



Above Viewing platform at Skipjack Point.

Francois Peron National Park

Francois Peron National Park lies within the Shark Bay World Heritage Area and adjacent to the Shark Bay Marine Park.

The park covers 52,500 hectares of arid shrublands, rolling sandplains and spectacular coastal scenery at the northern tip of Peron Peninsula.

Features of Peron Peninsula contributed to Shark Bay's listing as a World Heritage Area. Not only is the peninsula an example of superlative natural phenomena, it also contains important and significant habitats for the conservation of biodiversity. These World Heritage values make Francois Peron one of Western Australia's unique national parks.

Interspersed throughout the park and across Peron Peninsula are gypsum claypans known as birridas. Thousands of years ago, when sea levels were much higher than at present, most birridas were landlocked saline lakes. In more modern times the sea has invaded some birridas, such as Big Lagoon, to form shallow inland bays.

Above from left The rich red sands of Peron Peninsula show the tracks of native animals.

Umbrella bush (*Acacia ligulata*) is common throughout Shark Bay, especially on Peron Peninsula.

Sandalwood (*Santalum spicatum*) fruit.

The distinctive pink flowers of the Shark Bay daisy (*Pembertonia latisquamea*).

Right Walking track at Skipjack Point.



Below Peron Peninsula has exceptional coastal scenery and contrasting colours of dunes and ocean. It is an important habitat for the conservation of biodiversity, another criteria for gaining acceptance on the World Heritage List.



Aboriginal and European heritage

Aboriginal people have lived on Peron Peninsula, or *Wulyibidi* in the Malgana language, for about 25,000 years. At that time, much of Shark Bay was an arid valley with little fresh water.

The first written descriptions and images of Malgana lives were documented by French explorers early in the 19th century. One of the explorers was French naturalist François Péron who made meticulous descriptions of anthropology, oceanography, meteorology and zoology during Nicholas Baudin's 1801 and 1803 expeditions. The park bears his name in recognition of his contribution to Australia's natural and social history.

Péron's visit marked the beginning of European activities on Peron Peninsula. In the late 1880s a pearling camp was established at Herald Bight, where pearl shells still litter the beach. The peninsula was managed as a sheep station until 1990, when it was bought by the State Government. In 1993 Francois Peron National Park was declared. Today, the Peron Homestead precinct offers visitors an insight into what life was like during the pastoral era.

Below Big Lagoon, once a land-locked saline lake, is now a shallow inland bay.



Above The flowering of colourful parakeelyas (*Calandrinia* sp.) in spring.

Below The red flowering *Eremophila glabra*.

Wildlife

Plants

Shark Bay is an important transition point between the temperate vegetation zone of WA's south-western region, and the desert vegetation zone of the north and east.

As a result, two distinct vegetation types are found in the park. The red sandy plains are dominated by desert-adapted acacias (wattles), while flowering plants from cooler climates, such as hakeas and grevilleas, reach their most northern range on the peninsula. Living at the extreme, these 'pioneer' species have stretched their survival capabilities to withstand the harsh environment.

Peron Peninsula also boasts a dazzling array of wildflowers. One of the most striking and abundant flowers is the Shark Bay daisy, a creeper that displays its large mauve to pink flowers well above surrounding shrubs. Navigator William Dampier, who collected plants from the region in 1699, was impressed by the blue-flowering plants, including wild tomato bush, halganina, and his namesake, the hoary Dampiera. Dampier's specimens of the pink coastal thryptomene, a type of heath, are some of the earliest records of Australian plants. Along with white myrtle, yellow wattles and purple peas, they form a colourful display in spring.



Caring for the park

Stay cool Don't light fires. Free barbecues are available at most day visitor and camping areas and visitors may use their own gas appliances.

Be clean Put your litter in bins or take it with you. Discarded scraps attract feral animals, which threaten native animals.

