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Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions

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Europeans first visited the area around 1829, when Lieutenant-Surgeon Alexander Collier and Lieutenant William Preston named Lakes Preston and Clifton while exploring the coastline between Mandurah and Bunbury. In the 1850s, shortly after the introduction of convict labour into the State, the 'Old Coast Road' south of Mandurah was rebuilt by convict road gangs. For most of its length, the road ran through well-timbered, sandy limestone country of little value to agriculture. There were few settlements or holdings. Yalgorup National Park was formally established in the 1970s to protect the coastal lakes, swamps and tuart woodland between Mandurah and Myalup Beach.

History

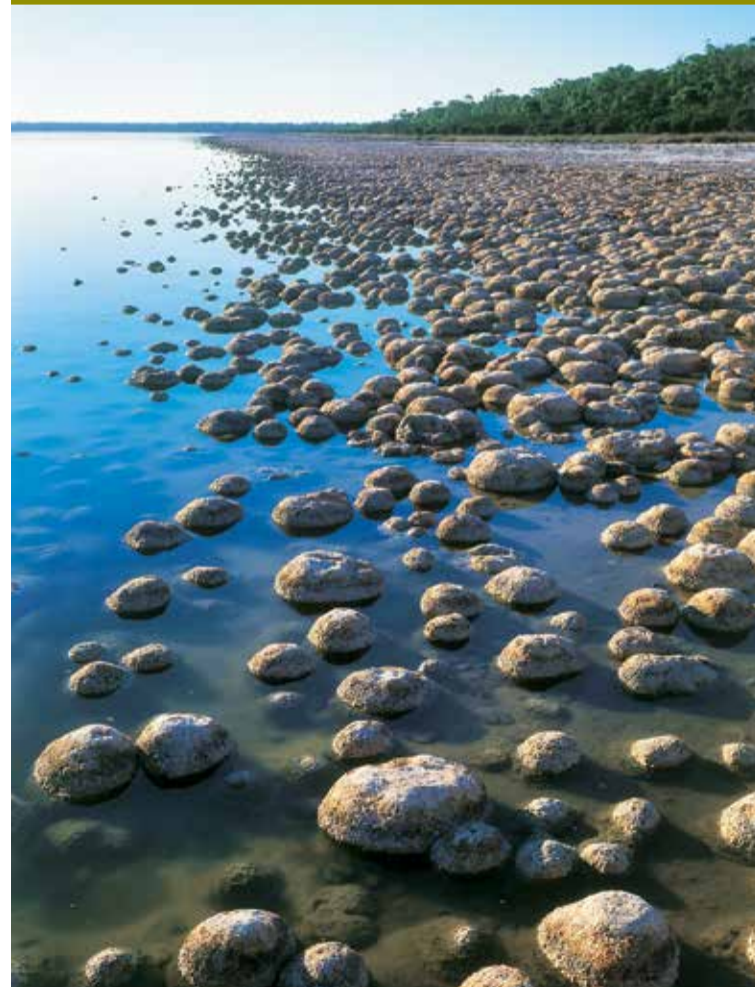
Yalgorup National Park lies on the western edge of the Swan Coastal Plain just south of the Dawesville Channel near Mandurah. The name Yalgorup is derived from two Nyoongar Aboriginal words; yalgor, meaning 'a swamp or lake', and up, meaning 'a place of'. It is an appropriate name because the park protects 10 lakes that run in a chain.

Yalgorup National Park

Above Magnificent grasses dominate this opening in the tuart forest.
 Photo – Gordon Roberts/DBCA



Yalgorup National Park



Visitor guide



Soils from the sea

The soils of Yalgorup National Park originated from the sea, mostly comprising calcareous material derived from seashells and other marine organisms. These soils, deposited in a series of dune ridges parallel to today's shoreline, illustrate the past changes in sea level. As the polar ice caps grew during the last ice age, about 130,000 years ago, the sea level fell. About 18,000 years ago it was 130m below its present level. The ice age ended about 10,000 years ago, causing the sea level to rise, producing the shoreline we see today.

