FORESTS DEPARTMENT
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WESTERN AUSTRALIA

# SULLIVAN ROCK NATURE TRAIL



# WELCOME TO SULLIVAN ROCK

The former 41 mile peg near Sullivan Rock has been a stopping place for travellers for many years. The old well at the picnic area is reported to have been constructed by convicts at the time the original Perth - Albany track was built.

The trail begins on the eastern side of the Highway and leads to the top of Sullivan Rock, a distance of ½ km. Numbered pegs along the trail indicate particular points of interest which are referred to in this guide. From the top of Sullivan Rock, the trail continues on a further 1½ km. to the summit of Mt. Vincent. Please note that this section is a more strenuous walk.

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Most of the soils of the Darling Range plateau have developed from the weathering of a lateritic (ironstone) cap, up to four feet thick, which once covered most of the Range. These gravelly ironstone soils are very low in plant nutrients.

Where the ironstone cap did not cover the underlying granite or diorite rock, or weathering over the centuries have exposed them, more fertile soils have developed.

On Sullivan Rock, the origin of soil development from parent rock can be seen. The differences in soil fertility have resulted in the development of several broadly different groups of plants, i.e. some plants are found only on the more fertile soils of granite origin while others are adapted to growing on the poorer ironstone gravels.

STOP 1

This is on a typical low fertility sandy gravel soil. Sometimes used as indicators of this type of soil are a group of plants including Bossiaea ornata, Lasiopetalum floribundum and Adenanthos barbigera, all of which are growing close to this spot.

STOP 2

This is a soil containing a mixture of lateritic ironstone gravel with some epidiorite floater rocks. The soil is slightly more fertile than at Stop 1, and this is reflected by the presence of some additional plants such as Hakea lissocarpa which commonly grows on the loamier soils.

STOP 3

This is at a granitic outcrop and the soil is a rather gritty sandy loam. Several new species are to be seen here.

STOP 4

At the small creek where a reasonable depth of loamy soil has developed, plants such as Calytrix angulata are growing. This would be a reasonably fertile acid soil derived from the weathering of Sullivan Rock itself.

From this point to the top of Sullivan Rock, the track is marked with rock cairns. Take care as the surface is slippery after rain.

STOP 5

On the edge of Sullivan Rock where the soil is very shallow, plants such as Borya nitida and Astroloma drummondi are the only ones capable of growing reasonably well. Further from the edge, where the depth of soil increases, shrubs such as Hakea petiolaris and Acacia pulchella grow quite vigorously.

STOP 6

Colonisation of the rock face begins with lichens; heating cooling and rain causes the rock face to exfoliate and crack at weak points. These small catchments for debris and moisture allow mosses and other lichens to colonise and these further break down the rock which begins to form soil. As the soil depth gradually increases, plants such as the Droseras and Borya nitida will grow. With further increasing soil depth, plants such as those at Stop 5 begin to appear.

From the highest point on Sullivan Rock, several similar granite outcrops can be seen. The tallest of these is Mt. Cooke (582 m. above sea level), located approximately 5 km to the southeast. Known as monadnocks, these outcrops belong to the Pre-Cambian era and are believed to be over 2½ thousand million years old, which makes them some of the oldest rock in the world.

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If you wish to continue on to the top of Mt. Vincent, follow the rock cairns to the start of the second section of the trail.