



What's special about Tasmania's marine environment?

Tasmania's marine environment is recognised as one of the most biologically diverse in the world. Our geographical isolation and proximity to sub-Antarctic influences have produced a stunning marine biodiversity, including animals and plants, unique to Tasmania.

An incredible marine biodiversity

Tasmania's extensive coastline has a range of strikingly different habitats, including rocky reefs; sandy beaches; deep, natural harbours; and open coasts. Each habitat supports a different range of plants and animals. Our marine environment contains extensive kelp forests, sponge gardens and seagrass beds, each supporting their own communities of marine invertebrates, fish and seabirds.

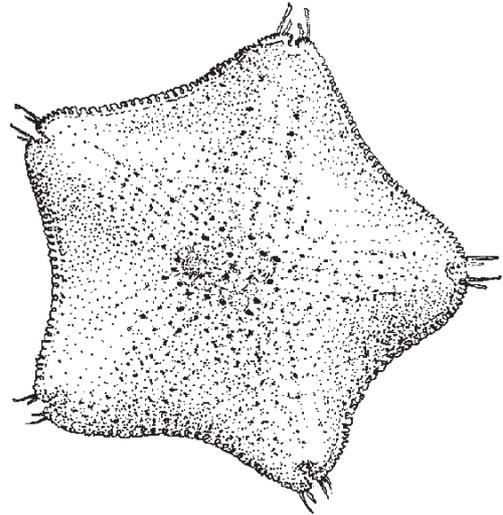


What is biodiversity?

Biodiversity is the variety of all life forms. It is the different plants, animals and microorganisms, the genes they contain, and the ecosystems they form.

Valuable and special creatures

Tasmania's marine environment is home to many commercially and recreationally important species, including abalone and rock lobster. It also hosts a range of special marine animals, from sea dragons and fairy penguins to great white sharks and migrating whales.



*The live-bearing seastar
Patirella vivipara*

The unique handfish

Tasmania's marine environment is home to seven of the eight known handfish species, and five of these are not found anywhere else in the world.

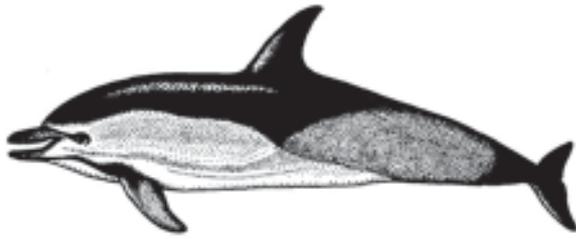
Unlike most other fish, handfish do not have a free floating, larval stage. Instead their young hatch out as miniaturised versions of the adult. Consequently, their distribution is extremely localised.

Live-brooding seastars

Tasmania is also home to two of Australia's three live-brooding seastars that are currently listed as threatened species. Unlike other seastars, and similar to the handfish, the young emerge as tiny versions of the adult.

Diverse and abundant seaweed

The diversity of seaweed in temperate areas of Australia is three times that of tropical areas. Shallow reefs around Tasmania are more thickly covered in seaweed than any other reefs in the world. Some of Tasmania's more familiar seaweeds include Australia's largest, such as giant and bull kelp. We also have the biggest subtidal kelp habitat in Australia with large forests of giant kelp on inshore reefs reaching to depths of thirty metres. This is also the key habitat for commercial species such as abalone and rock lobster.



