

11. WEST ISLAND AQUATIC RESERVE

Locality

Encounter Bay, Fleurieu Peninsula, just west of The Bluff.

Permitted Activities

West Island Aquatic Reserve is zoned into two areas – Area 1, and Area 2 the prohibited zone.

In Area 1, diving, swimming and fishing with rod and line or handline are permitted. The removal of marine organisms for study purposes is allowed by approved permit only.

Prohibited Activities

All public access to Area 2 is prohibited. Fishing and collecting or removing marine organisms from any area of West Island Aquatic Reserve is also prohibited.

Primary Purpose

West Island Aquatic Reserve was established to protect the marine organisms around the island for long term ecological studies.

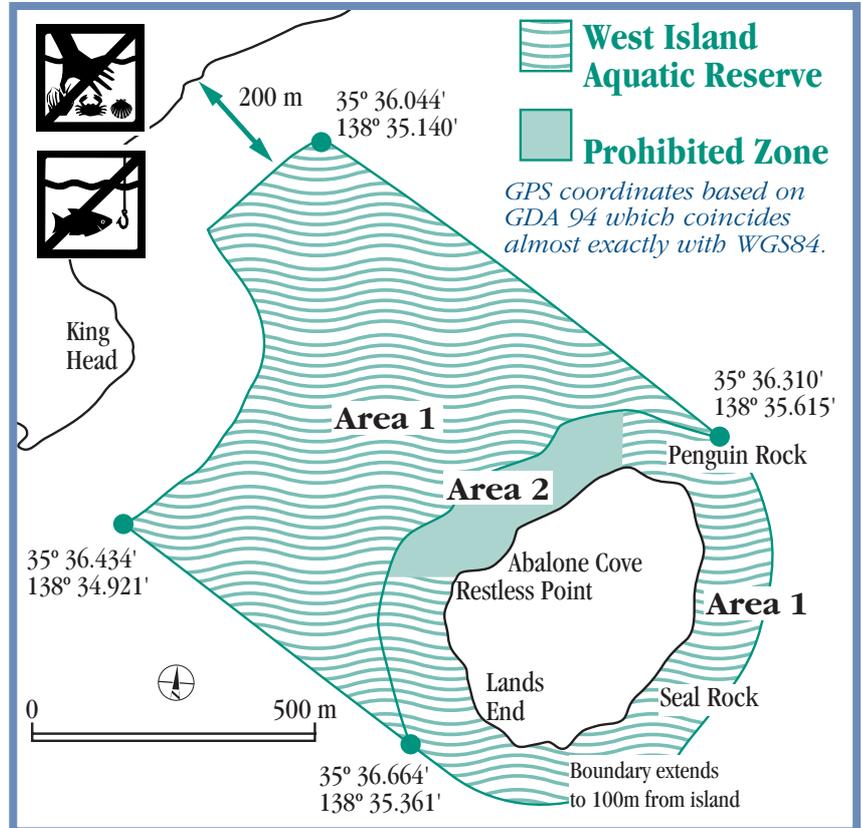
Major Habitat Types

The major habitat types within the West Island Aquatic Reserve include submarine cliffs, crevices and caverns with sandy and rocky seabed areas. There are three coastal habitat types, the rough-water southern and western coasts, the moderately rough-water sections of the eastern and northern shores and the semi-sheltered section of Abalone Cove.

Outstanding physical, biological or other features

West Island is subjected to rough conditions with no protection from the south-west. The island is suitably sized for studying the effect of wave action, which varies greatly from the windward to the lee shores. The steep underwater slopes permit a study of plant and animal communities in relation to depth. Along the windward southern face steep cliffs occur to a depth of about 29 metres. Underwater the granite boulders have broad sloping faces and form crevices, caverns and overhangs. The boulders provide many different microhabitats for a great diversity of plants and animals.

To the lee of the island, extensive beds of marine seagrasses stabilise the sandy seabed.



Additional Information

West Island has been set aside to protect the resident marine organisms and to enable long term research to be conducted.

West Island is a granite knoll located approximately 1 kilometre west of the Bluff, near Victor Harbor. The southern side of the island is subject to the full force of the Southern Ocean. Below the water line, granite boulders that form the island are covered by marine plants known as algae. Caverns and overhanging ledges provide different habitats for a wide range of marine plants and animals.

In contrast, the shallow sandy areas to the north and north-west are colonised by seagrass. The leeward side of the island, known as Abalone Cove provides a habitat for abalone and various fish species. Abalone found in the cove are the basis of a long running study into their growth and reproductive patterns.

West Island is also a major breeding site for the fairy penguin.