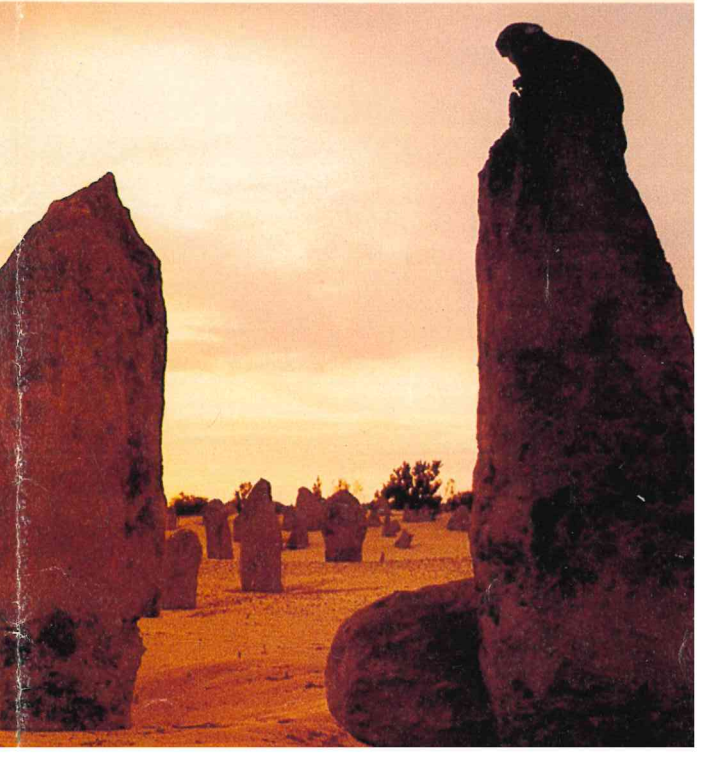
Nambung National Park

Western Australia

The Pinnacles at sunrise *D. Palmer*



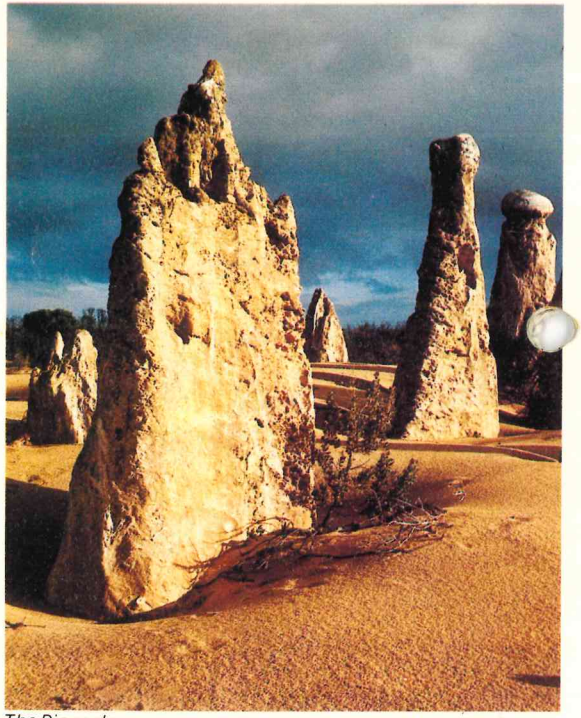
Nambung National Park

Nambung National Park appears to be a desolate expanse of sand dune country yet it contains extraordinary and spectacular geological features, a wealth of wildflowers, enthralling wildlife and marvelous beaches.

The recorded history of the area dates back to 1658 when North and South Hummocks (stabilized sand dunes rising to about 120m above sea level) were marked on Dutch navigators' maps. In early 1839 George Grey (later Governor of South Australia) was shipwrecked near Kalbarri. On the epic walk back to Perth, Grey discovered the dry bed of a river which he later named in honour of Fredrick Smith, a member of the party who died in this area. Although the name has changed to the Nambung River, Smith's name has been perpetuated on a tributary.

