

# Abalone

## Recreational fishing guide 2023/24



**A licence is required to fish for abalone**

### **Please note:**

**NEW** Greenlip abalone fishing closed Busselton Jetty to Shoal Cape

The West Coast Zone open season will start in December and fishing will be on Saturdays between 7:00 am and 8:00 am on:

- 9 December 2023
- 13 January 2024
- 3 February 2024
- 17 February 2024

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# Fish for the future

Abalone fishing is a popular recreational activity, with about 16,513 licences in the 2022/23 season.

The length of the open recreational fishing season for abalone may be adjusted each year to ensure recreational catch is managed in a sustainable manner.

The current Zone 1 recreational catch allocation is set at 23.6 tonnes.





Roe's abalone



Greenlip abalone



Brownlip abalone

# Recreational fishing rules

## Licences

You must have a licence to fish for abalone and be prepared to produce it if required. Apply for a new licence or renew an existing licence online on our website at [fish.wa.gov.au](http://fish.wa.gov.au). Alternatively, application forms are available from Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) offices.

**Note:** You don't need a licence to fish for sea urchin. However, if you are using a powered boat to reach your fishing spot, you will need a Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence.

## Don't fish for other people

Recreational fishers are only permitted to collect abalone and sea urchin for themselves and not for other people, even if they are part of the same group.

## Seasons and locations

Recreational fishers may only fish for or take abalone and sea urchin in the open season.

## No abalone fishing north of Moore River

Until further notice, fishing for abalone north of Moore River is prohibited. The closure includes part of the West Coast Zone (the area north of Moore River) and the whole Northern Zone, which runs from Greenough River mouth to the Northern Territory border.

## **West Coast Zone (Zone 1)**

The West Coast Zone extends from Busselton Jetty to the Greenough River mouth. This incorporates all islands within the zone including Rottnest, Carnac, Garden and Penguin Islands.

**Open season:** The following Saturdays from December 2023 to February 2024 (inclusive) 7:00 am – 8:00 am.

- 9 December 2023
- 13 January 2024
- 3 February 2024
- 17 February 2024

**Note:** The number of fishing days in this zone may be reduced or extended if in-season monitoring shows it is necessary to protect stocks or to provide the opportunity to take the recreational sector's catch share.

If poor weather conditions are forecast DPIRD will take action on the advice of Surf Life Saving Western Australia to close the fishery. Fishers are reminded that local water conditions can vary between fishing locations and fishers must take responsibility for their own safety – at no time should fishers enter the water unless they are confident in their ability to handle the sea conditions.

**Closed area:** The area north of Moore River is closed to abalone fishing until further notice.

**Open area:** Moore River to Busselton Jetty for abalone. Greenough River mouth to Busselton Jetty for sea urchin.

**Diving:** Recreational fishers may not use SCUBA or hookah (surface-supplied compressed air) gear to take abalone in this zone.

## Northern Zone (Zone 2)

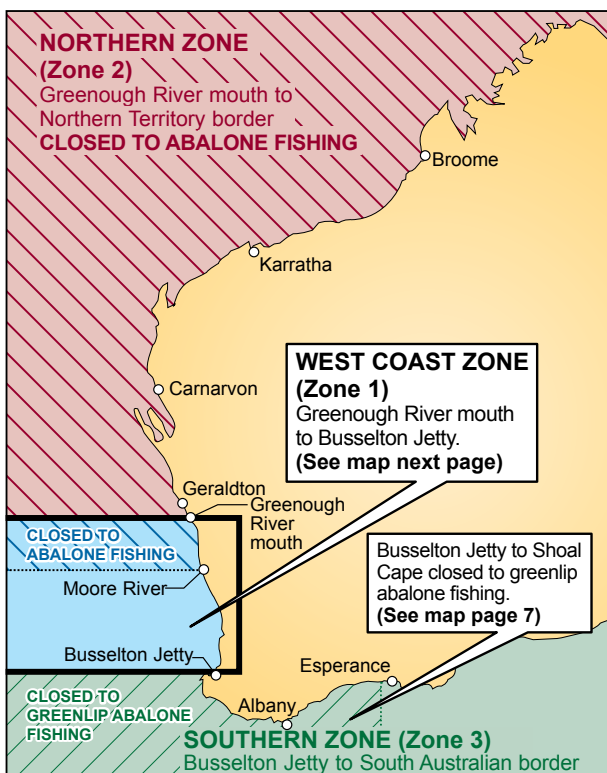
The area north of Moore River (which includes the entire Northern Zone) is closed to abalone fishing until further notice. However, sea urchin fishing is permitted in this zone between 1 October and 15 May the following year.

