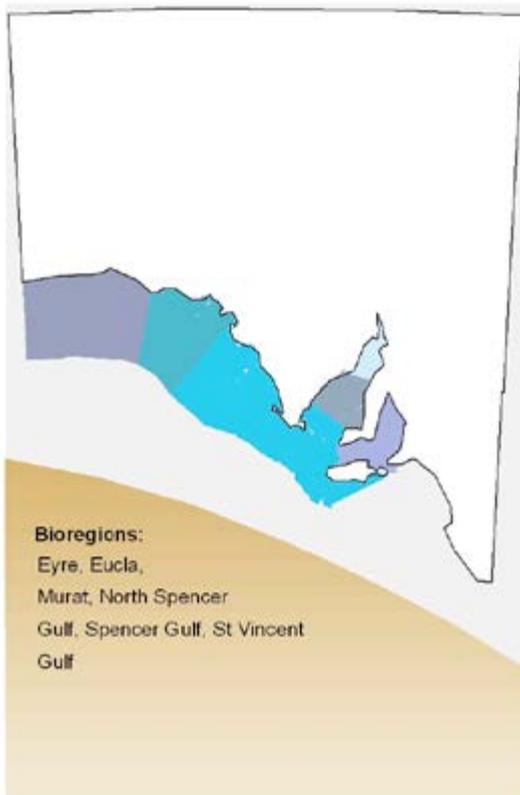
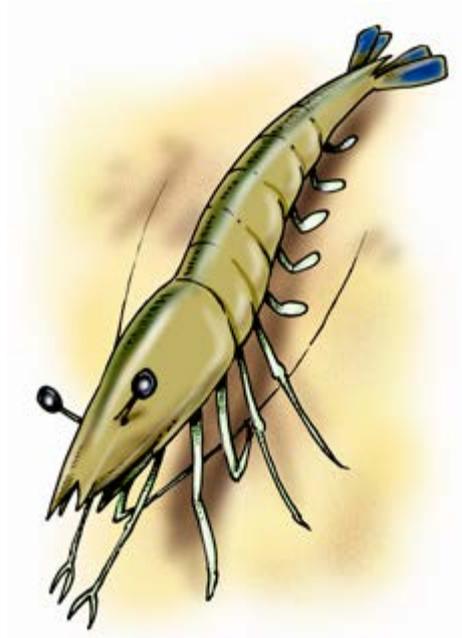


# Western King Prawn

*Penaeus latisulcatus*



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commercial Services.

Map is not intended to indicate spatial distribution of the species, only the bioregions in which the species is found.

Western King Prawns are decapod crustaceans. The only prawn fished in SA waters, they are caught at night as they are nocturnal feeders. SA's Spencer Gulf contains the largest known population of Western King Prawns in the world.

Western King Prawns are eaten by large fish and molluscs (e.g. squid and cuttlefish). To avoid predators, juvenile Western King Prawns either bury themselves in the sand or hide under seaweed during the day. They can live up to four years and become mature at six to seven months of age. As they grow, Western King Prawns moult. This happens often when they are juveniles (daily when they are very small), and every one to two months when adults. Their new exoskeleton hardens within a few days, and they usually stay buried during this vulnerable time.

The fishing of Western King Prawn is a valuable industry in SA, and careful management is needed to ensure it is sustainable for the future.

## Diet

They eat molluscs, bryozoans, small crustaceans, plant material and detritus.

## Breeding

When Western King Prawns spawn, fertilised eggs are released from small pores at the base of the female's third walking legs. Eggs float and usually hatch within 24 hours. When hatched they go through several stages of larval development over a number of weeks before they can settle onto the sea floor and turn into a juvenile prawn. They will only survive if they have landed in a suitable nursery area (shallow sand/mud flats).

## Habitat

Western King Prawns live in the Indo-West Pacific region. Mangroves of the St Vincent and Spencer Gulfs, sheltered west coast bays and seagrass meadows provide important nursery areas in SA. After living in the nursery grounds for their first three to six months, Western King Prawns migrate into the open ocean in the summer and autumn of each year. They then live on soft sea floors in coastal waters to depths of around 80 metres.

## Threats

Western King Prawns are a very popular food. Work is ongoing to identify critical steps to preventing their over-exploitation while still providing for ecologically sustainable harvesting. The degradation of their nursery habitats (seagrass meadows and mangroves) through pollution and development is also a problem.



Western King Prawns can spawn several times a year and 100,000 to 700,000 eggs are produced each time! Only around 2% of these will reach adulthood as they are eaten by a range of sea creatures.

### Conservation

You can help the Western King Prawn by:

- visiting the St Kilda mangroves and learning more about how important they are for biodiversity
- not polluting – anything washed down a stormwater drain goes straight out to sea.

## For further information

### Public enquiries

For more local information on any of the species in this resource please contact your nearest Natural Resource Centre office on:

**Eastwood:** (08) 8273 9100

**Gawler:** (08) 8523 7700

**Lobethal:** (08) 8389 5900

**Willunga:** (08) 8550 3400

### Education enquiries

For teachers wanting more information about environmental education resources and opportunities please contact the relevant NRM Education sub regional team on:

**Northern Adelaide:** (08) 8406 8289

**Barossa:** (08) 8563 8436

**Central Adelaide:** (08) 8234 7255

**Southern Adelaide:** (08) 8384 0176

**Southern Fleurieu:** (08) 8551 0524



Photo by D. Pearce

Western King Prawn



Photo by David Muirhead

Western King Prawn

