

6 | Escape.com.au

## Discover Tasmania

Cast about  
for a bite  
of nature

Greg Clarke dives into the increasingly warm waters off the coast of Tasmania

It's rare to be rocked to sleep at work. But I was trolling. The boat was gently bobbing along, rolling out its mysteriously shimmerous ways all the while. I couldn't keep my eyelids from closing. Yet I was vaguely aware of the cheery banter of the crew, the warmth of the sun and, even more vaguely, that I was supposed to be baby-sitting a fishing line.

A 25kg spanish mackerel was, however, one seriously effective alarm clock. It struck without warning. Line screamed from my reel. The rocking mackerel blasted off with a couple of hundred metres of it before I was clued enough to belatedly apply the brake. The crew, bless them, didn't spend too long laughing at my sudden animation and my attempted impersonation of a fisherman. I wouldn't have landed the tumbling mackerel without their coaching or perhaps their good-natured jibes.

## Game for fishing

That mackerel moment wasn't in Tassie. It remains the only time I have caught a fish where I could stretch my arms rather than my fingers to demonstrate its size. But each year about now I become aware that another 12 months have passed and I haven't yet been game fishing off Tassie's east coast. January marks the start of the game-fishing season off St Helens and along the east coast. And this year the emotional and physical exhilarations, the hunt, chase, the landing and the release of a big catch are only part of the reason to fish. Another is the opportunity to moonlight as a naturalist. According to Dr Gretta Pecl, a senior research fellow at the Tasmanian

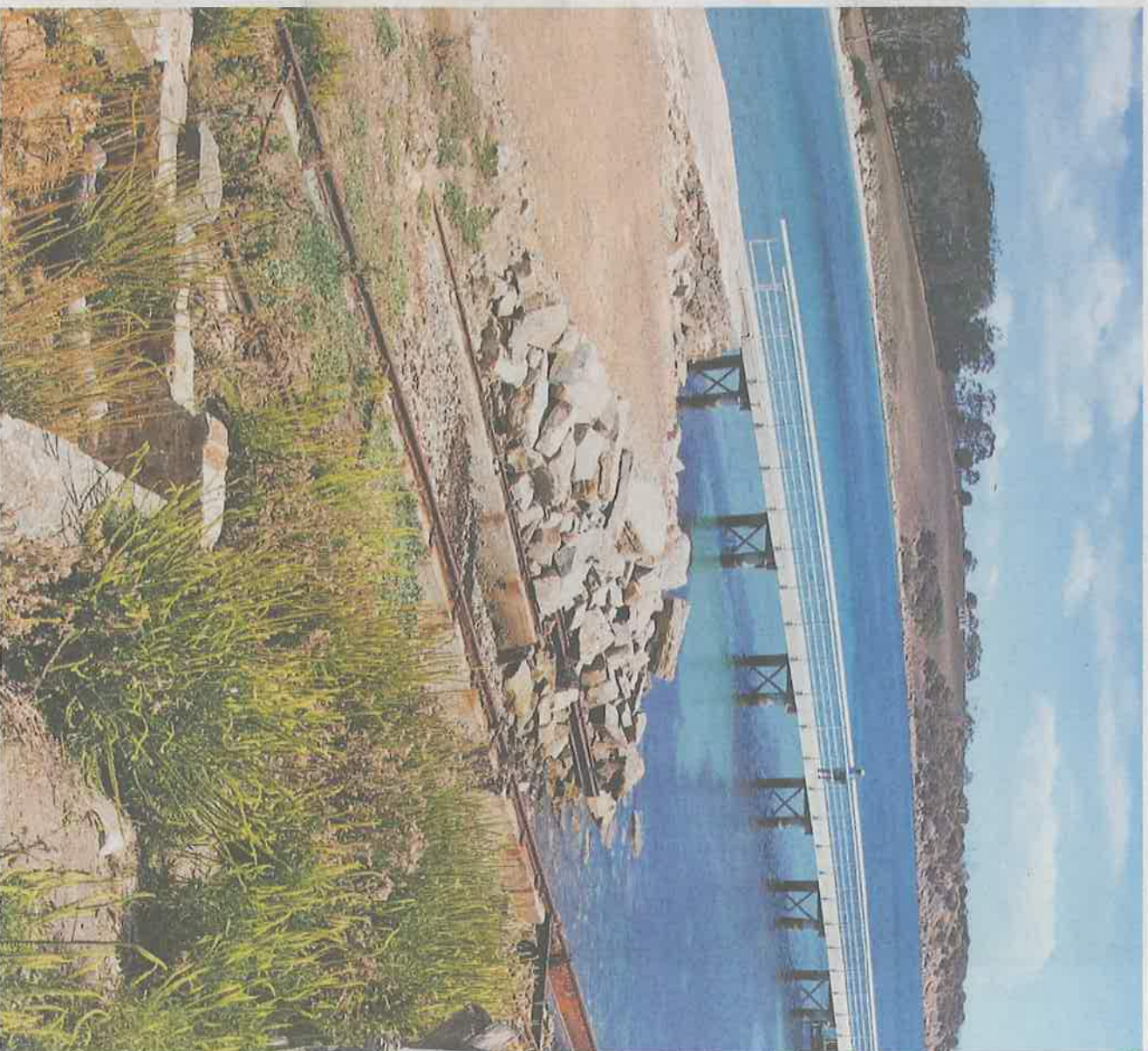
Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute (a joint venture of UTas and the State Government), Tasmania's waters are warming and fish not usually found 40 degrees south have recently decided this is a fine (and warm) place to live.