The dune systems at Yalgorup National Park are the result of these changes. The limestone rocks and soils at the surface inland from the coast, are derived from the older Spearwood dune system which formed in the past 10,000 to 140,000 years. The Spearwood dune system has leached sands at the surface and creamy yellow to reddish-brown soils. Superimposed on the sand dunes of the Quindalup dune system that have been blown in from the sea or washed ashore over the past 10,000 years. Yalgorup has 11 lakes that form three distinctive lines parallel to the coast. Lake Preston is extremely elongated and lies closest to the coast. The lakes behind the next ridge are far more broken, comprising (from north to south) Swan Pond, Duck Pond, Boundary Lake, Teal Lake, Lake Pollard, Martins Tank Lake, Lake Clifton. Like the famous stromatolites of Hamelin Pool, in Shark Bay, the thrombolites are built by microorganisms too small for the human eye to see. Within these structures of Lake Clifton are living communities of diverse inhabitants with population densities of 3000 per square metre! Lake Clifton is one of only a few places in Western Australia where living thrombolites survive. These peculiar structures live on the eastern edge of the lake and are most easily seen in March and April. Microbial mounds, which are the remains of thrombolites, can also be seen at nearby Lake Preston.

The thrombolite-building microorganisms of Lake Clifton resemble the earliest forms of life on Earth. These organisms were the only known form of life on Earth from 650 million to 3,500 million years ago. The thrombolites and stromatolites they constructed dominated the clear, shallow seas of this period and formed extensive reef tracts rivaling those of modern coral reefs.

Today, living examples of these once completely dominant organisms are restricted to only a few places in the world. The thrombolites and stromatolites are scientifically significant. Visitors walking on the fragile structures can degrade them. Visitors can view these fascinating structures from the purpose-built observation walkway.

Microscopic masterbuilders

Above Boardwalk over thrombolites at Lake Clifton. Photo – Steve Dutton/DBCA



Animals of the lake

The Yalgorup lake system is significant for waterbirds and is recognised under the international Ramsar Convention (named after the place where it was signed in Iran). The lakes provide important habitat for the international trans-equatorial waders that migrate from the northern hemisphere. These waders include the bar-tailed godwit, red-necked stint, greenshank, red knot, whimbrel and three species of sandpiper. Other waterbirds that use the lakes include the banded and black-winged stilts, red-necked avocet, hooded and red-capped plovers, Australian pelican and coot.

Surveys show that the Yalgorup lakes support high numbers of musk ducks, Pacific black ducks, black swans and shelducks.

The quacking frog, turtle frog and slender tree frog are among the eight frog species that inhabit the park and the long-necked oblong turtle is present in Lake Clifton.

Things you need to know

Yalgorup National Park offers visitors panoramic views of the beaches, dunes and lakes from several high spots. Peaceful settings among the patches of tuart forest and woodland, and sweeping views over the tranquil lakes, give the area a wilderness feel.

Where is it? 50km south of Mandurah.

What to do Walking, sightseeing, photography, birdwatching, camping and viewing wildflowers in season.

Walks

- Walk trails at Heathlands, Lake Pollard and Lakeside Loop.

Facilities

- Picnic tables are provided at Lake Hayward, Heathlands and Lake Pollard Walk Trails
- An observation boardwalk over the thrombolites, picnic tables as well as an information bay and toilets, are provided at Lake Clifton (Mount John Road).
- Please note, no firewood is provided at Martins Tank campground. No drinking water is available in the park. There is no access to the lakes in Yalgorup National Park for swimming, boating or fishing.

Camping

- Camping, gas barbeques, a camp kitchen, tables and toilets are provided at Martins Tank Campground.
- Fees apply and bookings are essential.
- Book online: parks.dpaw.wa.gov.au/park-stay

Best season Spring and autumn.

Safe walking tips

To protect yourself against heat stroke, wear a hat and loose protective clothing, drink 3 to 4 litres of water per day when walking and walk in cooler times of the day.

Caring for the park

Please report any incidents to the ranger on (08) 9303 7750.

Be kind Do not disturb animals and plants. No firearms or pets are permitted in national parks. There is no access to the lakes in Yalgorup National Park for swimming, boating or fishing

Be responsible Fires restrictions apply. Fires are only permitted in communal fire pits outside the fire ban season. Check current campfire conditions online:

parks.dpaw.wa.gov.au/current-campfire-conditions

Be clean Please take your rubbish out of the park when you leave.