## Southern Zone (Zone 3)

The Southern Zone extends from the Busselton Jetty to the South Australian Border. The zone is open to abalone fishing between 1 October and 15 May the following year.

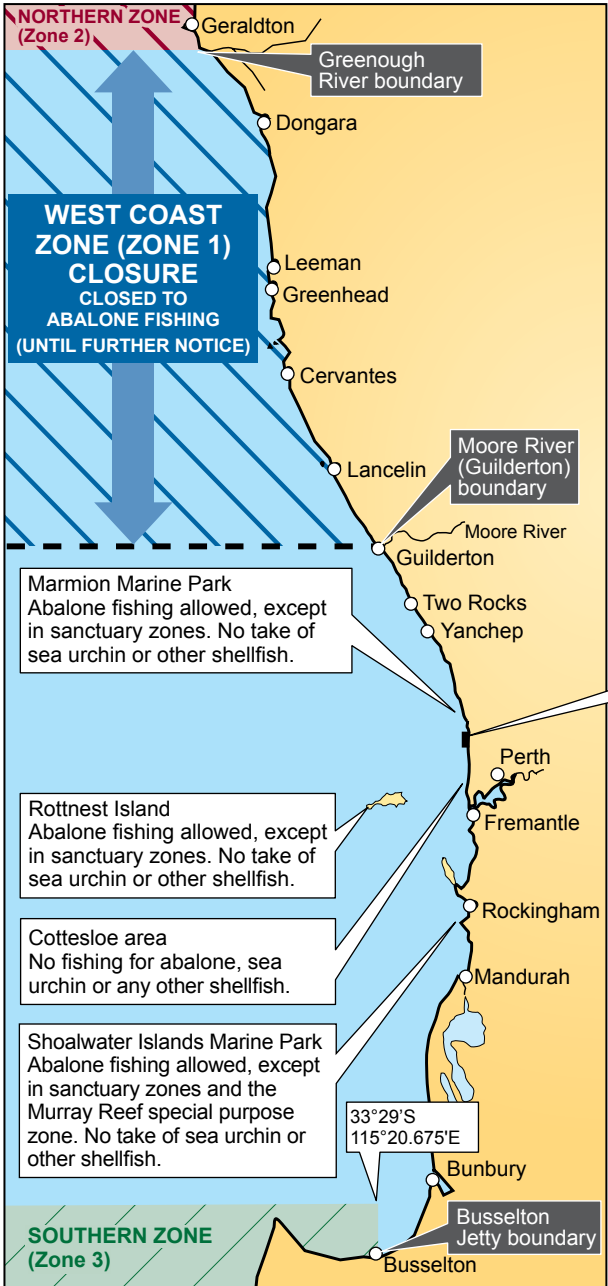
**Closure:** The area from Busselton Jetty to Shoal Cape is closed to greenlip abalone fishing.

## Recreational abalone and sea urchin zones in Western Australia



# West Coast Zone (Zone 1)

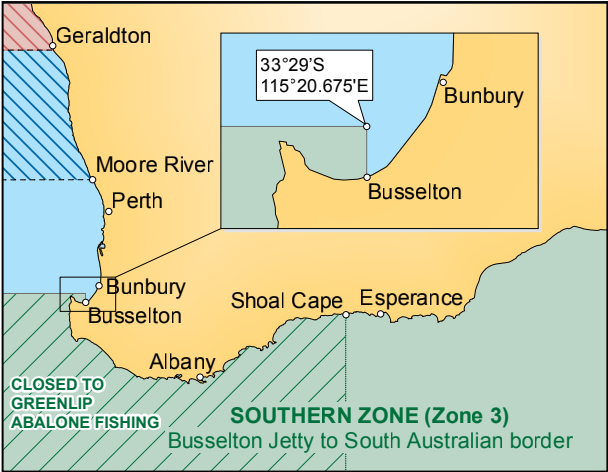
## Greenough River mouth to Busselton Jetty



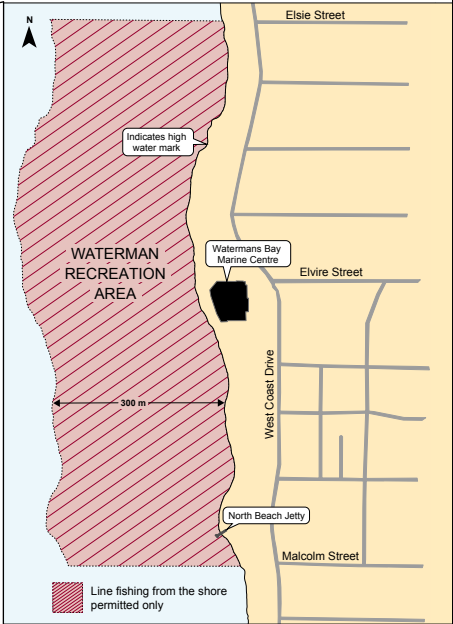


# Southern Zone (Zone 3)

## Busselton Jetty to Shoal Cape



Watermans Reef Observation Area No fishing for abalone, sea urchin or any other shellfish.



