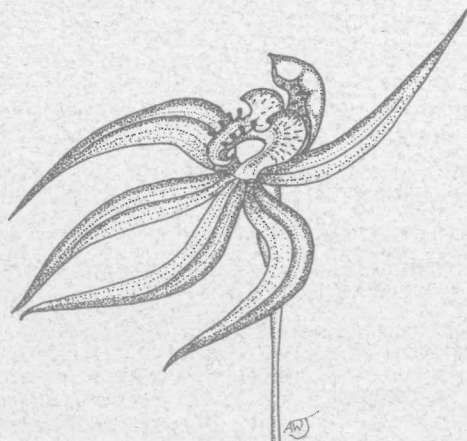


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NUYTS



A Wilderness Experience

Despite the surrounding pressures of human population and development, in the far south-west corner of Australia there still persist some areas of almost pristine bushland. The wilderness of Nuyts (pronounced 'nates') is just such an area: 4500 rugged hectares stretching from Deep River to the coast beside the Southern Ocean.

The Nuyts area is named after Pieter Nuyts, a high-ranking official of the Dutch East India company, and a guest on board the *Gulden Zeepard* (Golden Seahorse). In 1627 Francois Thyssen skippered the *Golden Zeepard* along the south coast on the first documented European visit.

To experience the wilderness intimately, you naturally have to go there. No book can do it for you. Even so, we hope this leaflet goes with you when you go. Read it in those pensive moments, the times of silence as you walk along the trail in the daytime, or in camp as the bush sounds alter at dusk. Use it to take stock of where you are and what surrounds you; let it help you discover some of the magic that the aborigines and early pioneers may have experienced.

Natural Sculptor at Work

The forces of nature are constantly remodelling the face of the earth. Much of south-western Australia is part of an ancient landform that geologists have called the Great Plateau. The edges of this plateau are slowly eroding away, exposing the granite bedrock. The Darling Scarp is the western boundary of the plateau; the steep granite hills of the south coast mark the southern boundary. Much younger dunes have covered the valleys along the coast, leaving the occasional granite dome protruding.

One of those domes, Mt Hopkins, is the dominant feature of the Nuyts area. If you climb Mt Hopkins and look out over the surrounding heath-covered dunes you will discover some more natural magic. This is the wettest part of the south-west; on average around 1400 mm of rain falls here each year. Over eons, vegetation and detritus were washed off the slopes and accumulated in the depressions in the dunes, sealing them to form perched lakes. Two of these, Bogy Lake and Crystal Lake, are visible from Mt Hopkins.

Streams That Race and Spill

The excess rain percolates through the sands and finds its way into freshwater rivulets, eventually forming streams which etch moist gullies into the dunes. As you near Thompson Cove you will see lush green WA peppermints (*Agonis flexuosa*) lining a gully where a stream, having found a gap in the granite bedrock, races to spill onto the beach at the head of the cove.

In some places the sands have lithified to form a limestone cap, and have subsequently been undermined and sculptured into caves in the cliffs. There is a cave like this behind Aldridge Cove.

And as night falls ... imagine sitting in the cave at sunset, your tribe around you, eating fish you've trapped in the shallows of the cove. Looking out to sea you notice a new thing - a large craft with billowing white clouds harnessed to tall spears, scudding west before a brisk sea breeze!

Tales of the Past

For tens of thousands of years, the Nyungar aborigines roamed the south coast, regularly setting fire to the forest to keep bush and scrub to a minimum for hunting. They wore kangaroo pelts and quarried stone from the rocky cliffs; they built fish traps in the estuaries, or captured seals on the coastal headlands. Perhaps the land's outstanding feature, for them, is shown in the name they gave it: *Nornalup*, 'place of the tiger snake'.

There must have been many aborigines in this area at that time. In 1803 French explorer Nicholas Baudin, sailing west along the coast, reported in his journal: "During the day we saw such a great number of fires along the coast that there is every sign of this part being reasonably inhabited."