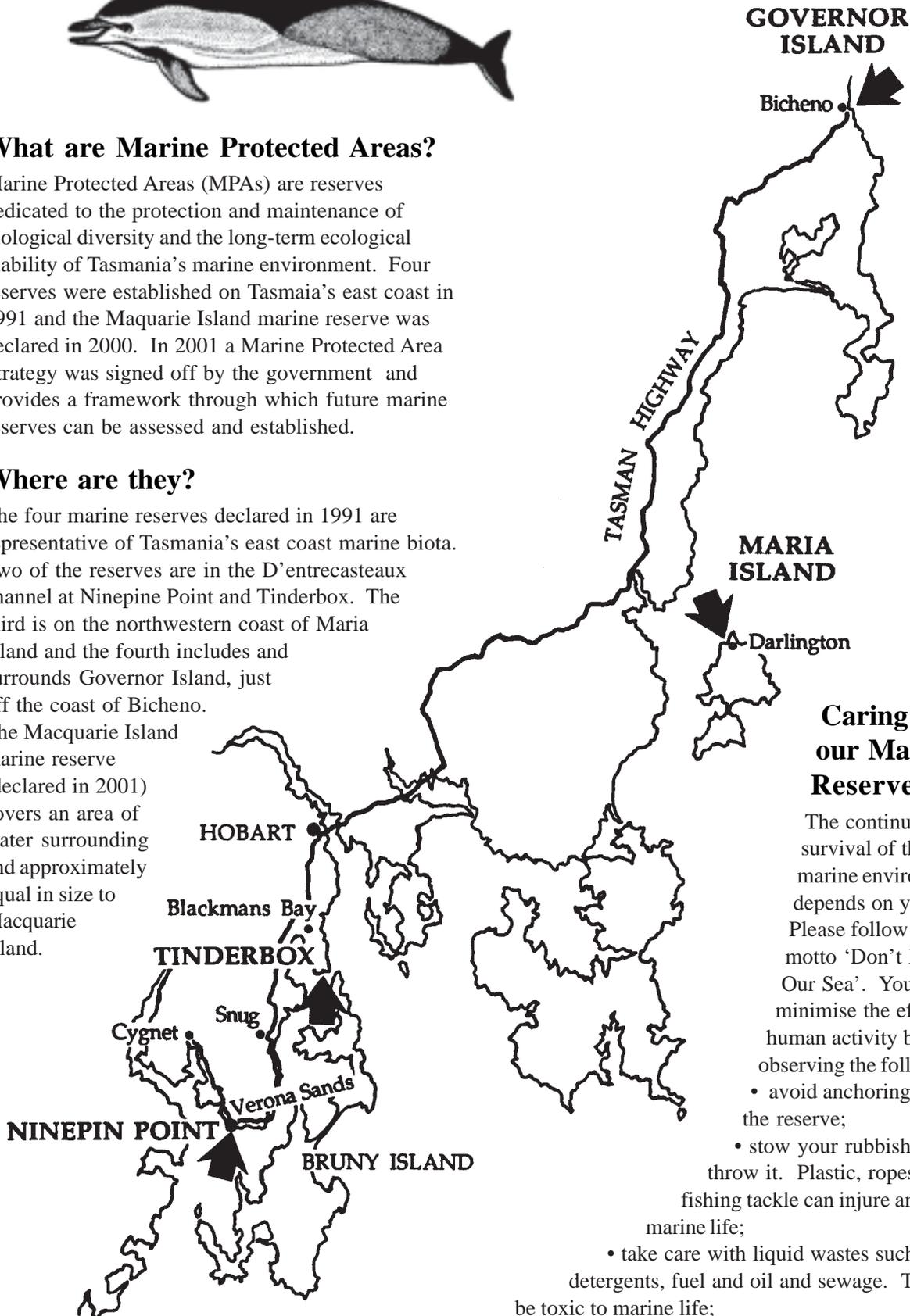
What are Marine Protected Areas?

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are reserves dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity and the long-term ecological viability of Tasmania's marine environment. Four reserves were established on Tasmania's east coast in 1991 and the Macquarie Island marine reserve was declared in 2000. In 2001 a Marine Protected Area Strategy was signed off by the government and provides a framework through which future marine reserves can be assessed and established.

Where are they?

The four marine reserves declared in 1991 are representative of Tasmania's east coast marine biota. Two of the reserves are in the D'entrecasteaux channel at Ninepine Point and Tinderbox. The third is on the northwestern coast of Maria Island and the fourth includes and surrounds Governor Island, just off the coast of Bicheno.