## Bag limit (maximum)

### Roe's abalone



- 15 per fisher per session in the West Coast Zone (Zone 1)



- 20 per fisher per day in the Southern Zone (Zone 3)

### Greenlip/brownlip abalone (combined)



- 5 per fisher per day
- Where take of greenlip abalone is prohibited a bag limit of 5 brownlip applies

## Possession of abalone

If they are not a licence holder, a person cannot be in possession of abalone on the seaward side of the high-water mark (the beach).

If a boat goes out to take abalone during season, abalone must be landed by 8:00 pm, otherwise they will be committing an offence.

Fishing for greenlip abalone from Busselton Jetty to Shoal Cape is prohibited.

## Possession limit

This means the maximum number of abalone you may have in your possession, even if you did not take them all from the sea on the same day. A possession limit of 20 Roe's and 10 greenlip/brownlip abalone (combined) applies everywhere except in your permanent place of residence.

The maximum number of abalone a person may have at their permanent place of residence is 80 Roe's abalone and 20 greenlip/brownlip abalone (combined).

## Boat limit

- No boat limit applies to Roe's abalone.
- A maximum of 5 greenlip/brownlip abalone (combined) per fisher per day (or 10 where there are 2 or more licensed fishers on board) may be carried on a boat, except in prohibited areas.

## Minimum size

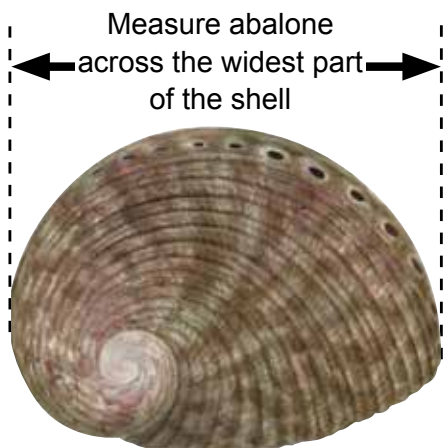
### Roe's abalone

- Legal minimum size limit – 60 mm

### Greenlip/brownlip abalone

- Legal minimum size limit – 140 mm

It is illegal to take an abalone smaller than the minimum size limit.



## Measuring

Measure each abalone across the widest part of the shell using an abalone gauge, available from tackle shops. Measuring with anything else, such as a mark on a screwdriver, can lead to mistakes.

Once an abalone is in your catch bag, it is considered your catch. Do not wait to measure and count your catch until after you get to shore. You are legally required to measure each abalone as you collect it. All undersize abalone must be immediately and carefully replaced on the reef before you take your next abalone.

### **Taking abalone from the reef**

To increase their survival rate, ensure you measure each abalone before you take it off the reef to make sure it is legal size. Then to remove it, insert a flat blade under the edge of the abalone and lift with a quick, strong flick. Carefully count your catch; the bag limit (see page 8) is strictly enforced to protect breeding stocks, so stop fishing once you reach your limit. Taking more abalone and discarding them later puts pressure on the abalone population because discarded animals will probably die.

### **Shucking**

Take your catch home to clean it. Removing abalone from their shells (shucking) is not permitted within 200 metres of the high-water mark.

Abalone cannot be shucked at sea and must be left in their shells so their size can be checked by DPIRD staff.

### **Bait ban**

The use of abalone meat or any abalone material as fishing bait is prohibited and significant fines apply.

## Penalties for illegal fishing

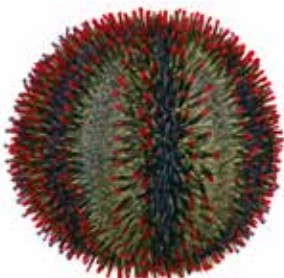
Fishing rules are essential to ensure fishing remains at a sustainable level. All fishing may be subject to surveillance by Fisheries and Marine Officers. Fishing out of season, taking undersize or prohibited abalone, fishing in closed waters or having more than your session limit can attract penalties as high as \$10,000 plus up to 10 times the dollar value of the species.

It is illegal for recreational fishers to sell their catch. Fines as high as \$400,000 plus up to 10 times the prescribed value of the catch – or imprisonment – may apply.

As per *Fish Resources Management Regulations 1995*, fishers must stay out of the water if they have any abalone fishing gear until the season starts, and after the season finishes.

