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Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions

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WHAT YOU CAN DO

Each person must take responsibility for his/her own environment. Through your actions others are influenced.

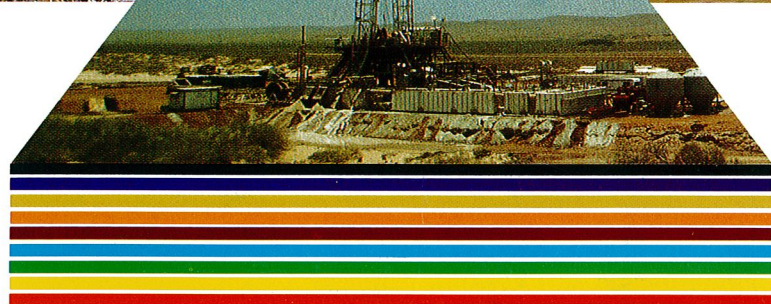
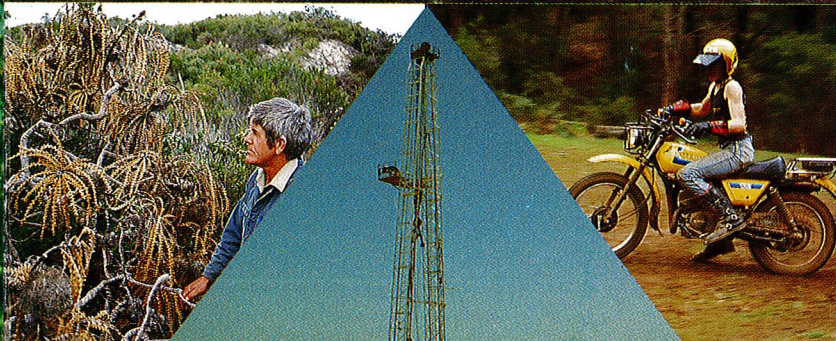
1. Visit your local National Park.

2. Join or start up a local 'Friends of National Parks' group, 'Naturalists' club or 'Wildflower Society'.

3. Go and see your member of Parliament, or write to him/her, whenever one of your favourite National Parks is threatened.

- write letters to editors of newspapers.
- talk to your friends.
- join the Conservation Council of W.A.
- join W.A. National Parks and Reserves Association.

What's happening to our National Parks



Your Parks Under Threat

The principal aim of National Parks is conservation. They are areas set aside from exploitative activity so that a representative or unique ecosystem or landscape can be protected for all time. In addition, they provide us with opportunities for inspiration, education and enjoyment.

As our resources dwindle, populations increase and work hours shorten, more pressure is applied to the limited area of National Parks. It is up to us to take responsibility for our National Parks and so protect them from degradation, whether that be from mining, tourist developments, adjacent land pressures or inappropriate fire use.

MINING — In 1985 the W.A. Government allowed the establishment of a gold mine in Hamersley Range National Park. This could set a precedent for the mining of other National Parks.

Internationally accepted definitions of National Parks reject environmentally destructive activities such as mining. Yet in W.A. exploration licences are freely granted over all areas, and mining companies understandably expect to be able to exploit any mineral deposits they find.

Over 90% of West Australians are opposed to mining in any National Park. The Government should withdraw exploration and mining rights in National Parks and make it very clear to the mining industry that the tiny proportion of land that has been reserved for National Parks is off limits.

Tourist Development

Growth in urban populations, together with more leisure time have led to an increased demand for outdoor or bush-orientated recreation. By the year 2000 it is believed that demand will rise by 300%. We need to plan for the future if these resources are not to be "loved to death"!

Tourist development in National Parks need not mean an array of hotels, restaurants and "attractions" which defeat the primary purpose of a National Park — Conservation. The majority of people value the peaceful, natural and primitive state of National Parks.

FIRE — A Burning Question

Before European colonization some aboriginal tribes used fire for mythological purposes, to drive game and encourage regeneration of desired food plants.

Nowadays managers of production forests and other public lands attempt to protect human life and property by controlled burning. These are frequent, relatively cool fires designed to reduce leaf litter and other fuel. However, they have the effect of reducing the diversity of flora and fauna, and may lead to the spread of dieback and a reduction in nutrients.

Broadscale intentional burning should never be carried out in National Parks and Reserves. The leaf litter and shrubs play important roles in natural ecosystems by providing soil nutrients which are vital to the vigor and health of vegetation in general. They are also very important habitats for a multitude of animals, from insects to mammals and are therefore essential to food webs.