The Macquarie Island marine reserve (declared in 2001) covers an area of water surrounding and approximately equal in size to Macquarie Island.



Caring for our Marine Reserves

The continued survival of the marine environment depends on your help. Please follow our motto 'Don't Rubbish Our Sea'. You can minimise the effects of human activity by observing the following:

- avoid anchoring within the reserve;
- stow your rubbish, don't throw it. Plastic, ropes and fishing tackle can injure and kill marine life;
- take care with liquid wastes such as detergents, fuel and oil and sewage. These can be toxic to marine life;
- try to walk around plants and animals on the shoreline; and
- leave shells where you find them so that they can become homes for other creatures.

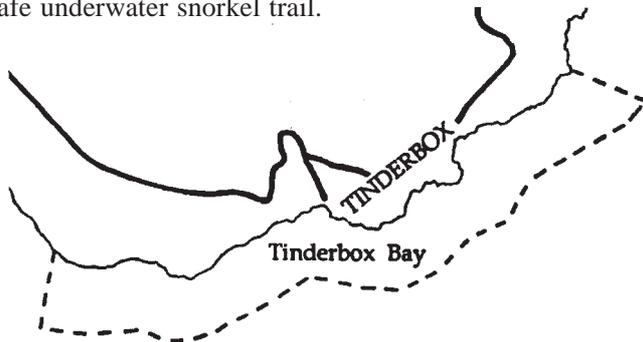
What can I do in these reserves?

Because these reserves are protected there is an abundance of marine life. They are fantastic places to experience first hand the incredible diversity to be found in Tasmania's waters. All of the following activities are permitted in marine reserves.

- Snorkelling & scuba diving
- Underwater photography
- Windsurfing
- Nature study
- Swimming
- Boating

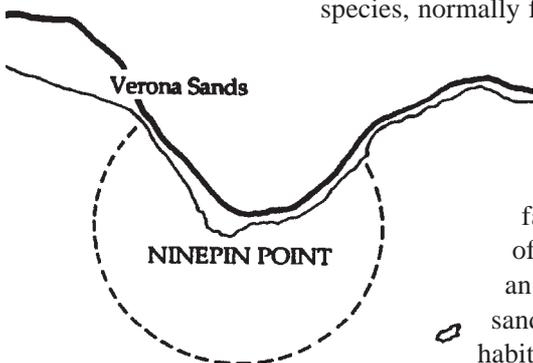
Tinderbox Marine Nature Reserve

This reserve extends along the coastline for approximately one kilometre and stretches 200 m out to sea. It covers an area of 45 ha. A sheltered sandstone reef, with a large variety of fish, abundant seaweed species and colourful sponges are features of the area. There is good, safe diving from the shoreline and a ramp for launching boats. Although no fishing is permitted within the reserve, there are good fishing locations nearby. You may bring fish caught outside the reserve onshore here. There are two marked diving zones, including a safe underwater snorkel trail.



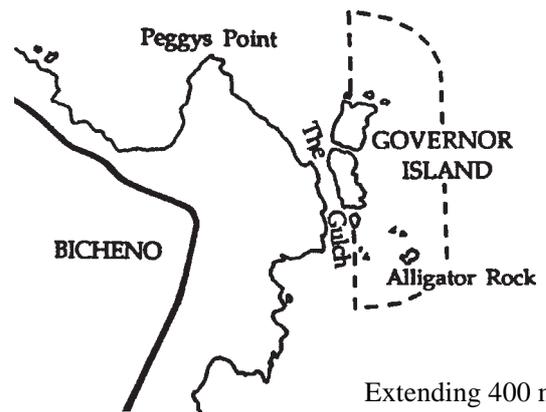
Ninepin Point Marine Nature Reserve

This 60 ha reserve extends to a 500 m radius from Ninepin Point itself, and includes the foreshore. The tannin rich waters flowing from the Huon River create a rare estuarine habitat, in which many marine species, normally found at greater



depths, may be located near the surface. There is a fascinating array of seaweed and an interface of sand and reef habitats. No fishing is permitted.

