

of wheat began to swell. As a result, most of the structure was destroyed, and the ship sank. The wreck has not been relocated in recent times.



Chofuko Maru

Occator 1856

Occator, a 145-ton brigantine, sailed out of Melbourne heading for the Murion Islands near Exmouth. About 50 km south from the Cape, the ship ran onto the Ningaloo Reef. The wreck of *Occator* has not yet been found, but is believed to be situated near Yardie Creek.

American Submarine Chaser 1943

In 1943 at a point somewhere north west of Mangrove Bay on the Ningaloo Reef, an American, wooden submarine chaser ran ashore. To prevent it falling into enemy hands, the Americans destroyed the vessel. The location of the wreck is not known.

The Jones' Anchor

A mysterious anchor lies on the reef opposite Tantabiddi Creek and appears to be the site of a 'near-miss' where an unknown vessel almost came to grief. GPS Position 21° 53.59' S 113° 56.72' E

Lady Ann 1982

Lady Ann, an oil rig tender, was wrecked in 1982, 55 nautical miles north west of the Cape during a storm when it was slammed into its oil rig by very heavy seas. It lies in very deep water.

Mildura 1907

In June 1907, SS *Mildura*, a 1,394-ton steamship carrying a cargo of bullocks, bound for Fremantle from Cambridge Gulf, was wrecked off the north point of the North West Cape. The crew got ashore safely but many of the cattle were lost. The master of *Mildura* was found guilty of neglect and had his certificate suspended for three months. Although the wreck is plainly visible offshore, it is not a recommended dive. GPS position 21° 47.14' S 114° 10.00' E

Fairy Queen 1875

Fairy Queen, a 155-ton schooner, was wrecked while sailing from Singapore in August 1875 on a pearling expedition to the North West. On October 12, it was wrecked in heavy seas on the north east side of the Cape. The wreck, which lies just south of the US Navy jetty, is mostly covered with sand, but at times has been exposed. GPS position 21° 49.16' S 114° 11.20' E

Catalina WWII

The wreck of a Catalina type of flying boat is believed to lie just east of Wapet Shoal. It has occasionally been seen but its exact position is not known.

Wild Wave 1875

Wild Wave, a 28-ton pearling schooner, was wrecked in a terrible cyclone on December 24, 1875. The owner and 30 crew members were drowned in the ordeal. Thirteen Aboriginal men and one European survived by swimming ashore in the difficult conditions.

Army Barge 1942

Details of this wreck are unknown, but it is believed to have sunk in the Exmouth Gulf during WWII.

Airlie 1889

Airlie was a 237-ton three-masted coastal trading schooner. In January 1889, 100 nautical miles off the North West cape, the captain noticed smoke coming from the hatch. He tried for a day, along with the crew, to douse flames in the hold. Unsuccessful, and in great danger, they decided to head for the mouth of the Ashburton river and beach the ship. They reached the river on January 15, launched their lifeboats and watched their ship burn. The wreck has not been located.

For further information on historic shipwrecks contact the WA Museum Shipwreck Galleries or the WA Heritage Council:
<http://www.museum.wa.gov.au/collections/maritime/march/march.asp>
<http://tourism.heritage.wa.gov.au>

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Diving notes

Wrecks are often hazardous. Access to the wrecks requires a boat. Divers need to be fit and qualified. A diver's flag must be displayed. Never dive alone or leave a boat unattended. Persons diving on these wrecks do so at their own risk. These wrecks are part of Western Australia's heritage. They are protected under legislation. Please enjoy them but do not disturb them.

WRECKS OF THE CORAL COAST

Introduction

The Aborigines hunted for fish, crabs, and other seafood on the shores of the Exmouth region for thousands of years before the first Europeans arrived. The first known Europeans in the area were the Dutch under Dirk Hartog in 1616. They were the first of many sailors who sailed past the Cape and sighted land but did not stop there. The English first sighted the Cape in 1620. From then on they began using what they called Cloates Island (Point Cloates) as a navigation aid in their voyages north. A Dutchman, Willem de Vlamingh, visited the North West Cape in 1696 and Vlamingh Head Lighthouse was later named after him.



Stefano

The French Explorers Baudin and Hamelin, and the Norfolk Island-born Phillip Parker King, visited the region in the early 19th century while exploring the west coast of Australia. In 1874, many pearlers from the Cossack area (Nickol Bay) ventured down to the Exmouth Gulf to continue their work. As a result, many of the wrecks in the Gulf are pearling luggers wrecked during cyclones and storms. During this time pastoralists began searching for good land on the North West Cape. One of these was Thomas Carter, noted ornithologist who pioneered Ningaloo Station, and built his house out of pieces from the wrecks at nearby Point Cloates. Others were also setting up in the region using sheltered

bays and jetties such as that at Maud Landing, to load wool into lighters (small boats). From there it was taken out to larger vessels anchored in deeper water. Then came World War II, an eventful time for the North West Cape. When the Americans were forced out of the Philippines and later Darwin, they surveyed the ocean and land in the Exmouth region for a submarine base. The area proved unsuitable, though a refuelling facility was established there. The US military influence remained with the establishment of the naval communications base in 1967.