## Sea urchin limits

The bag limit for sea urchin is 20 per fisher per day. There are no possession or size limits.



Sea urchin

# Marine conservation areas

## **Marmion and Shoalwater Islands Marine Parks**

You may take abalone during the open season, except in sanctuary zones and the Murray Reef special purpose (scientific reference) zone in Warnbro Sound. You may not take sea urchin or other shellfish. Open season fishing hours are 7:00 am – 8:00 am (see page 4 for season dates). Bag and size limits apply.

## **Watermans Reef Observation Area – No fishing**

This area surrounds the old WA Marine Research Laboratories at Watermans. It runs from the northern side of Elsie Steet to the southern side of Malcolm Street and extends 300 metres seawards of the high-water mark. All reef life is protected in this area at all times. You may not take any species including abalone, any other shellfish, sea urchin, crab, rock lobster and octopus.

## **Rottnest Island**

You may not take sea urchin or any shellfish. However, you may take abalone during the open season, except in sanctuary zones (see page 4 for season dates). Bag and size limits apply.

## **Cottesloe area**

Due to low abalone numbers in the Cottesloe area, a closure to recreational abalone fishing was introduced in 2003. This closure runs south of the main Cottesloe groyne to Rous Head where you may not take abalone, sea urchin or any other shellfish.

## **Ngari Capes Marine Park**

This marine park, between Busselton and Augusta, came into effect on 10 April 2019. You may not take abalone in the sanctuary zones.

# Safety tips when fishing for abalone

- Carry your catch in a loose-weave net bag; this will allow water to pass through and not become a dragging weight.
- Attach your measuring gauge to your wrist; don't hang it around your neck.
- Study the waves before you get into the water and keep an eye on the swell while fishing – it is easy to be injured on reefs.
- Wear protective footwear and a wetsuit or light clothing that will not become too heavy when wet.
- If you are unsure whether conditions are too rough, don't go in.
- If you do get into trouble, try to stay calm and raise one arm (an international distress signal) to attract help.

## Catch care

Keep your catch in good condition by:

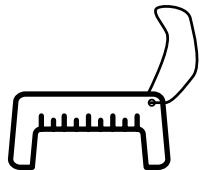
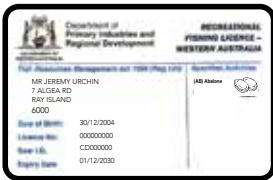
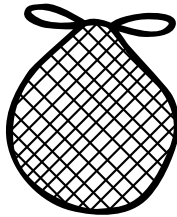
- placing abalone in a loose-weave net bag, which allows water to flow through it.
- storing abalone in a cool, shady place if you are staying longer at the beach.



## Biosecurity

To help keep WA's waters pest and disease free, please thoroughly clean and dry all gear before moving to another area to fish.

You can also help to protect our valuable aquatic environment by reporting any aquatic pests or diseases (including fish kills) to FishWatch on 1800 815 507.





# The catch that's been waiting all year...

The abalone season is short, gear up and plan ahead to make it count.



For location, fishing and safety tips visit [mybeach.com.au/abalone](http://mybeach.com.au/abalone)

## Recfishwest

Love your fishing? So do we!

As the peak body for recreational fishing, our purpose is to ensure great fishing experiences for all in the WA community forever. Visit our website to find out about some great fishing initiatives.



recfishwest



[recfishwest.org.au](http://recfishwest.org.au)

Report shark sightings to Water Police on **9442 8600**  
Download the SharkSmart WA app

SWITCH ON YOUR SEA SENSE

[SHARKSMART.COM.AU](http://SHARKSMART.COM.AU)

# Hook up to the rec fishing rules

It's easy to keep up to date with Western Australia's recreational fishing rules. Whether it's for bag and size limits, seasonal closures or licences, all the rules are at your fingertips.



Go to **fish.wa.gov.au/rules** for rules covering more than 180 fish species. Use the interactive maps to discover information about marine protected areas and common species by region.



The free Recfishwest app provides access to the rules even if you're out of phone range and has an easy fish identification feature.



Grab a copy or download from **fish.wa.gov.au/guide**



## Important disclaimer

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This publication is to provide assistance or information. It is only a guide and does not replace the *Fish Resources Management Act 1994* or the *Fish Resources Management Regulations 1995*. It cannot be used as a defence in a court of law. The information provided is current at the date of printing but may be subject to change. For the most up-to-date information on fishing and full details of legislation contact your local DPIRD office or visit **[dpird.wa.gov.au](http://dpird.wa.gov.au)**

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**[fish.wa.gov.au/abalone](http://fish.wa.gov.au/abalone)**

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