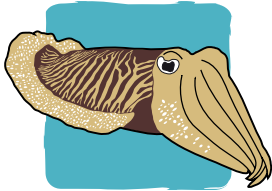




Kent Group MARINE RESERVE



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The spectacular and remote Kent Group is located in the middle of eastern Bass Strait, approximately halfway between the northern tip of Flinders Island and Wilsons Promontory, Victoria. The group is comprised of five granitic islands and several islets, all protected within the Kent Group National Park.

The marine reserve surrounds Deal, Erith, Dover and North East islands and extends from the high water mark to three nautical miles offshore.

The marine reserve is divided into two zones:

- the western half is a no-take zone where all marine life is protected and fishing and other extractive uses are prohibited.
- the eastern half is a restricted-take zone where some fishing is permitted – see 'Things to do' section for further details.

The Kent Group has been declared a marine reserve due its high diversity of marine life, created by the meeting point of three major ocean currents.



Giant cuttlefish are commonly seen at the Kent Group. They are one of the largest cuttlefish species in the world, reaching up to 80cm in length. Nerve-activated pigment cells in their outer body enable them to rapidly change colour to blend with the environment or communicate with potential mates or enemies.

Photo: Neville Barrett

Getting there

Access is via private boat or private charter boat as no regular commercial tours are available. Access is also possible for extremely experienced, highly-skilled and well-equipped sea-kayakers. All visitors must be entirely self-sufficient with adequate fuel, water, food and first aid supplies as no facilities or services are available at the Kent Group.