Exmouth Wrecks

Emma 1867

Emma, a 116-ton schooner, was the connecting link between Fremantle and the North West in the 1860s. In 1867, it disappeared in the north of WA with over 1/3 of the European population on board. In 1988 a wreck on the reef near Coral Bay was examined by the WA Museum and identified as most likely being *Emma*. The wreck is an excellent snorkel dive in the right conditions. GPS position 23°05.08' S 113° 44.11' E

Brothers 1867

This 16-ton cutter left Fremantle in February 1867 and was never seen again. It is believed that *Brothers* and *Emma* were wrecked in a storm in the Coral Bay area. The captain, four crew and its only passenger lost their lives

Correo D'Azia 1816

This Portuguese dispatch vessel was wrecked in the Point Cloates area in 1816. The wreck was found in 2004 by a Fugro aerial magnetometer survey.



Rapid

Rapid 1811

Rapid, a 366-ton American China trader, was wrecked in 1811, just south of Point Cloates. The captain and crew then burned the ship to stop it being salvaged, and headed north in the lifeboats.

A salvage team was sent back down and recovered all but 20,000 silver dollars. The wreck was found by spearfishermen who were rewarded \$30,000 and worked with the WA Museum on the excavation. It is an interesting dive. GPS position 22° 44.44' S 113° 41.46' E

Perth 1887

This 499-ton ship also had an interesting life. While trading between Melbourne and Adelaide, it collided with SS *City of Launceston*, which sunk in three quarters of an hour, in Port Philip Bay. *Perth* was then refitted and operated on the west coast, until it was wrecked near Point Cloates. The engine of the ship is clearly visible on the reef top opposite Ningaloo Homestead, but the wreck is difficult to reach. GPS position 22° 41.67' S 113° 38.48' E

Benan 1888

Benan, a 1400-ton sailing vessel, was carrying coal when it was wrecked at Point Cloates in 1888. It was thought that strong currents carried the ship onto the reefs. All of the crew survived. In 1992, a team from the WA Museum examined a wreck believed to be *Benan*, just south of SS *Perth*. The wreck is difficult to reach and is dangerous in all but flat calm conditions.



Benan

Fin 1923

The small Norwegian whaler was wrecked in January 1923 by a devastating cyclone which drove it onto Fraser Island. The island has since disappeared leaving the wreck and a lighthouse tower that once showed the way into Norwegian Bay, all that is visible today. Although the wreck site is visible and only a few minutes from the shore, a boat is still needed. It is well worth the effort, and in the right conditions is great snorkel dive. GPS position 22° 38.93' S 113° 37.6' E

Zvir 1902

Zvir, a 3,355-ton steamer en route from Java to Melbourne with a cargo of sugar, ran aground two nautical miles north of Fraser Island in November 1902. The crew survived but the steamer soon sank. This wreck is an excellent dive when swells are low. GPS position 22° 36.55' S 113° 37.56' E



Zvir

Caledonia 1815

Caledonia ran onto a reef in the Point Cloates area in 1815. It is believed to have been salvaged at the time.

Stefano 1875

Stefano, an 858-ton barque, was on a voyage to Hong Kong from Wales when, at 2 am on October 27, 1875, it hit a reef south of Point Cloates. A pitiful band of 10 survivors travelled south but they were trapped in a cyclone and many of them died. The other continued on down hoping to make it to the Gascoyne River. But they turned back disappointed. The last two survivors were taken by Aborigines to Exmouth where six months after the wreck, they were picked up by Captain Tuckey in *Jessie*. The wreck site was found in 2004. GPS position 22°49.613' S 113°43.271' E.

Shunsei Maru 1931

In February 1931 this wheat ship ran onto a reef about 10 nautical miles north of Point Cloates. The vessel sent distress messages to *Chofuko Maru*, which was nearby. While trying to assist, *Chofuko Maru* also ran aground. *Shunsei Maru* was later salvaged and the anchors and chain used to recover the vessel still remain to mark the site of stranding.

Chofuko Maru 1931

This 3287-ton steamer from Japan became wrecked in 1931 near Point Cloates in attempting to assist *Shunsei Maru*. While it was aground, a fire broke out, water got into the hull and the cargo