"The waters off Maria Island are warming at 3.8 times the global average," Pecl says. The figure, she notes, hasn't been derived from scientific modelling but rather incontrovertible fact monthly since 1944, temperature, salinity and nutrient data have been collected off Maria Island. The analysis of some 60 years of data confirms the sea has warmed 2C.

It's doubtless a troubling figure for climate-change advocates. Fish are no less sensitive to temperature rises, but for reasons more to do with house hunting.

"Temperature is a really major determinant of where species live," Pecl says. A change of a couple of degrees off the coast might not sound like much, "but in terms of habitat for an animal it is the difference between Tasmanian waters and those near the Victoria and NSW border. It's only a couple of degrees but it's actually a really big difference for the animals."

Pecl wants to know about species that have wised up and moved to Tassie. And she is asking recreational and commercial fishers, divers and other members of the public to help identify new residents. She and her colleagues launched the Range Extension Database and Mapping Project (Redmap) last month. Integral to the project is an interactive website ([www.redmap.org.au](http://www.redmap.org.au)) where anyone can enter data about an animal they have observed that isn't commonly found in Tasmanian waters. "If they can get a photo, fantastic."



Pecl says, though unverified sightings of species will also be recorded, but not as prominently, on the website.

Morerton bay bugs (two unverified sightings to date) and leatherback turtles are two of the more unexpected reports logged on the Redmap site.

You don't even have to be a fisher, diver or naturalist to be involved. Those who register on the website to receive a quarterly newsletter from Redmap go into a draw for prizes and vouchers from Mures and Anacosta.

For information on game fishing follow the Activities link from the homepage of [www.discovertasmania.com](http://www.discovertasmania.com)

## Mt Maria

Wineglass has collected as many "best beach" accolades as any of its colleagues on remote Pacific islands.

This partly comes about because of the view from the lookout that has been crafted into the Hazards and the oh-my-lord views of the curve of sand and the various shades of blue in the water.

That there is not a building anywhere adds to the length of time you spend musing superlatives and filling your camera's memory card.

Mt Maria is Maria Island's tallest feature. From the island's peak the two beaches along Riedle and Shoal bays appear to be dressed by the designer who crafted Wineglass Bay.

On a fine day the view of Riedle Bay and the almost co-joined Shoal Bay – the waters are only prevented from kissing by an isthmus as narrow as a catwalk model – is as fine as anything found on the Freycinet Peninsula.

The climb and the views are alone worth the trip to Maria.

