



# Maria Island

## MARINE RESERVE



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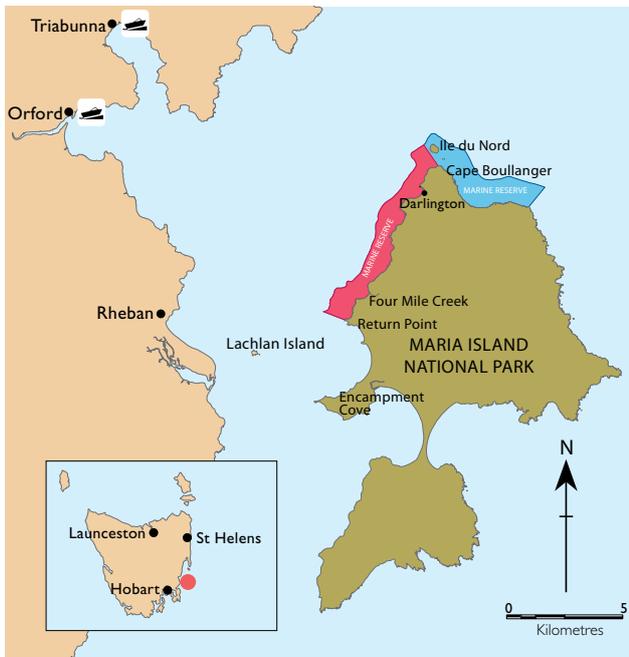
Maria Island Marine Reserve protects spectacular underwater seascapes and the most diverse range of marine life in the state, offering excellent snorkelling and diving opportunities.

The marine reserve extends along the north and west coasts of the island from low water mark to 20 m water depth. In the southern part of the reserve (south of Four Mile Creek), where the water depth does not reach 20 m, the reserve extends to one kilometre offshore.

A no-take zone exists between Cape Boullanger in the north and Return Point in the south. In this zone, fishing and other extractive activities are prohibited.

### Getting there

Maria Island is located on Tasmania's east coast about 8 km offshore. It is accessible via a 30-45 minute ferry ride or private boat from Triabunna.



For detailed map see next page



**Banded morwongs** can live for almost 100 years. They are commonly seen on exposed reefs, often congregating in large caves. Protected within this reserve, they are heavily targeted outside the reserve as a live export fish. Photo: Emma Flukes

### Things to do



Snorkelers can access the reserve in many locations. A popular snorkel is the Darlington jetty. Its pylons are covered in colourful sponges and jewel anemones. Take extra care as power boats and ferries frequently use this jetty.



A wide variety of dives are possible in the reserve. One of the more accessible shore dives is the boulder reef north of the jetty where large lobsters, bastard trumpeter, banded morwong and boarfish are regularly seen. Tasmania's cool water environments can be challenging for people accustomed to diving in warmer waters, so seek local advice from dive charter operators.



Rockpool rambling at the Painted Cliffs within 1-2 hours of low tide will reward you with a wonderful array of marine life. Collect the Rockpool Rambling brochure and tide information from the Commissariat Store. If you gently turn small rocks to explore the life beneath, please return them to protect the creatures from dehydration.



Fishing is permitted only in the blue zone - not in the red no-take zone. Stow fishing equipment out of sight when in the no-take zone.

### LEGEND

- Marine reserve – no-take zone
- Marine reserve – fishing zone
- National Park
- Camping
- Boundary marker

In the red no-take zone all marine life is protected. Fishing and other extractive activities are prohibited. The reserve is patrolled. **Heavy penalties apply** for fishing or interfering with marine life. Report illegal fishing to Fishwatch.





## Help our marine environment

**Know the boundaries.** If fishing, ensure you're not in the no-take zone.

**Take your rubbish home.** Ropes, plastics and fishing line can harm wildlife.

**Anchoring.** Avoid sensitive habitats such as seagrass beds and sponge gardens. Sandy seafloors are preferred; alternatively kelp-covered reefs.