Pets are not allowed in Francois Peron National Park. They can disturb wildlife and are also at risk of poisoning from fox baits which are laid throughout the park as part of DEC's *Western Shield* wildlife recovery program.

Stay safe



Coastal cliffs are undercut and unstable and should be approached with caution. Be wary of crumbling edges and strong winds. Stay well back from cliff edges at all times.



Shark Bay is in sub-tropical waters and **venomous marine creatures** such as stonefish and coneshells are common. Reef sandals or similar footwear should be worn when walking in the shallows. If you are unlucky enough to be stung or bitten by these animals, keep the injured area immobilised and seek immediate medical attention. A Silver Chain nursing post is located in Denham at the corner of Hughes and Durlacher streets. The phone number is (08) 9948 1400.

More information

DEC District Office
89 Knight Terrace, Denham WA 6537
Phone (08) 9948 1208
Fax (08) 9948 1024

Visit www.naturebase.net and www.sharkbay.org for more information



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Front cover Dramatic colour contrasts between land and sea are a spectacular feature of the Peron Peninsula and Francois Peron National Park.

All photos - DEC

Francois Peron National Park



Information guide



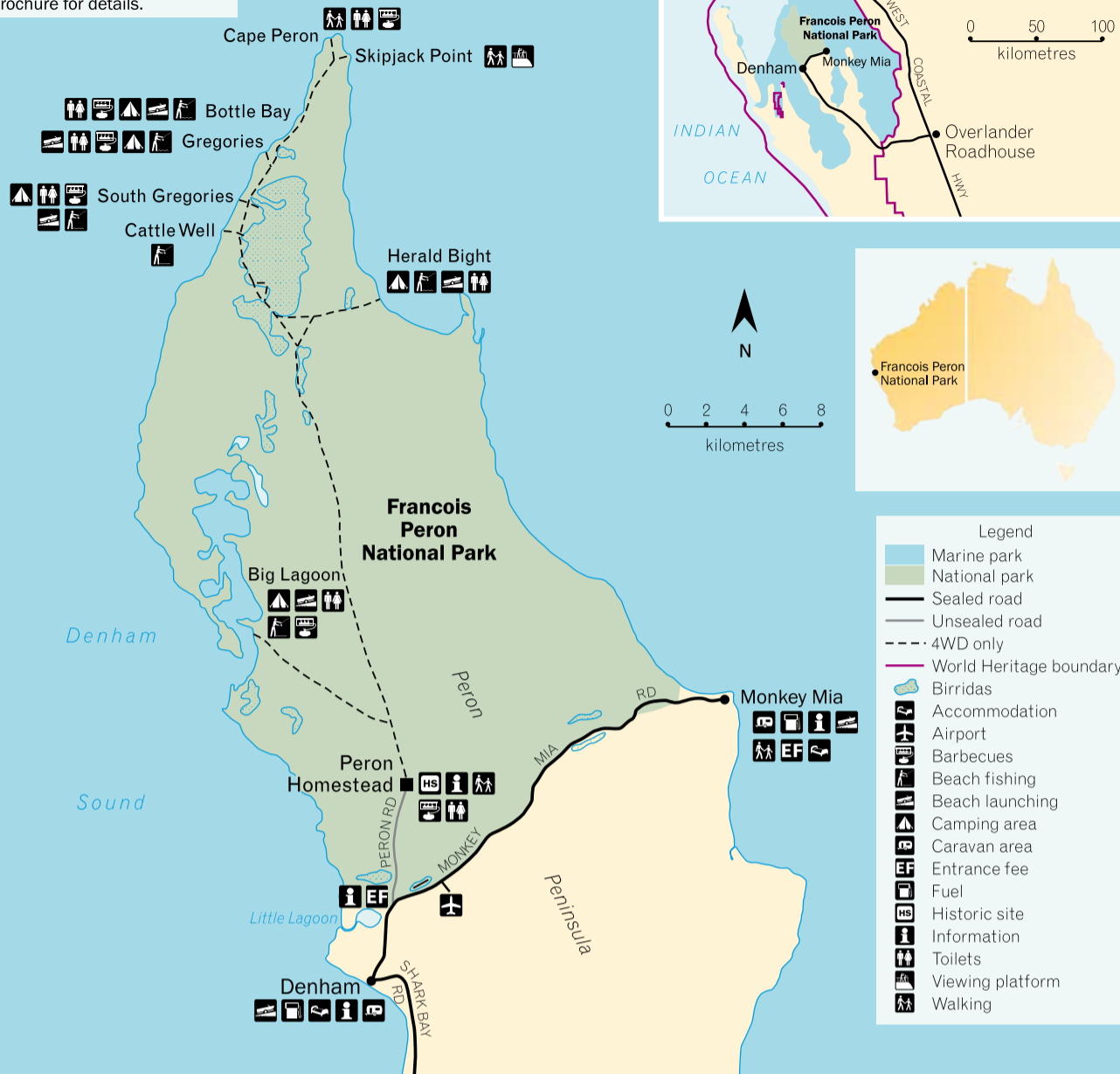
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Marine Park Regulations
Special rules apply to fishing and other recreational activities in waters surrounding the park. Please obtain a copy of the Shark Bay Marine Park brochure for details.

