

# Rock lobster

Recreational fishing guide 2017/18



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

## Please note:

- Female setose lobsters can now be taken.
- Rock lobster tails (shell on) may now be kept at your principal place of residence.
- Pot specifications have been simplified.

# Contents

<b>Fish for the future</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Recreational fishing rules</b> .....	<b>2</b>
Licences .....	2
Fishing seasons and times.....	2
Legal size limits for taking lobsters.....	3
Western and tropical rock lobster .....	4
Southern rock lobster .....	4
Fishing for lobsters .....	6
Pot specifications .....	7
Sea lion exclusion devices (SLEDs).....	9
Plastic bait bands.....	10
Totally protected lobsters .....	10
Identifying setose and tar spot lobsters ....	12
<b>Lobsters you keep</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Marine conservation areas</b> .....	<b>15</b>
Marine Parks and Marine Management Areas.....	17
Fish Habitat Protection Areas (FHPAs) .....	17
Other rock lobster fishing closures.....	17
<b>Go fishing for science</b> .....	<b>19</b>
Return a tag – get a reward.....	19
<b>About this guide</b> .....	<b>20</b>

## **Important disclaimer**

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## 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 [www.fish.wa.gov.au](http://www.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.

Information on lobster science is available at [www.fish.wa.gov.au/species/rock-lobster](http://www.fish.wa.gov.au/species/rock-lobster)

# 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 and Marine 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 [www.fish.wa.gov.au](http://www.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 seasons and times

**South of North West Cape (21° 44'S latitude):**  
Season open 15 October – 30 June.




### **North of North West Cape:**

All species of lobster may be taken all year.

**Night fishing ban:** Between North West Cape and Cape Leeuwin, pots may not be pulled or rock lobster taken by diving at night from 7.30 pm to 4.30 am 15 October – 31 March and from 6.00 pm to 6.00 am 1 April – 30 June.

**2017-18 season start:** Recreational fishers may not soak pots before the season starts, but they may bait and set pots the day before the season opens. Pots must not be pulled until after 4.30 am on the first day of the open season.

## Legal size limits for taking lobsters

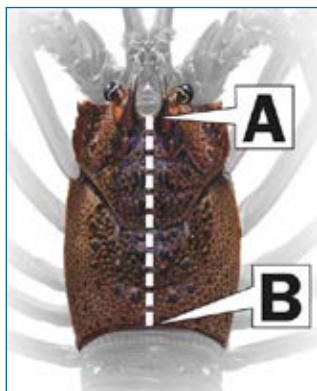
Species		Minimum legal carapace length
	<p><b>Southern rock lobster</b> (<i>Jasus edwardsii</i>)</p> <p>Identifiable by a single spine between and just forward of their eyes</p>	98.5 mm
	<p><b>Western rock lobster</b> (<i>Panulirus cygnus</i>)</p> <p>Identifiable by a single white dot on the outside (lateral) edge of each tail segment</p>	76 mm
	<p><b>Tropical rock lobsters:</b></p> <p><b>Ornate</b> (<i>Panulirus ornatus</i>)</p> <p><b>Painted (green)</b> (<i>Panulirus versicolor</i>)</p>	76 mm

There is no longer a maximum legal size limit for taking female western rock lobsters.

See how to measure lobsters below. Always use the correct gauge, available to buy at tackle shops.

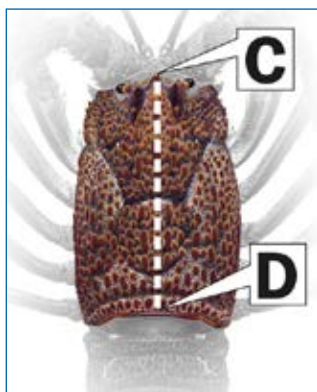
### Western and tropical rock lobster

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.

### 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.

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

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.

### Boat limit

This means the maximum number of rock lobsters you may carry on a boat at any one time. If there is only one licensed fisher on board, the maximum is one day's bag limit (**8**), including no more than **4** tropical rock lobsters. If there are two licensed fishers on

board, it is two days' bag limit (**16**), including no more than **8** tropical rock lobsters. If three or more licensed fishers are on board, it is three days' bag limit (**24**), including no more than **12** tropical rock lobsters.

## Fishing for lobsters

### Diving

Divers may only catch rock lobster by hand, or by a hand-held snare or blunt crook. Spears, nets and similar devices that can damage rock lobster are illegal. Diving for rock lobster is now permitted at the Abrolhos Islands.

Divers should make all attempts to measure and count rock lobsters as accurately as possible in the water. Check each rock lobster as you catch it to determine if it is totally protected (see page 10). 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), any skin or hide, anything to which any mammal skin or hide is attached, any abalone material or any lobster material.

### Pot limits

No more than two rock lobster pots per licence holder. Six pots may be pulled when there are three or more licensed fishers on board.