**Marine pests and diseases.** To avoid their spread, after every trip clean and dry your fishing/diving/boating gear. Annually clean your boat hull.

**Fish for the future.** Where fishing is permitted, observe size, bag and possession limits. Only take enough for a feed. Get a copy of the latest Recreational Sea Fishing Guide or go to [www.fishing.tas.gov.au](http://www.fishing.tas.gov.au) for fishing information.



**Bastard trumpeter** numbers have significantly increased in the reserve and are now one of the most commonly encountered fish species. However, numbers remain low outside the reserve, as they are a mobile species frequently caught in gill nets.  
Photo: Cath Samson

## Going ashore

**Check your gear.** Tasmania's off-shore islands, like Maria, are free from many pests, weeds and diseases. Before going ashore, check your footwear, clothes, equipment and food are free from soil, seeds, insects and vermin.

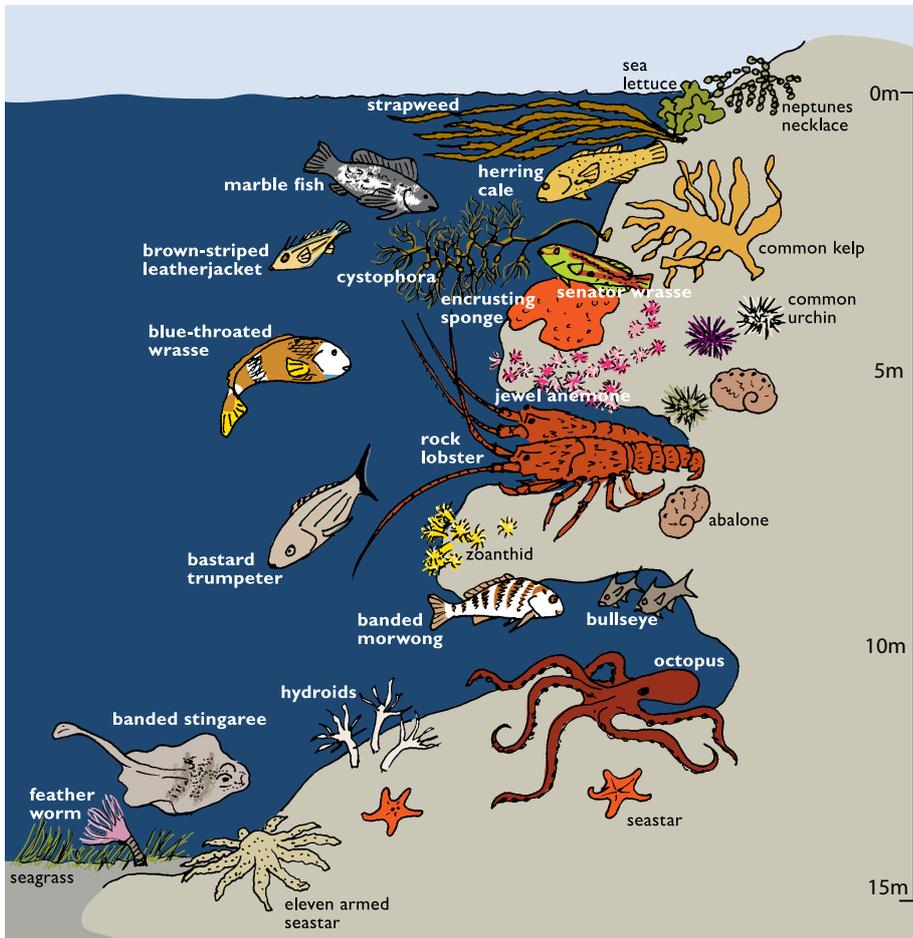
**Protect birdlife.** Leave your dog and other pets at home. When walking on beaches, stay on the wet sand as shorebirds nest in the dry sand above high tide.

**Fuel Stove Only.** Campfires are prohibited except in metal fire places at Encampment Cove. To avoid introducing unwanted pests, please don't bring firewood; wood is provided.