Shark Bay Marine Park



Visitor information

Vehicle access

Access to Francois Peron National Park is from Monkey Mia Road, about four kilometres north-east of Denham.

The road to the Peron Homestead precinct is accessible for two-wheel drive vehicles. All access north beyond the homestead precinct into the park is only suitable for high clearance four-wheel drive vehicles. All-wheel drive vehicles are not suitable.

All high clearance four-wheel drives need to have reduced tyre pressure before travelling north beyond the Peron Homestead precinct to minimise damage to tracks and improve access through numerous soft sandy sections. Caravans and large boat trailers are not suitable. Please reduce air pressure in all tyres including those of your camper or boat trailer as well as your car. Check with the Denham DEC office before travel to get up-to-date road and track information.

Many of the previous station tracks in the park are either being revegetated or are for management purposes only. Please follow the signs and stay on public access roads. Birridas consist of a thin crust over a bog mire kept moist by ground water. Vehicles driving on birridas will become bogged and recovery of these vehicles will be costly and time consuming. As these landscapes are difficult to rehabilitate, it will also result in long-term scarring of the birrida and degradation of the surrounding vegetation.

Peron Homestead precinct

The Peron Homestead precinct provides an insight into how life was when the park was a working sheep station. A self-guided walk around the Peron Homestead precinct provides an insight into life on a working sheep station. On the walk, you can explore the history of the area visiting the shearing shed, shearers' quarters and stock yards. Interpretive signs explain the station's interesting history along the way.

A small interpretive centre depicts stories of Indigenous inhabitants, European colonisation and current day conservation programs such as Project Eden (see information on this page).



The 'Hot Tub' is a popular stop to relax and soak in the hot artesian waters, which provided the original vital water supply for the station's stock. There is a free gas barbecue, picnic tables and lawn areas surrounding the 'Hot Tub'.

Wanamalu Trail

The Wanamalu Trail stretches for 1.5 kilometres along the cliff edge between Cape Peron and Skipjack Point. This 45-minute (one-way) walk provides excellent views of the coastline and interpretive signs along the trail provide an introduction to the features of the area.

Two viewing platforms at Skipjack Point provide spectacular coastal views and the opportunity to view Shark Bay's abundant marine life.

Boating, fishing, swimming

Recreational fishing is a popular activity in the Shark Bay area and many species can be caught all year round. Species commonly encountered on Peron Peninsula include whiting, bream and kingfish. Dinghies can be launched from the beaches at Big Lagoon, Gregories, South Gregories, Bottle Bay and Herald Bight.

Safe swimming beaches can be found at all the camping areas. Swimming is not recommended at Cape Peron because of the strong currents.

