



Nuyts Archipelago and Investigator Group Wilderness Protection Areas

Draft Management Plan 2024



Government of South Australia
Department for Environment
and Water

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Acknowledgement of Country

The Department for Environment and Water acknowledges First Nations peoples as the traditional custodians of the lands we live and work upon and pays respect to Elders past and present. The department also acknowledges and respects the deep spiritual connection that First Nations people have to Country and that cultural and heritage beliefs continue to be just as important to living First Nations people today.





Your views are important

The Nuyts Archipelago and Investigator Group wilderness protection areas were proclaimed under the *Wilderness Protection Act 1992* in 2011. Prior to this, Evans Island was unallotted Crown Land and all other islands were part of either the Nuyts Archipelago Conservation Park, Isle of St. Francis Conservation Park or the Investigator Group Conservation Park.

The Nuyts Archipelago and Investigator Group Wilderness Protection Areas Draft Management Plan is the first plan to be developed for these parks since their proclamation as wilderness protection areas. It has been developed to outline the objectives and strategies that will set the direction for the long-term management of the parks.

It is released for public comment to provide members of the community with an opportunity to express their views on the future management of the parks.

Feedback received will be considered during the development of a final plan. Once developed, the final plan will be submitted to the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water for adoption under Section 31 of the *Wilderness Protection Act 1992*.

I encourage all interested people to assist in shaping the long-term management of the parks by making a submission on this draft plan. Guidance for the preparation of a submission can be found on page 26.

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Michael Williams". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "M".

Michael Williams

Director of National Parks and Wildlife

Developing this draft plan

This draft management plan incorporates the Nuyts Archipelago and Investigator Group wilderness protection areas. It has been developed to guide contemporary management of biodiversity, wilderness and visitation to these remote island parks.

The plan was developed by the Department for Environment and Water with input from First Nations, key stakeholders, park managers and technical experts utilising a combination of biological data, scientific reports, discussions, a review of previous management plans and feedback provided in 2 pre-planning submissions. The aspirations of Far West Coast Aboriginal people as outlined in the Far West Coast Sea Country Plan 2022-2032 has been incorporated in this plan for the Nuyts Archipelago Wilderness Protection Area.

This plan highlights the most important values of the parks, describes the main threats to these values and provides strategic direction for the protection of these values. This approach ensures that the plan is flexible and able to guide a range of future management challenges and opportunities.



Directions for management

The Nuyts Archipelago and Investigator Group wilderness protection areas are island parks located off the west coast of Eyre Peninsula. They encompass 36 individual islands and islets and comprise some of South Australia's most remote islands.

Wilderness protection areas are highly protected landscapes managed to retain their natural and undisturbed qualities. The *Wilderness Protection Act 1992* requires that management of wilderness protection areas conform to the policies set out in the *South Australian Code of Management for Wilderness Protection Areas and Zones*. The Code requires management with a focus on conservation and protection of biodiversity and the enhancement of wilderness quality. Public use and enjoyment is allowed where compatible with maximising wilderness quality.

The parks are rich in biodiversity and provide important habitat and breeding areas for many threatened species at both the national and state level.

The health of marine, coastal and land ecosystems is fundamental to the cultural and heritage values of First Nations people that have a connection with these parks. Many of the islands remain unchanged since the arrival of Europeans and retain native biodiversity from when sea levels were lower and the islands were connected to the mainland. As a result they are havens for biodiversity, contain endemic species and are among some of the last refuges for species now extinct, or at high risk of extinction on the Australian mainland.

The strategic management of these parks is primarily focussed on retaining the wilderness values by conserving habitat and breeding areas, minimising impacts to wildlife sensitive to disturbance, preventing physical damage to the landscape and managing biosecurity risks. Continuing research to increase understanding of wildlife populations and island ecology will inform biodiversity conservation and the actions required to support the resilience of species to key threats. Management zones have been designated to guide the protection of habitat and breeding areas and allocate areas for sustainable tourism and recreation.

The remote nature and limited access to the islands makes regular management challenging. Ongoing relationships with researchers, other agencies and commercial operators that visit these areas will enable the sharing of information that is important for responding to management challenges and opportunities.

Once adopted, the plan will meet the requirement for the development of a management plan for the Nuyts Archipelago Wilderness Protection Area and the Investigator Group Wilderness Protection Area as specified under section 31 of the *Wilderness Protection Act 1992*.

Management zones

The management zones designated in the parks (refer to Figures 1 and 2) establish a framework for consistent management that is compatible with conservation of the exceptional ecological values while also providing opportunities for sustainable tourism and recreation.

Under the *Wilderness Protection Act 1992*, operations must be carried out in accordance with the management plan. Therefore, each zone must be kept and maintained in accordance with the detail below and the conditions outlined throughout the plan.

Island Wilderness Zone

The Island Wilderness Zone comprises areas that have exceptional ecological value, outstanding wilderness quality and are largely free of the impacts of introduced pests. They provide secure areas and breeding sites for wildlife including shorebirds, seabirds, coastal raptors, reptiles and marine mammals, some of which are particularly sensitive to disturbance.

Island Wilderness Zones meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. The majority of the island that is accessible is utilised by wildlife sensitive to disturbance
2. Access on to the island is not possible without impacting wildlife sensitive to disturbance
3. Access from the water is impractical due to the geological profile, exposure to significant wind and swell energy, culminating in a high risk to visitor safety and damage to watercraft
4. The island has been proclaimed a Prohibited Area under the *Wilderness Protection Act 1992*.

Access to areas in this zone for park management operations, scientific research, cultural heritage management, conservation work and maintenance of marine navigational equipment is considered foundational and will be permitted subject to conditions.

Conditions will be designed to minimise disturbance to wildlife and the environment, manage the number of people, prevent biosecurity incursions and keep visitors safe. Access may be restricted further during wildlife breeding periods or sensitive life cycle stages. Overnight stays will only be permitted where essential to support outcomes associated with foundational activities. There are no facilities in these zones and visitation for tourism and recreation is not permitted.

Island Visitation Zone

Beach areas on St Francis and Goat islands (refer to Figure 1) have been designated as Island Visitation Zones to provide opportunities for on-island nature-based tourism and recreation experiences during day-light hours. Visitation to these areas requires prior approval to ensure that strategies are in place to minimise disturbance to wildlife and the environment, manage the number of people, prevent biosecurity incursions and keep visitors safe.

Access may be restricted further during wildlife breeding periods or sensitive life cycle stages. Visitor impacts will be monitored and visitation to each location will be reviewed and adjusted if negative impacts are determined. Infrastructure and visitor facilities will not be permitted to support tourism and recreation. Overnight stays will only be permitted for park management operations, scientific research, cultural heritage management or conservation purposes.

