



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

Kalbarri Blue Holes

*Fish Habitat
Protection Area
(FHFA)*



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YOUR LICENCE FEES AT WORK

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Cover

Kalbarri Blue Holes at low tide.
Photo: Andrew Cribb

Kalbarri Blue Holes FHPA

The Blues Holes form part of an inshore coastal limestone reef system to the west of the town of Kalbarri. The reef features sections that are permanently submerged by the ocean (sub-tidal) and that are exposed at low tide (intertidal). Both types of reef incorporate irregular shaped depressions with sandy bottoms – giving the ‘Blue Holes’ stretch of coast its name. The reef is home to a rich abundance of aquatic animals and fish and is a popular attraction for local people and visitors to the area alike. As one of the few accessible and relatively safe beaches close to the town of Kalbarri, it provides a base for a range of recreational activities including swimming, scuba diving and snorkelling.

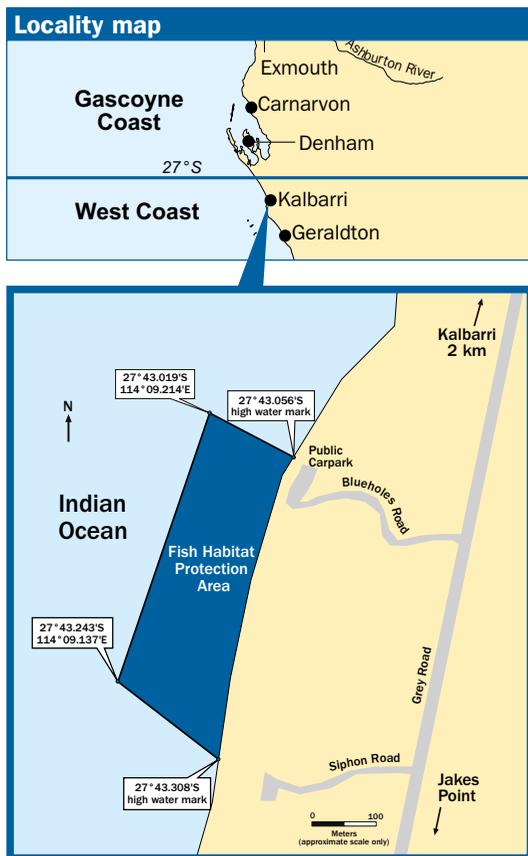
What is an FHPA?

A Fish Habitat Protection Area (FHPA) is a location declared by the Minister for Fisheries as having special ecological and community significance and thus deserving special management to ensure its long-term sustainability.

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

Where is the Kalbarri Blue Holes FHPA?

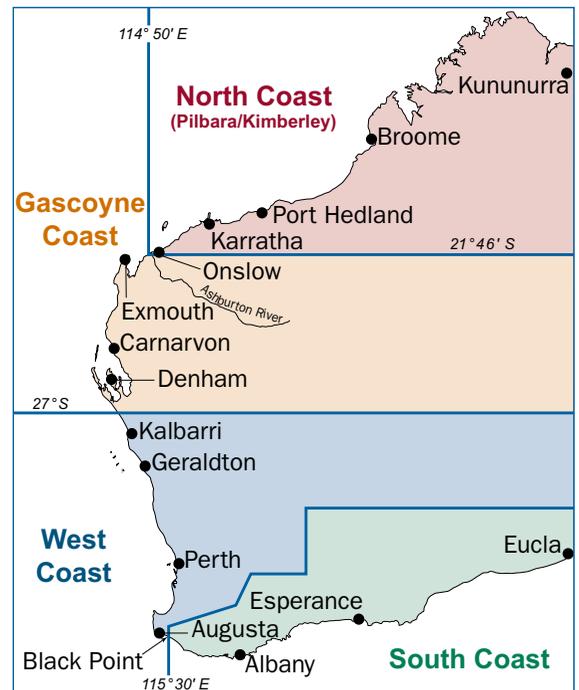
The Kalbarri Blue Holes is located immediately to the west of the town of Kalbarri (see aerial map). Kalbarri, or 'Wutulalu', as it known to local indigenous people, is in the Mid West region of Western Australia, approximately 590 kilometres north of Perth. Kalbarri is bordered to the north by the Murchison River, and surrounded in the east and south by the Kalbarri National Park.



The Kalbarri Blue Holes FHPA includes part of a near-shore limestone reef system. The northern boundary of the FHPA is located immediately west of the northern end of the Blue Holes car park and extends south from this point for a distance of around 420 metres. The width of the FHPA varies from around 130 metres wide at the southern end, to approximately 140 metres wide at the northern end.

West Coast Bioregion

Marine fishing in Western Australia is managed in four biological regions each with different recreational fishing regulations, known as the North Coast, Gascoyne Coast, West Coast and South Coast bioregions.



About Kalbarri Blue Holes

The West Coast bioregion stretches from north of Kalbarri, 27°S, down to Black Point, south of Augusta, 115°30', and features a limestone coast with cool temperate waters. These waters are influenced by the Leeuwin Current, which carries warm tropical water down the continental coast along with a number of tropical species. However, fish stocks of the region are generally temperate, typical of those found in temperate water that ranges from 18°C to about 24°C. The weaker northward flowing Capes Current flows from Cape Leeuwin to Shark Bay during the summer, bringing cooler water.

