A current licence is required to fish for any species of rock lobster

Please note:

• Fishing is permitted year-round.
• A night fishing ban also applies to the south coast.
• Pot rope requirements apply when fishing with a combined pot line and float rig length longer than 20 metres.
• A maximum of 2 floats may be attached to your pot.
• Female setose lobsters may be taken.
• Rock lobster tails (shell on) may be kept at your principal place of residence.
Fish for the future

Western Australia’s fisheries management strategies have one primary goal - ensuring we have fish for the future. This can only be achieved by making sure our fisheries are ecologically sustainable.

An integrated approach to management takes into account the impact of fishing by recreational and commercial sectors, plus the effect of other human activities on the State’s ecosystems.

Scientific research and monitoring underpins the management of the State’s fisheries and marine resources. We are developing a growing understanding of the biology of fish populations and their natural variations in number from year to year, as well as their vulnerability to fishing and the impact of other human activities.

The annual *Status Reports of the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources of Western Australia* provides detailed information on the state of WA’s fisheries and is available at [fish.wa.gov.au](http://fish.wa.gov.au)

Fisheries management plans and regulations are adjusted in response to increased knowledge and changes in the impact of human activities. The implementation of the rules is designed to facilitate a safe and enjoyable fishing experience.

Recreational fishing rules

Licences
You must have a licence to fish for any species of rock lobster and produce it when requested to by a Fisheries Officer. Apply for a new licence or renew an existing licence online at the Fisheries website. Alternatively, application forms are available from our offices and the website at fish.wa.gov.au

You are not permitted to sell or use recreationally caught rock lobster for any gain or reward (including barter or exchange for other goods or services).

Fishing season and times

Statewide:
All species of lobster may be taken all year.

Night fishing ban:
A seasonal night fishing ban applies southwards of the North West Cape. A person must not pull pots or fish for rock lobster by diving during the below dates and times:

- 15 October – 31 March, 7.30pm – 4.30am
- 1 April – 14 October, 6.00pm – 6.00am
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Minimum legal carapace length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Southern rock lobster</strong> ((Jasus edwardsii)) Identifiable by a single spine between and just forward of their eyes</td>
<td>98.5mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Western rock lobster</strong> ((Panulirus cygnus)) Identifiable by a single white dot on the outside (lateral) edge of each tail segment</td>
<td>76mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tropical rock lobsters:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ornate ((Panulirus ornatus))</td>
<td>76mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painted (green) ((Panulirus versicolor))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is no longer a maximum legal size limit for taking female western rock lobsters.
See how to measure lobsters below.

Western and tropical rock lobster
Place the end of a gauge over the ridge between the two spikes at the front of the rock lobster’s head (A) and the other end of the gauge over the back of the carapace (B).

Southern rock lobster
Place the end of a gauge over the groove at the base of the antennae at the front of the lobster’s head (C) and the other end of the gauge over the back of the carapace (D).

Statewide catch limits

**Bag limit (maximum Statewide)**

8 rock lobsters per licensed fisher, per day, of which no more than 4 may be tropical rock lobsters (see page 3 for tropical species).

After pulling a lobster pot, you must immediately and carefully release all rock lobster in excess of the bag limit.

Divers cannot return to their vessel or come ashore with more than their bag limit.
Possession limits
This means the maximum number of rock lobsters you may have in your possession, even if they were not all taken from the sea on the same day. A possession limit of 24 rock lobsters per person applies, including at your principal place of residence.

You must only be in possession of whole rock lobsters unless the lobster is being prepared for immediate consumption. However, you may now possess rock lobster tails (shell on), at your principal place of residence.

Rock lobsters MUST be transported whole. For this reason, it is illegal to take stored tails away from your principal place of residence, which is the only place where you may possess them.

Your principal place of residence does not include a tent, vehicle, boat or caravan (unless you live permanently in the caravan).

Boat limit
This means the maximum number of rock lobsters you may carry on a boat at any one time. If there is only 1 licensed fisher on board, the maximum is 1 day’s bag limit (8), including no more than 4 tropical rock lobsters. If there are 2 licensed fishers on board, it is 2 days’ bag limit (16), including no more than 8 tropical rock lobsters. If 3 or more licensed fishers are on board, it is 3 days’ bag limit (24), including no more than 12 tropical rock lobsters.