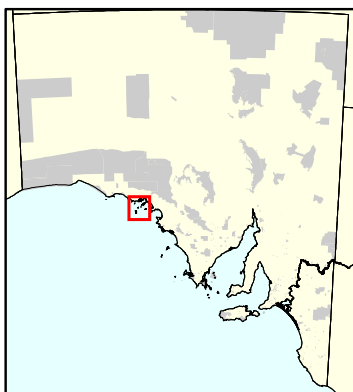
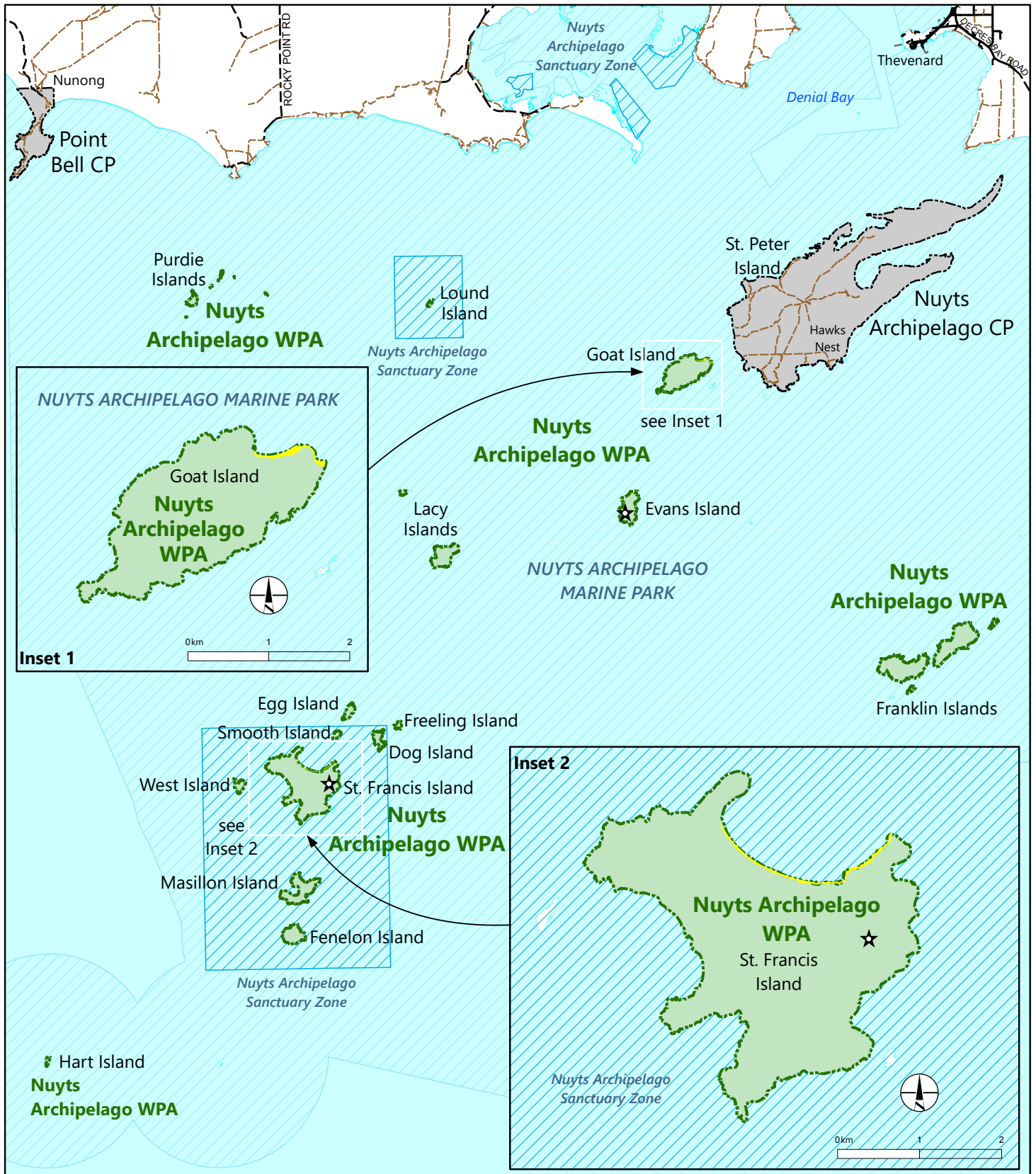
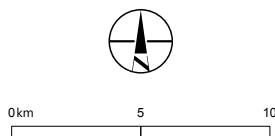


Figure 1

Nuyts Archipelago
Wilderness Protection Area



LEGEND

- Sealed road
- - - Unsealed road
- ⋯ Vehicle track
- ★ Marine navigational aid
- ▭ Nuyts Archipelago Wilderness Protection Area
- ▭ Island Wilderness Zone
- ▭ Island Visitation Zone
- ▭ Other parks
- ▭ Marine Park
- ▭ Marine Park Sanctuary Zone

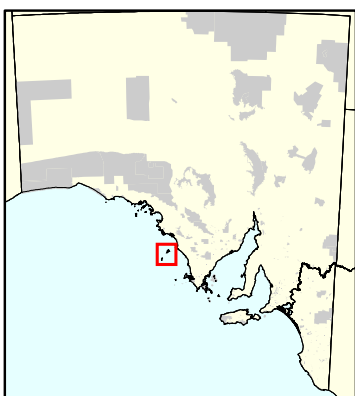
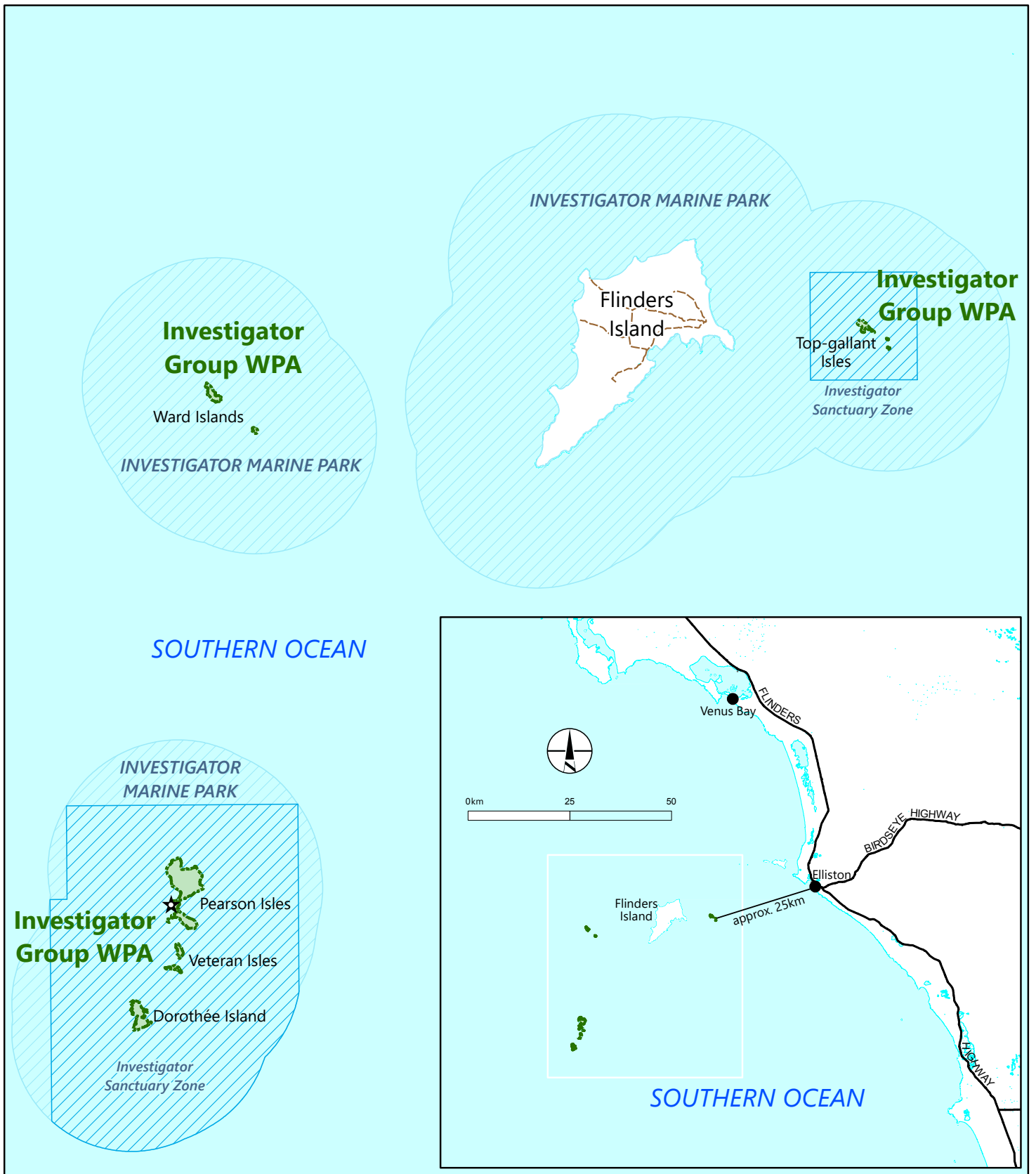
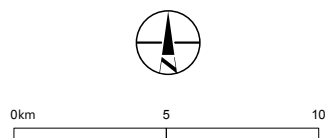







Figure 2
Investigator Group
Wilderness Protection Area



LEGEND

-  Investigator Group Wilderness Protection Area
-  Island Wilderness Zone
-  Marine Park
-  Marine Park Sanctuary Zone
-  Vehicle track
-  Sealed road
-  Marine navigational aid

Significance and purpose

The islands encompassed by these parks are a prominent part of the seascape within the Great Australian Bight. They are eroded remnants of the continental landmass cut-off from the mainland by rising sea levels thousands of years ago.

The morphology of the islands generally reflects their rock type and structure. The granite inselbergs of the Investigator Group of islands display perfect sheet structure, with granite pavements sloping gently into the sea, while islands in the Nuyts Archipelago have younger dune calcarenite forming a distinctive capping on ancient granitic and volcanic rocks (Robinson et al. 1996).

Wilderness areas are a critically important resource for the long-term protection of native flora and fauna, biological diversity and self-sustaining ecosystems, particularly in the face of climate change. For land to be considered 'wilderness' under the *Wilderness Protection Act 1992* it must be relatively free from the effects of modern technology and not seriously affected by exotic animals, plants or organisms.

The islands have long been recognised for their ecological value. In 2009, the former South Australian Wilderness Advisory Committee assessed the wilderness values of these islands and found that they play an important role in protecting delicate island ecology and habitat and breeding grounds for numerous threatened species including marine and migratory fauna (DEH 2009). Subsequently, on 25 August 2011, by proclamation under the *Wilderness Protection Act 1992*, the:

- Investigator Group Wilderness Protection Area replaced the Investigator Group Conservation Park; and
- Nuyts Archipelago Wilderness Protection Area was formed incorporating parcels of the Nuyts Archipelago Conservation Park, Isle of St. Francis Conservation Park and Evans Island.

