

Abalone

Recreational fishing guide 2017/18



A licence is required to fish for abalone

Please note:

NEW The West Coast Zone open season will now start in December and fishing will now be on Saturdays, with four fishing days only (7.00 am to 8.00 am):

- Saturday 9 December 2017
 - Saturday 13 January 2018
 - Saturday 3 February 2018
 - Saturday 17 February 2018
- West Coast Zone daily bag limit for Roe's abalone is 15.
 - No fishing is permitted north of Moore River until further notice.
 - Fishing for sea urchin is permitted only during the abalone open season.

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Fish for the future

Abalone are highly prized for their eating qualities and Western Australia has one of the few remaining sustainable abalone fisheries in the world.

Abalone fishing is a popular recreational activity, with about 18,000 recreational licences issued each year. Due to poor recruitment of juvenile Roe's abalone following the marine heatwave in February and March 2011, the recreational catch allocation for the 2017/18 season is set at 20 tonnes. During the marine heatwave, sea surface temperatures rose to unprecedented levels – in some areas, more than 5°C above average. This unusually warm water led to a number of abalone and fish kills.

The recreational catch is managed through size and bag limits, as well as closed areas and seasons.

The length of the open recreational fishing season for abalone may be adjusted each year to ensure the total metropolitan catch is consistent with this allocation and managed in a sustainable manner.

The commercial fishery, valued at about \$8 million per year, is managed through quotas that are set each year to ensure the fishery's long-term sustainability. As part of the integrated management approach to this fishery, the commercial fishery's quota has been reduced in response to lower stock abundance resulting from the marine heatwave.

No fishing north of Moore River

Until further notice, no abalone or sea urchin fishing is permitted north of Moore River. The closed zone 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.

This is to allow abalone stocks to recover following high mortality during the 2011 marine heatwave off the coast.

Lifecycle

Roe's abalone inhabit reef platforms across the southern half of the State, north to about Steep Point. They take about four years to reach legal size, giving females at least one to two spawning seasons before they can be taken by fishers.

Greenlip and brownlip abalone mainly live off the State's southern coastline, preferring limestone or granite seabeds in waters deeper than five metres. Greenlip abalone reach legal size at five to seven years and brownlip abalone are thought to reach legal size at six to eight years, which is at least two years after reaching maturity.

Female abalone can produce millions of eggs each year. After about a week, depending on water temperature, the tiny larvae develop into small juveniles (called 'spat') and settle on rocks, where they feed on microscopic algae. When the juveniles reach about five millimetres in length they start feeding on larger species of algae, particularly drifting red algae.

Ongoing research and management is required to ensure they are harvested at a sustainable level and breeding stocks are protected.



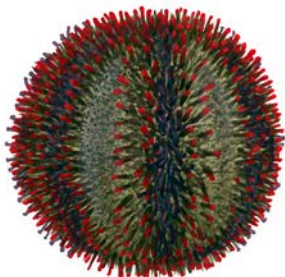
Roe's abalone



Brownlip abalone



Greenlip abalone



Sea urchin

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 www.fish.wa.gov.au Alternatively, application forms are available from Fisheries 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.

Beach access

When accessing beaches to fish for abalone or sea urchin, fishers should use designated paths and avoid damaging coastal vegetation. Careless treatment of these sensitive areas can lead to erosion.

Seasons and locations

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

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 2017 – February 2018 (inclusive) 7:00 am – 8:00 am.

- Saturday 9 December 2017
- Saturday 13 January 2018
- Saturday 3 February 2018
- Saturday 17 February 2018

The changes aim to improve fisher safety and experience by fishing during the best weather conditions, and to improve sustainability outcomes for the fishery.

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 the Department will take action on the advice of local councils, SLSWA and Recfishwest 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 until further notice.

Open area: Moore River to Busselton Jetty.

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

Northern Zone (Zone 2)

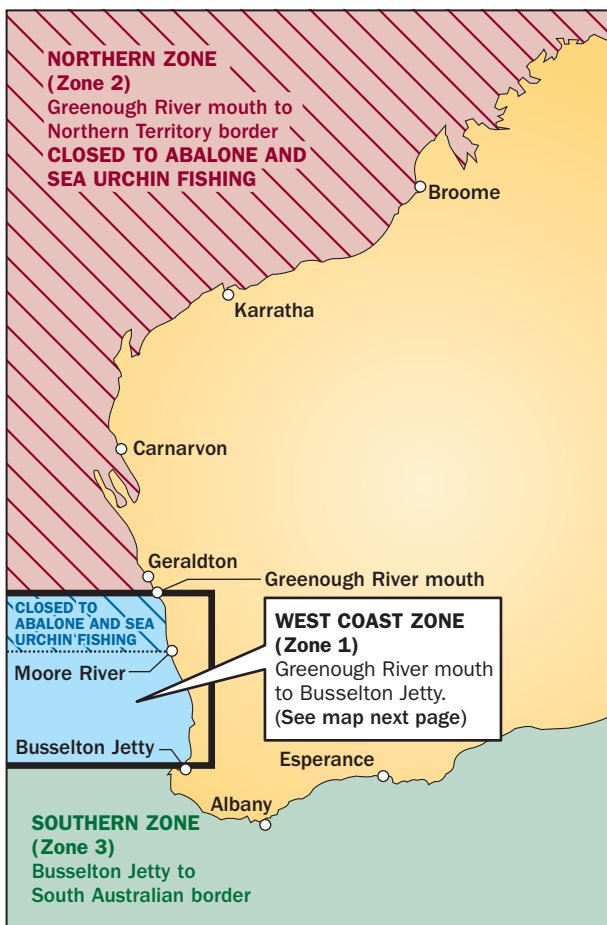
The area north of Moore River (which includes the entire Northern Zone) is closed until further notice.