Fishing for lobsters
Diving
Divers may only catch rock lobster by hand, a hand-held snare or a blunt crook. Spears, nets and other similar items that can damage rock lobster are illegal.
Divers should measure and count rock lobsters in the water. Check each rock lobster as you catch it to determine if it is totally protected (see page 12). If totally protected, release it carefully and immediately, before another rock lobster is captured.

Fisheries Officers in normal circumstances allow five minutes from when a diver returns to the vessel for divers to sort, recheck for any totally protected lobster and tail clip their catch (see page 14), before undertaking their inspection.

**Illegal baits**
You may not fish for rock lobster using any bovine material (other than gelatine or tallow), skin or hide, anything to which mammal skin or hide is attached, abalone material or lobster material.

**Pot limits**
No more than 2 rock lobster pots per licence holder. A maximum of 6 pots may be pulled when there are 3 or more licensed fishers on board per boat trip.

No more than 6 pots may be pulled per boat trip. No more than 6 pots may be carried on a boat at any time.

Pots must be set and pulled by the licence holder. *Pulling and setting someone else’s pot is illegal. Even if you have permission from a friend or family member to pull their pot, it is still illegal.*

Removing someone else’s float from a pot and replacing it with your own is also illegal.
Sharing pots
2 licensed fishers are now permitted to share rock lobster pots. Each licensed fisher must have their own separate float with their issued personal gear identification (ID) marked on the float. No more than 2 floats, each with only one gear ID number, must be attached.

Each licensed fisher may use no more than 2 pots to fish for lobster, even when sharing pots, and may not have their gear ID number on more than 2 pots, including when sharing pots.

Fishers are not permitted to bring home lobsters on behalf of the person who shares their pot and may only take and land their own bag limit.

Pot specifications
Various types of pots – batten, beehive (cane) and other pots (such as moulded plastic pots) – can be used. Before using pots, check that they conform to standards set out in the *Fish Resources Management Regulations 1995*. These standards are outlined below.

A pot must not exceed 1,000mm in diameter or width at its widest point and 500mm in height.

Entrance and escape gaps
Pots must have only 1 entrance. The neck must be rigid and at least 160mm wide.

Pots must not have any internal partitions or chambers. Escape gaps and the neck must not be obstructed.

North of North West Cape, pots do not require escape gaps. Between North West Cape and Cape Leeuwin, pots must have at least 3 escape gaps. In the waters south and east of Cape Leeuwin, pots must have at least 1 escape gap.
**Escape gaps** must be as far away as practical from the hauling rope attachment points and no more than 110mm above the base of the pot. They must not be obstructed by ballast, rope or anything else. Gaps must not be between the hauling rope attachment points on any type of pot.

Each escape gap must be a minimum of 54mm high and 305mm wide and made of rigid material that can’t reduce the internal measurements of the escape gap.

To help prevent pot theft and illegal pot pulling, and to help us identify lost or stolen pots, we encourage fishers to engrave their gear identification number into their own pots – if possible, on the frame and on the end where the hauling ropes are attached (for example, see the batten pot below).
Float requirements
Surface floats must be fitted to every pot rope. They must be at least 15cm in diameter and stamped or branded with the licence holder’s gear ID number, with lettering 6cm high and at least 1cm wide.
You may only have 2 floats attached to your pot at any time, regardless of the length of rope you are fishing with or if you are pot sharing.

Rope requirements
When more than 20m of rope length (combined pot line and float rig) is attached to a pot, fishers must ensure that the top half of the pot line rope is hung vertically in the water column (see diagram on page 10).
This applies to recreational fishers all year round.
‘Pot line’ means the length of rope between the first surface float and the bridle. ‘Float rig’ means the rope on the surface of the water connected to the first surface float and the last surface float, including any rope that extends beyond the last surface float (see diagram on page 10).
Reducing the amount of rope on the surface of the water will minimise the risk of gear entanglements with migrating humpback whales during the winter months and will reduce the loss of fishing gear from entanglement with other fishing boats.
Recreational fishing rules

Combined pot line and float rig when rope length is more than 20 metres.

Max number of 2 floats

Float rig

Top ½ pot line to be held vertically in water column.

Pot line

Rope can be modified to hold it vertically in the water column. eg: by use of sinker, chain spliced in the rope or negatively buoyant rope.