Isolation, a climate different to that on the mainland and a lack of introduced predators has resulted in a high level of endemism, unique wildlife assemblages and relict populations of species that once occurred on the mainland. Wildlife utilising these islands are not generally impacted by the common and ever present threats that occur on mainland Australia.

Over 500 species of native flora and 100 species of native fauna have been recorded across the islands, many of which are listed under the *Environment*

Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 and the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* (refer to Appendix 1 and 2). Some of the state's most endangered species including Australian sea lion (*Neophoca cinerea*), Pearson Island black-footed rock wallaby (*Petrogale lateralis pearsoni*), greater stick-nest rat (*Leporillus conditor*), southern brown bandicoot (Nuyts Archipelago) (*Isoodon obesulus nauticus*), white-bellied sea eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*) and eastern osprey (*Pandion haliaetus cristatus*) are found in the parks. The ecology of the islands are of great interest to scientists and researchers for insight into the evolution of species in isolation and their response to changes.

The islands support several broad vegetation structures which are largely determined by island size, topographic variability, distance from the mainland, basic geology and the kind of soil development that has occurred (Robinson et al, 1996). The larger islands generally support a more diverse range of vegetation types compared to smaller islands due to the geological variability and soil types. The larger islands also generally support additional vertebrate fauna species not found on smaller islands. The Subtropical and Temperate Coastal Saltmarsh threatened ecological community is likely to be present on a number of islands within both parks.

The boundary of both wilderness protection areas extends to low water mark where it connects with the boundary of the marine parks surrounding all islands. This connectivity represents the importance of protecting the link between terrestrial and marine ecosystems.

Nuyts Archipelago Wilderness Protection Area

Nuyts Archipelago Wilderness Protection Area encompasses 2,329 hectares and is made up of 24 islands and islets with the largest being St Francis Island. Many of the islands have spectacular cliffs and sheltered bays. The islands generally have a base of granite blanketed with varying depths of calcarenite derived soil. The prodigious granite foundations supporting West, St Francis, Masillon and Fenelon islands are of compositions not found on the mainland (Robinson et al. 1996). Many of the islands provide important habitat for seabirds and migratory species as well as breeding areas for Australian sea lions. St Francis and the Franklin islands protect populations of

southern brown bandicoot (Nuyts Archipelago). The Franklin Islands protect colonies of the greater stick-nest rat. Rock stacks and cliff faces provide important nesting sites for the white-bellied sea eagle and eastern osprey.

Grazing of sheep began under lease on St Francis Island and several other outlying islands from 1859 to around 1939 when it was considered unviable. Goat Island and the Franklin islands were also used for grazing at times. Penguin guano was mined from several islands in the late 1800s and used as fertiliser on the islands and sold as a commodity on the mainland.

Blefuscu Island is a small island approximately 500 metres to the south of West Franklin Island. It is dominated by rocky patches and contains a small area of soil at its northern end that supports hardy shrubs that are salt tolerant. Australian sea lions and little penguins (*Eudyptula minor novaehollandiae*) breed on the island.

Dog Island is blanketed by thick calcarenite which has contributed to the islands deep sand which is perforated with burrows supporting one of the densest island colonies of short-tailed shearwaters (Robinson et al. 1996). Marsh saltbush (*Atriplex paludosa ssp. cordata*) and seaberry saltbush (*Rhagodia candolleana ssp. candolleana*) intermixed with a variety of heathland species dominate the sandy soil and also support a population of bush rat (*Rattus fuscipes*) (Robinson et al. 1996). The nationally endangered basalt peppergrass (*Lepidum hyssopifolium*) has been found on the island. The coastline is carved into irregular points and sheltered coves that provide haul-out areas for Australian sea lions. The white-bellied sea eagle, greater crested tern (*Thalasseus bergii cristatus*) and ruddy turnstone (*Arenaria interpres interpres*) are also known to utilise the island.

Egg Island is surrounded by steep granite shelves and deep water. The island's greater bulk is clothed in a relatively complex mosaic of coastal heath vegetation (Robinson et al. 1996). The deeper patches of soil are well utilised by little penguins and short-tailed shearwaters. White-bellied sea eagles are known to utilise the island as do Australian sea lions for hauling out.

Evans Island has an upper plateau with deep soil that supports a dense, tall chenopod shrubland dominated by marsh saltbush dotted with short-tailed shearwater and white-faced storm petrel burrows. At the coast the calcarenite drops steeply to a broad granite fringe; this transition is divided by jumbled boulders of both rock types, the harder granite weathering to more rounded forms in contrast to the jagged limestone and sandstone. Where the calcarenite is thicker the sea has carved out the underlying sandstone, leaving a limestone shell to form extensive overhangs and caves that are often quite deep (Robinson et al. 1996). White-bellied sea eagles are known to breed on the island.

The 3 metre tall lighthouse is owned and managed by the Australian Marine Safety Authority and the land that it is situated on is not part of the park.

The **Franklin Islands** are calcarenite-capped plateaus, dropping steeply to granite platforms along the coastlines. Nitre-bush (*Nitraria billardierei*) dominates in soil that generally carries marsh saltbush on other islands. The western side of each island has curving beaches of sand back by dunes and the islands are joined by a ribbon of white sand that dries at low tide. The islands protect colonies of southern brown bandicoot (Nuyts Archipelago) and the world's last known natural population of greater stick-nest rat. The distinctive mounds of woven sticks in which the animal normally shelters are not as prominent on the Franklin Islands as they once were over its former range on the mainland: instead, the island populations seem more satisfied with the protection of overhanging rock ledges, only a few rudimentary stick-nests ever having been built (Robinson et al. 1996). Both islands have been declared Prohibited Areas to protect the habitat and populations of greater stick-nest rat and southern brown bandicoot (Nuyts Archipelago).

These islands support an abundant population of black tiger snakes (*Notechis scutatus*), which grow to extremely large dimensions, reflecting the variety of prey present (Robinson et al. 1996). Short-tailed shearwater burrows occupy all available deep soil. The islands are also known breeding areas for white-bellied sea eagle, eastern osprey, caspian tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*), little penguin and pacific gull (*Larus pacificus georgii*). Migratory species including the caspian tern, common greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*), common sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*), double-banded plover (*Charadrius bicinctus bicinctus*), greater crested tern, red-necked stint (*Calidris ruficollis*), ruddy turnstone and sanderling (*Calidris alba alba*) have all been recorded on these islands.

The Franklin Islands were at one stage incorporated into the pastoral lease of St Francis Island, and were used as bonus grazing land for sheep. A timber-framed hut remains on West Franklin Island.

Freeling Island has pockets of sandy soil that supports low saltbush shrubland and small breeding populations of short-tailed shearwaters and little penguins.

Australian sea lions haul out on the island and migratory species including the greater crested tern, ruddy turnstone and sanderling also use the island.

Fenelon Island has a dome shape with a calcarenite hummock sloping gently to a broad rim of granite. The coastline is rounded, with the only cliffs by a small bay on the north-eastern side (Robinson et al. 1996). Marsh saltbush shrubland grows in the deeper pockets of soil. Shrubland with heath bluebush (*Maireana oppositifolia*) dominates the shallower soils while heath vegetation is found in the extensive outcroppings of shingled stone. Sheltering among the heath near the islands summit is a stand of wind-gnarled Yalata mallee (*Eucalyptus yalataensis*) little more than 50 cm high (Robinson et al. 1996). These are the only eucalypts to be found in the St Francis Group and their persistence is likely to be the last remains of a population stranded by the island's initial isolation more than 9,000 years ago (Robinson et al. 1996). Australian sea lions breed on the small beach and rock platforms along the northern coastline. White-faced storm petrels burrow into the shallower soils.

Goat Island has steep cliffs on the exposed south side and a sandy beach in the north-eastern tip. The upper platform is almost entirely blanketed in deep soil, with only occasional hilly outcrops of limestone (Robinson et al. 1996). A low nitre-bush shrubland is confined to the rises, leaving the remainder of the island covered by marsh saltbush shrubland (Robinson et al. 1996). Australian sea lions haul out on the island and it is known to be territory for the white-bellied sea eagle. A dense population of short-tailed shearwater utilise the extensive deep soils across the island. With such disturbance from burrowing, the island only supports a small number of flora species. The dense chenopod shrubland also provides habitat for the bush rat.

Goat Island at one stage was incorporated into the pastoral lease of St Francis Island, and was used as bonus grazing land for sheep.

Hart Island is one of the most distant islands from mainland South Australia and was one of the first to be severed by the rising ocean 10,800 years ago (Robinson et al. 1996). The island is a slab of worn rock with limited vegetation which is mostly patches of round leaved pigface growing in sheltered areas. The island is an important roosting site for birds including crested terns and ruddy turnstones but is most likely not sheltered enough to be a major breeding site. Australian sea lions are known to haul out on the island.