The West Coast is the most heavily used area for recreational fishing in Western Australia, attracting more than 70 per cent of the State's recreational fishing effort each year due to its proximity to major urban population centres.



Photo: Andrew Chubb

History

In 2001, the Friends of Blue Holes (FOBH), a community-based conservation group, first nominated Kalbarri Blue Holes as an FHPA under the *Fish Resources Management Act 1994*.

The Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS) carried out a marine survey of the area, which identified the number and range of species in the area and mapped out the habitat. More than 200 species were identified, including seagrasses, algae, fish, reef-dwelling organisms and corals. AMCS described it as a “complex and diverse reef community”.

A draft plan of management was prepared by the Department of Fisheries with the assistance of the FOBH. After public submissions were called for and considered, the FHPA was formally declared in December 2007.

Community importance

The Blue Holes is one of the few safe beaches where swimming is possible outside the Murchison River. It is an accessible beach, with an outstandingly attractive marine environment. When the swell is low, it is a popular swimming and snorkelling spot for both children and adults.

Now protected by the FHPA, the Blue Holes provide an excellent ‘live’ educational resource for school groups, marine researchers and the general public.

The area is now safely and effectively framed to allow visitors to observe a relatively undisturbed near-shore reef ecosystem on Kalbarri's doorstep.

To Aboriginal people, access to the reef system – near to the river mouth – is likely to have made it a significant site for hunting fish and gathering seafood. The river mouth beside Kalbarri, is called 'Wudumalu' or 'Wutumalu' by the local Nhanda language group.

Similarly, Kalbarri's nearby towering landmark, Red Bluff, is referred to as 'Gabagaba' and Witecarra as 'Withikara'. The Department of Fisheries acknowledges the contribution of the Yamatji Language Centre, Geraldton, and the Yamataji Land Sea Council in providing this information.



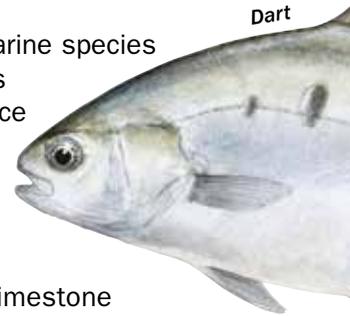
Photo: Andrew Cribb

Species to look for

There is a wealth of marine species to observe at the Blues Holes with an abundance of finfish, shellfish, crustaceans, corals, seagrasses and sponges living there.

The reef's sea grass, limestone basins, reef platform and coral gardens are home to more than 70 species of finfish – many of them tropical. Some of the fish to look out for are dart, moon wrasse, raccoon butterfly fish, humbugs and western rock lobster.

Snorkellers can enjoy the underwater spectacle of up to 10 types of sponge, 11 species of coral, crustaceans such as banded hair shrimps and beds of oysters in and around the coral colonies.



Dart



Photo: Henrique Kwong

The colourful moon wrasse in all its glory.

Protecting Kalbarri Blue Holes

The Kalbarri Blues Holes FHPA has a fragile ecosystem, and some simple rules can help to protect it for future generations.

All fishing is prohibited

- All marine life is protected and no fishing activities are permitted.

Recreational boating and the use of jet skis

- The FHPA is designed to protect fish and ensure the reef's inhabitants can be observed safely and freely with minimum disturbance. The use of all motorised vessels (boats and jet skis) is prohibited within the FHPA's waters.

Snorkelling and scuba diving

The Kalbarri Blue Holes FHPA is a popular snorkelling and scuba diving site, particularly during summer in low swell conditions.

- Snorkelling and scuba diving are ideal ways to observe and appreciate the FHPA's marine habitat. Both activities, pursued safely and responsibly, are fully encouraged within the FHPA.

Rubbish

- Please take all of your rubbish away with you and dispose of it appropriately.
- Take special care not to discard plastic bags – these can kill marine animals, such as turtles, dolphins and seabirds.

Aquatic nature-based tourism

Aquatic nature-based tourism (aquatic eco-tourism) can help promote awareness of environmental values. It is important that these tours, and operators running them, are managed to ensure the protection of the FHPA and its values.

- In order to run tours of this nature in the FHPA, tour operators must apply to the Department of Fisheries for the relevant licence.
- Licences may be granted to those operators who can demonstrate their tours will be conducted in an environmentally responsible way.
- Guidelines outlining licence application are available from the Department of Fisheries.

Photo: Andrew Orlibo



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, considering the effects of fishing and other human activities on ecosystems. This is informed by a scientific research and monitoring program that builds our understanding of the biology, productivity, abundance and vulnerability of 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**

Further information

More details about Kalbarri Blue Holes FHPA is available in *Fisheries Management Paper No. 188: Plan of Management for the Kalbarri Blues Holes Fish Habitat Protection Area*, available on the Department of Fisheries' website at **www.fish.wa.gov.au**

For the most up-to-date information on fishing rules, see the current West Coast Recreational Fishing Guide, available at **www.fish.wa.gov.au** or contact your nearest Department of Fisheries office.

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Fish for the future