FACT SHEET

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TEER
Healthy waterways together

Protected areas and species of the kanamaluka / Tamar estuary

WHAT ARE PROTECTED AREAS?

Protected areas in Australia are defined under categories set out by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The kanamaluka / Tamar estuary contains several protected areas, classed as either Nature Reserves or Conservation Areas under the National Parks and Reserves Management Act 2002.

Within the kanamaluka / Tamar estuary and foreshore there are 11 protected reserves, historic sites, and conservation areas that support 63 threatened plant species, 36 threatened animal species, and 20 migratory bird species.

PROTECTED SHARK REFUGE AREA

Sharks play an important role in the aquatic ecosystem, being apex predators and helping to maintain a balanced food web.

All areas of the kanamaluka / Tamar estuary south of Low Head are included in a Protected Shark Refuge Area. This recognises the importance of the estuary as a breeding and nursery habitat for school and gummy sharks, skates, and rays; it also prohibits the taking of any of these species from the estuary.

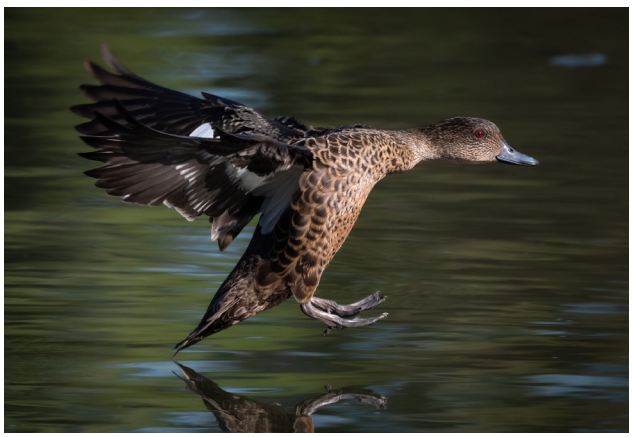
IMPORTANT BIRD AREA & KEY BIODIVERSITY AREA

The kanamaluka / Tamar estuary forms part of the East Asian – Australian flyway: a migratory corridor for birds, which extends from breeding grounds in the Russian Tundra, Mongolia, and Alaska.

Birdlife International has listed the water and intertidal mudflats of the kanamaluka / Tamar estuary from Launceston to Batman Bridge as an Important Bird Area (IBA), recognising the importance of the mudflats to shorebirds.

The presence of more than one percent of the global chestnut teal and pied oystercatcher populations utilising the kanamaluka / Tamar estuary during a key stage of their life cycle has resulted in the recognition of the area as a Key Biodiversity Area by Birdlife Australia.

Above: Gummy sharks (*Mustelus antarcticus*) are just one species of shark found in the kanamaluka / Tamar estuary.
Photo credit: Jack Breedon / Atlas of Living Australia.



Above: female chestnut teal (*Anas castanea*).
Photo credit: Helen Cunningham.

MIGRATORY AQUATIC SPECIES

Estuaries are a key transition area between marine and freshwater systems for migratory fish species. Their life cycles rely on safe passage through estuaries to complete their journey to important breeding, spawning, and feeding areas. The kanamaluka / Tamar estuary is used by at least ten migratory fish species, including the common *Galaxiidae*, the short-fin eel, the threatened Australian grayling, and the endangered Tasmanian mudfish.

Tasmanian mudfish spawn in late winter, with larvae heading out to sea for several months before returning to freshwater rivers and streams via estuaries. Similarly, access through estuaries, particularly the kanamaluka / Tamar estuary, is crucial to the life cycle of short-fin eels. Adults migrate all the way to the Coral Sea off the coast of Queensland to spawn, with larvae returning to the kanamaluka / Tamar estuary and migrating to the head water streams to colonise our catchments.

THREATENED ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITIES

An ecological community is a group of native plants, animals and other organisms that interact in a unique habitat. 'Threatened ecological communities' are ecological communities that are at risk of extinction.

Federally listed threatened ecological communities in and around the kanamaluka / Tamar estuary, from the North Esk floodplains to the estuary mouth, include:

- vulnerable *Eucalyptus ovata – Callitris oblonga* forest;
- endangered giant kelp forests;
- critically endangered lowland native grasslands of Tasmania; and
- coastal saltmarshes.

A further eight state listed vegetation communities are represented on the estuary foreshore, including *Melaleuca ericifolia* and wetlands extending into the upper estuary around Launceston.

Top left: short fin eels (*Anguilla australis*) migrate to the Coral Sea via the kanamaluka / Tamar estuary. Photo credit: Hydro Tasmania.

Bottom left: the common *Galaxiidae* (*Galaxias maculatus*) migrate downstream to spawn, with juveniles spending five to six months at sea before returning to freshwater via the estuary. Photo credit: Australian Museum.

Right: the South Esk pine (*Callitris oblonga*), pictured at the Gorge in Launceston, and it's vegetation community are threatened. Photo credit: Tim Walker - ABC Local.