Lacy Islands is a group consisting of one large island with a small islet and a cluster of submerged and drying rocks 3.5 km to the north (Robinson et al. 1996). The thin soil on the main island supports a low heath containing a relatively high diversity of species (Robinson et al. 1996). Heath bluebush shrubland occurs in areas with less outcropping limestone, while in deeper soil pockets of the valleys are dense shrublands of marsh saltbush and nitre-bush. Many of the species found in the heath are not found on many other nearby islands. The thicker shrubs have also aided the survival of the bush rat (Robinson et al. 1996). Short-tailed shearwaters burrow in the valleys where the soil is deep. The greater than usual area of shingly limestone provides habitat for a high number of reptile species than otherwise would be expected.

Lilliput Island is around 600 metres off the north-eastern tip of West Franklin Island. It rises steeply to a plateau of around 2 hectares. Shrubs persist where the soil provides good growing conditions. The island protects a breeding colony of Australian sea lions. Sea birds including little penguins, caspian tern and greater crested tern are known to breed on the island.

Lound Island is larger than most of its western neighbours and has more diverse flora and fauna (Robinson et al. 1996). The calcarenite cap is protected from the erosive force of the ocean by a high granite base. Australian sea lions breed on the island. Birds including sooty oystercatcher (*Haematopus fuliginosus fuliginosus*), bridled tern (*Onychoprion anaethetus*), ruddy turnstone, greater crested tern, red-necked stint and sanderling are known to inhabit the island.



Masillon Island has a cross-bedding of calcarenite layers often visible in the cliffs, a relic of when the sandstone was windblown dunes (Robinson et al. 1996). Vegetation is dominated by nitre-bush across the clifftops, small heathy shrubs in the shallow soils and marsh saltbush shrubland in the deep loamy sand that supports a large population of short-tailed shearwaters. The nationally endangered basalt peppergrass (*Lepidum hyssopifolium*) has been recorded on the island. Areas of dense vegetation also supports a population of bush rat. Australian sea lions haul out on the island.

The **Purdie Islands** consist of a main island and chain of granite islets. Most are too low and exposed to the effects of surging seas and salt spray to support permanent plants or animals. The main island however, retains a thick sheet of calcarenite and enough soil to support a range of low shrubs and salt-tolerant, low growing plants (Robinson et al, 1996). It also supports a large breeding colony of Australian sea lions, especially concentrated at the northern end but found distributed across the entire island. Fairy terns (*Sternula nereis nereis*) and migratory species including bridled tern, greater crested tern, red-necked stint and ruddy turnstone and known to use the island.

Smooth Island is a relatively small island with a thin calcarenite mantle that has been smoothed by erosion (Robinson et al. 1996). Sandy skeletal soils fill the depressions in rock across the island with saltbush dominating deeper pockets of soil. Australian sea lions haul out on the island.

St Francis Island is the largest island within the wilderness protection area. It also has the greatest complexity. Its granite base is concealed beneath a thick bed of calcarenite, exposed only as wave-slicked boulders and shelves fringing calcarenite cliffs along the western, southern and eastern coastlines (Robinson et al. 1996).

Petrel Bay with its north-easterly aspect offers safe anchorage. Sand dunes fringe Petrel Bay and crown some of the cliffs ringing the sandy coves on the south-western side (Robinson et al. 1996). Saltbush shrubland is the dominant vegetation type. The shallow soil and limestone outcrops characteristic of the elevated southern end support a taller, more diverse shrubland (Robinson et al. 1996).

Small stands of dry land tea-tree (*Melaleuca lanceolata*) grow on the southern side and are the tallest shrubs found on the island (Robinson et al. 1996). Reptile species are more diverse on St Francis than on the surrounding smaller islands, with species utilising most habitats. Spinifex grows in the taller shrubland and supports a diverse range of gecko and skink species.

The thin soil at the north-western end supports a distinct vegetation characterised by scattered saltbush, grasses and extensive mats of pigface. Short-tailed shearwaters breed across large areas of the shrubland where the soil is deep. The white-bellied sea eagle and eastern osprey have breeding territories on the island and Cape Barren geese (*Cereopsis novaehollandiae novaehollandiae*) utilise the grasses for spring feed. Australian sea lions haul out on the islands varied coastline and hooded plovers breed on the extensive beach of Petrel Bay. Little penguins use the rocky areas at the eastern end of Petrel Bay. A population of southern brown bandicoot (Nuyts Archipelago) inhabit the island. Attempts to reintroduce brush-tailed bettongs (*Bettongia penicillata*) in the 1980s were unsuccessful.

An application to lease the island and several others nearby was lodged in 1859 and sheep were introduced in 1891. The cultivation of lucerne (40 ha), wheat and barley (9 ha) and vegetables (16 ha) was also undertaken at times. The ruins of limestone buildings, yards and fence lines are what remains of pastoral activity on the island. Penguin guano mined from caves on the eastern side of the island proved to be a small export industry for several years.

The automatic lighthouse and radio beacon located at the islands summit are leased to the Australian Marine Safety Authority.

West Island and its neighbouring reef are remnants of a promontory that once extended from St Francis Island (Robinson et al. 1996). Like many islands in the area it is composed of a granite base with a calcarenite mantle. Ocean swell has stripped the island of most of its calcarenite leaving exposed granite surfaces. Vegetation is dominated by plants that can tolerate shallower soils and a high salt load. Australian sea lions use the north-western end for breeding and hauling out and the migratory greater crested tern is also known to use the island.

Investigator Group Wilderness Protection Area

The Investigator Group Wilderness Protection Area is approximately 386 hectares and is made up of five steep domed granite island groups- Pearson, Veteran, Dorothée, Top-gallant and Ward islands (Figure 2). The group displays features common to many Eyre Peninsula islands but combines them in awe-inspiring exhibitions of natural architecture (Robinson et al. 1996). The biological features of the Pearson Isles are of such interest that it is one of the most scientifically important of the state's offshore islands (Robinson et al. 1996).

The **Pearson Isles** is composed of 3 main land masses. The larger northern island is separated from the southern island by a rock-choked channel effectively dividing them in two. A small islet lies just off the western coastline of the southern island.

A noticeable feature of the islands are the sharp granite peaks. Although predominately granite, the islands have retained patches of thin calcarenite sand. The highest peak is 238 metres and is on the north island. The variety of landforms and soil types on these islands create a range of micro-climates which supports a correspondingly high diversity of species (Robinson et al. 1996).

On the north island 2 valleys have evolved with a rudimentary drainage system retaining soil worn from the surrounding rocks. Above 100 metres from the sea a drooping sheoak (*Allocasuarina verticillata*) woodland fills sheltered ravines in deep patches of granite-derived soil and their density increases with altitude (Robinson et al. 1996). This community resembles areas similar on the mainland but is not impacted by the same range of threats and is of great interest to botanists as it has been isolated for around 10,000 years. Dryland tea-tree dominates the higher areas of the north island on shallower soils and swamp tea-tree (*Melaleuca halmaturorum*), which is a minor species on offshore islands, is found along the saline soil of Main Creek. Closer to the sea the vegetation changes to heath and shrubland more common on offshore islands. The state rare dwarf centrolepis (*Centrolepis cephaliformis* ssp. *murrayi*) has been found on the north island and fringe-fruited pennywort (*Hydrocotyle comocarpa*) has been found on both islands.

The structural variety of the islands is also reflected in its vertebrate inhabitants (Robinson et al. 1996). The Pearson Island black-footed rock wallaby inhabits the granitic rocky areas of both islands. They have only been present on the south island since 6 animals in the captivity of researchers accidentally escaped and established in 1960. The population of bush rats present a fascinating insight into the long-term effects of genetic isolation and evidence of adaptive evolution (Robinson et al. 1996).

A breeding colony of Australian sea lions can be constantly found in the sheltered cove on the eastern side of the southern island. Long-nosed fur seals (*Arctocephalus forsteri*) also breed on the islands. The white-bellied sea eagle and eastern osprey utilise the islands and a range of seabirds including the fairy tern, little penguin, short-tailed shearwater, white-faced storm petrel, pacific gull and flesh-footed shearwater breed on the islands. The islands also provide habitat for the common greenshank, greater crested tern, red-necked stint, red-tailed tropicbird, ruddy turnstone, rock parrot, sooty oystercatcher, Pacific reef heron (*Egretta sacra sacra*) and the Cape Barren goose.

The woodlands and shrublands shelter land birds such as the golden whistler (*Pachycephala pectoralis*), red-capped robin (*Petroica goodenovii*) and masked woodswallows (*Artamus personatus*) not normally associated with offshore islands (Robinson et al. 1996). The islands contain a range of reptile species that utilise the cracks and crevices in the rock as well as cover from leaf litter and shrubs.

The marine navigation aid on North Pearson Island is owned and managed by the Australian Marine Safety Authority and is not formally part of the park.