11 mile Beach *A. Start*

Scaevola crassifolia *A. Start*



The Pinnacles *V. Serventy*

A.C. Gregory passed through the area in 1848 and in 1854 Robert Brockman carved a large "B" on the trunk of an Old Tuart tree as a reference point for a grazing lease granted to him in 1855. A stock route from Dongara to Perth passed through the region in 1889. In the early 1900's bat guano deposits, rich in phosphates, were discovered in the caves of the area and mined by local farmers. Following a survey by the Hungarian Geologist Goeczal in 1908, the Minister for Agriculture visited the area and was so impressed by the great quantities of guano that he initiated steps to have all caves along the coast from the Murchison River south to Albany reserved. The resultant fertilizer industry based on guano was a failure.

Land was first set aside for preservation of caves and National Park in 1956 and the areas of pinnacles were added to the Park in 1968. The National Park now contains 17487 ha which is looked after by two Rangers resident in Cervantes. (Telephone No. 095 45 7043)

Flora

The flora of this National Park is related to an intricate system of dunes that run more or less parallel to the coast and are derived from lime-rich, wind-blown beach sands.

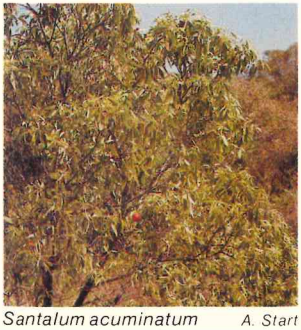
Although, in a geological time scale these dunes are very young, they increase in age with increasing distance from the sea. Associated with the increase in age there is a gradation in a number of factors such as topography (steep dunes near the coast grading to undulating plains inland), exposure to wind and salt spray and the degree of soil leaching. Four major systems can be discerned in the area.

FOREDUNE SYSTEM

Plants such as *Arctotheca populifolia* with its rosettes of grey leaves often grow between the dunes and high water while immediately behind the beach the fordunes support a characteristic flora which, although relatively poor in species diversity, may be very dense. Typical species are the blue flowered shrub *Scaevola crassifolia,* a succulent ground cover commonly known as pig-face *Carpobrotus australis* and two species of coastal *Spinifex* grasses.

QUINDALUP SYSTEM

Immediately inland from the foredunes is the Quindalup system which consists of lime-rich whiteish sands that form steep dunes which are being added to by fresh sand from the beach and foredunes. The vegetation has been described as coastal scrub but it varies considerably with aspect. The windward side of the dunes are often characterised by the grey foliage of *Olearia axillaris* dotted amongst the different greens of other species.



Santalum acuminatum A. Start

Quondong A. Start

The leeward side and the swales may support taller thickets of various *Acacia* species which are frequently covered by tangled masses of fine olive coloured stems of the parasitic Dodder *Cassytha.*

Banksia prionotes B. Muir

SPEARWOOD SYSTEM

Further inland the older Spearwood Dune System consists of yellow or brownish sands, often overlaying limestone. The most outstanding feature of this system is the Tuart, *Eucalyptus gomphocephala* woodland. Although Tuarts do not occur throughout this system at Nambung they are common in the valleys. They do not grow as tall as those further south, but some of them have immense boles and must be several hundred years old. Other vegetation types found on the Spearwood system include heathlands and low woodlands of *Banksia* and *Casuarina. Banksia prionotes* with its brilliant orange flowers is common in this system and one of the most striking plants of the Park.

BASSENDEAN SYSTEM

On the eastern side of the Park there are some examples of the oldest of the systems, the Bassendean Dune System, which usually forms a gently undulating landscape of white silica-rich sand, the lime having been leached out. The vegetation is characteristically a low open woodland of *Banksia menziesii* and *B. attenuata* growing over a low open undergrowth of wood shrubs rich in genera of families such as Proteaceae, Myrtaceae and Fabaceae.

Fauna

Although Nambung National Park is not noted for its obvious fauna, Emus and Western Grey Kangaroos are common. Brush Wallabies occur in the thickets, especially on the eastern side of the Park and there are several species of small mammals recorded from the area. These, however, are seldom seen by the general visitor.

