

National West Coast Recreation Area



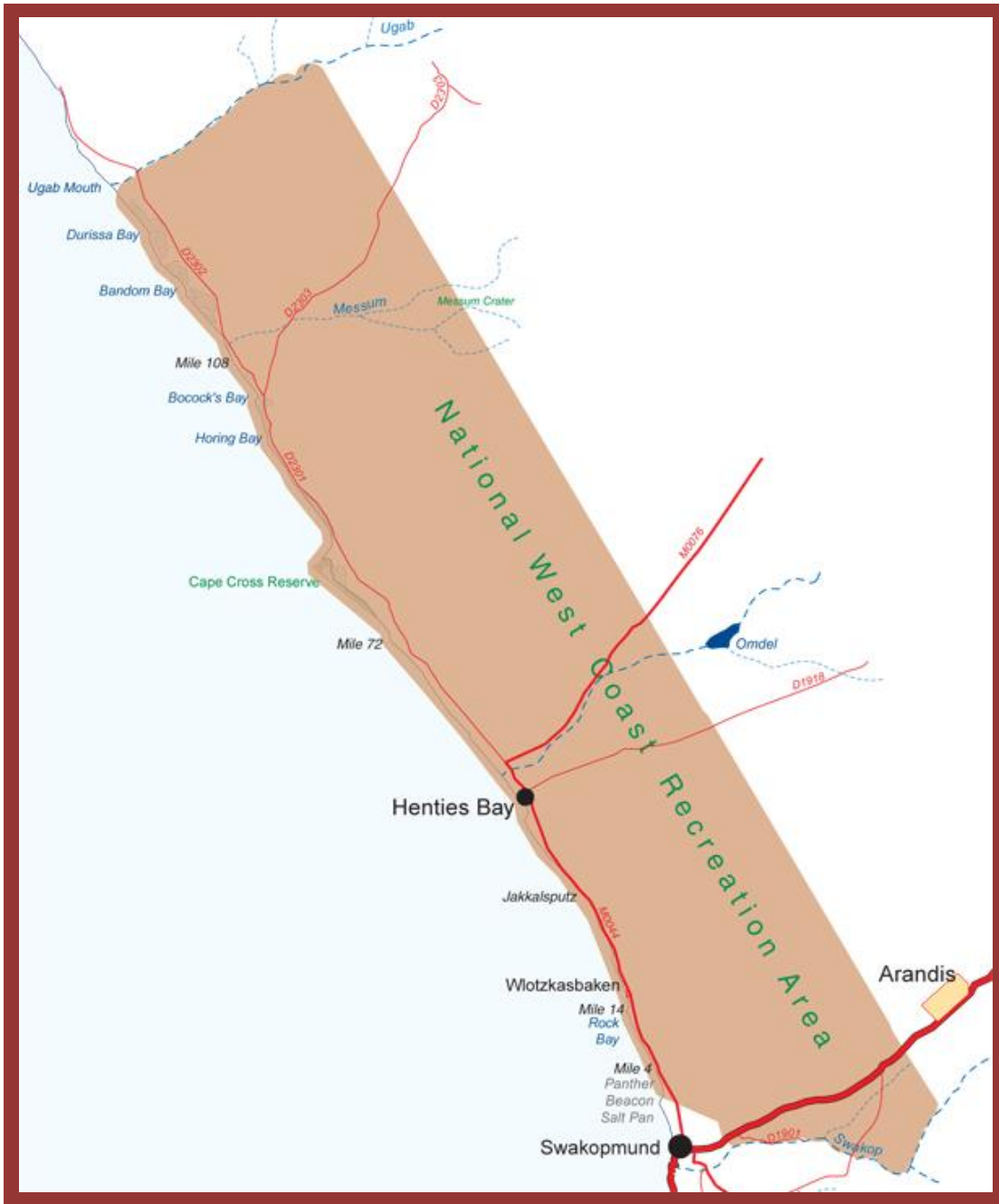
The National West Coast Recreation Area is known as an angler's paradise, with kabeljou, galjoen and steenbras the most prized species. But it also contains a few surprises. Extensive lichen fields are found north of Wlotzkasbaken and Cape Cross, while the Messum Crater in the north contains San rock paintings and archaeological sites from Damara nomads.

It is bordered to the north by the Ugab River and the Skeleton Coast Park. The Omaruru River bisects it, while the Swakop River is situated just south of its boundary. The towns of Henties Bay and Swakopmund are found within its boundaries, along with the hamlet of Wlotzkasbaken. The Cape Cross Seal Reserve is a separate reserve in the northern section of the area.

FACT FILE

Park size:	7 800 km ²
Proclaimed:	1973
Natural features:	The Atlantic coastline, gravel plains, sandy beaches with dune hummocks. Extensive lichen fields.
Vegetation:	Namib Desert Biome. Vegetation type: Central Desert. Pencil bush (<i>Arthroa leubnitzia</i>), dollar bush (<i>Zygophyllum stapfii</i>), lichens, shepherd's tree (<i>Boscia albitrunca</i>), welwitschia (<i>Welwitschia mirabilis</i>).
Wildlife:	Springbok, black-backed jackal, Cape fur seal, brown hyaena, gemsbok. The 270 bird species recorded here include Damara tern, Ludwig's bustard, Rüppell's korhaan, African black oystercatcher, Gray's lark.
Tourism:	Angling, camping, walking. There are four campsites along the coast at Mile 14, Jakkalsputz, Mile 72 and Mile 108. These are currently under renovation and development by a public private partnership through Namibia Wildlife Resorts. Jakkalsputz Walking Trail (18 km) and 20- and 70-km walking trails in the Omaruru River. Contact the Henties Bay Municipality for further information. Cape Cross Seal Reserve (see Cape Cross profile).

Map



Conservation successes

Vast lichen fields, the largest breeding colony of Cape fur seals in the world and breeding grounds for the endemic Damara terns, the National West Coast Recreation Area maintains these key conservation areas while at the same time, provides recreational areas for anglers and adventurers. It is not always an easy balance to maintain, but with the proclamation of the Namib-Skeleton Coast National Park protection will come with stronger mandates from the government and hopefully more respect from users.

Key management issues

Off-road driving is a major concern, particularly with regard to uncontrolled use of 4x4 vehicles and quad-bikes. This leads to physical degradation and the destruction of unique habitats, especially of highly fragile lichen fields and breeding areas of endangered species, such as Damara terns.

Tracks leave scars that can remain for centuries, affecting the aesthetic qualities of the dunes and the surrounding gravel plains, reducing the attractiveness of the area as a recreational destination. Littering of the beaches and the desert due to increasing tourism is a general problem. Camping outside of designated areas occurs during peak holiday periods.

Future plans

The status of the area will be upgraded to that of a national park, and will be managed with the Walvis Bay and Swakopmund area, which will also be proclaimed. This will result in the creation of a mega-park, protecting the entire Namibian coastline.