

Victoria’s marine national parks and marine sanctuaries

Just like our fantastic system of land-based national parks, our marine national parks and marine sanctuaries exist to protect Victoria’s unique and diverse marine ecosystems and the many plants and animals that live in them.

An important part of protecting these places includes encouraging people to visit and experience the wonder of these environments for themselves.

So that these marine protected areas can be enjoyed for generations to come, the plant and animal species living within them are fully protected by law. It is illegal to fish or collect bait, or to remove animals, plants, shells, rocks, sand, or artefacts from Victoria’s marine national parks and marine sanctuaries.

Please treat Victoria’s intertidal areas with respect so those visiting in the future can have the same great experience.

Report injured or sick marine wildlife, such as seals or seabirds, to the *Department of Environment and Primary Industry* (DEPI) on 13 6186 or *Parks Victoria* on 13 1963.

Staying safe by the sea

Victoria’s rocky shores are exciting places to visit but there are a few precautions you should take while exploring, both to ensure your own safety, and to help care for our precious marine environment.

Love it and leave it

These creatures call the rocky shore home. Leave any creatures, plants, or shells you find where they are, and put any rocks you move back where they came from.

Take it with you

Litter can harm birds and marine animals so take your rubbish with you when you go.

Don’t feed the locals

Human food isn’t good for coastal birds, seals, or marine life. Don’t feed the wildlife.

Be sun smart

Remember to slip on clothing, slop on sunscreen and slap on a hat.

Keep your distance

Stay clear of seals and nesting birds; they need their personal space, and they won’t appreciate the attention.

Keep your hands where you can see them

Don’t put your hands where you can’t see them. Potentially dangerous animals such as the Blue Ringed Octopus may shelter in the nooks and crannies of the rocky shores.

Good soles

Rock platforms can be very slippery – wear sturdy footwear with good grip while exploring.

Time and tide

Make sure you go at low tide. Be aware of the tide times so you won’t be caught out.

Never turn your back on the sea

Large, dangerous waves can come at any time and if you’re not paying attention it can be easy to be knocked over or even dragged out to sea.

Some of the great intertidal reefs within Victoria’s marine protected areas include:



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There’s plenty to see and do along Victoria’s shoreline.

Along with walking, swimming, and sightseeing, there are plenty of activities such as snorkelling, diving, and photography that can be enjoyed in these areas.

This guide will help you discover and appreciate the plants and animals that call Victoria’s rocky shores their home.

Explore Victoria’s rocky shores

Life is tough in the intertidal zone, the area between high and low tide, and it’s one of the hardest places in the world to survive. The animals and plants that call it home must deal with a constantly changing environment, coping with the challenge of crashing waves, the dangers of drying out in the sun as the tide retreats, and the constant threat of predators from both above and below the waves.

In spite of these challenges intertidal rocky shores are teeming with life. They host everything from seaweeds and limpets to filter-feeding worms, mussels, and sea squirts, along with predatory snails and birds that feed off them all.

In addition to the animals and plants that make their home on Victoria’s exposed rocky shores, a rich abundance of life can also be found in coastal rockpools. These shoreline sanctuaries are like an oasis in the punishing intertidal zone. They provide water for plants and animals and are a vital shelter from predators and the sun.



More information

Parks Victoria
13 1963
www.parks.vic.gov.au

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Identification Guide

Here is your handy guide to some of the many plants and invertebrate animals that make their homes on Victoria’s rocky shores. This isn’t a complete list but it covers many of the common species you may find.

While there is a lot of variation between different Victorian rocky shores, the species below are listed in the approximate area of the shoreline that they may be found – either closer to the high-tide mark (further up the shore), or near the low-tide zone (closer to the sea).

Generally species found in the high-tide area are better at surviving out of the water for longer periods, while those that need to stay wet will be found in the low-tide areas or in rockpools.



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Upper Shoreline

False Limpet
While similar in appearance to other intertidal limpets that have gills, these animals are air breathers and have a small groove on one side to allow air into their bodies.



Blue Periwinkle
Located high on the rock platform to avoid being washed away, these small grazing snails are often found in crevices, reducing their exposure to the sun and wind and helping to prevent water loss.



Striped Conniwink
These herbivore snails live on the upper part of the rock platform. To feed, conniwinks and other snails have a chainsaw-like tongue called a radula that is used to scrape tiny algae for food from the rocks.



Mid Shoreline

Waratah Anemone
When out of the water these anemones look like little red blobs. When underwater, they fan out their red tentacles to catch prey.