There are many species of reptile ranging from small lizards to bobtail skinks and large goannas. Snakes, although common, usually mind their own business playing an important role in the ecology of their environment, if left alone.

To the keen ornithologist the birds can provide unlimited challenge and pleasure. Over 90 species are recorded from the Park and many of these are easily observed. Nankeen Kestrels hover effortlessly over the heathland and swans and several species of ducks use the lakes near Cervantes. At times waders abound on the beach while seabirds can be observed off shore. Nevertheless, many of the most interesting birds of the Park inhabit the thick scrub and to see them one has to be patient and observant. Such are the White Winged Wrens of the coastal heathland and the Mallee Fowl which has been observed several times in recent years although no nesting mounds have been discovered as yet.

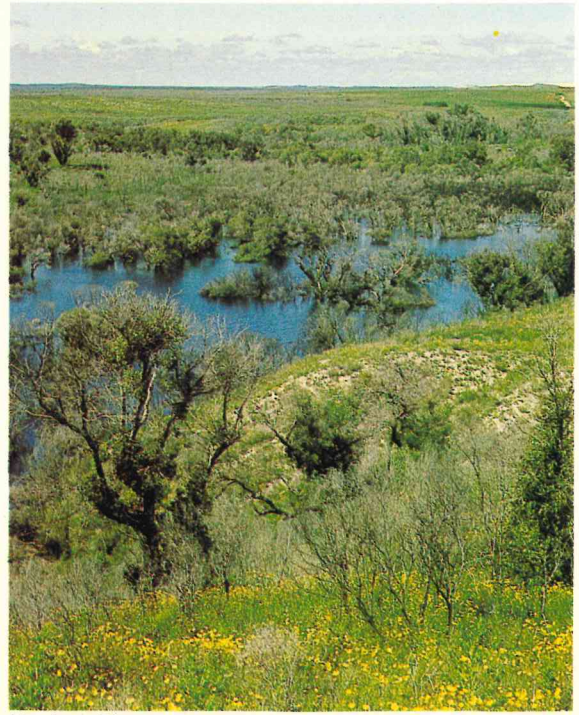
Trachydosaurus rugosus - Bob Tailed Lizard A. Start

