

Things to do in Kangaroo Island marine parks



National Parks South Australia



Government of South Australia
Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources



Kangaroo Island marine life

Kangaroo Island's marine environment is unique and complex. It is influenced by the warm Leeuwin current flowing from the west and by the cold Flinders current flowing from the south east. Habitats vary from shallow rocky reefs battered by Southern Ocean swells, to protected bays harbouring seagrass meadows that shelter nursery areas for small fish. Strong tidal currents in Backstairs Passage have scoured a deep trench in the seabed where rare, giant sponges grow; estuarine saltmarshes and tidal mudflats provide feeding grounds for shorebirds; and an upwelling off the southwest coast brings sunken nutrients to the surface, generating blooms of plankton that fuel a food web supporting fish, shellfish, seabirds and marine mammals.

As a result, the coastal waters around Kangaroo Island are home to an important and diverse mixture of temperate and sub-tropical marine species. They provide locals and visitors with opportunities for recreation and also support the local economy through tourism, aquaculture and commercial fishing. Their significance to the island and the state has been recognised through the creation of four marine parks to ensure increased protection to approximately two-thirds of the island's waters.

Things to see underwater



Southern biscuit star

(*Tosia australis*)

11 cm diameter

A colourful, five-sided sea star with short arms. Occurs in many different colours and patterns.



Moonlighter

(*Tilodon sexfasciatus*)

40 cm long

Rounded body with six dark side bands including one at the base of the tail. Seen at most reefs up to 30 m deep.



Southern eagle ray

(*Myliobatis australis*)

2.4 m long

Blunt snout, with eyes on the side of its head and pointed wing flaps. Long, whip-like tail with venomous spine.



Shorttail ceratosoma

(*Ceratosoma brevicaudatum*)

15 cm long

An abundant and brightly coloured species of nudibranch. Can be found in a wide variety of habitats.



Marine parks

To conserve the astonishing marine biodiversity found around Kangaroo Island and in other parts of South Australia, 19 marine parks have been established covering 44% of state waters. Designed to include examples of all known marine ecosystems and habitats, these parks conserve site dependent species and maintain ecological connections for species that move between habitats at different stages of their life cycles.

A multiple-use zoning scheme for each marine park provides for varying levels of conservation, while allowing most types of recreational and commercial use. Significant effort was made to avoid placing high protection zones in heavily used areas in order to minimise negative impacts on industries and community uses.

All regulations began in March 2013, except fishing restrictions in sanctuary zones which commenced on 1 October 2014. "No take" sanctuary zones protect areas of high conservation value to allow natural ecological processes to continue without interference from humans. While no forms of fishing are allowed in sanctuary zones, low impact recreational activities like snorkelling, surfing and swimming are welcome.

Things to see from the shore



Pied oystercatcher

(*Haematopus longirostris*)

50 cm tall

Black and white bird with long, straight red bill. Can be found feeding on sandy beaches, estuaries and tidal flats.



Hooded plover

(*Thinornis rubricollis*)

19–21 cm tall

Often seen running along sandy beaches. Bobs its black 'hooded' head up and down when looking for food.



Long-nosed fur seal

(*Arctocephalus forsteri*)

2.5 m long

Found on rocky shores around the island. Often seen swimming near land and at Kingscote Wharf.



Variagated limpet

(*Cellana tramoserica*)

65 mm long

Several limpet species can be found on intertidal reefs. Some limpets return to the same place at every low tide.



Further information

Natural Resources Centre Kangaroo Island

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Related Websites

www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/kangarooisland

www.environment.sa.gov.au

www.marineparks.sa.gov.au

Further reading

Baxter, Chris (2015) *Birds of Kangaroo Island: A photographic field guide*

Edgar, Graham (2008) *Australian marine life: The plants and animals of temperate waters*

Image credits

Hooded plover by Birds Australia.
Other images by Natural Resources Kangaroo Island.

24 ways to experience Kangaroo Island marine parks



Admire the tallest coastal cliffs in SA at Scotts Cove.



Birdwatch at Bay of Shoals and Reeves Point.



Play in shallow pools at low-tide at Min-Oil Beach.



Learn about early settlers on a walk around American River.



Snorkel with blue groper at Western River Cove.



Scuba dive with leafy sea dragons under the Kingscote Jetty.



Watch the sunset change the cliff colour at Red Banks.



Kayak on Pelican Lagoon.



Swim and body surf at Snellings Beach.



Feel the mud squelch between your toes at Western Cove.



Experience the thrills of a boat tour in Nepean Bay.



Investigate life in rock pools at Browns Beach.



Observe dolphins swimming in Hog Bay.



Fish for whiting at D'Estrees Bay.



Smell the long-nosed fur seals at Cape du Couedic.



Camp under the stars at West Bay.



Build sandcastles at Antechamber Bay.



Beachcomb for washed up treasures at Bales Bay and leave them where you find them.



Hike the Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail.



Track little penguin footprints in caves at Ravine des Casoars beach.



Look for whales at Cape Willoughby.



Watch the Australian sea-lion colony at Seal Bay.



Listen to the powerful, roaring ocean at Snake Lagoon beach.



Climb the lighthouse at Cape Borda.