Southern Zone (Zone 3)

The Southern Zone extends from the Busselton Jetty to the South Australian border.

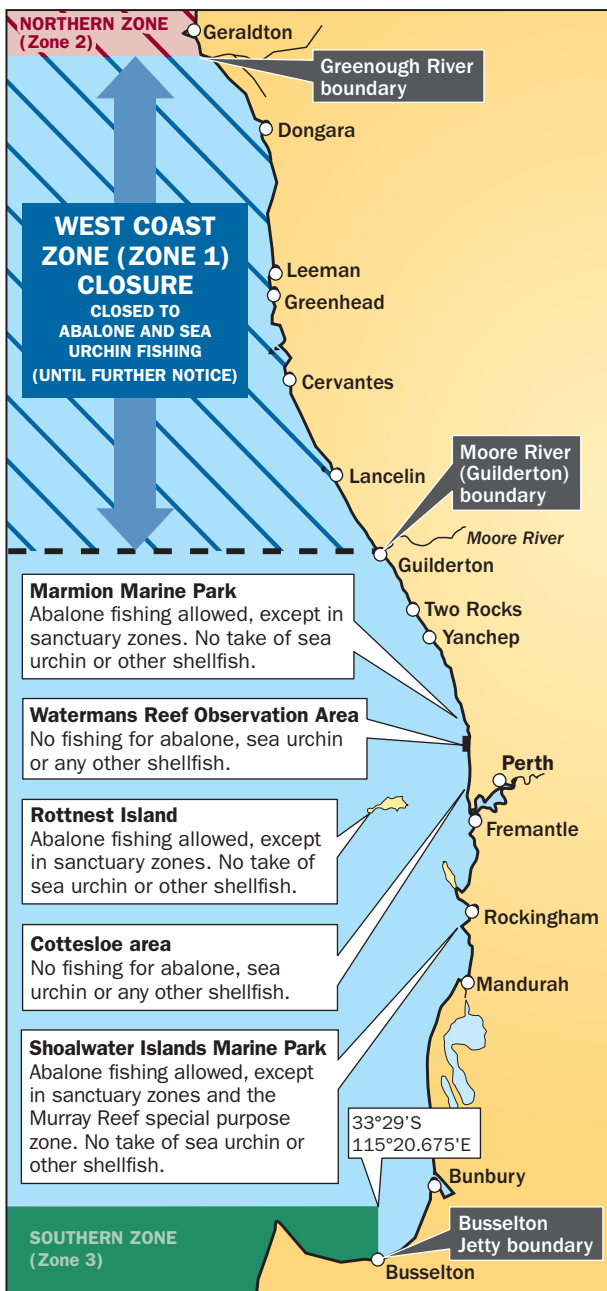
Open season: Between 1 October and 15 May the following year.

Recreational abalone and sea urchin zones in Western Australia



West Coast Zone (Zone 1)

Greenough River mouth to Busselton Jetty



Bag limit (maximum)



Roe's abalone

- 15 per fisher per day 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

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.

Minimum size

Roe's abalone

- Legal minimum size limit – 60 mm

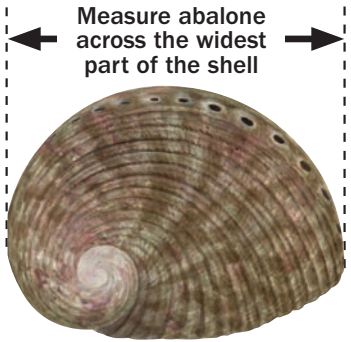
Greenlip/brownlip abalone

- Legal minimum size limit – 140 mm

It is not legal to take an abalone smaller than the minimum size limit. Undersize abalone left undisturbed on the reef can grow larger for next year's season.

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.



You are legally required to measure each abalone as you collect it and, if it is undersize, immediately and carefully replace it on the reef before you take your next abalone.

To increase their survival rate, measure each abalone before you take it off the reef, if possible.

Sea urchin limits

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

Taking abalone from the reef

To remove abalone, 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 so that abalone remains don't spoil the beach for others or attract stingrays and other marine foragers.

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

Bait ban

The use of abalone meat or any abalone material as fishing bait is prohibited and significant fines apply. This is a biosecurity measure to reduce the risk of introducing abalone diseases and pathogens such as abalone viral ganglioneuritis into WA waters.

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 abalone or having more than your possession 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.

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 5 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. Open season fishing hours are **7.00 am – 8.00 am** (see page 5 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 and will be in place until abalone stocks have recovered. You may not take abalone, sea urchin or any other shellfish.

Ngari Capes Marine Park

This marine park, between Busselton and Augusta, has been created, but the zoning scheme and fishing restrictions have not been legislated. When this occurs, the take of abalone in sanctuary zones will be prohibited.

Yallingup Reef Protected Area

Recreational fishing for abalone and sea urchin is not permitted in this area.

Safety tips and catch care

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 string bag, which allows water to flow through it; and
- 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.

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.

1. Web

Go to www.fish.wa.gov.au for rules covering more than 180 fish species.

2. App

The free Recfishwest app provides access to the rules even if you're out of phone range.



Recfishwest

Love your fishing? So do we!

As the peak body for rec fishing, our purpose is to ensure great fishing experiences for all in the WA community forever.

See what we do to make your fishing better.



www.recfishwest.org.au



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HELP KEEP EVERYONE SAFE

Report shark sightings
to Water Police on

9442 8600



SHARKSMART.COM.AU

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