

gnaraloo wilderness foundation

Gnaraloo Turtle Conservation Program



Why are the Gnaraloo sea turtles endangered?

Globally inappropriate coastal development, 4WD traffic, commercial fishing, unsustainable harvesting, pollution and predation by introduced species have pushed all of the world's sea turtles towards extinction. So much so that the three species of turtle nesting at Gnaraloo are either endangered or critically endangered.

With only 1 in 1500 turtle hatchlings surviving to sexual maturity, it's vitally important to protect the wilderness beaches of Gnaraloo. It's one of the few remaining sites where turtles can lay their eggs without disturbance. The turtles from Gnaraloo support and contribute to the third largest loggerhead sea turtle population in the world.

About the scientific monitoring program

Between November and February each year scientists monitor the turtles at Gnaraloo when they come onto the beach to lay their eggs in the sand. This helps build up a picture of how many females come in to nest and the number of nests so we can understand more about the turtles.

For the first time in 2015, we're tracking 10 adult female turtles via satellite to understand where they go after nesting. View their fascinating sea journeys on our Gnaraloo Turtle Tracker app available for Windows, Android and Apple from December 2015.

Which sea turtles come to Gnaraloo?

Mostly loggerheads nest here, but the occasional green and hawksbill turtles have also been observed to use the beaches for nesting.



Loggerhead Turtle

Endangered Species
 Age at maturity: around 30 years
 Average Length: 80-120 cms
 Average Weight: 70-146kg
 Diet: Omnivore
 Clutch size: Around 120 eggs
 Number of clutches in a season: average 3-4 at about 2-week intervals
 Females return to lay every 2-5 years

How many turtles come in to lay their eggs?

Loggerhead Turtle

Year	Nests	Turtles
2008/09	364	73
2009/10	479	96
2010/11	473	95
2011/12	409	82
2012/13	352	70
2013/14	478	96
2014/15	364	73

Green Turtle

Year	Nests	Turtles
2008/09	6	1
2009/10	30	5
2010/11	8	1
2011/12	25	4
2012/13	7	1
2013/14	6	1
2014/15	0	0

Hawksbill Turtle

Year	Nests	Turtles
2008/09	14	6
2009/10	78*	31*
2010/11	2	1
2011/12	0	0
2012/13	1	0
2013/14	5	2
2014/15	0	0

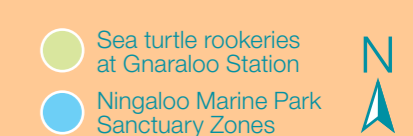
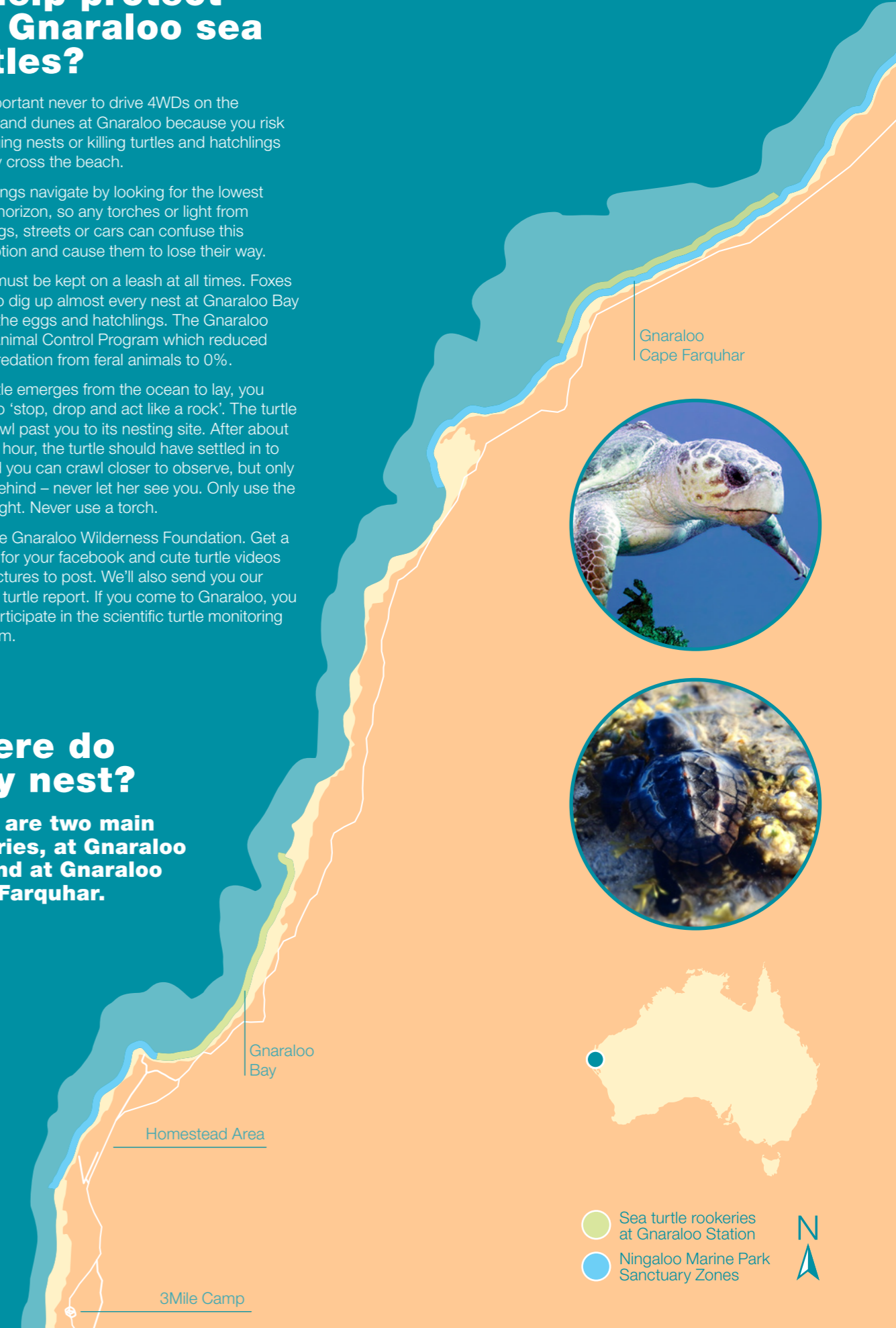
* Likely over-estimation during the early years of the program. Probably loggerhead nests.

