

ASHMORE REEF AND CARTIER ISLAND RESERVES



Natural Heritage Trust

*Helping Communities Helping Australia
At Australian Government's Expense*

ASHMORE REEF AND CARTIER ISLAND RESERVES

Ashmore Reef National Nature Reserve lies about 840 kilometres west of Darwin. Cartier Island Marine Reserve is approximately 46 kilometres to the southeast of Ashmore. Together, the Reserves cover an area of 750 square kilometres.

The management plans for the reserves assign both reserves to IUCN (World Conservation Union) category Ia – strict nature reserve. A small section of Ashmore Reserve is managed as IUCN category II – national park.

The reserves are managed to maintain ecological processes and systems and to protect the habitats and biodiversity of the reserves from the pressures associated with human use.



A DIVERSITY OF MARINE LIFE AND HABITATS

These reserves protect unique and vulnerable tropical marine ecosystems.

Ashmore Reserve contains a coral reef system, three vegetated sand islands, two lagoons, seagrass beds, and extensive tidal sand flats.

Seagrass provides food for threatened species including dugongs and endangered sea turtles as well as providing food and habitat for a variety of fish, sea urchins, sea cucumbers, crustaceans and molluscs. The extensive sand flats are exposed at low tide, providing feeding areas for birds.

Cartier Reserve includes one sand island, extensive tidal sand flats and a coral reef system.



SEABIRDS

The islands of the Ashmore Reserve provide a resting place for large numbers of migratory shorebirds, and support large colonies of breeding seabirds. Some of these bird species are in such large numbers that the Ashmore Reef Reserve was designated a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance in October 2002.

TURTLES

Ashmore and Cartier Reserves support significant populations of feeding, breeding and nesting sea turtles. The Reserves protect critical habitat for sea turtles, such as extensive seagrass beds, undisturbed reef flats and sandy beaches.

SEA SNAKES

Ashmore is particularly famous for its abundance of sea snakes. Seventeen species have been recorded in the Reserve which is the greatest number of species recorded at any location around the world.

INDONESIAN FISHING

Traditional Indonesian fishers have visited reefs and shoals in the Ashmore and Cartier area for hundreds of years to collect sea cucumbers and trochus shells. Harvest of these species is prohibited in the Ashmore and Cartier Reserves.

An agreement between Australia and Indonesia allows traditional Indonesian fishers to continue to access certain parts of Ashmore Reserve to replenish fresh water supplies and seek shelter. Indonesian fishers may also visit grave sites.

RESEARCH AND MONITORING

There is ongoing research and monitoring in the Reserves. Studies include sea snakes, dugong, turtles, fish, corals, birds, sea cucumbers, trochus, shore ecology, oceanography, water chemistry, climate and sediments.

HOW YOU CAN HELP PROTECT ASHMORE RESERVE

(THERE IS NO PUBLIC ACCESS TO CARTIER RESERVE)

- Only West Island Lagoon and the eastern beach of West Island are open to the public. Public access to Middle and East Islands is prohibited.
 - To avoid damage to coral and seagrasses, please anchor at one of the 13 public moorings in accordance with the use limits outlined in the *Mooring at Ashmore* information sheet.
 - Do not collect or disturb Indonesian artefacts or any objects from shipwrecks. Cultural heritage is protected in the Reserve.
 - Do not collect any plants, animals or objects from the Reserve, including coral or shells.
 - Avoid wildlife disturbance by keeping boat speed and noise to a minimum and avoid shallow waters. Navigation requires caution.
- A speeding boat can harm turtles, dugongs and damage seagrass, coral and feeding grounds in shallow waters.
- Avoid disturbing nesting birds at all times. If adult birds are disturbed, nestlings and eggs may die from heat exposure in the intense sun. Excess noise may disturb birds and other wildlife.
 - To ensure the nocturnal behaviour of wildlife such as turtles is not disturbed, lighting should be kept at a minimum.
 - Camping on islands and lighting fires (including in portable barbeques or stoves) is prohibited. A wildfire could kill thousands of birds and destroy important habitat.
 - Waste, litter and pollutant liquids such as sewage are not to be dumped or released in the Reserve.
- Plastic bags and other debris can injure or kill marine animals.
- Do not take any animals or plants into the Reserve. Doing so may disturb wildlife and introduce pests.
 - Closely inspect personal effects and clothing (especially footwear) and remove earth, seeds and plant material before going ashore on West Island.
 - Resist the temptation to feed fish, birds and marine animals as it changes their natural behaviour and diet.
 - When diving or snorkelling, take care not to damage the fragile coral structures.
 - Water quality and availability at the pump on West Island cannot be guaranteed.

ACTIVITIES ALLOWED IN THE RESERVES

The Reserves are managed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. All activities in the Reserves or which may impact on the Reserves are subject to the provisions of the Act and its Regulations.

	AREAS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC IUCN category II zones West Island Lagoon, east beach and central corridor of West Island	AREAS CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC IUCN category I zones Majority of Ashmore Reserve (including Middle and East Islands) and all of Cartier Reserve
Public access	✓	permit*
Recreational activities		
Recreational fishing	Fishing (finfish only) for immediate consumption allowed.	✗
Collecting**	✗	✗
Camping and lighting fires	✗	✗
Scuba diving and snorkelling	✓	✗
Commercial activities		
Fishing and collecting**	✗	✗
Organised tours	permit	permit*
Other commercial activities	permit	permit*
Research	permit	permit*
Traditional Indonesian fishing		
Fishing and collecting**	Fishing (finfish only) for immediate consumption and one day's sailing allowed. No other collecting.	✗
Access for Indonesian fishers	Allowed for fresh water, shelter and to visit grave sites.	Allowed to West, Middle and East Islands to visit grave sites in cooperation with on-site managers.