In the early 1800s European and American sealers were the first white settlers. They called the navigable entrance to the Nornalup Inlet the Deep River, and set up camp at Sealer's Cove.

Settlement on the Deep

Although there were many exploratory visits, and proposals for development, it wasn't until 1845 that a group of Englishmen led by Dr Henry Landor settled on the Deep River. They planned to catch fish in the estuary and salt them for sale to passing trade ships, and to graze cattle and horses on the coastal flats. They established a vegetable garden on Newdegate Island (Snake Island) and a camp near what is now Landor's Gully.

By that time the Nyungars throughout the south-west were being ravaged by European diseases - cholera, influenza, whooping cough, measles and typhoid. The aboriginal practice of attributing cause of death to other Nyungars led to fierce inter-tribal wars, and numbers began to dwindle.

Tinglewood

In 1910 the sailing ship *Grace Darling* anchored at the mouth of Nornalup Inlet and deposited Frank Thompson, writer and political philosopher, who had recently left Sussex in search of a paradise - which probably meant anywhere with a better climate than England's. He purchased 300 acres (120 ha) on the Deep River and began building Tinglewood Lodge.

In the 1920s Tinglewood Lodge became an exclusive resort for people seeking the wild beauty, solitude and excellent fishing that the area had to offer.

The Wilderness Experience

In 1920 Professor Ernest H. Wilson of Harvard University urged the then Premier of WA, Sir James Mitchell, to make the Nornalup area a national park. This was an unusual attitude for its time, but in 1921, 12 000 ha were duly declared a national park. The Nornalup Reserves Board was formed in 1924, passed to the State Gardens Board in 1947, then to the National Parks Authority, and finally to CALM.

For many years the Nuyts area remained a retreat for bushwalkers 'in the know'. In the late 1980s, however, organised adventure tours began to proliferate in Western Australia. When large groups began using the Nuyts area, it was apparent that some controls were needed to conserve the wilderness experience.

In 1988 nature took a hand by washing away the bridge over the Deep River. But people continued using the area, and indeed were taking risks crossing the water. A new bridge was urgently needed. In 1989, accordingly, friends of the

park have been helping CALM to design and construct a swing bridge in place of the old. Over the same period, displays outlining safety, interpretive information and a few regulations for campers have been placed at the trail head.

Beneath the Stars

Camping under the stars is perhaps the most effective way to evoke an Australian wilderness experience. If you are lucky enough to have fairly clear skies, then you will have the thrill of seeing literally millions of stars. If you're especially lucky you might see the *Aurora australis*, nature's upstage of a laser light show, caused by solar storms interacting with polar electromagnetic particles.

Rare, Elusive, Noisy!

The high rainfall has created a moist, dense understorey under the stunted trees in the gullies. This is the habitat of the very rare and elusive Noisy Scrub-bird. You are more likely to hear a Noisy Scrub-bird than see one. They are so named for one of the male calls - a loud whistle consisting of several repeated notes, accelerating up to an even louder crescendo. We encourage campers to practise this call at night after dinner.

Noisy Scrub-birds were recorded in the 1800s from Harvey, Augusta, Torbay and Albany. After 1899 they were believed extinct; then in 1961 a small population was discovered at Two Peoples Bay east of Albany. Through careful management of a specially declared nature reserve, numbers increased to a level which enabled a new group of birds to be located at Mt Manypeaks. In 1987, a third group was created at the base of Mt Hopkins.

Respect the Wilderness

In the late 1970s the Nuyts area was afforded extra protection by being gazetted as "access is by walking only". There are no signs or marked trails in the wilderness, no rubbish bins or other facilities, and only primitive campsites.

Inspired management and respectful use of this area are essential if the unique experience is to be conserved for future generations. We ask campers and bushwalkers to take time to read the important information at the trail head and observe the simple code for bushwalkers.

In Case of Emergency

The nearest settlement is Tinglewood Lodge. Otherwise, contact CALM in Walpole (on the highway at the Western end of town). Phone (098) 401 027.