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

Pots must be set and pulled by the licence holder. *Pulling someone else's pot is illegal.*

Removing someone else's float from a pot and replacing it with your own is also illegal.

### **Sharing pots**

Two licensed fishers are now permitted to share a rock lobster pot. Each licensed fisher must attach a separate float with only their own gear identification (ID) number on it, to the pot. No more than two floats, each with only one gear ID number, must be attached.

Each licence holder may use no more than two pots to fish for lobster, even when sharing pots, and may not have their gear ID number on more than two 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.

**Note:** The specifications for lobster pots have been simplified.

A pot must not exceed 1000 mm in diameter or width at its widest point and 500 mm in height.

## Entrance and escape gaps

Pots must have only one entrance. The neck must be rigid and at least 160 mm wide.

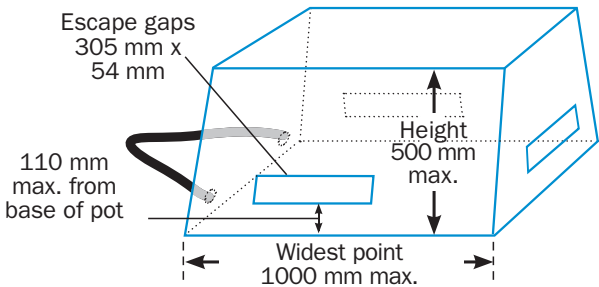
Pots must not have any internal partitions or chambers. Escape gaps and the neck must not be obstructed.

In areas north of North West Cape, pots do not require escape gaps. Between North West Cape and Cape Leeuwin, pots must have at least **three escape gaps**. East of Cape Leeuwin, pots must have at least **one escape gap**.

**Escape gaps** must be as far away as practical from the hauling rope attachment points and no more than 110 mm above the base of the pot. They must not be obstructed by ballast, rope or anything else. Also, gaps must not be between the hauling rope attachment points on any type of pot.

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

**Hauling ropes** must be fitted to the end of the pot opposite the escape gap, except where four escape gaps are being used.



**Surface floats** must be fitted to every pot rope. They must be at least 15 cm in diameter and stamped or branded with the licence holder's gear ID number, with lettering 6 cm high and at least 1 cm wide.

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).



### Sea lion exclusion devices (SLEDs)

Fishers who use lobster pots between 30°51.06'S, 115°10.32'E (south of Wedge Island) and Freshwater Point, south of Dongara, are required to fit SLEDs to their pots to prevent sea lion pups 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 [www.fish.wa.gov.au](http://www.fish.wa.gov.au)



This internal SLED juts vertically from the pot's base so the sea lion can't get in.

## 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.

### **Berried females:**

Any species of lobster that is carrying eggs (berried) is protected.



**Berried female.**

**Tar spot 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.

Signs they are ready to spawn include:

- A 'tar spot' 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 tar spot to fertilise the eggs.

## Identifying setose and tar spot lobsters



**Female**

Setose tar spot female lobster. Most setose females also have tar spots (sperm packets) attached.



**Male**

Male swimmerets. Note the lack of the forked egg-carrying appendages.



**Female**

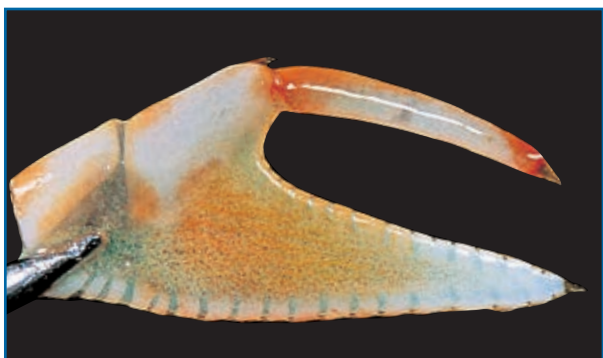
Female swimmerets. Note the forked appendages (egg-carrying endopodites), which have long fine hairs when the lobster is in breeding condition.



A hairy endopodite. A female in this condition is called setose. Photo: C. Chubb



On occasion, only a fringe of hairs develops, but the lobster is still setose. Photo: D. Evans



Non-setose female endopodite. Photo: J. Lochman

## 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 10 mm in diameter in the central segment of



the tail fan, within five 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 five 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:

1. Must not have any Totally Protected Fish i.e. undersize tar spot etc.
2. Must not have more than the bag limit or boat limit
3. Must have tail clipped all retained lobsters.