Rock lobster pot

Combined pot line and float rig when rope length is more than 20 metres.

Suggested methods for hanging pot rope vertically in the water column:

- Attach a weight to the rope, half way down the pot line.
- Replace the top half of the pot line rope with negatively buoyant rope.

Ways to safely and efficiently weight the rope:

- Attach a ‘shark clip’ to a snapper sinker and attach to the pot line rope.
• Attach (splice) a small piece of rope with sinkers attached, into the main pot line rope (see below).

Shark clips.

Snapper sinker.

Splice attached to main pot line.

It is recommended that fishers use at least a 16 ounce (~450 gram) weight to ensure the rope remains vertical in the water column.

Rope coiling

Coiling and tying up excess rope on the surface of the water is called ‘dog boning’ and is permitted although not encouraged due to the risk of rope coming undone or lengthening if not secured correctly.

Fishers must ensure the dog bone or coiled rope is held securely – any dog bone or rope coil that comes undone may result in the combined pot and float line rope exceeding 20m in length.

It is the fisher’s responsibility to ensure the dog bone or rope coil cannot come undone. Additional securing of the rope coil with cable ties is recommended when using this method.
For additional information on how to hang a rope vertically in the water column, visit recfishwest.org.au

**Sea lion exclusion devices (SLEDs)**

Fishers who use lobster pots between South Rocks (south of Wedge Island) and Freshwater Point, south of Dongara, are required to fit SLEDs to their pots to prevent sea lions being caught.

SLEDs are also mandatory in two areas of the Abrolhos Islands – the Pelsaert and Easter groups of islands.

For details, refer to the separate Sea Lion Exclusion Device brochure available from our offices or the website at fish.wa.gov.au

![This internal SLED juts vertically from the pot's base so the sea lion can't get in.](image)

**Plastic bait bands**

Possessing plastic bait bands at sea is prohibited on all commercial and recreational fishing boats in WA. The bands pose a risk to marine life through entanglement.

**Totally protected lobsters**

Lobsters are totally protected at some stages in their lifecycle.

When lobsters are protected, you may not take them, have them in your possession, buy, sell, or bring them into the State or into WA waters.
You are legally required to immediately return them to the water from which they were taken, before the next pot is pulled and before you catch another lobster when diving.

**Berried females:**
Any species of lobster that is carrying eggs (berried) is protected.

**Tarspot females:**
Western rock lobsters in this condition are protected between Windy Harbour and North West Cape. Females shed their shells and begin their breeding cycle in late winter and spring.

Females ready to spawn have a ‘tarspot’ under the carapace between the back legs. This black spot is a packet of sperm attached during mating. During spawning, the female releases sperm from the tarspot to fertilise the eggs.

**Identifying berried and tarspot lobsters**

*Setose tarspot female lobster. Most setose females also have tarspots (sperm packets) attached.*
Lobsters you keep

Keep your lobsters whole
Rock lobsters must be kept and stored whole (with head and tail) unless they are being prepared for immediate consumption.

However, you may now store lobster tails (shell on) at your principal place of residence (see page 5).

Tail clipping
If a lobster is kept, you must clip the central flap on its tail fan, removing at least the bottom half of it, or punch a circular hole of no less than 10mm in diameter in the central segment of the tail fan within 5 minutes of the lobster being brought to the boat or land where a boat is not used.

This is done to identify it as a recreationally caught lobster, which can’t be sold.

In normal circumstances a Fisheries Officer will allow 5 minutes from the time a diver returns to the vessel or from when a pot is pulled before undertaking an inspection.

At the end of your fishing activity you:
• must not have any Totally Protected Fish (for example undersize and/or tarspot etc)
• must not have more than the bag limit or boat limit
• must have tail clipped all retained lobsters.
Marine conservation areas

Rock lobster fishing is restricted in the marine conservation areas shown on the following maps. For more information, see pages 17-18. For full information, please contact the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) or the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.

