

# Cape Howe Marine National Park

## Victoria's Pacific gem

At the far eastern tip of Victoria is a remote wilderness that few people have seen. Adjacent to the Cape Howe Wilderness Area, Cape Howe Marine National Park is where Victoria touches the Pacific, bathed in warm water from the tropical north, and buffered from waves generated in the east.

Much of the coastline is formed from mobile sand dunes that are gradually shifting over the border into New South Wales. Bordering these dunes is a mixture of ancient pink granite and purple sandstone formed over 350 million years ago. These rocks outcrop near the border at Cape Howe.

Low profile reefs are covered in a dense forest of the brown seaweed *Phyllospora* or Crayweed that reaches over 2 metres in length. Beneath this thick, swirling canopy shelter many smaller seaweeds, red sea-tulips, sponges, colourful sea-stars and many large shells. Tiny brittle-stars, pill-bugs and brightly-coloured worms nestle around large sea squirts.

Off this section of the coast, the seafloor tilts steeply down into deeper water. Here, there is not enough light for the large brown seaweeds, and the low sandstone reefs are covered with small patches of leafy red seaweeds and many attached animals. Sea-whips are common, arching gracefully up from the seafloor.

The whole region is alive with a variety of fish, with an assortment of warm and cool water species. Purple Wrasse, Blue-Throated Wrasse and Herring Cale dart amongst the kelp. Large, disk-like Sunfish are relatively frequent visitors, drifting in the surface waters and feeding on jellyfish.

Hundreds of humpback whales pass through the park area on their annual migration between the tropics and Antarctic waters, sometimes followed by pods of Orcas. Little Penguins are common too, foraging from the large rookery at Gabo Island.

Cape Howe Marine National Park is part of a system of 13 Marine National Parks and 11 smaller Marine Sanctuaries created by the Victorian Government to ensure that representative samples of Victoria's diverse, distinctive and amazing marine environment are conserved for future generations.

These parks and sanctuaries now protect 5.3% of Victoria's coastal waters, safeguarding important marine habitats and species, and complementing our world-class national parks system on land.

By keeping some of these marine areas in a natural state, free from potentially damaging human activities, we will protect these environments into the future.

## What you might see

### Eastern Blue Groper *Achoerodus viridis*

Large, inquisitive and charismatic, the Eastern Blue Groper is actually a member of the wrasse family and is not a true Groper. These fish are local identities of the rocky ledges and gutters of the Cape Howe Marine National Park. When scuba diving you may see and hear these fish crunching on Black Sea-urchins or molluscs with their plump, tough lips.

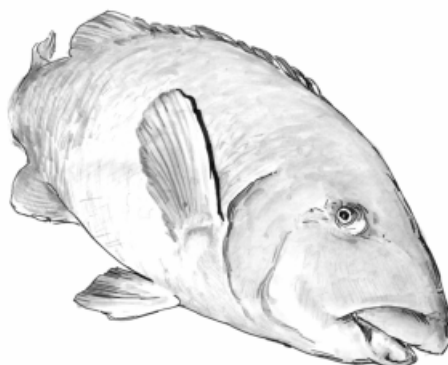
Colour distinguishes male from female fish – males being blue or green and females usually brown or red. Reaching up to a metre in length, Eastern Blue Gropers inhabit reefs to a depth of 40 metres.



**Parks Victoria Ranger**

*"Victoria's system of Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries provides total protection for their unique inhabitants, offering unlimited opportunities for us all to learn more about this stunning underwater world."*

For more information call the Parks Victoria Information Centre on 13 1963 or visit our website at [www.parkweb.vic.gov.au](http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au)