Wearing reef shoes or sandals is recommended when wading or swimming, particularly around reef areas, because of the risk of stonefish stings.

Please remember that special rules apply to fishing and other activities in the Shark Bay Marine Park. Fishing is not permitted in sanctuary zones such as in the northern waters of Big Lagoon, which is a nursery habitat for fish species. In the special-purpose zones around Cape Peron and the mouth of Big Lagoon, drop nets for crabs are allowed but set netting and spearfishing are not permitted. Because of the prevalence of dolphins and dugongs, waterskiing and freestyle jetskiing are also not permitted. Please check appropriate Department of Fisheries and DEC information before setting out.

Camping

Camping areas are located at Big Lagoon, South Gregories, Gregories and Bottle Bay. Herald Bight camping is on the beach and vehicle access is through very soft sand. Toilets are provided at all camping areas.

Carry all of your rubbish with you when leaving the northern section of the park. A large skip bin is located at the Peron Homestead precinct for rubbish disposal.

Fees

Entrance and camping fees apply to visitors. A self registration fee collection box is located at the park entrance off Monkey Mia Road. Your fees are used to maintain and develop park facilities.

Fires

Only gas appliances are permitted within the park. Free gas barbecues are provided at most camping and day visitor sites or you can use your own gas appliances.

Water

No drinking water is available in the park. Always carry your own supplies even on short visits. Allow at least two to three litres per person per day. Drinking water supplies are available in Denham.



Above Sightings of the woma python have been rare in the past 50 years but the Shark Bay population appears to be increasing.

Animals

Francois Peron National Park and the Shark Bay World Heritage Area are home to some of the rarest and most endangered animals in Australia and the world.

The region's birdlife is particularly rich, with diverse land-based, wading and migratory birds all being seen on Peron Peninsula. Emus, fairy-wrens, scrubwrens, finches and wedgebills are the most common species but visitors may also spot the thick-billed grasswren, a threatened species once widespread on the mainland but now restricted to a small area that includes the national park.



Nearly 100 reptile and amphibian species live in Shark Bay. Creatures as beautiful and diverse as the thorny devil, racehorse goanna, bobtail skink, knob-tailed gecko and bearded dragon are abundant. Snakes such as the gwardar, mulga and woma python, a threatened species, are often seen basking in the sun.

From the cliffs at Cape Peron and Skipjack Point, visitors may spot bottlenose dolphins, dugongs, green and loggerhead turtles, manta rays and sharks. Visitors can also find tracks of euros (small kangaroos), echidnas and native mice scattered over the red sand.

Above from left Woylies, a loggerhead turtle and a thick-billed grasswren.

Right A banded hare-wallaby being released.



Above A bilby (left) and a malleefowl (right), species that have been successfully reintroduced to Peron Peninsula.

Project Eden

Project Eden – one of WA's most significant conservation projects – is based in Francois Peron National Park. Its aim is to return to Shark Bay native species that have become extinct in other parts of the country because of predation and habitat loss caused by introduced foxes, cats and grazing animals.

Project Eden's integrated, whole-ecosystem approach combines feral animal removal with a captive breeding and reintroduction program. Five native species – the woylie and the captive-bred banded hare-wallaby, mala, bilby and malleefowl – have been reintroduced into the national park. The bilby and malleefowl are now successfully established within the park and it is possible to see them around Peron Peninsula. Reintroductions of animals such as chuditch, bandicoots and red-tailed phascogales are also planned for the future.

Reducing the number of feral animals has resulted in the recovery of many other fauna species including the woma python, echidna, several species of dunnart and many reptiles from tiny geckoes to the race-horse goanna.

The feral animal control program requires the regular distribution of meat baits treated with 1080 poison throughout the park and across Peron Peninsula. Native wildlife has a high tolerance for this naturally occurring poison but the baits are lethal to feral animals and domesticated cats and dogs. Please do not bring your pets into the national park.

