

## YOUR VIRTUAL DISCOVERY VISIT – 68 TO THE HERITAGE STORIES OF ROTTNEST ISLAND



*Virtual Visits were initiated during the COVID-19 pandemic when Rottnest Island was closed to the public due to lockdown and quarantine from March to June 2020. Virtual Visits have continued to enable a further enjoyment of stories introduced at the Wadjemup Museum, the Chapman Archives or sites around the Island.*

*Enjoy, reflect and share.*

### Wreck of the Kiryo Maru



Since the first Europeans visited the west coast of Australia in the 17th century, Rottnest Island has seen numerous shipwrecks. The 11-kilometre long and 4.5-kilometre wide island is surrounded by hidden and partly exposed reefs whilst being buffeted by north-westerly winter gales as well as very strong south-west summer sea "breezes". Because it is situated 12 kilometres west of the port of Fremantle much of the maritime traffic to Western Australia's major port passes close by.

On August 6, 1984, the Japanese tuna boat Kiryo Maru I was on its way to Fremantle when it went aground 50 metres offshore at Cathedral Rocks. One seaman swam ashore with a line and the other 17 men followed safely. After a careful analysis by an environmental study group, it was decided to leave the wreck in situ because any efforts to remove it may have resulted in irreversible damage to the fragile reef.

As evidence of the power of the sea, little remains of the Kiryo Maru today. The main wreck site sits beneath dangerous breakers and is only accessible in very low swell less than 0.5 metres. Some small and scattered pieces of wreckage can be seen as a debris field on the seafloor at a depth ranging from 2 - 9 metres.



An anchor and plaques on the cliff top overlooking the wreck site provide an introduction to the *Kiryo Maru* story when guides are not present.

### What's in a Name?

There is another popular attraction nearby which forms part of the **West End Wanderer** experience offered by Rottneest Voluntary guides. The advantages of scientific names for precise identification of flora and fauna is amply demonstrated in the case of ***Arctocephalus forsteri***. Local names for this species include: Long Nosed fur seal; Australasian fur seal, South Australian fur seal, New Zealand fur seal, and Antipodean fur seal. Current best practice on Rottneest and within the RVGA is **Long Nosed fur seal**.



The species occurs in Australia and New Zealand. It is found in the coastal waters and on the offshore islands of southern Australia, from the south-west corner of Western Australia to just east of Kangaroo Island in South Australia, and also in southern Tasmania and the subantarctic Macquarie Island. Small populations are forming in Bass Strait and coastal waters of Victoria and southern New South Wales.



Before the arrival of humans in New Zealand, the species bred around all the New Zealand mainland and its subantarctic islands.

Rottneest is privileged to have a colony of Long Nosed fur seals that lives at Cathedral Rocks. Throughout the year, fur seals live in colonies at haul out sites where they can leave the water. Fur seals spend about half their time out of the water resting on the rocks.

*Synchronised Swimming Sea Lions Show Off At Stunning Rottneest Island - Sarah Lansdown, The Huffington Post, 23 February 2017*

## Perspectives of Long Line Tuna Fishing

There is an environmental issue of which we should be aware if questions are asked. Of the various kinds of longline fishing practices one of the most dangerous to seabirds is mid-water pelagic fishing for tuna. This fishery concentrates near ocean fronts -and continental shelf breaks, which are also favoured by foraging seabirds. Vessels deploy large numbers of baited hooks on long, lightweight branch lines that sink slowly and are vulnerable to attack by seabirds (in contrast, demersal longliners deploy short branch lines on a weighted mainline which sinks relatively quickly).

Tuna fishing is conducted by the domestic fleets of various nations and by large fleets from Japan and other Asian nations which have the capacity to fish almost anywhere in the world for the lucrative Japanese raw tuna markets. In the Southern Hemisphere the Japanese longline fishery for southern bluefin tuna, *Thunnus maccoyi*, is perhaps the fishery with the greatest incidental take of albatrosses and other seabird species.



*Japanese tuna boats alongside Victoria Quay, 1989*

To a Japanese tuna fisherman, longline fishing represents the means to a decent living, the opportunity to follow a family tradition and the chance to be an officer or even the fishing master of a tuna vessel. It also means ten-and-a-half months a year at sea, long working hours, isolation from family life and almost total exclusion from a normal social existence. To a seabird conservationist, longline fishing for tuna is an activity that causes unacceptably high mortality rates of seabirds.



### **Access to Australian Ports**

Under the 1996 Subsidiary Agreement, Australia permits licensed vessels to enter certain ports. Fishing and port access are considered important levers in international fisheries management. Australia uses those elements to influence the way fisheries are managed. Under the current arrangements, bilateral subsidiary agreements allowing Japanese vessels, port and fishing access cannot be finalised until the international SBT quota is set by the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna. This provides a mechanism for maintaining leverage over fisheries management outcomes important to Australia

Japan has argued strongly for a separation of port access and the fishing access agreements. The Japanese would like to sever the linkage because the administrative burden is significant and the nexus with the southern bluefin tuna Commission. The benefits to the Japanese in having access to Australian ports include the facilities and services available, the commercial convenience of not having to travel to other more distant. The value of access to Fremantle is estimated as \$6.75 million to the Japanese industry.

[http://www.shipwreckswa.com/kiryo-maru-1970-1984-](http://www.shipwreckswa.com/kiryo-maru-1970-1984-2/http://museum.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/Rottnest.pdf)

[2/http://museum.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/Rottnest.pdf](http://museum.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/Rottnest.pdf)

<https://www.divingwawrecks.com/rotnest-south>

<https://wildlife.rotnestisland.com/water/fauna/new-zealand-fur-seal>

<https://www.stirworld.com/see-features-nendo-s-inventive-makeover-of-a-japanese-tuna-longliner-reminisces-life-ashore>

<http://museum.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/Rottnest.pdf>

A future Virtual Visit will explore the long history, pre-dating Federation, of visits by Japanese naval vessels to Western Australia.