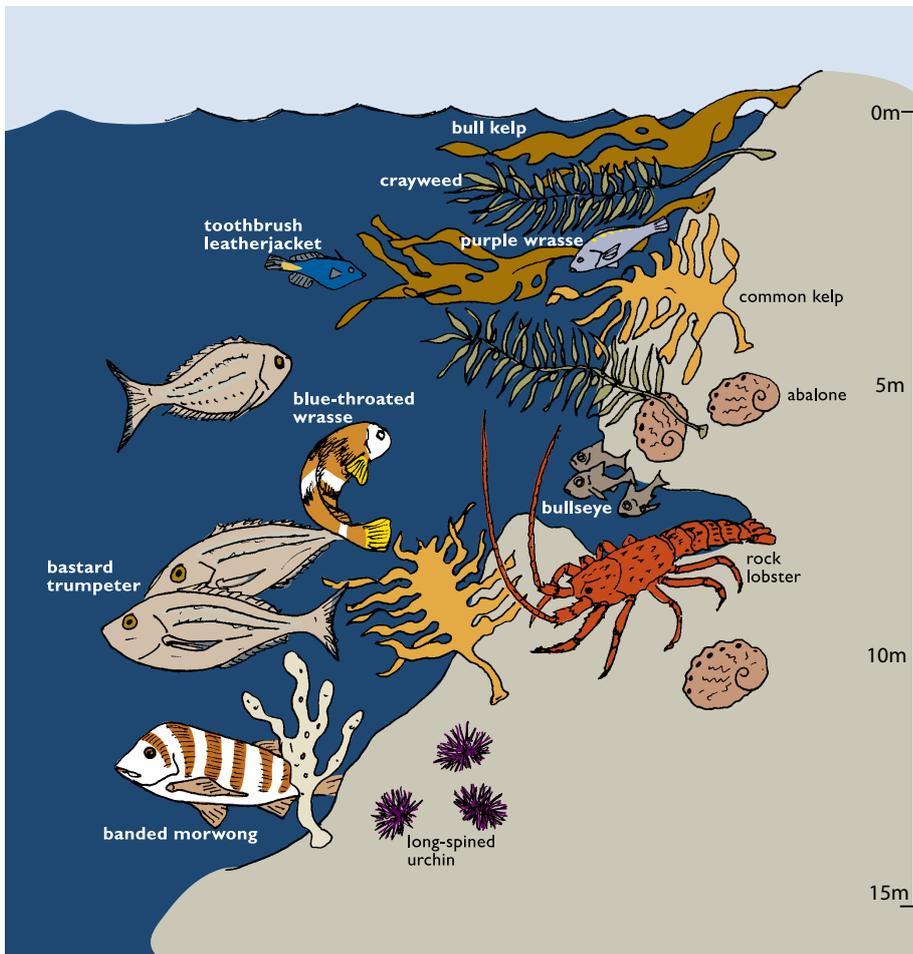
**Parks pass.** A Parks pass is only required if you are going ashore. Passes can be purchased from the Commissariat Store on the island.



**Red velvetfish** are found only in southern Australian waters and most commonly in Tasmanian waters. They are most active at night when they hunt crabs and octopus on the seafloor.  
Photo: John Smith



Example of marine life found on the sheltered coast of Maria Island



Example of marine life found on the exposed coast of Maria Island

## Special features

The reserve protects a representative range of the marine habitats found on Tasmania's east coast. These include seagrass, sand and reefs with a range of rock types (dolerite, siltstone, sandstone, and limestone) and wave exposures (from sheltered to fully exposed).

In Fossil Bay on the exposed north coast, deep gutters, overhangs and caves (extending up to 40 m into the limestone cliffs) form spectacular seascapes both above and below the water.

On the more sheltered western shore, which is protected from fishing, large southern rock lobsters abound and the numbers of reef fish, such as bastard trumpeter, banded morwong and boarfish, have greatly increased since the reserve was declared in 1991. Seahorses and weedy seadragons are commonly sighted, while fascinating species such as warty prowfish and red velvetfish hide amongst sponges and algae.