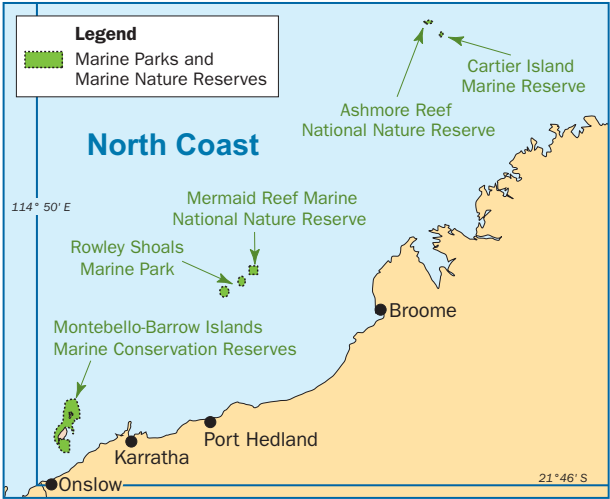
## Marine conservation areas

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 Fisheries or the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.

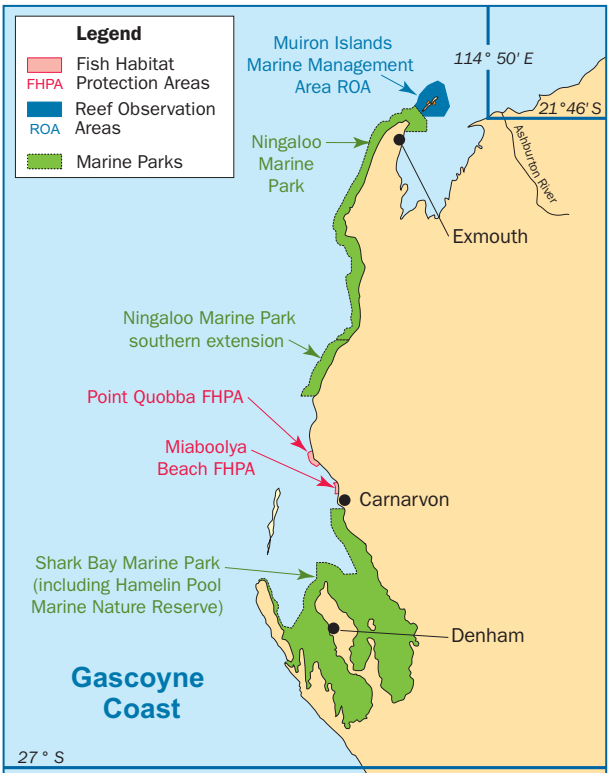
### West Coast



## North Coast



## Gascoyne Coast



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

## Fish Habitat Protection Areas (FHPAs)

### **Abrolhos Islands FHPA**

Rock lobster season open  
15 October – 30 June.

### **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 Fisheries offices and the Fisheries website at [www.fish.wa.gov.au](http://www.fish.wa.gov.au)

## Other rock lobster fishing closures

### **Busselton Jetty Observatory**

All fishing is prohibited.

### **Hamelin Pool Marine Nature Reserve**

All fishing is prohibited.

### **Jurien Bay Research Area**

Lobster fishing is prohibited in the triangle from 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 [www.fish.wa.gov.au](http://www.fish.wa.gov.au)

## Go fishing for science

### Return a tag – get a reward

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 tar spot 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.

Give us the recapture information and to say thanks we will send you a Scratch'n'Win card and information on your lobster and its travels. Your name may also be entered into a draw for annual cash prizes of up to \$3,000.

Report tagged lobsters to Ben Hebiton on **(08) 9203 0111** or email **lobster.tag@fish.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 Fisheries office or visit [www.fish.wa.gov.au](http://www.fish.wa.gov.au)

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

Fishing out of season, 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 Fisheries 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 [www.fish.wa.gov.au](http://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](http://www.recfishwest.org.au)



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## HELP KEEP EVERYONE SAFE

Report shark sightings  
to Water Police on

**9442 8600**



[SHARKSMART.COM.AU](http://SHARKSMART.COM.AU)

# FISHERIES

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Gordon Stephenson House  
140 William Street, Perth WA 6000  
T: (08) 6551 4444  
customerservice@fish.wa.gov.au

## **ALBANY DISTRICT OFFICE (AND SOUTHERN REGIONAL OFFICE)**

88–90 Stead Road  
Albany WA 6330  
(08) 9845 7400

## **BROOME DISTRICT OFFICE (AND NORTHERN REGIONAL OFFICE)**

Port of Pearls House  
401 Port Drive  
Broome WA 6725  
(08) 9193 8600

## **CARNARVON DISTRICT OFFICE (AND GASCOYNE REGIONAL OFFICE)**

59 Olivia Terrace  
Carnarvon WA 6701  
(08) 9941 1185

## **FREMANTLE DISTRICT OFFICE (AND METROPOLITAN REGIONAL OFFICE)**

14 Capo D'Orlando Drive  
South Fremantle WA 6162  
(08) 9432 8000

## **GERALDTON DISTRICT OFFICE (AND MIDWEST REGIONAL OFFICE)**

69–75 Connell Rd  
Geraldton WA 6530  
(08) 9920 8400

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