For detailed map see next page

Things to do

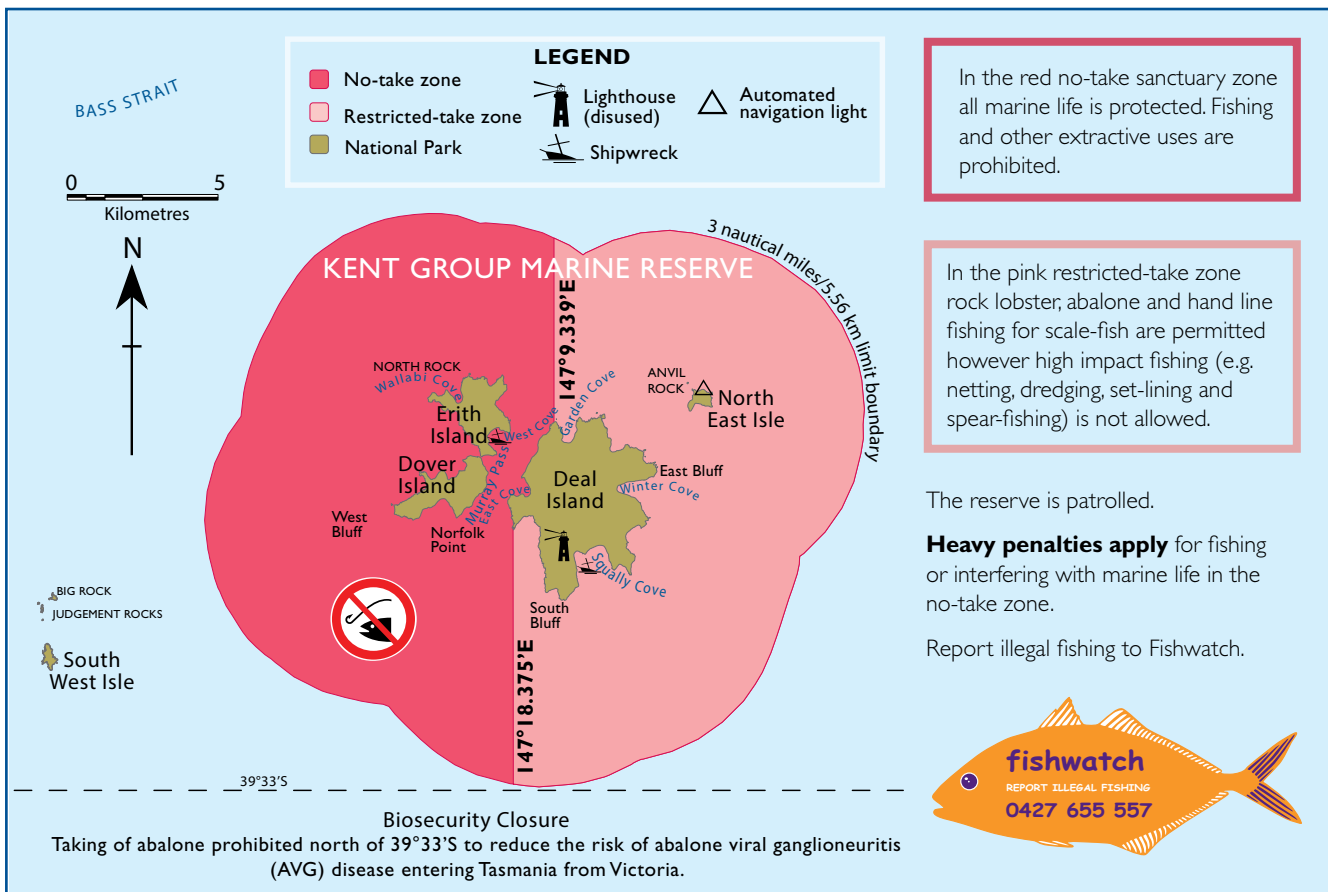


The Kent Group offers spectacular diving and underwater photography with its clear waters and high diversity of marine life, particularly fish species. Visibility usually ranges between 15 and 30 metres. Historic shipwrecks of the steamships *Bulli* and *Karitane*, which are in shallow water in West Cove and Squally Cove respectively, are additional highlights. Strong tidal currents occur in the area, particularly in Murray Pass – the channel that separates Deal and Erith Islands.



In the **pink restricted-take zone**, fishing for rock lobster and abalone, and line fishing for scalefish is permitted, however high impact fishing (e.g. netting, dredging, set-lining and spearfishing) is not allowed.

In the **red no-take zone** fishing is not permitted. The reserve is patrolled and heavy penalties apply for fishing or interfering with marine life in this reserve.



Help our marine environment

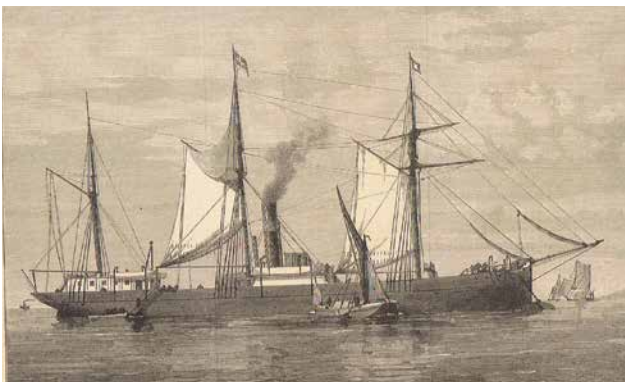
Know the boundaries. If fishing, ensure you're not in the no-take zone.

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. Check your chart to avoid anchoring on the historic shipwreck of the steamship *Bulli* in West Cove, Erith Island.

Marine pests and diseases. To avoid their spread, after every trip clean and dry your fishing/diving/boating gear. Periodically and at least 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. Refer to the Recreational Sea Fishing Guide or go to www.fishing.tas.gov.au for fishing information.



The steamship *Bulli* was wrecked off Erith Island in 1877.
Photo: courtesy of John Riley collection



Eastern blue gropers have recently extended their range south into the Kent Group area from the mainland. If you see one, log it on redmap.tas.org.au
Photo: Neville Barrett