The **Veteran Isles** form 2 separate groups of islands with steep summits. The northern rising to 82 metres and the southern to 26 metres. Both peaks are granite. The higher, deeply corrugated northern island retains pockets of granitic soil supporting low shrubland dominated by marsh saltbush and twiggy daisy-bush (*Olearia ramulosa*) (Robinson et al. 1996). The southern island has no soil or vegetation due to the powerful swells that impact the surface limiting animals to transient species and Australian sea lions that haul out across the group. Short-tailed shearwaters and little penguins breed on the north island and Cape Barren geese use it as part of their feeding territory.

Dorothée Island is split by a main crevasse into a northern and southern peak, the northern reaching 140 metres and the southern rising to 102 metres. The upper platform retains pockets of soil deep enough to support 5 plant associations with diverse heath characteristics. Australian sea lion, white-bellied sea eagle, little penguin, pacific gull, short-tailed shearwater and white-faced storm petrel breed on the island.

The **Top-gallant Isles** were named after the upper spars and rigging on a square-rigged sailing ship, the first part seen when such a ship appears on the horizon (Robinson et al. 1996). Their soaring, sheer profiles are the product of a massive bed of calcarenite with undercut cliffs caused by wave action. The main island, which is around 20 hectares, is encircled by 75 metre high cliffs and has a summit of 100 metres. A heath with the more salt tolerant plants are found where the cliffs flatten. The soil layer deepens as the slopes round off to the summit plateau, allowing taller, more deeply rooted shrubs to grow (Robinson et al. 1996). Plant communities are relatively simple and include 4 distinct plant communities; all low shrublands, two dominated by chenopods, the remainder by nitre-bush or pointed twinleaf (*Roepera apiculata*). On the smaller islets hardy plants grow in pockets where coarse sand has accumulated in rock crevices. Short-tailed shearwaters and white-faced storm petrels breed on the main island utilising the deeper pockets of soil for burrows. White-bellied sea eagles are known to breed on the island and Australian sea lions haul out on the shoreline.

Ward Islands include a main island and an islet with detached reefs and submerged rocks. The main island is the product of a volcanic intrusion that solidified to granite. As with many of these islands, sand dunes have solidified to calcarenite. This calcarenite now remains as a tall stump in the centre of the island which at times is all that is exposed, with the erosive surf crashing into its base and carving overhangs and caves. The simple vegetation that grows on these islands is dominated by saltbush in the deeper soils, nitre-bush generally in the limey calcareous soils and point twinleaf prevalent on the decomposed sandstone soils. Short-tailed shearwaters burrow in the deeper soils and white-faced storm petrels in the shallower soil. White-bellied sea eagles breed on the islands as does a colony of Australian sea lions.

What are we looking after?

- Islands that have been retained in their natural state and contain wilderness qualities important for native flora and fauna, biological diversity and self-sustaining ecosystems.
- Island environments containing intact and functional habitat that provides critical breeding, feeding and resting areas for land and marine mammals, reptiles, coastal raptors, seabirds and shorebirds.
- Fauna species that are uniquely island endemic and threatened at the national and state level.
- Relic fauna populations that have persisted and evolved since the islands were cut-off from the mainland by sea level rise thousands of years ago.
- Areas without artificial light, important for the proper functioning of natural ecosystems.
- Areas likely to contain a nationally threatened ecological community.
- Landscape features and sites that are of cultural and spiritual significance and important for the continuation of First Nations culture.
- Opportunities for wilderness and nature-based experiences where visitors can connect with nature and appreciate the unique features of the natural environment.
- Ecosystems and species that provide insight into evolutionary processes and opportunities for scientific research.
- 9 flora species that are listed as threatened under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* (refer to Appendix 1).
- 17 fauna species that are listed as threatened under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*. This includes 8 species that are also listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (refer to Appendix 2).



Challenges and opportunities

Key challenges and opportunities in the protection and management of the parks are:

- Maintaining wilderness and natural values of the islands so they remain as havens for biodiversity, including endemic and threatened species.
- Maintaining natural processes, habitat quality and vegetation communities that provide the conditions necessary for the life cycle of native species.
- Implementing biosecurity measures to prevent and mitigate the risks to island ecology from the introduction of exotic pests and diseases.
- Managing the impacts of pest plants to protect habitat for breeding populations of native fauna and vegetation of conservation significance.
- Managing nature-based tourism and recreation to ensure the ongoing protection of threatened species, island endemic species and species sensitive to disturbance.
- Working with the tourism sector to ensure nature-based tourism experiences are high quality, raise awareness of the importance of island habitats and consistent with the protection of key values.
- Supporting further scientific research and biological surveys to increase understanding of island ecology, breeding populations and wildlife assemblages.
- Partnering with environmental organisations, researchers, commercial tourism operators and First Nations for the monitoring and protection of park values.
- Partnering with First Nations to ensure cultural sites are protected.
- Understanding the impacts of climate change and the actions required to support ecosystem resilience to decreasing rainfall, increasing temperatures and sea level rise.

THEME 1:

Protecting habitat and breeding areas

The Nuyts Archipelago and Investigator Group wilderness protection areas protect islands in a near natural state and play a key role in the preservation of wildlife populations through the protection of habitat and breeding areas, particularly for native fauna including threatened, marine and migratory species.

While the remoteness and isolation is a large contributing factor in the islands retaining their wilderness values by largely insulated them from impacts caused by pest plants and animals, diseases and human disturbance, they remain fragile and require careful management of key threats to maintain their exceptional ecological qualities.

Many of the unique biodiversity values are sensitive to disturbance by visitors. Potential impacts include disturbance of breeding, moulting and resting wildlife, destruction of burrows, introduction of exotic species, litter, trampling and erosion. Australian sea lions, coastal raptors, shorebirds and migratory birds are particularly sensitive to disturbance.

Preventing incursions of exotic species and minimising impacts to species sensitive to disturbance are priorities. Continuing to improve understanding of ecological systems and population dynamics will enable changes to be monitored over time. Management activities will focus on maintaining wilderness values by implementing biosecurity measures, minimising disturbance to wildlife, monitoring, surveys, scientific research and strategic weed management.

Key species of conservation significance such as Australian sea lion, black-footed rock wallaby, southern brown bandicoot (Nuyts Archipelago), greater stick-nest rat, fairy tern, hooded plover, eastern osprey, white-bellied sea eagle, Cape Barren goose and rock parrot rely on the environmental conditions that these islands provide. These threatened species require specific management to prevent further decline or extinction. Actions detailed in recovery plans and conservation advice statements for species listed

under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* will be implemented where necessary to support their conservation.

Monitoring, biological surveys and scientific research are fundamental activities for continuing to build understanding of island ecosystems, habitat condition and species distribution and abundance. Partnering with researchers and environmental organisations will be important for positive long-term outcomes and collaboration to establish accurate baseline data that is crucial for detecting changes and supporting adaptive management. This is particularly important for islands where visitation is likely to occur.

Biosecurity risks are a continual challenge. The movement of watercraft, people and material from the mainland to islands, and between islands, can result in the unintended introduction of exotic species including cats, rodents, insects and weeds. This can create serious impacts including species competition, predation, habitat modification and a decrease in ecosystem health. The introduction of exotic predators would almost certainly create significant impacts on species such as beach-nesting shorebirds, reptiles and small mammals. Responding to incursions of exotic species on these islands will be costly and difficult due to their remoteness. Preventing biosecurity incursions through the development of protocols and preparedness by having response plans will be crucial to managing biosecurity risks and responding to detections.

Climate change projections for the region indicate decreasing rainfall, increasing temperatures, rising sea levels and more severe fire danger days (DEW 2022). Implications of climate change will include submersion of current shorelines and low lying islands, more time in drought, changes in native vegetation and increased risk of extinction to vulnerable species. Research and monitoring will be vital in developing an understanding of climate change impacts and implementing programs to support ecosystems and vulnerable species to be resilient.



Vegetation

Remoteness and the lack of reliable water sources have precluded pastoral use from the majority of the islands. Subsequently, vegetation communities are largely intact except on a few islands that have endured agriculture. Some of the most common native vegetation types include:

- Marsh Saltbush (*Atriplex paludosa*)
Chenopod Shrubland
- Nitre-bush (*Nitraria billardierei*) Low Shrubland
- Round-leaved Pigface (*Disphyma crassifolium* ssp. *clavellatum*) Herbland
- Marsh Saltbush (*Atriplex paludosa*)
Chenopod Shrubland

Marsh Saltbush Chenopod Shrubland is found on fine sandy loams and in its undisturbed state it supports enormous breeding populations of short-tailed shearwaters. It has adapted to a turnover of subsoil and topsoil from September to April each year and a large input of phosphate. It was these shrublands on the rich sandy loam that were cleared and grazed by sheep on St Francis Island and numerous other islands to a degree.