Access and Facilities

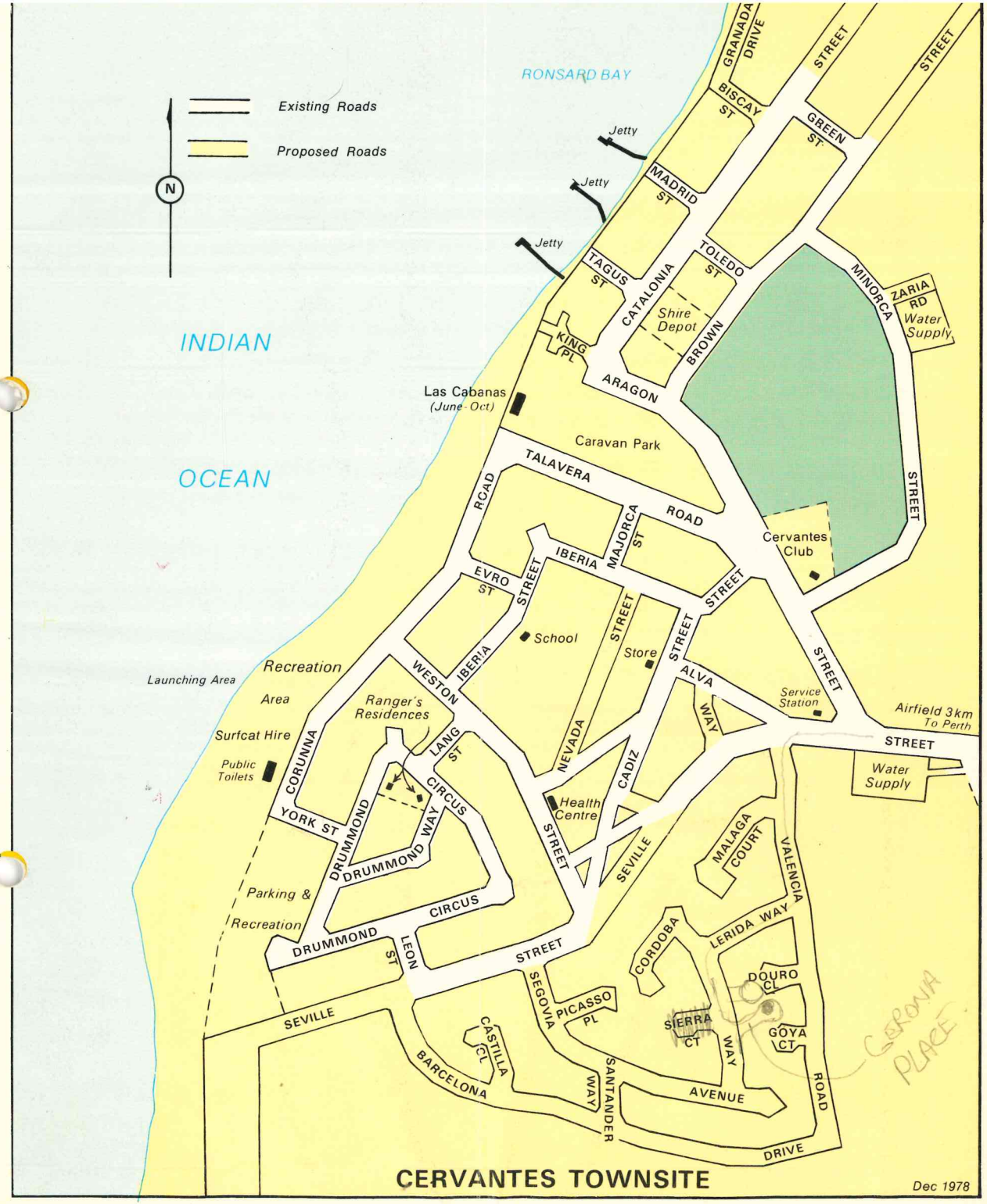
Cervantes, the access point into the National Park, is 244 km from Perth via the Brand Highway and Bibby Road (all sealed) or 255 km via the Brand Highway and Cadda Road. (Cadda Road, which leaves the highway just north of the new Badgingarra townsite, includes 26 km of good gravel road).
Roads within the Park are not sealed and may be very rough on some sections due to the frequent outcrops of capstone and the constant eroding effect of the wind. The road running south from Cervantes to Grey townsite and the drive into and round the Pinnacle Desert are negotiable by conventional vehicles. However, routes marked on the map as 4-wheel drive tracks frequently traverse patches of deep sand and very rough rock outcrops. They should not be attempted except by 4-wheel drive vehicles.

Drivers are asked to be particularly careful not to leave the track at any point and to follow the one way system in the Pinnacle Desert area. Failure to do so results in vehicles passing others and irrepairably damaging the formations.

Picnic tables are provided at some of the coastal beach areas but there are no camping facilities within the Park. A caravan park in Cervantes accommodates caravans and campers with necessary facilities (telephone 095 45 7060) while foodstuffs and fuel can be obtained from local distributors. Rental accommodation is to be had in the town between June and October only (telephone Perth 349 3423) and temporary membership is available at the Cervantes Community Club which provides normal club facilities including evening meals. Tours of the Pinnacle Desert are run from the town's caravan park. One-day tours from Perth operate every Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday leaving from the W.A. Government Travel Centre at 8.30 am.



Nambung River R. May



CERVANTES TOWNSITE

Dec 1978

Pinnacles

The main attraction of the Nambung National Park is the Pinnacle Desert.

In this area of sand of varying colours, there are thousands of limestone pinnacles which range in size up to 5 metres tall and 2 metres thick at the base. Scattered between them are slender limestone twigs little more than ankle high and the thickness of a pencil.