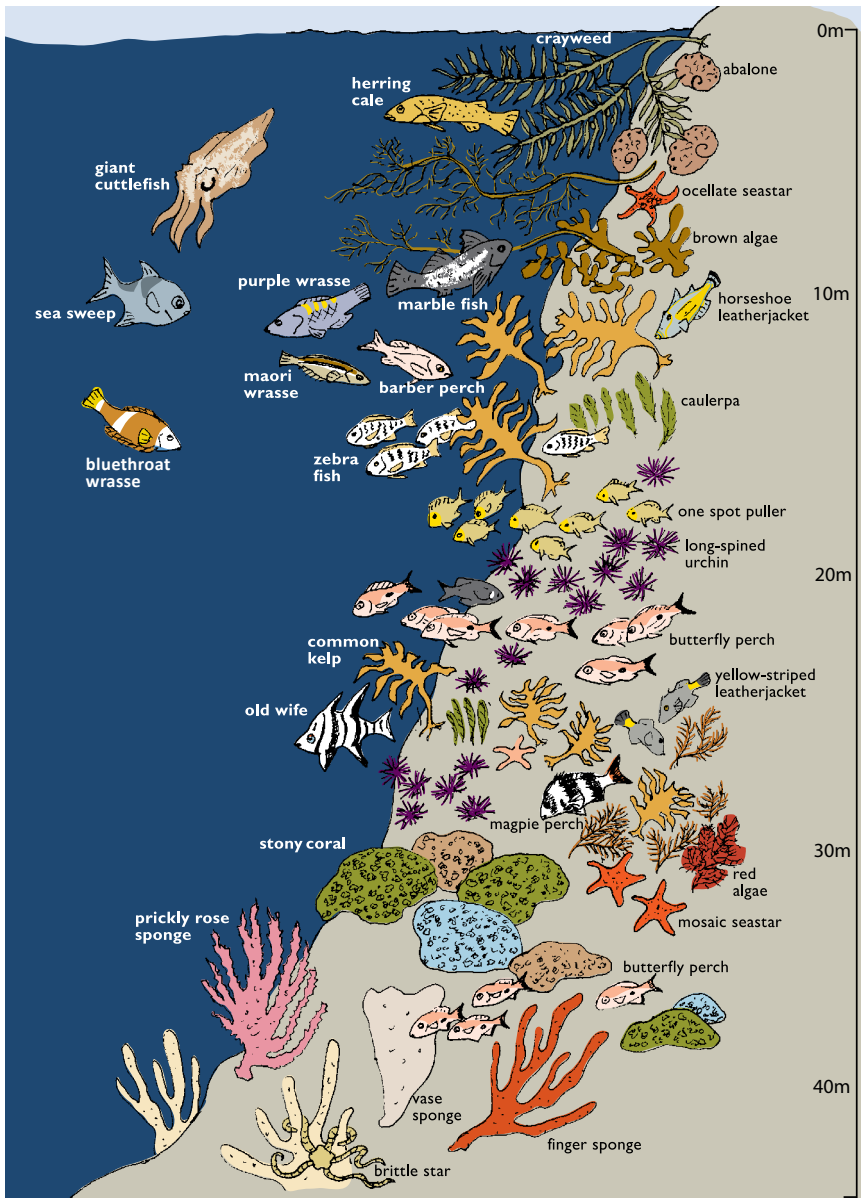
Going ashore on the islands

Check your gear. Tasmania's off-shore islands 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 the constructed barbeques on Deal Island.

Parks Pass. A Parks Pass is only required if you are going ashore. Passes can be purchased from Service Tasmania shops statewide.



Example of marine life found at Kent Group Marine Reserve

Special features

The Kent Group Marine Reserve has a high diversity of marine life due to its extensive range of habitats and its unique location at the meeting point of three major marine currents. The East Australian Current brings warmer waters from New South Wales, the South Australian Current brings warmer waters from the west, and cooler temperate Tasmanian waters come from the south.

Fish-life in the reserve is unusually diverse with more than 90 species recorded, the highest fish diversity of any location in Tasmania. Species seen here include those found around Tasmania but also species typical of more northern waters. The Kent Group is the southern strong-hold for several species including the violet roughly, mosaic leatherjacket, Wilsons weedfish, maori wrasse and one spot puller. It is also the most southerly location to see the eastern shovelnose ray and the snakeskin wrasse.

Seagrass beds, which are normally restricted to water depths less than 10-15m, are found at depths of greater than 20m in Murray Pass due to the very clear waters in the area.

In deeper waters sponge gardens are very common, covering 40% of habitat in depths greater than 40m, particularly in high current areas.



Magpie perch are a very common inhabitant of the Kent Group. Juveniles have a reddish tail which darkens as the animal matures. They feed on small invertebrates.

Photo: Neville Barrett



Horseshoe leatherjackets are named for the characteristic horseshoe-shaped marks on the sides of their bodies.

Photo: Graham Edgar



Seagrass beds

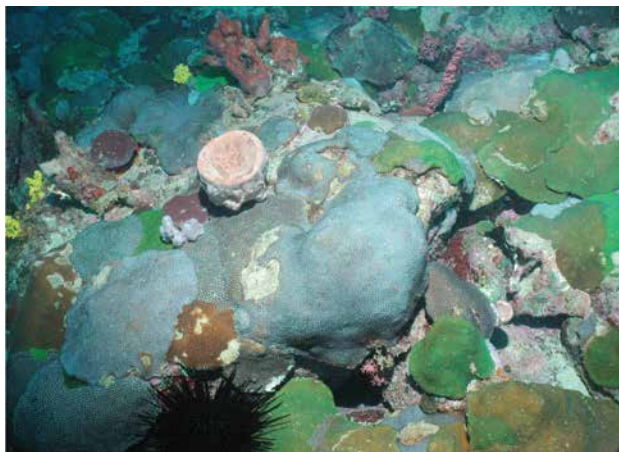
Photo: Graham Edgar



Ocellate seastar

Photo: Neville Barrett

Unusual stony corals (*Plesiastrea versipora*) are found in deeper waters and in areas shaded by cliffs where light levels are too low for algae to grow. This widespread southern Australian reef-building coral can be brown or green as a result of the microscopic dinoflagellates living in the coral tissue. Generally all colonies in an area are the same colour; however in the Kent Group each colony varies in colour creating a multi-hued green and brown patchwork.



Unusual multi-hued **stony coral**.

Photo: Graham Edgar

With warmer East Australian Current waters extending further south, long-spined urchins and urchin barrens are now a feature of the Kent Group. Large schools of butterfly perch and barber perch are often seen in urchin barrens.

Several shipwrecks lie within the reserve – some of which are protected historic sites. The best-known is the remarkably intact steamship *Bulli* at West Cove, Erith Island. This 60m (180 feet) long steel steamship wrecked on 28 June 1877 while taking coal from Newcastle to Launceston when heavy southerly gales forced the ship to shelter at the Kent Group. Please check charts to avoid anchoring on the wreck.



Wreck of the steamship *Bulli*.

Photo: Graham Edgar

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

Flinders Island office (03) 6359 2217

Caretakers in residence

East Cove, Deal Island

Weather

Boating forecast: 1900 969 930

www.bom.gov.au/tas/forecasts

Listen on VHF 16



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