Ribbed Top Shell
This snail feeds on microalgae on the rocks and has distinctive spiral ridges like an old fashioned spinning top.



Smooth Limpet
Many limpets have a kind of homing beacon that allows them to return to the same location where their shell matches the shape of the rock surface to help protect them from drying out when exposed.



Honeycomb Barnacle
Barnacles are crustaceans with hard, segmented shells cemented to the rock. They open up two valves at high tide to filter food from the sea water using their hairy legs.



Beaked Mussel
Mussels anchor themselves to rocks using secretions that harden on contact with seawater and feed by filtering seawater.



Sea Lettuce
Forming bright green patches on the reef and in rockpools, this algae is an important food source for a number of grazing snails. Its large fronds also provide an excellent habitat for other marine critters.



Red Turfing Algae
This plant looks like a marine version of moss and grows on rocks in dark red-brown clumps. It can also be found growing on mussels or on the limey tubes made by tube worms.



Shore Crabs
These crabs can be found abundantly under stones and in rockpools. They scavenge their meals from the rich feasts of food that the tide brings in.



Tube Worm
These worms form large colonies and have a hard calcareous tube in which they live with only their feathery mouth parts sticking out to filter food when under water.



Sea Anemone
They may look like a harmless flower but these deadly animals have a mouth surrounded by long tentacles covered with powerful stinging cells. They use these tentacles to paralyse any small animals that drift too close.



Neptune’s Necklace
This seaweed is made up of small beadlike segments that contain water which prevents it from drying out at low tide. It provides an important habitat for many other marine organisms.



Warrener
One of the more conspicuous herbivores on the mid to lower rocky shores, this snail has a green and white striped shell with a large opening that can be completely closed at low tide by a tight fitting round lid.



Encrusting Coralline Algae
Forming a pink crust which spreads across rocks, these unusual red algae have a hard surface to protect them from drying out.



Chequerboard Snail
This snail scavenges between the rocks for dead animals to feed on. It uses a long, tube-like siphon to ‘sniff out’ potential food.



Dog Whelk
This serious predator on the rocky shores has a distinctive groove in the end of its shell that allows it to extend its siphon to detect prey species including tubeworms, mussels, warreners, and cunjevoi.

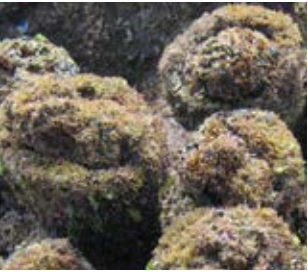


Lower Shoreline

Chiton
With their distinctive shells made from eight overlapping plates, these grazing molluscs have a large muscular foot that keeps them attached to the rock surface.



Cunjevoi (Sea Squirt)
This strange animal's name comes from its habit of shooting out jets of water when disturbed. It is a filter feeder that has one siphon for sucking water in and another for squirting water out.



Bull Kelp
One of the key species on exposed Victorian rocky shores, these large brown algae can grow up to 8m in lengths and have strong holdfasts that firmly anchor them onto the reef.



Rockpools

Elephant Snail
Generally found under ledges and rocks, these very large snails have a distinctive black colour, two long tentacles, and a small white shell often hidden under folds of skin.



Blue Ringed Octopus
These small octopuses are masters of camouflage, often hiding in crevices or under rocks. But when disturbed, iridescent blue rings appear to warn potential predators. Their powerful toxins cause paralysis. Do not touch!



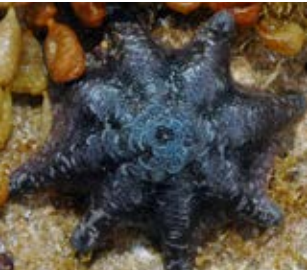
Seaweed Crab
This crab is a master of camouflage. It grows seaweed on its shell to hide from predators. Amazingly, it can also change its seaweed ‘suit’ to match the type of seaweed it is hiding in.



Little Green Seastar
This tiny seastar only grows up to around 2cm across in shallow rockpools and is often found in areas with Neptune’s Necklace seaweed.



Common Seastar
This seastar’s table manners leave something to be desired; when it finds food, it pushes its stomach outside of its body in order to envelop and digest its meal. This seastar is the garbage guts of the rocky shore! It will eat anything it can fit its stomach over.



Sea Hare
The so-called Sea Hare is in fact a large sea slug. It is named for its large protruding tentacles, thought to resemble the ears of a rabbit. When disturbed sea hares can release a bright purple ink to ward off predators.