**Eastern Blue Groper**

**Cape Howe Marine National Park** Area: 4,050 ha

Marine National Park  
 National Park  
 Waterbody

Lighthouse

K I L O M E T R E S  
 Cartography by Spatial Vision 2002 M7364

MELBOURNE

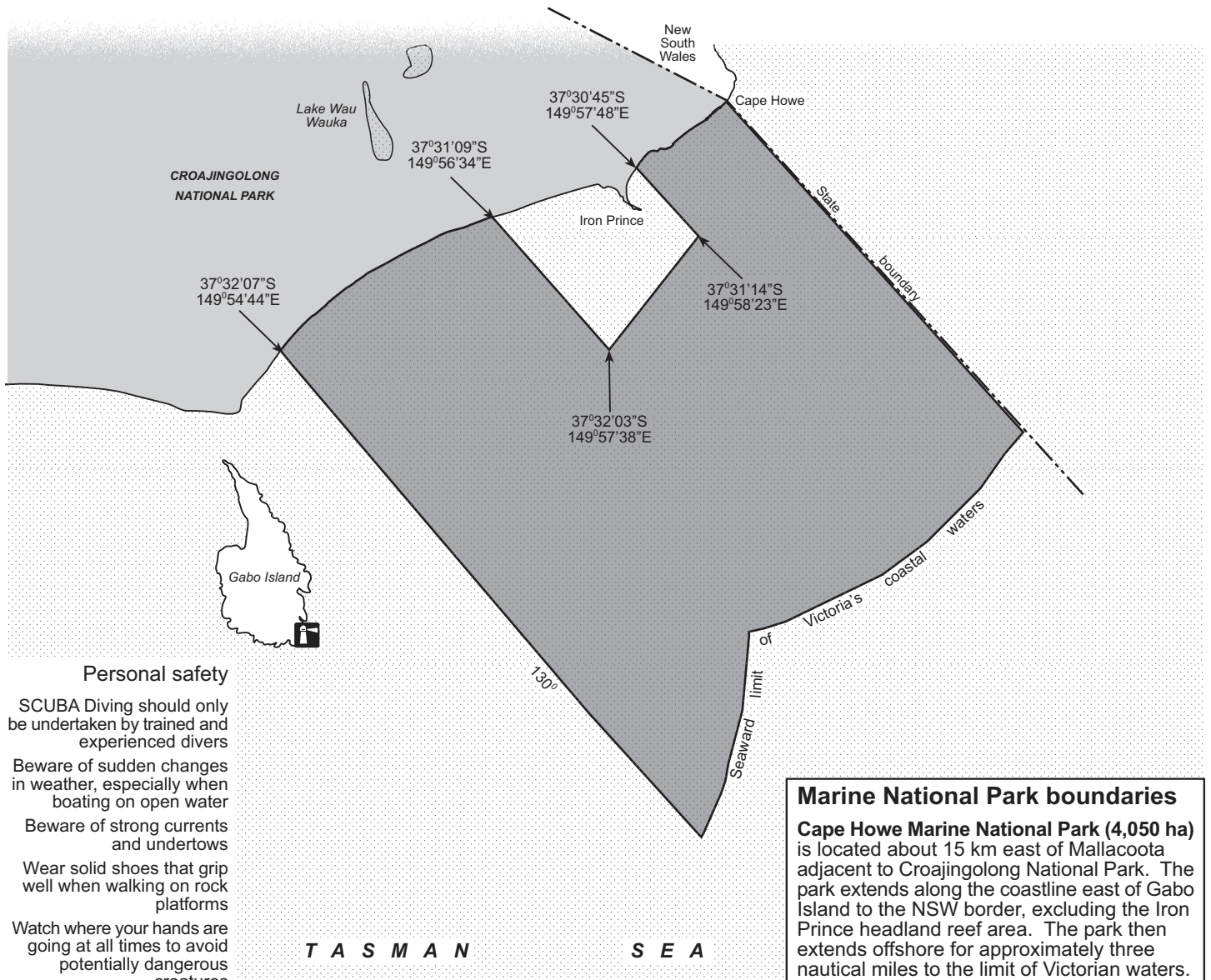
Latitude and Longitude values are based on WGS84



No fishing, netting, spearing, taking or killing of marine life. All methods of fishing, from the shore or at sea, are prohibited.



No taking or damaging of animals, plants and objects (artefacts)



### Personal safety

- SCUBA Diving should only be undertaken by trained and experienced divers
- Beware of sudden changes in weather, especially when boating on open water
- Beware of strong currents and undertows
- Wear solid shoes that grip well when walking on rock platforms
- Watch where your hands are going at all times to avoid potentially dangerous creatures
- Be aware of large unexpected waves when walking on shore, especially on rock platforms

### Caring for the marine environment

- Discarded gear and rubbish can endanger birds and marine animals – please take your rubbish home
- Always replace any organisms or rocks you may have disturbed
- Keep clear of bird nesting or roosting areas

### Restrictions

For the protection of the marine environment, a number of activities are prohibited within the boundaries of Victoria's Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries.

There are strong penalties under the National Parks Act for fishing in Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries. These restrictions and penalties apply in most Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries from 16 November 2002.

However, recreational and commercial fishing will be allowed to continue in Cape Howe Marine National Park until 1 April 2004, at which time it will cease.

### Marine National Park boundaries

**Cape Howe Marine National Park (4,050 ha)** is located about 15 km east of Mallacoota adjacent to Croajingolong National Park. The park extends along the coastline east of Gabo Island to the NSW border, excluding the Iron Prince headland reef area. The park then extends offshore for approximately three nautical miles to the limit of Victorian waters.

To report a fishing offence contact NRE Fisheries on (03) 9483 4283. Please ask for the Duty Officer and give a short message and leave a contact number.

Parks Victoria is responsible for the day-to-day management of Victoria's Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries. For further information contact the Parks Victoria Information Centre on **13 1963** or visit the Parks Victoria website at: [www.parkweb.vic.gov.au](http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au)

Parknotes on each of Victoria's Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries, including boundaries and permitted and prohibited activities, have been produced to assist visitors to these areas.