Thousands of years ago when the sea level dropped, beach sand was blown inland in vast quantities and formed dunes which gradually became stabilized by vegetation. After eight to ten thousand years had passed, the roots of those plants had collected and formed a weak cementation of lime and calcite within the dunes. After some twentyfive thousand years of downward percolation by rainwater, redeposited lime from within the soil formed as hard calcite along the plant root systems and other channels in the porous sand.

The continued leaching within the dunes gradually sculptured the limestone into pinnacles, and the covering soil became a subdued heap of loose quartz sand.

In the vicinity of the Pinnacles, the wind has continually blown northwards and a succession of sand dunes have blown over each other. In relatively recent time, a young sand dune covered the area killing the vegetation on the old dune. When the young dune moved on rapidly, it exposed the yellow quartz soil which also blew northwards exposing the pinnacles.

CLIMATE

Lying in the northern region of the Swan Coastal Plain, the Park has a climate generally similar to the Perth area but slightly drier.

During the summer, the days range from warm to very hot and dry with a modifying influence of daily afternoon sea breezes.

The average annual rainfall is 600 mm, the majority of which falls between the months of May and September.

A good time to visit Nambung National Park is during spring. This gives visitors a chance to see replenished water ways, fresh green vegetation and most of the native flora in bloom.

Nambung National Park

Wealacutta Pool
RONSARD BAY
Landing Ground
ROAD
To BRAND HIGHWAY
CERVANTES
Jetties
CERVANTES
See Enlargement
LAKE THETIS
Thirsty Point
HANSEN BAY
THE SPRINGS
DEAD MAN THICKET
Warrup Pool
Wyip Pool
Kinchela Pool
PUDDING HILL
NAMBUNG BAY
Jetty
Kangaroo Point
GREY ROAD
INDIAN OCEAN
HANGOVER BAY
Shag Rock
11 Mile Beach
Wrigley's Camp
GREEN HILL
WHITE DESERT
RED DESERT
PINNACLE DESERT
SADDLE HILL
LIMEY LOOKOUT
NORTH HUMMOCK
SOUTH HUMMOCK
LITTLE PAINTED DESERT
PAINTED DESERT
BULLER ISLAND
WHITTELL ISLAND
GREEN ISLANDS
RED ROCK
GREY
"Winja"
Katoora Soak
NAMBUNG RIVER
Bibby Creek
Mount Jelty Creek
FLATS
Yewadabby Spring
Frederick Creek
"Nambung"
Smith Creek
Surveyors Swamp
"Karinga"
Coonmadodo Swamp
115°15'
115°10'
30°30'
30°35'
30°40'

LEGEND

- National Parks Boundary
- Sealed Road
- Formed Road
- Unformed Road
- Track (4 Wheel Drive)
- Sand (Shifting Dunes)
- Lake Intermittent
- Swamp
- Area Liable to Flood

Metres: 100, 70, 50, 30, 10, Sea Level

SCALE 1 : 50 000

0 1 2 Kilometres

Prepared by the National Park Drafting Section under the direction of the Director, National Parks, Western Australia from base maps supplied by the Department of Lands and Surveys W.A. 1979.

National Parks are established -

- to preserve fine scenery, flora, fauna and other natural features and
- to enable people now and in the future to appreciate and to enjoy those natural features in such ways as will not damage them, and will not spoil the enjoyment of them by other people.

PLEASE take particular note of the following points that apply to ALL NATIONAL PARKS in Western Australia.

1. Fire should be confined to the use of portable stoves or the barbecues provided. Open fires are dangerous. Always keep an eye on any fire or stove when it is alight.
2. All vehicles are required to remain on approved tracks, as shown on this brochure, or indicated by directional signs. All vehicles in the park are required to be registered and to comply with the requirements of the Road Traffic Act.

All native plants and wildlife are protected, and therefore no firearms or domestic animals are permitted in the park, so please, no dogs.

Approved for distribution by:-

The Hon. G.E. Masters, M.L.C.
Minister for Conservation and the Environment

President - C.F.H. Jenkins

Director - Dr. F.G. Smith

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