potential change caused by extractive uses and fishing practices
- Providing opportunities for education, research and tourism in undisturbed marine and coastal systems
- Providing reference sites and benchmarks to allow scientists to compare and measure changes caused by human influences such as fishing, waste discharges or other activities
- Helping to achieve sustainable fisheries by protecting nursery habitats and insuring against fish stock collapses caused by overfishing and other environmental impacts.

How can I get involved?

Parks Victoria's formal management planning process over the coming three years encourages public consultation and involvement from any interested individuals or groups. As part of this process, Parks Victoria will engage with the community to identify issues and actions required for the management of each Marine National Park and Marine Sanctuary in a variety of ways, including meetings, consultation and collaboration with interest groups, and formal submission processes.

At the individual park level, opportunities to participate in or establish new Friends groups and other volunteer projects are always available. Whilst some Friends groups have formal membership, it is not necessary to belong to a group to join in volunteer activities - visitors are welcome! Joining or establishing a Friends Group has many benefits, from being actively involved in marine conservation and meeting like-minded people to keeping abreast of issues and activities.

For more information or assistance on becoming involved in your local Friends group, or establishing a new Friends group, contact Geoff Durham, Friends Network Liaison Officer on (03) 9523 5559.