**Weedy seadragons** are beautifully coloured. They are often seen at the boundary between the seaweed and sand, where their food (mysid crustaceans) is found. Like seahorses, the males lay the eggs, holding them under their tails for two months. The young hatchlings are miniature replicas of adults.

Photo: John Smith



**Jewel anemones** are colonial animals which grow in shaded or deep areas where there is insufficient light for algae to survive. They often form spectacular mosaics of pink, orange, purple, brown and white.

Photo: Neville Barrett

## Major changes - the last 20 years

A long-term monitoring program within and outside the marine reserve undertaken by scientists at the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies has documented many significant changes in the reserve since it was declared in 1991.

### Lobsters and urchins

In the section of the reserve where fishing is prohibited the number of lobsters has increased by 300% and large lobsters are over ten times more common within the reserve than elsewhere along the coast.

Urchin barrens are an increasingly common sight on Tasmania's east coast. They are formed when urchin numbers get too high and overgraze kelp beds transforming them from highly productive reefs to barrens. One of the few predators able to control urchin populations is the rock lobster, but only very large rock lobsters. In the reserve where there are more large rock lobsters fewer urchin barrens appear to be forming and urchin numbers are declining.



**Southern rock lobster** eating common urchin.

Photo: Neville Barrett

### Giant kelp

Twenty years ago there were spectacular giant kelp forests in the reserve at Magistrates Point and in Fossil Bay. Giant kelp plays a critical role in maintaining the structure of an entire ecological community. Like trees in a rainforest, the kelp provides a complex three-dimensional structure that supports an enormous number and diversity of marine animals.

Why are the kelp forests not here today? Giant kelp is reliant on cold nutrient-rich waters. Over the past 60 years Tasmania's east coast waters have warmed by 2°C. This warming, one of the most rapid in the southern hemisphere oceans, is due to globally increasing sea-surface temperatures and a southward extension of the East Australian Current (EAC). The warmer nutrient-poor waters of the EAC are less favourable for the giant kelp.

## Securing the future

Tasmania has one of the most biologically diverse and unique marine environments in the world. Over 80% of the plants and animals living in Australia's southern waters are found nowhere else on earth.

Tasmanians are heavily reliant on a healthy, well-functioning marine environment. The benefits and enjoyment we get from our marine and coastal environments are central to our lifestyles and livelihoods.

Like marine environments world-wide, Tasmania's marine environment is under increasing pressure. Human activities have caused observable changes to our marine environment, some of which you may have witnessed along your favourite part of the coast.

Marine reserves – the ocean equivalent of national parks – provide a safe haven for marine life. Like national parks, they are places set aside for everyone to enjoy. These protected areas, which are under less stress than non-protected marine environments, are more likely to cope with pressures of climate change or invasive species than ecosystems weakened by many years of human impact.

Marine reserves also provide scientists with opportunities to learn about our impacts on the marine environment by comparing changes in protected areas with non-protected areas, helping improve management of our coastal waters.

Approximately 2.7% of immediate state coastal waters (i.e. excluding subantarctic Macquarie Island) are in marine protected areas (either marine reserves or marine conservation areas), of which 1.1% of state coastal waters are highly protected in no-take sanctuary zones.

The conservation and sustainable use of Tasmania's marine environment is everyone's responsibility. By supporting marine reserves you'll be helping protect our extraordinary marine environment for future generations.

## More Information

### Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service

[www.parks.tas.gov.au/marinereserves](http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/marinereserves)

PWS Maria Island Office: (03) 6257 1420

Visit the Ranger Station at Darlington, Maria Island

### Weather

Boating forecast: (03) 6376 0555

[www.bom.gov.au/tas/forecasts](http://www.bom.gov.au/tas/forecasts)



To help promote and care for reserves, join a community volunteer group. Contact Wildcare Inc: (03) 6233 2852 [www.wildcare.tas.gov.au](http://www.wildcare.tas.gov.au)