Be careful Your enjoyment and safety are our concern but your responsibility. Stay on marked trails and roads.

How to get there

Yalgorup National Park lies on the western edge of the Swan Coastal Plain just south of the Dawesville Channel, near Mandurah.

Situated only 80 minutes drive south of Perth, 45 minutes drive south of Mandurah or 45 minutes north of Bunbury, Yalgorup National Park offers panoramic views of the local beaches, peaceful settings of forest and woodlands and sweeping views over tranquil lakes.

More information

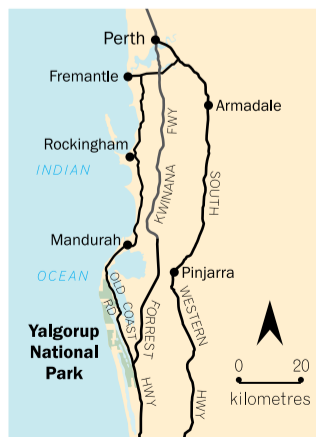
Parks and Wildlife Service Mandurah Work Centre

432 Pinjarra Road
 Mandurah WA 6210
 Phone: (08) 9303 7750
 Web: pws.dbca.wa.gov.au

Camping

Book online:
parks.dpaw.wa.gov.au/park-stay

Front cover Thrombolites at Lake Clifton, Yalgorup National Park.
 Photo – Alex Bond

