

# Ninety Mile Beach Marine National Park

## Splendour in the sands

Victoria's Ninety Mile Beach lies on the edge of a long slender sand dune, thrown up from the sea by the easterly waves and protecting the Gippsland Lakes. Offshore, beneath the water, vast plains of sand stretch in every direction.

Yet these areas are not as monotonous as they might first appear. Sand particles are sorted into different groups and layers according to the waves and currents, while there are different surface features such as mounds and ripples as a result of animal and wave action.

Although the sandy seafloor may appear -to be lacking in life, the fine sands of Gippsland harbour more animals per square metre than most other marine habitats in the world. In a scientific survey of 10 square metres some 803 species were discovered.

This great diversity is derived from the myriad of small creatures that call this area home - creatures that live between sand grains, burrow into the sand, build tiny tubes or exist by eating scraps of food that drift by.

Larger animals are far fewer in number. To conserve their energy and retain access to oxygenated water, animals like crabs, octopuses, brittle stars and shrimp do not burrow very deep.

Beyond the Ninety Mile Beach the offshore sandy plains are only occasionally broken by low ribbons of reef, which formed as shorelines or sand dunes during ice-ages when the sea-level was lower than today.

Even these reefs are periodically covered by sand, shifted around by the strong tidal currents. These reefs do not support the large brown seaweeds characteristic of many Victorian reefs, but instead are covered by resilient red seaweeds and encrusting animals that can survive the sandy environment.

Fish too are here in abundance, many feeding on the seafloor smorgasbord of tiny animals. Schools of pelagic fish like pike, school whiting and snapper are common.

Ninety Mile Beach 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.



**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)**



**Common Stargazer**





## What you might see



### **Common Stargazer *Kathetostoma laevis***

Although the Common Stargazer is one of the largest fish found near reefs on the underwater sandy plains, it is hard to spot. Lying almost buried, motionless, with only its eyes and mouth peering out of the sand, this bottom-dwelling fish resembles a pugnacious bulldog. With its skilful ambush tactics, the Common Stargazer can rapidly lunge upward, its cavernous mouth consuming unsuspecting fish and crustaceans in one gulp

**Ninety Mile Beach  
Marine National Park**

Area: 2,750 ha

-  Major sealed road
-  Minor sealed road
-  Marine National Park
-  Waterbody

-  Boat access point
-  Shore based boundary marker (Triangular Beacon)



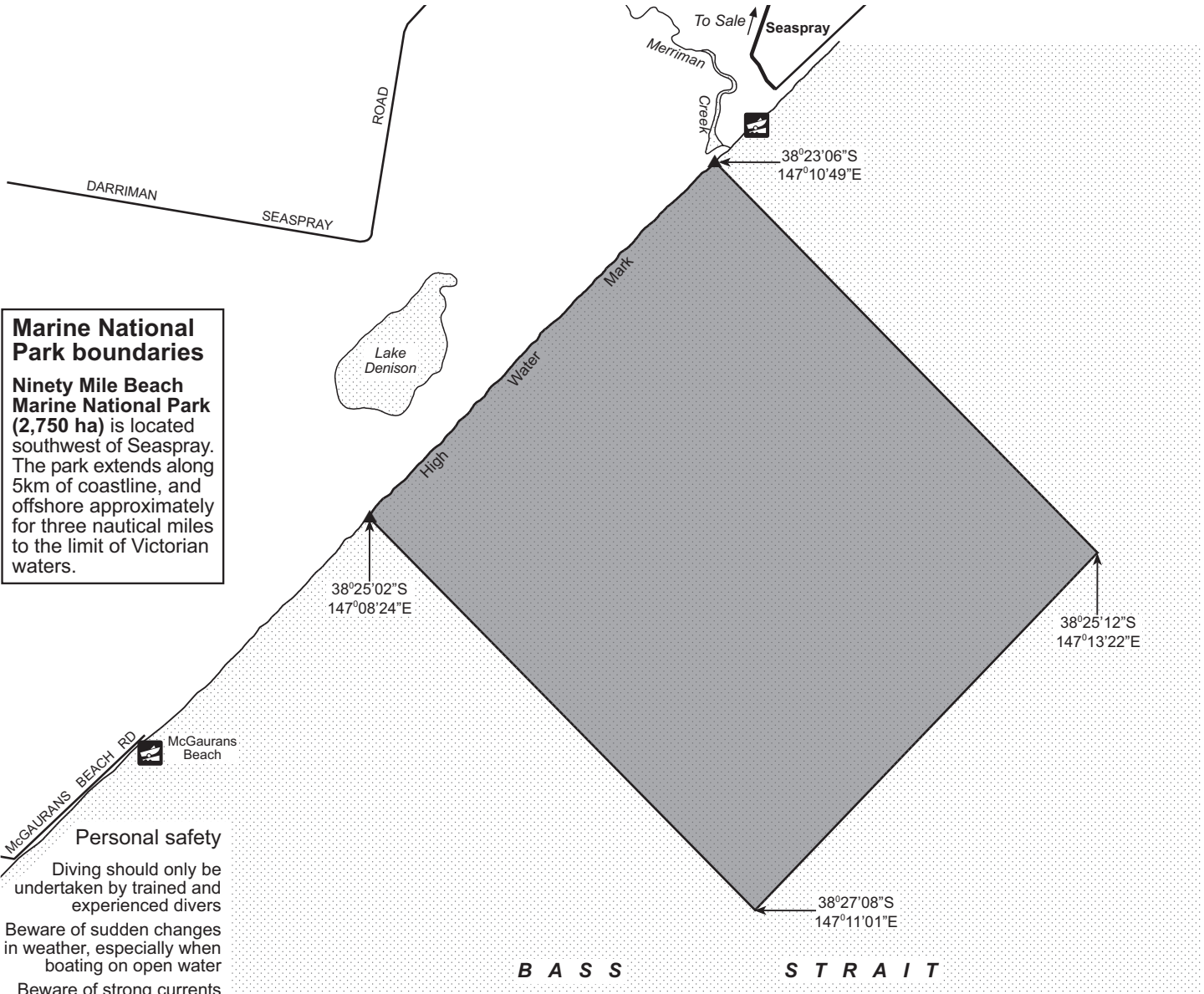
Latitude and Longitude values are based on WGS84



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)



**Marine National Park boundaries**

**Ninety Mile Beach Marine National Park (2,750 ha)** is located southwest of Seaspray. The park extends along 5km of coastline, and offshore approximately for three nautical miles to the limit of Victorian waters.

**Personal safety**

- 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 when snorkelling or at the beach
- When boating, always let someone know before you go, including an estimated time of arrival
- Always consult tide charts before going boating

**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 turned over

**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 Ninety Mile Beach Marine National Park from 16 November 2002.

You may carry fin-fish on board your boat within park boundaries if you caught the fish outside the parks, and you may also carry (but not use) a fishing rod or a spear gun.

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**

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.