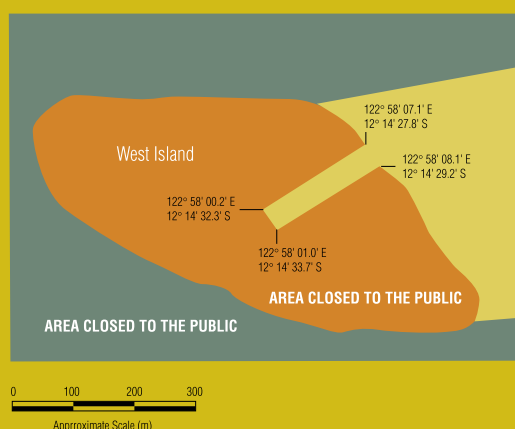
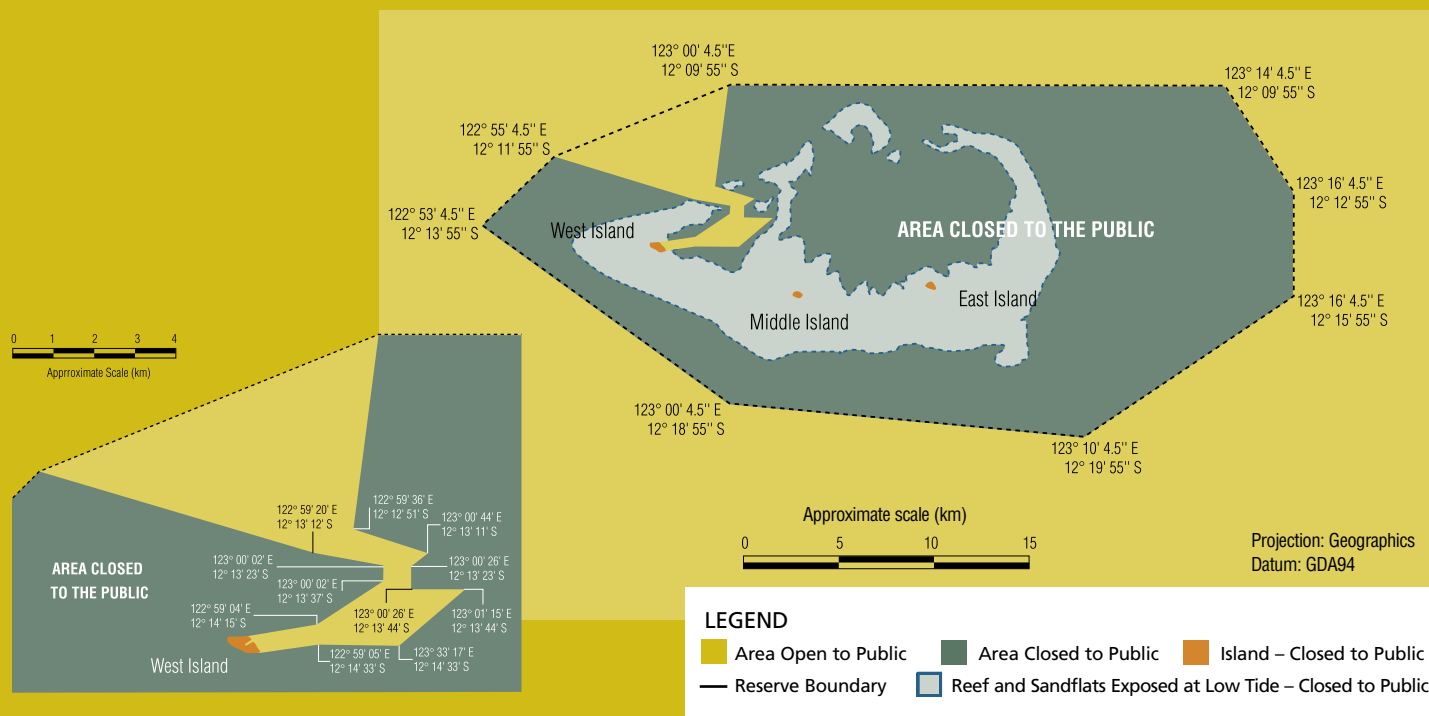


✓ activity allowed ✗ activity not allowed

* A permit under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2000* is required. Any access allowed to closed areas will be subject to strict conditions to ensure the ecological values of the Reserve are protected. For further information please refer to contact details on back page of brochure.

** Collecting refers to the collecting of any object, animal or plant from the Reserve, including coral, shells and sedentary species such as sea cucumbers.

ASHMORE REEF NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE - AREA OPEN TO THE PUBLIC



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

The Director
Marine Protected Areas Taskforce - Management Section
Department of the Environment and Heritage
GPO Box 787
Canberra ACT 2601
Telephone (02) 6274 1111

INFORMATION CAN ALSO BE FOUND ON OUR WEB SITE

For more information on the reserves and copies of the Ashmore Reef National Nature Reserve and Cartier Island Marine Reserve Management Plans visit our web site:
<http://www.deh.gov.au/coasts/mpa/index.html>

For permit application forms go to:
<http://www.deh.gov.au/epbc/permits/parks/>

PHOTO CREDITS

Flock of noddies, a typical sight at Ashmore (cover) – Graeme Beech
Brown Booby, a common species at Ashmore – Kriton Glenn
Traditional Indonesian fishing boat or perahu – Phil Domaschenz
Marine biologist undertaking reef platform survey – Kriton Glenn
Olive Sea Snake, Middle Island – Kriton Glenn
Masked Boobies, mother with chick – Paul Hemmings
Nautilus shell – Australian Institute of Marine Science

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