During summer the ferry from Triabunna to Maria Island runs twice a day every day. There is a service to Darlington in the morning (9.30am) and afternoon (4pm). A return trip costs \$50 for adults and reservations are essential [www.mariaislandferry.com.au](http://www.mariaislandferry.com.au)

## Go south

Fish are not the only ones making their way to 40 degrees south.

Neeta Oakley from the Freycinet Experience Walk sent through some interesting notes recently.

According to Oakley, the proportion of Queenslanders on their walk over the past four years has risen from 8 per cent in 2004/2005 to 20 per cent in the 2008/2009 season.

According to Oakley this isn't connected to any of their advertising campaigns. Oakley thinks Queenslanders are coming south for not

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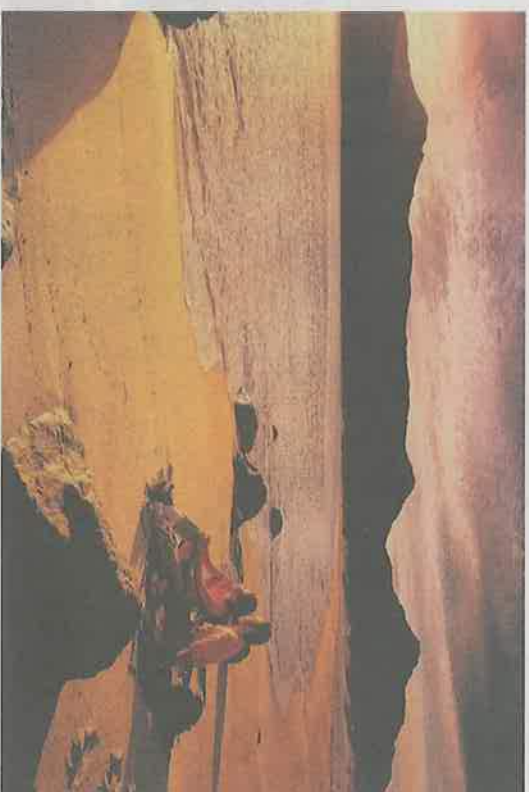
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**SPARKLING BLUE:** (Left) Maria Island Jetty. (Above) Wineglass Bay. Picture: Garry Moore, Tourism Tasmania



**TOP RETREAT:** (Above, left) Darlington on Maria Island National Park. (Right) Bay of Fires. Pictures: Joe Shemesh and Leigh Winburn

only the walk and all its highlights but also the weather.

That is, they're escaping from the heat. Can't say I'm surprised. I've long regarded Queensland as far from perfect. [www.treycinet.com.au](http://www.treycinet.com.au)

**New restaurant**

The owners of the Seaview at Bicheno holiday complex, Helen and Subi, opened a new restaurant and wine bar last month.

Granite is a Portuguese-inspired eatery. Tasmanian-born chef Daniel McLean is head chef and, since opening, he's been running a busy char grill.

Churrasco (a Portuguese term for grilled meat) dishes are one feature of Granite. Fish, chicken, beef and lamb dishes are available in the style.

Another main, twice-roasted pork belly, bubble and squeak, Spring Bay scallops, apple and soft herb salad (\$30), a modern Australian dish, sounds just as fine.

There is also a dessert menu (crema catalana, \$12) and cheese plates (\$12). The restaurant, open from 6pm, has great views over Bicheno to the sea. The wine bar opens from 4pm. Petiscos (Portuguese small bites) are available across the bar.

Granite is closed Mondays and Tuesdays. [www.seaviewatbicheno.com.au](http://www.seaviewatbicheno.com.au) and 6375 1247.

**Places to stay**

**Bay of Fires Retreat**

This secluded open-plan house features local stone and a sunken lounge with contemporary furnishings. The main bedroom has a king-size bed (the other has a queen-size bed) made from Tasmanian myrtle. Guests can walk

along a nearby beach (30 minutes) to a restaurant, Angasi, at Binalong Bay.

It costs \$260 a night at the retreat. Each person who stays is charged an additional \$15 regardless of the length of their stay (whether it be one night or a week). If six people stay one night they will be charged an extra \$90. If they stay a week they will be charged the \$90 plus the \$260 a night fee. **Information: Ph 6376 1592.**



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