Indicative mapping of the nationally vulnerable Subtropical and Temperate Coastal Saltmarsh ecological community shows it is likely to be present on Fenelon, Top-gallant, Pearson and Dorothée islands. Ground-truthing is required to determine if local communities meet the key diagnostic characteristics and condition thresholds of the defining criteria.

Vegetation associations that have not been subjected to external impacts such as rabbits and sheep like those on the mainland provide great opportunity for botanists to can study them in their natural state. Early photographic records and vegetation descriptions for islands including Pearson and the Franklin islands provide scope for further research into vegetation changes over time.

The most notable invasive species on the islands is African boxthorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*) and common iceplant (*Mesembryanthemum crystallinum*). Boxthorn was introduced to many islands across the state, including St Francis, to form windbreaks and as hedges to fence sheep. Birds that eat the fleshy fruit have spread the seed to other islands. In some instances boxthorn can provide nesting sites for birds, in others it can reduce the area available for nesting.

Iceplant is a well-known coloniser of bare ground. It is able to survive in saline areas by moving excess salt around its root zone to the outer surface of the leaves and stems. As an annual plant, these salts are returned back to the soil when it dies almost always ensuring it is iceplant that re-establishes the area. More understanding of the impacts of iceplant on the islands is needed to understand the changes in vegetation that may be taking place. This will be important for any areas where re-establishing native vegetation may be undertaken following weed control.

Targeted weed control will be undertaken on islands where pest plants threaten the condition of important habitat for breeding populations of native fauna and where vegetation of conservation significance is at risk of degradation. New infestations of introduced species detected will be controlled or eradicated where feasible to prevent outbreaks having an impact on biodiversity and the wilderness quality of the parks.



Land mammals

The largest of the terrestrial mammals found in these parks is the Pearson Island black-footed rock wallaby. Wallabies from the Pearson Isles were successfully released on Wedge and Thistle islands in the 1970s to increase the range of the species (Eldridge and Close 1998; Robinson et al. 1996). Fire, disease, drought and a low level of genetic variability are potential threats but are not known to be currently having an impact.

Greater stick-nest rats were once broadly distributed throughout the arid and semi-arid regions of southern Australia (Copley 1999, Lee 1995). The mainland population has been extinct since the 1930s (Copley 1999), leaving the only extant population on the Franklin Islands. A captive breeding program beginning in 1985 has enabled the reintroduction of progeny to be made on mainland South Australia, other islands off the Eyre Peninsula and islands in Western Australia. On the Franklin Islands, it uses the dense shrubs, as well as short-tailed shearwater nesting burrows and crevices among rocks, for shelter (Lee, 1995). Barn owls and black tiger snakes are the main predators of the greater stick-nest rat on the Franklin Islands (Robinson 1975; Strahan 1998) and the main potential threat is the introduction of feral predators.

The southern brown bandicoot (Nuyts Archipelago) is uniquely endemic to these islands and only occurs on the Franklin Islands and St Francis Island. They are omnivorous and inhabit areas with sandy, well-drained soils supporting scrubby vegetation with heathy low shrubs or ground cover (Braithwaite 1998, Maxwell et al. 1996). Populations seem to occur at a much lower density on St Francis Island (Copley et al 1980; Kemper 1990; Watts 1974) which is likely a result of predation by black tiger snakes and southern carpet pythons. The main identified threats include habitat disturbance; and extinction of local populations due to its susceptibility to stochastic events, as a result of its extremely limited distribution (Kemper, 1990; Maxwell et al., 1996). The introduction of feral predators would have a detrimental impact.

Islands can play a key role in fauna reintroduction and translocation programs due to their isolation from issues affecting the mainland, lack of predators and their geographical boundaries. Further wildlife reintroduction or translocation programs are not currently planned but may be considered in the future to boost genetic variability between populations, stabilise, re-establish or increase in-situ populations of threatened species.

Marine mammals

The boundaries of these parks extend to low water mark incorporating rocky shores, rock pools, beaches and intertidal areas utilised by colonies of long-nosed fur seals and the nationally endangered Australian sea lions. Both species were hunted to the point of extinction by the early 1800s. As a result the eastern extent of the original range of Australian sea lions has been substantially reduced. While both species are no longer threatened by hunting, there is concern over why Australian sea lions are making such a slow recovery when compared with the long-nosed fur seal (Sarre 1998; Shaughnessy 1999). Known threats to Australian sea lions include fishery bycatch and entanglement in marine debris, human disturbance, competition, prey depletion and climate change. Emerging threats include disease and pollution. Disturbance at breeding times can lead to displacement from the area, shorter lactation times, abandonment of pups and mortality through conspecific trauma.

Australian sea lion counts are being undertaken every breeding season to better understand population dynamics and monitor Australian sea lion numbers. Utilising drone technology and photogrammetry software in monitoring programs will enable multiple surveys to be undertaken each season and the ability to detect population changes more quickly and more accurately. Monitoring provides critical insight into Australian sea lion numbers, identification of areas used for breeding and hauling out and supports adaptive management of existing and emerging threats to support their recovery.

Reptiles

A range of reptiles including snakes, skinks and geckos are present across the islands. St Francis Island has a particularly high diversity which is attributed to the presence of spinifex (*Triodia irritans*) which generally supports reptile communities wherever it is a major component of the vegetation.

Black tiger snakes have evolved to island conditions since being cut off from the mainland. Black tiger snakes are the major terrestrial predator on South Australia's islands, feeding on lizards when small and on seabirds such as short-tailed shearwaters and white-faced storm petrels when they are larger (Robinson et al, 1996). Differences in markings, sexual dimorphism and sex ratio between black tiger snake populations on different islands has been attributed to the difference in prey available on each island (Schwaner, 1985).

The isolated nature of the islands, along with the presence of near relatives to these reptiles on the mainland, makes reptiles perfect candidates for further research and studies on island biogeography and evolution.



Coastal raptors, seabirds and shorebirds

Many of the islands provide feeding and resting areas and support breeding colonies of marine, coastal and terrestrial bird species, some of which are threatened at the state or national or listed in international agreements for the conservation of migratory species. Introduced predators and human impacts from disturbance and trampling of nests and burrows are considered key threats.

The white-bellied sea eagle and eastern osprey are both moderately common across these islands but are considered endangered in South Australia due to low numbers of breeding pairs. Both species have had a decline in the number of occupied territories over the past 50 years (Dennis 2007b; Detmar and Dennis 2018; Dennis and Detmar 2018). They use rocky shores, cliffs and rock stacks as nesting sites and roosting areas in these parks due to the lack of trees. The availability of undisturbed coastal areas makes these parks a significant breeding refuge for these species. Implementing strategies identified in the *South Australian Recovery Plan for Eastern Osprey and White-bellied Sea Eagle* will be important for their ongoing survival.

Tens-of-thousands of short-tailed shearwaters and white-faced storm petrels breed on these islands where the soil is deep enough to support burrows. St Francis Island supports one of the largest colonies of short-tailed shearwaters in the state.

The islands also provide breeding sites for state significant numbers of little penguins and shorebirds including plovers, terns, oystercatchers and gulls. Cape Barren geese are known to use North Veteran and Dorothee islands as feeding territories.

Coastal raptors and beach-nesting shorebirds are particularly sensitive to disturbance, especially during the breeding season, and will abandon their nests and young if disturbed. Visitor activity will be planned around breeding seasons and monitored if necessary to assess potential impacts to breeding populations. Where human disturbance has an unsustainable impact, access restrictions may be applied.



Objective

Protect wilderness values, populations of threatened species and species of conservation significance by managing threats to island habitats and breeding areas.

Strategies

- Monitor impacts of visitor activity on wildlife sensitive to disturbance, particularly during breeding seasons. Implement management strategies to minimise human disturbance.
- Implement actions outlined in recovery plans and conservation advice statements for nationally threatened species where necessary to prevent a decline in populations.
- Monitor populations of threatened species and support further surveys, monitoring and scientific research to better understand the health and extent of flora and fauna populations and to inform operational requirements for their protection. Utilise technological advances in monitoring and survey techniques to improve efficiency and accuracy and work closely with researchers and environmental organisations.
- Develop and implement biosecurity protocols and education programs to prevent new incursions of introduced species. Develop response plans for priority islands in preparation for potential biosecurity incursions.
- Support monitoring and research to inform climate change adaptation actions for threatened species and ecosystem health.
- Support monitoring of native vegetation, particularly recruitment after fire and islands where historical grazing has occurred, and implement remedial actions if necessary for the conservation of threatened species.
- Implement strategic and targeted weed control to protect areas of high conservation value and where pest plants threaten the survival of threatened flora or fauna populations. Control new incursions and outbreaks as a priority.
- Implement strategies in the *South Australian Recovery Plan for Eastern Osprey and White-bellied Sea Eagle*.