West Coast

Legend
- Fish Habitat Protection Areas (FHPA)
- Reef Observation Areas (ROA)
- Marine Parks

[Map showing marine conservation areas along the West Coast of Western Australia, including locations such as Kalbarri, Jurien Bay, Lancelin Island, Marmion Marine Park, Cottesloe Reef FHPA, Rottnest Island Reserve, Swan Estuary Marine Park, Shoalwater Islands Marine Park, Ngari Capes Marine Park, and Hamelin Bay Ray FHPA.]
Marine conservation areas

Marine parks and marine management areas

All marine parks have ‘no take’ sanctuary zones that are closed to all fishing. Some may have special fishing rules that apply only in that area. Please refer to the ‘Management of marine protected areas’ page on the Fisheries website at fish.wa.gov.au

If in doubt, check with local DPIRD or Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions offices.

Fish Habitat Protection Areas (FHPAs)

**Abrolhos Islands FHPA**  
Rock lobster season open all year.

**Kalbarri Blue Holes FHPA**  
All fishing is prohibited within the protected area.

**Lancelin Island Lagoon FHPA**  
All fishing is prohibited within the protected area.

**Point Quobba FHPA**  
All fishing is prohibited in the Point Quobba restricted area. For details see the Point Quobba FHPA brochure, available from DPIRD offices and the Fisheries website at fish.wa.gov.au

Other rock lobster fishing closures

**Hamelin Pool Marine Nature Reserve**  
All fishing is prohibited.

**Jurien Bay Research Area**  
Lobster fishing is prohibited in the waters between Boullanger Island to Osprey and Whitlock islets.
Point Samson
All reef life is protected. You may use a line or spear for finfish only (except sharks and rays, which are protected).

Rottnest Island
Fishing is prohibited in the five conservation areas – Parker Point, Thomson Bay, Armstrong Bay, Green Island and West End.

Seven Mile Beach – Dongara
Lobster fishing is prohibited within the research area.

Watermans Reef Observation Area
All reef animals are protected. Line fishing is permitted.

Dive wrecks
All fishing is prohibited within the stated areas at the following wreck sites:

- **HMAS Perth**: within 250 metres.
- **HMAS Swan**: within 200 metres.
- **Kunmunya and Samson II**: within 500 metres.
- **Lena**: within 400 metres.
- **Sanko Harvest**: within 500 metres.
- **Saxon Ranger and South Tomi**: within the defined areas described under ‘Year-round closures’ on the Fisheries website at fish.wa.gov.au
Return a tag

Scientists use yellow ‘spaghetti’ tags to collect data about lobster movements, growth rates, abundance and catch rates.

If you catch a tagged lobster, write down the tag number, lobster size (carapace length), date, location (GPS co-ordinates if possible) and depth at which it was caught.

Also record whether it was carrying eggs or had a tarspot and whether it was kept or released.

If the lobster is legal to take, you may keep it. If it is not legal to take (undersize or berried) return it to the water with the tag still attached.

Report tagged lobsters to Ben Hebiton on (08) 9203 0111 or email lobster.tag@dpird.wa.gov.au. iPhone users can submit the information using our free FISHTAGWA app.
About this guide

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

Please note that **penalties apply** for fishing offences. All fishing may be subject to surveillance by Fisheries Officers.

Taking undersize rock lobster or having more than your possession limit can attract fines as high as $5,000 for an individual plus up to 10 times the prescribed value of the species.

Interfering with another person’s fishing gear or catch, selling recreationally caught fish and other similar offences can result in penalties of up to $400,000, imprisonment for four years and loss of boats, vehicles and equipment. Offenders may also lose the privilege of engaging in a licensed fishing activity.

If you see or hear of illegal fishing activity, call FishWatch on 1800 815 507 or report it to your local DPIRD office.
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 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.

Recfishwest.org.au

HELP KEEP EVERYONE SAFE

Report shark sightings to Water Police on

9442 8600

Sharksmart.com.au
Contact us

(08) 6551 4444
enquiries@dpird.wa.gov.au

Albany Office
(and Southern Regional Office)
444 Albany Highway,
Albany WA 6330
(08) 9845 7400

Broome Office
(and Northern Regional Office)
Port of Pearls House
401 Port Drive,
Broome WA 6725
(08) 9193 8600

Carnarvon Office
262 South River Road,
Carnarvon WA 6701
(08) 9956 3333

Fremantle Office
(and Metropolitan Regional Office)
14 Capo D’Orlando Drive,
South Fremantle WA 6162
(08) 9432 8000

Geraldton Office
(and Midwest/Gascoyne Regional Office)
69–75 Connell Road,
Geraldton WA 6530
(08) 9920 8400

fish.wa.gov.au