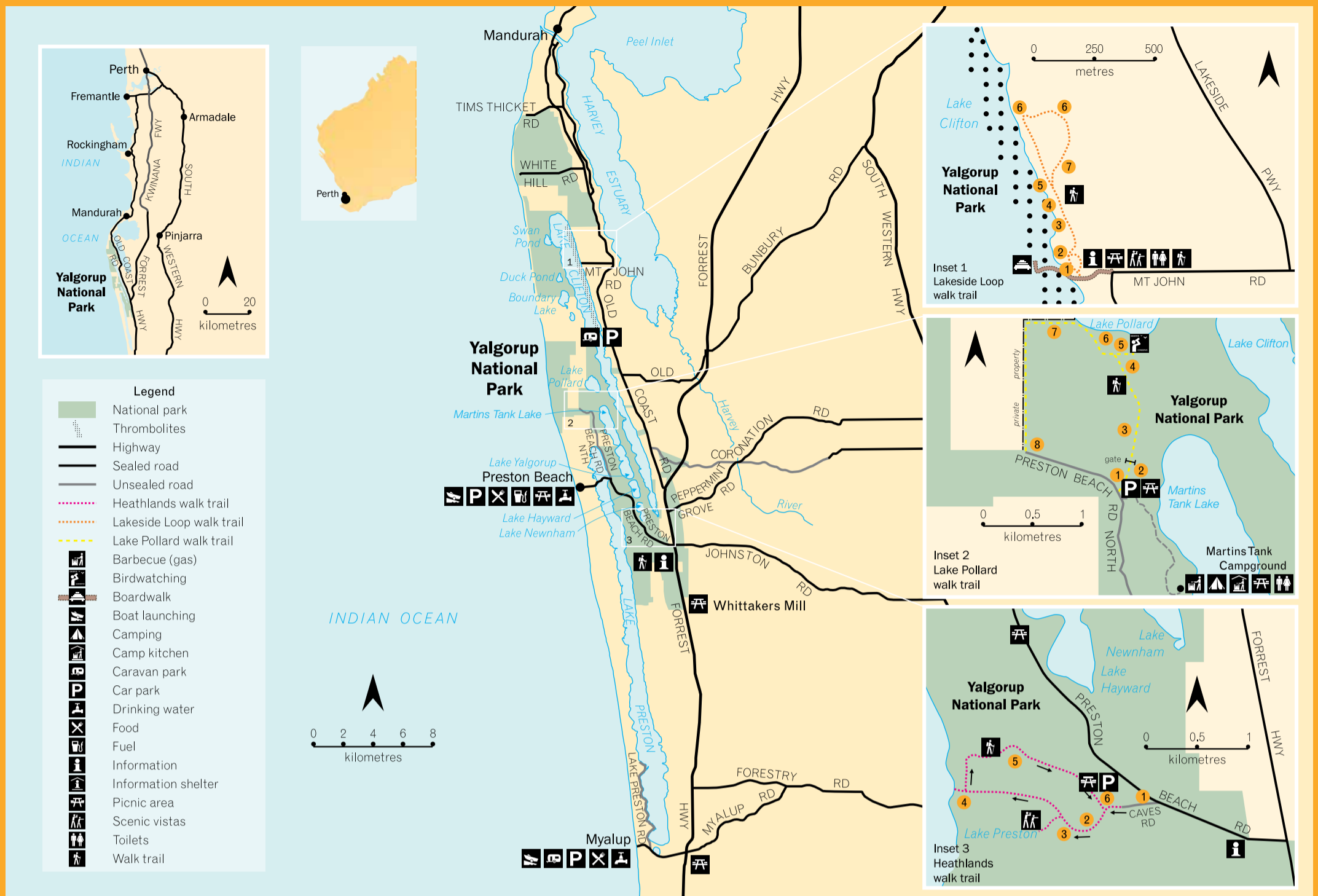


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Lake Pollard Walk Trail

Length 6km
Class 2 (a well defined trail with gentle gradients)
Walk time 2 hours

Where is it? 50km south of Mandurah
Travelling time About 45 minutes from Mandurah or Bunbury
Facilities Picnic Table, Gas barbecues, tables and toilets are nearby at Martins Tank Campground
Best season Lake Pollard is renowned for its high numbers of black swans between October and March

The walk begins at the entrance to Martins Tank Campground on Preston Beach Road.

- 1 Parrotbush (*Dryandra sessilis*), a shrub or small tree with prickly fan-shaped cream to yellow domed flower heads, grows at the start of the trail and in dense thickets across the road from the trailhead sign. Beyond this dense thicket is a woodland comprised of jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*), tuart (*E. gomphocephala*), peppermint (*Agonis flexuosa*) and bull banksia (*Banksia grandis*).
- 2 After a short walk, you reach a gate that prevents vehicles from entering the trail. Here, cockies tongues (*Templetonia retusa*) flower profusely from May to December. The magnificent red or pinkish-red flower of this species has a long wing petal and a distinctive long, narrow standard petal that is bent abruptly back, giving it the appearance of a cockatoo's head. If you are walking in the morning, watch for signs of animal tracks in the sandy path. You should be able to distinguish tracks of grey kangaroos or brush wallabies as well as bandicoot and possible echidna diggings. Chuditch, brushtail possums and water rats are also known to occur in the park.
- 3 Other plants seen along the track include grasstrees (*Xanthorrhoea*), zamias (*Macrozamia*), prickly moses (*Acacia pulchella*) and the usually multi-stemmed Christmas tree (*Nuytsia floribunda*), which most people rarely notice until its brilliant gold blooms appear in December.
- 4 On reaching a T-junction, a signpost with a yellow pointer indicates that you should turn right. The woodland is at first composed mostly of tuart and peppermint, but soon the first paperbarks indicate the close proximity of the lakes. Finally the tuarts are replaced by paperbarks, cockle shells litter the path and water can be seen between the trees.
- 5 Turn left when you reach the sign and you will see the bird hide and vista of Lake Pollard. Black swans arrive here in high numbers from October to March, when they graze on extensive growths of stoneworts (musk grasses). Along the lake is a fringe of attractively gnarled and stunted, white-barked saltwater paperbarks (*Melaleuca cuticularis*).
- 6 Return to the T-junction, where the adventurous can choose to travel straight ahead while others might turn left and retrace their steps back

to the start along the flatter route. For those who decide to proceed onward, follow the trail to the right and, before long, there is a low heathland of hakea, parrotbush and cockies tongue on your left and woodland on your right.