Governor Island Marine Nature Reserve



Extending 400 m eastward from the shoreline of Governor Island, this 50 ha reserve includes the island itself and Alligator Rock. A boat ramp in the gulch provides easy access for divers to view deep-water species in a setting of spectacular and unusual granite formations and coves. A variety of attractive marine communities are found within a compact area. Governor Island is also home to one of Tasmania's largest breeding populations of crested terns. Diving is popular in these clear waters. No fishing is permitted.

Maria Island National Park Marine Extension

A range of east coast marine habitat is protected within this reserve. Features include clear oceanic waters, underwater caves, sandstone and dolerite reefs, kelp forests and a diversity of plants and animals that create

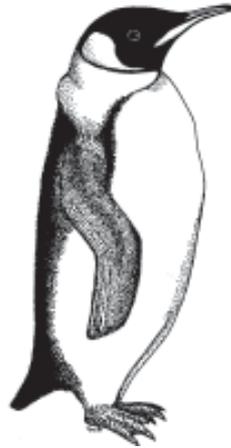
a scenic ocean underworld. This reserve extends approximately one kilometre from the shores of Maria Island and covers 1500 ha.

Commercial and recreational fishing are permitted within the stippled area indicated on the map.



Macquarie Island Marine Reserve

Macquarie Island is a comparatively small rock situated in the frigid sub-Antarctic waters 1500 km southeast of Tasmania. Isolated by thousands of kilometres from any other land mass the island is a vital breeding ground and feeding area for seals, a variety of birds (such as penguins and albatros), and many other plant and animal species intrinsic to the sub-Antarctic ecosystem. It was named a State Reserve in 1972 and since then has been declared as an UNESCO Biosphere Reserve (1978) and as a World Heritage Area (1997). In 2000 a 74 715 ha area of surrounding marine habitat was declared as a marine reserve. Protecting the marine environment surrounding the sub-Antarctic island effectively extends the protection offered to all land and marine creatures living in the area by promoting the conservation of one of the integral habitats in the regions ecosystem. A permit is required to land on Macquarie Island.



Further information

For further information contact the District Ranger:

Tinderbox & Ninepin Point
(03) 6233 6560

Maria Island
(03) 6257 1420

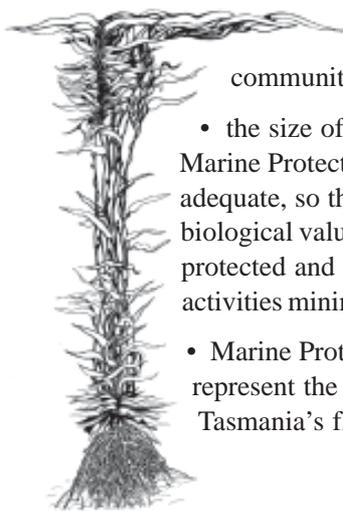
Governor Island
(03) 6376 1550 or
(03) 6257 7000.

The Marine Protected Area Strategy

The Marine Protected Area Strategy provides a system for establishing and managing marine reserves in Tasmania.

The Marine Strategy ensures:

- a comprehensive system which protects example of the full range of Tasmania's habitats and biological communities;
- the size of our system of Marine Protected Areas is adequate, so that physical and biological values can be protected and the impact of activities minimised; and
- Marine Protected Areas represent the diversity of Tasmania's flora and fauna.



How does the Strategy work?

An independent authority with relevant expertise will carry out the identification and selection of Marine Protected Areas.

STAGE 1-IDENTIFICATION

The first stage scientifically assesses the marine environment. Areas need to meet specific criteria including:

- whether the area is representative, unique, ecologically important or significant; and
- whether it is vulnerable or productive.

STAGE 2-SELECTION

The second stage is based on different criteria that take into account broader issues such as social and economic values. The criteria also address issues of practicality and feasibility, vulnerability assessment and replication.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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