What can you do to help protect the Gnaraloo sea turtles?

1. It's important never to drive 4WDs on the beach and dunes at Gnaraloo because you risk damaging nests or killing turtles and hatchlings as they cross the beach.
2. Hatchlings navigate by looking for the lowest bright horizon, so any torches or light from buildings, streets or cars can confuse this perception and cause them to lose their way.
3. Dogs must be kept on a leash at all times. Foxes used to dig up almost every nest at Gnaraloo Bay to eat the eggs and hatchlings. The Gnaraloo Feral Animal Control Program which reduced nest predation from feral animals to 0%.
4. If a turtle emerges from the ocean to lay, you need to 'stop, drop and act like a rock'. The turtle will crawl past you to its nesting site. After about half an hour, the turtle should have settled in to lay and you can crawl closer to observe, but only from behind – never let her see you. Only use the moonlight. Never use a torch.
5. Join the Gnaraloo Wilderness Foundation. Get a badge for your facebook and cute turtle videos and pictures to post. We'll also send you our annual turtle report. If you come to Gnaraloo, you can participate in the scientific turtle monitoring program.

Where do they nest?

There are two main rookeries, at Gnaraloo Bay and at Gnaraloo Cape Farquhar.



The Gnaraloo Wilderness Foundation

Turtle monitoring and conservation

Our annual program collects scientific data on sea turtle nesting activities to promote their long-term survival. The methodology is based on the Ningaloo Turtle Program in Exmouth run by the Department of Parks and Wildlife(WA).

By identifying nesting trends and monitoring feral disturbance and predation, our scientists gather information to inform responsible management and protection of these endangered sea turtles and their critical coastal nesting habitat.

Feral animal monitoring and control

Since 2008, the Foundation has been collecting important baseline data on the sea turtles of Gnaraloo, an area that previously had very little scientifically verified data. Surveys revealed that most turtle nests were disturbed and predated by feral animals. In 2008, the Foundation introduced the highly successful Gnaraloo Feral Animal Control Program, which has seen nest predation by feral animals fall to 0% during 2010/11 – 2014/15, saving over 200,000 eggs in total at the Gnaraloo Bay Rookery during this period. This program also helped protect other biodiversity values at Gnaraloo and the adjacent significant Lake MacLeod wetland system, which were also being hunted by foxes, feral cats and wild dogs.

Scientific training

The Foundation also trains graduates from Australia and overseas under its seasonal Scientific Internship Program. We also share our data with the scientific community worldwide to support research and conservation efforts globally.

Community and school engagement

We work with the community and schools to increase awareness of the Gnaraloo sea turtle rookeries and their need for protection.

**Only 1 in
1,500 turtle
hatchlings
survive, let's
increase
their odds**