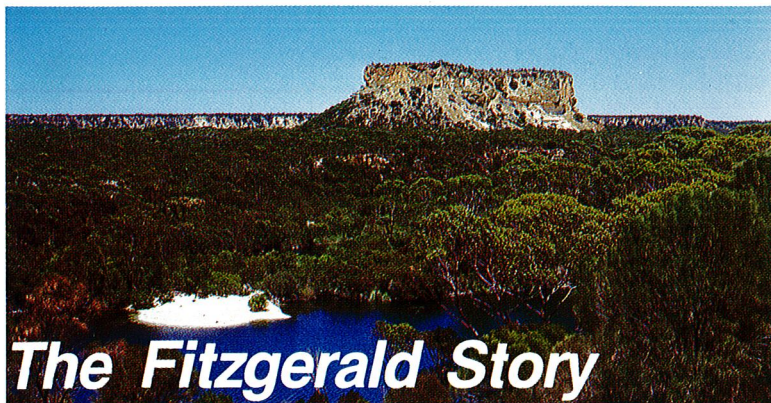
Any artificial disturbance to these elements of an ecosystem must be treated with caution, especially in Parks and Reserves which are specifically set aside to protect wildlife. As an overall strategy to protect natural resources, we require detailed management plans which consider not only the people/property factor but effects on the natural environment as well.

What About The Neighbours

National Parks are vulnerable to outside influences such as feral animals, exotic plants and polluted waters.

These are the most common problems:

- Land clearance can cause salination and nutrient pollution to rivers, streams or lakes which run through Parks.
- Clearing burns or hazard reduction burns can escape into National Parks or nature reserves. Frequent fires along boundaries encourage weeds. Parks are sometimes burnt to prevent any wildlife from posing a hazard to surrounding farms.
- Developments on the periphery of a Park intrude upon wilderness values.
- Stock may stray, damaging flora and spreading weeds through dung.
- Herbicides and weedicides can drift, or be washed downstream.
- Seeds of exotics, such as pines, can become established.



The Fitzgerald Story

In 1971 proposals were put forward to mine coal and other minerals in the Fitzgerald Flora and Fauna Reserve.

Though the mining company promised a port and hundreds of jobs, some of the locals opposed the destruction of the only wilderness area left in the S.W. Wheatbelt, and undertook a public campaign against it.

By 1973 their efforts were rewarded by the cancellation of mining leases and the gazettal of Fitzgerald as an 'A' class National Park.

The group formed an association around the Park, primarily for social and educational activities, but found that threats to the integrity of the Park continued and appropriate action was again warranted.

In 1982 they discovered that the buffer surrounding the Park had been surveyed for farmland and bulldozing had commenced on boundary lines.

The Government of the day denied responsibility stating that they had to uphold the previous Government's commitments to opening up the land, and said they would see what could be done. After long and frustrating negotiations the Government was convinced that it had made the wrong choice and backed off.

Today, the Fitzgerald River National Park Association (F.R.N.P.A.) play a major role in management planning for the Park. Their aim is to change attitudes through education, "stimulating an awareness of the joys of loving and caring for the earth" and to ensure that this unique wilderness area is managed primarily for the conservation of its natural features.

Parks Can't Look After Themselves

European settlement has brought about such radical changes to the natural ecosystem that careful management is required now to protect parks damage.

It is only since 1984 that the authorities have been required by law to prepare management plans. These should be based upon detailed biological research of the Park so that roads or other facilities can be sited where they will do the least damage, and fire management carried out in

the most environmentally sound manner.

As these plans can take a number of years to complete, we must be vigilant and active to ensure that any proposed developments in the meantime do not erode Park values.

Funding and Staffing — or the Lack of it

W.A. National Parks have always suffered from a lack of funds and staff leaving some Parks unmanned and open to activities such as hunting, rubbish dumping, and indiscriminate firewood collection.

W.A. is the only state that does not provide visitor information centres in National Parks.

The figures below indicate that other state governments place far more importance on National Parks than does the W.A. Govt.

State	Staff per 10,000 ha	\$ per ha
N.S.W. 83/84	1.85	10.76
VIC. 83/84	3.62	10.08
SA. 83/84	6.41	2.40
WA. 83/84	0.23	0.94

Data for N.S.W. and S.A. include all conservation parks and reserves.