THEME 2:

Visitor Management Strategy

The *South Australian Code of Management for Wilderness Protection Areas and Zones* requires a visitor management strategy to be included in any management plan. To maintain the wilderness quality of the parks it is important that their features are retained in a natural state and that activities associated with visitation or development that would lead to an adverse effect on biodiversity are avoided. For example, these wilderness protection areas have exceptional dark sky values that are important for the proper functioning of natural ecosystems. Artificial light necessary for overnight visitation on island and on boats can disorientate seabirds, causing collision, entrapment, stranding, grounding, and interference with navigation (being drawn off course from the usual migration route). These behavioural responses may cause injury or death (DCCEEW 2023).

Visitation to the islands is low. Most of the islands are difficult to access due to hazardous sea approaches and limited safe anchorage. A small number of commercial tourism operators have been licenced to visit some islands in recent years. Occasional unauthorised visits occur by people from recreational watercraft (e.g. yachts), fishing charters and commercial fishing boats where there is safe anchorage and easy access. There are no airstrips and the landing of aircraft in wilderness protection areas is only permitted for emergency and essential management operations.

The abundance of wildlife, exceptional scenic qualities and the remoteness of these parks are conducive to providing unique visitor experiences. However, these island environments can be fragile and many of the key species that utilise them are threatened, uniquely endemic and can be sensitive to direct and indirect disturbance. The risks and impacts of visitation to these islands are real and have the potential to result in catastrophic consequences to plants and animals. Finding a balance between enabling people to experience these special places and protecting their values is one of the challenges for future management.

Island management zones

Access to all islands for any purpose requires prior approval from the Department for Environment and Water. Applications will be assessed to identify alignment with management zones, identify potential risks and to ensure strategies are in place to minimise impacts.

Island Visitation Zone

Beach areas on St Francis and Goat islands within the Nuyts Archipelago Wilderness Protection Area have been designated Island Visitation Zones (refer to Figure 1). Visitation for nature-based tourism and recreation experiences in these zones is permitted during day-light hours subject to the assessment of applications. Overnight stays, infrastructure and visitor facilities associated with tourism and recreation activities are not permitted, primarily due to the risk of biosecurity incursions associated with the importation of equipment and material, physical damage to vegetation and the environment and disturbance to wildlife. Visitation by large groups such as those from cruise ships can result in concentrated impacts in relatively short timeframes and therefore are not permitted.

Island Wilderness Zone

Island Wilderness Zones (refer to Figures 1 and 2) have been determined by applying a set of criteria as outlined on page 4. The impacts to habitat and wildlife sensitive to disturbance and the high risk to visitor safety and watercraft during access for tourism and recreation activities in these areas outweighs the benefits and therefore tourism and recreation is not supported.

Prohibited Areas

The Franklin Islands have been declared Prohibited Areas to limit disturbance and protect the habitat of greater stick-nest rat and southern brown bandicoot (Nuyts Archipelago) populations. Entering a Prohibited Area requires a permit issued by the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water. Declaring other islands as Prohibited Areas may be considered in the future to protect areas of the highest conservation value.

Island Access Principles

The following high-level principles have been developed to guide the decision making process regarding requests to access islands:

1. Visitation furthers research and conservation outcomes or is necessary for operational or cultural heritage purposes
2. Ecological processes and wildlife can sustain the form of visitation and activities which are occurring, or that are proposed
3. The purpose, intensity and frequency of visitation does not damage island values or result in risks to visitor safety
4. Commercial tourism is high quality and enriches visitor experiences through interpretation and opportunities to connect with the natural and cultural environment.

Approvals will include conditions to minimise disturbance to wildlife and the environment, manage the number of people, keep visitors safe and ensure biosecurity protocols are in place. Other conditions or approvals such as permission in accordance with the *Wilderness Protection Regulations 2006*, a scientific research permit or a commercial tour operator's licence may also apply.

Park management operations, scientific research, conservation work and cultural heritage management are considered foundational activities and will be permitted on all islands and both management zones subject to the approval process and specific conditions.

Marine navigational aids on St Francis, North Pearson and Evans islands are maintained by the Australian Maritime Services Authority (AMSA). National Parks and Wildlife Service staff will work closely with AMSA regarding maintenance schedules and to ensure that strategies are in place to minimise potential impacts from management operations and ensure biosecurity protocols are in place.



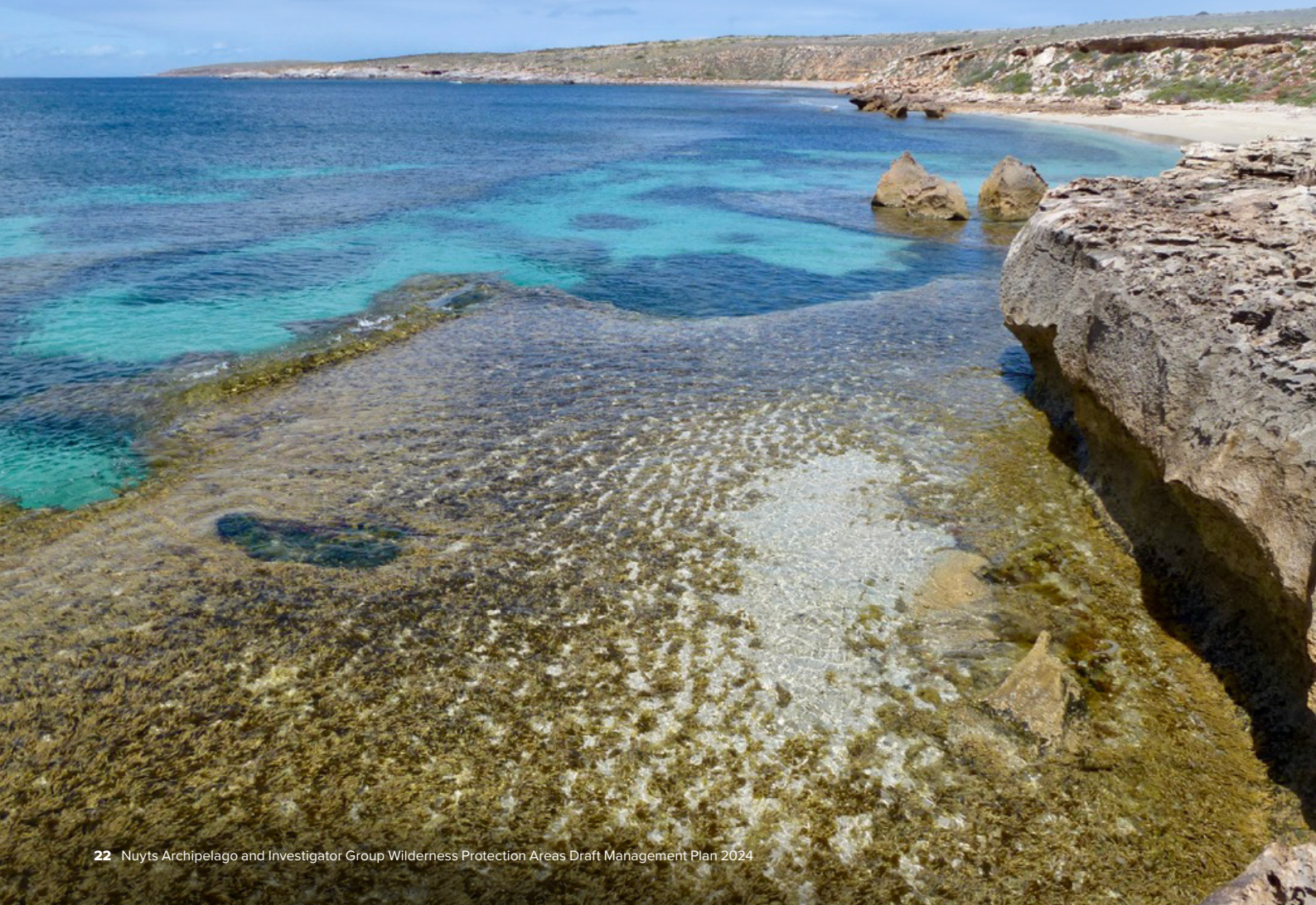
All visitors will need to respect and observe wildlife from a distance, apply the Leave No Trace principles, abide by the *Minimum Impact Code for Wilderness Use in South Australia* and comply with the *National Parks and Wildlife (Protected Animals-Marine Mammals) Regulations 2010* at all times. Impacts will be monitored and visitation to each island will be reviewed and adjusted if negative impacts become evident.

Protecting unique island habitats as safe havens for plants and animals within these wilderness protection areas is vitally important. There are opportunities for nature-based tourism experiences that can be achieved from the water surrounding these islands or on other islands across the Eyre Peninsula that have established tourism operations. Working with commercial operators and the tourism sector will ensure delivery of high quality visitor experiences that are sustainable and will explore opportunities for collaboration across the public and private sector.

Engaging with First Nation groups will provide the most appropriate pathway to recognising and protecting cultural values from the impacts of visitation as well as provide opportunity for cultural tourism.