- 7 When you reach the fence, turn left and climb up the steep firebreak for a magnificent vista over Lake Pollard. At the top of the hill, rare mallees cling to the rocky hill top. The rough-barked Fremantle mallee (*Eucalyptus foecunda*) has bright orange buds and white flowers. Continue to follow the fenceline back to Preston Beach Road.
- 8 As you walk back to the starting point along Preston Beach Road (North) look out for the kangaroo paws along the roadside.

Heathlands Walk Trail

Length 4.6km
Class 3 (moderately difficult with short steep sections and in some places the surface is soft and sandy).
Walk time 1.5 hours

Where is it? 50km south of Mandurah
Travelling time About 45 minutes from Mandurah or Bunbury
Facilities Picnic table, also nearby at Lake Hayward picnic site
Best season Late winter and spring for wildflowers

This walk explores the many different vegetation types of Yalgorup National Park, from the towering tuarts to the delicate flowers of the limestone ridges.

- 1 Begin at the information bay on Preston Beach Road and head west along the track signposted as Caves Road. This refers to the limestone tunnels or shafts discovered here in the 1940s, which are now largely derelict.
- 2 As you turn left and begin to climb, the understorey of the woodland on your left thins and grasstrees stand tall and proud among the forest. On the other side of the track, where the soils are shallower and the trees cannot grow, there is a scrubland of wattles, hakeas, grevilleas and other plants.
- 3 As you near the top of the rise, some swamp banksia (*Banksia littoralis*) grows in the lee of the hill. On the hilltop, the rare limestone mallee (*Eucalyptus petrensis*) and Fremantle mallee (*E. foecunda*) cling to the limestone outcrops. A short walk at the top of the rise takes you to a lookout, with panoramic views of the Yalgorup lakes.
- 4 When you reach the next marker you can take a small detour to the lake edge through the fringing thicket of swamp paperbark. Back at the marker, you are surrounded by thick peppermints. If you look carefully, as you continue, you may see a nest-like collection of small wren sticks high up in the branches, called a drey. It is made by the rare western ringtail possum, which has successfully been reintroduced into this area. The track turns east and, after you leave the peppermints again, you re-enter the tuart woodland.

- 5 A totem indicates that the path leaves the track and winds off to the right, and you travel through thicker scrubland, around a small outcrop, then drop back into the cool peppermints once more, before rejoining the track.
- 6 The marker indicates to turn left onto the track which returns to the start.

Lakeside Loop Walk Trail

Length 5km
Class 2 (a well defined trail with gentle gradients)
Walk time 2 hours

Where is it? 32km south of Mandurah (follow the sign to the thrombolites)
Travelling time About 35 minutes from Mandurah or 50 minutes from Bunbury

Facilities Information shelter, toilets, picnic tables and boardwalk over lake
Best season Late winter and spring

Lake Clifton contains the largest known community of living thrombolites in the southern hemisphere and is an important refuge for waterbirds.

- 1 The track begins near the information shelter. Head north along the limestone track from the trail head sign.
- 2 The track runs parallel to the eastern side of Lake Clifton. You will notice the difference in the vegetation on both sides of the track. Paperbark trees (*Melaleuca*) occur next to the lake edge and peppermint (*Agonis flexuosa*) and tuart (*Eucalyptus gomphocephala*) trees occur on the other side of the track. Changes in water levels determine where the different kinds of trees grow.
- 3 On the left hand side, small trees with long fruits bend towards the track. These are honey myrtle (*Melaleuca huegelii*) – these trees grow near the coast, particularly on shallow limestone soil and rocky areas. Large numbers of insects are attracted to this species for its nectar.
- 4 On the east side of the track are some old fences and a cattle ramp. Farming was established in this area in the early 1900s.
- 5 At this point a fork occurs in the track – stay to the left and continue heading north.
- 6 At the T-junction turn right as indicated by the yellow arrow and follow the track about 100m up a slope, before turning right again. You are now following the private property fence boundary and heading south toward the car park area. Notice how the vegetation has suddenly changed. These limestone ridge areas (Tamala limestone) have shallow soils and support shrubland vegetation such as dryandras, acacias, meleleucas and xanthorrhoeas, or balgas. You will get glimpses of Lake Clifton as you proceed south.
- 7 The track turns right through the peppermint trees then links up with the lakeside track heading back towards the car park.