Some islands have been subject to agriculture and guano mining but there are no remaining relics that provide any real heritage value.

Tourism opportunities in the marine parks surrounding the parks include swimming, snorkelling and diving however fishing is not permitted within the marine park sanctuary zones.



Objective

Maintain the wilderness quality of the islands by managing visitation so that ecological values are not compromised.

Strategies

- Consider applications for low-impact nature-based tourism in Island Visitation Zones where impacts to wilderness values can be minimised. Work closely with the tourism sector and commercial operators to ensure delivery of high quality visitor experiences.
- Support First Nations to explore opportunities for cultural tourism activities and enterprises.
- Undertake detailed assessments of applications to access islands to ensure alignment with management zones and the island visitation principles. Conditions associated with permission to visit islands can include, but not be limited to, clauses that specify:
 - visitors are informed about sensitive island values and appropriate behaviours through the distribution of pre-visit information, guidelines and interpretation materials
 - access points and permitted areas
 - approved activities while on islands
 - seasonal restrictions during key wildlife breeding seasons
 - biosecurity protocols
 - the maximum number of people to be on an island at any one time
 - the frequency and timing of visits
 - ecotourism accreditation as a minimum standard
 - a guide nominated by DEW to be present on visits to monitor impacts and contribute to the purpose of the visit
 - the research and conservation outcomes required.
- Monitor for impacts of visitor use on park values, particularly in relation to the physical environment and native species that are threatened or sensitive to disturbance. Develop strategies and take appropriate action where impacts are unsustainable.
- Liaise with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority regarding the management of marine navigation aids to ensure maintenance does not negatively impact on wilderness qualities.
- Consider declaring individual islands as Prohibited Areas to further protect areas of the highest conservation value.

THEME 3:

Protecting cultural heritage

For Aboriginal people, the land and sea cannot be separated. Sites and features across the land and seascapes of these wilderness protection areas have cultural importance and are connected to stories that have been passed down over thousands of years. When the islands were connected to the mainland, and while they were more accessible as the sea level started to rise, Aboriginal people would have occupied and utilised these areas.

Ensuring sites of cultural importance are protected from impacts associated with visitation and operational programs will be achieved in consultation with the relevant First Nation groups. Developing and maintaining relationships with these groups will provide opportunities to protect and enhance biodiversity, undertake monitoring, support cross-cultural learning and ensure cultural sites are protected.

Aboriginal culture and heritage values on these islands have not been comprehensively researched or documented. Supporting First Nations to map sites of cultural significance is an opportunity for partnerships to ensure sites are not impacted by on-island activities and an opportunity to pass on information across generations.

All Aboriginal sites, objects and remains are protected from damage, disturbance or interference by the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988*, regardless of whether they are recorded in the Register of Aboriginal Sites and Objects.

European heritage of western Eyre Peninsula began in the early 17th century when the Dutch navigator Pieter Nuyts reached the Great Australian Bight. Most of the Eyre Peninsula coastline and its offshore islands were recorded almost 200 years later by the Flinders and Baudin expeditions when they surveyed and mapped much of the western Eyre Peninsula coastline, naming many of the islands in the process.

Whaling and sealing took place throughout coastal South Australia from the early 1800s up until the 1920s. There have been whaling and sealing sites located on many islands off the western Eyre Peninsula and it is expected that more would be found with further research.

Many of the islands have had little in the way of human activity or occupation since they were proclaimed as protected areas. Ruins associated with agriculture and guano mining activities on St Francis and West Franklin Islands is all that remains of the physical evidence of post-colonial history. They are in advanced states of deterioration and will be left to decay naturally.

The coastline in the vicinity of the islands contain approximately 23 shipwrecks. Any shipwreck or associated object that is 75 years old or older, or has been declared as a historic shipwreck by the Minister, is protected by either the *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1981* (SA waters) or the *Underwater Cultural Heritage Act 2018* (Commonwealth waters).

Interpretation of the history and natural environment within the parks is a way to create meaningful connections for tourists and the public to the cultural, historical and natural values of these parks. Any messaging developed to help visitors understand the significance of the islands will be developed in collaboration with First Nations groups and relevant stakeholders.

Objective

Maintain the cultural and heritage values of the parks in consultation with First Nations and other stakeholders.

Strategies

- Explore opportunities for partnerships with First Nation groups to ensure sites of cultural significance are protected and not impacted by visitation.
- Facilitate opportunities for First Nation groups to undertake surveys or research to map sites of cultural and heritage significance. Support development of a cultural heritage management plan if required for key sites to ensure sites are protected from impacts associated with visitation, conservation, research or operational programs.
- Ensure the development of any interpretive material on the natural, heritage and cultural values of the parks is done in collaboration with First Nation groups and key stakeholders.



Invitation to contribute

The Nuyts Archipelago and Investigator Group Wilderness Protection Areas Draft Management Plan has been released for public consultation to facilitate community input into the management of the parks.

You are invited to contribute by making a submission. Please consider the points below when drafting your submission to help ensure that it is effective:

- Make your feedback concise and clear
- Reference any specific comments to a page or section within the draft plan
- Identify aspects of the draft plan that you support, or do not support. Explain your reasons for disagreeing with the content of the draft plan and suggest alternatives
- Highlight any information that may be inaccurate and provide a reference to assist with further editing.

After all submissions received have been carefully considered, a final park management plan will be prepared and forwarded to the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water for consideration together with a detailed analysis of submissions received.

Please note that your submission will become part of the public record and will be available to anyone who requests a copy unless you specifically request otherwise.

You can submit your comments via post, email or online using the details provided.

**Submissions close at 5 pm on
Monday 8 July 2024**

Written submissions:

National Parks and Protected Areas Program Unit
Department for Environment and Water
GPO Box 1047
ADELAIDE SA 5001

E-mail submissions:

DEWProtectedAreaManagement@sa.gov.au

Online submissions:

yourSAy.sa.gov.au



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Appendix 1: Threatened flora species

Species	Common name	EPBC Act ¹	NPW Act ²	Nuyts Archipelago WPA	Investigator Group WPA
<i>Centrolepis cephaliformis</i> ssp. <i>murrayi</i>	Dwarf centrolepis		R		✓
<i>Crassula sieberiana</i>	Sieber's crassula		E	✓	✓
<i>Hydrocotyle comocarpa</i>	Fringe-fruit pennywort		R		✓
<i>Leiocarpa pluriseta</i>			R	✓	
<i>Leucopogon obovatus</i> ssp. <i>obovatus</i>			R		✓
<i>Myoporum parvifolium</i>	Creeping boobialla		R	✓	
<i>Poa fax</i>	Scaly poa		R	✓	
<i>Plantago</i> sp. A (A.C.Robinson 704)			R		✓
<i>Wurmbea latifolia</i> ssp. <i>vanessae</i>	Broad-leaf nancy		R	✓	

¹ Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Commonwealth). CR - Critically Endangered, EN – Endangered, VU – Vulnerable.

² National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972 (South Australia). E – Endangered, V – Vulnerable, R – Rare.

Appendix 2- Threatened fauna species

Species	Common name	EPBC Act ¹	NPW Act ²	Nuyts Archipelago WPA	Investigator Group WPA
<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i> ³	Common sandpiper		R	✓	
<i>Arenaria interpres interpres</i> ³	Ruddy turnstone		R	✓	✓
<i>Calidris alba alba</i> ³	Sanderling		R	✓	
<i>Cereopsis novaehollandiae novaehollandiae</i>	Cape Barren goose		R	✓	✓
<i>Egretta sacra sacra</i>	Pacific reef heron		R	✓	✓
<i>Haematopus fuliginosus fuliginosus</i>	Sooty oystercatcher		R	✓	✓
<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>	White-bellied sea eagle		E	✓	✓
<i>Isoodon obesulus nauticus</i>	Southern brown bandicoot (Nuyts Archipelago)	VU	V	✓	
<i>Leporillus conditor</i>	Greater stick-nest rat	VU	V	✓	
<i>Lerista microtis</i>	Long-legged slider		R	✓	
<i>Neophema petrophila zietzi</i>	Rock parrot		R	✓	✓
<i>Neophoca cinerea</i>	Australian sea lion	EN	V	✓	✓
<i>Pandion haliaetus cristatus</i>	Eastern osprey		E	✓	✓
<i>Petrogale lateralis pearsoni</i>	Black-footed rock-wallaby (Pearson Island subspecies)		R		✓
<i>Pseudemoia baudini</i>	Bight coast skink		R		✓
<i>Sternula nereis nereis</i>	Fairy tern	EN	E	✓	✓
<i>Thinornis cucullatus cucullatus</i>	Hooded plover	VU	V	✓	✓

¹ Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Commonwealth). CR - Critically Endangered, EN – Endangered, VU – Vulnerable.

² National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972 (South Australia). E – Endangered, V – Vulnerable, R – Rare.

³ Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 migratory species list.

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