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Department of Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions

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Dieback is caused by a pathogen, known as *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, which is lethal to hundreds of plant species. This disease kills plants by destroying their root systems, and threatens many of the parks plant species. The climate of the south coast favours the spread of dieback, which thrives in warm, moist soil and can easily be spread in mud or soil that adheres to vehicle tyres or bush walkers' footwear.

It is therefore sometimes necessary to close roads and tracks or temporarily restrict access to certain areas. Fitzgerald River National Park is one of the parks least infected by dieback in south-western Australia. With your help it has a chance of remaining so. Bush walkers can help by cleaning mud and soil from their boots before entering a park or reserve, or at the boot-cleaning stations provided at trailhead sites in the park. When driving in the park, it is essential to keep to established roads and tracks and obey all 'ROAD CLOSED' signs. By washing the tyres and under-body of your car before and after a trip to a park or reserve, you can help preserve WA's natural areas.

## Dieback



West Mount Barren summit



Royal hakea (*Hakea victoria*), Mount Bland.

Fitzgerald River National Park is one of the most botanically significant national parks in Australia with about 15 per cent of Western Australia's described plant species found here. Recently improved sealed road access and recreational facilities provide a wide range of opportunities for world class nature-based activities, in highly scenic and diverse coastal and inland environments.

This brochure is one of a set about Fitzgerald River National Park (see back panel for more information). For general information about the park, including a park map and details of access roads please refer to the *Fitzgerald River National Park information and recreation guide* brochure.

The western side of Fitzgerald River National Park can be accessed from the South Coast Highway by using either the Devils Creek Road or Quiss Road. If accessing this section of the park from Bremer Bay, it is suggested that you use either Swamp Road or Devils Creek South Road. (see the map for directions).

## Walk trail classifications

Parks and Wildlife walk trails are assigned a 'class' to indicate degree of difficulty. The walk classes range from Class 1 (universal access), which is suitable for wheelchairs to Class 5, which requires walkers to be fit, experienced and suitably equipped. Check trailhead signs at the start of walks for specific information.



Oak-leaved Dryandra (*Banksia heliothol*).

and the whale oil they produced were an important part of the colonial economy. Today the island is a nature reserve and whales are fully protected under an international treaty.

- Gordon Inlet and mouth of the Gairdner River, 10km to the south-east, was named after Gordon Gairdner by Surveyor General Roe in 1848.
- Quaalup homestead can be seen to the south. John and Mary Wellstead built the homestead in 1858 and free-ranged this area with cattle and sheep.
- On a clear day, the eastern peaks of Stirling Range National Park are visible 110km to the west.
- The Fitzgerald River valley is seen to the north about 25km away. The yellow and orange cliffs of spongolite (Pallinup siltstone) are a distinctive feature of this valley. The spongolite was quarried at Twertup from 1973 - 1976 and used for building materials.
- Mount Drummond, 40km to the north north-east, can be seen on a clear day, rising as a low conical shape to 326m above sea level. This peak is named after the famous botanist and explorer James Drummond who travelled along the coast to West Mount Barren from Cape Riche in 1847.



Above Spongolite. Above right Spongolite with fossils.

## Remember

**Don't light fires.** Gas barbecues are provided free of charge to day visitors at Four Mile Beach, Hamersley Inlet and Point Ann picnic areas.

**Be clean.** Rubbish bins are not provided in the park; please take your rubbish with you.

**Save animals and plants.** No hunting or wildflower picking is permitted in Fitzgerald River National Park. Drive slowly to avoid killing wildlife on the roads.

**Stay on the road.** Follow signs in the park and keep vehicles on the roads marked in this map. Observe track closures and speed limits. To drive a four-wheel drive vehicle on sand, engage four-wheel drive and reduce tyre pressure. Don't forget to re-inflate your tyres when you leave the area. It is recommended that two-wheel drive vehicles are not driven on sand or other soft surfaces.

**Be prepared.** Always carry plenty of fresh water (at least three or four litres per person per day) as there are no reliable drinking water supplies within the park.

## Take care

**Keep your personal safety in mind at all times.** Caution is required in any natural environment with potentially hazardous terrain. Fitzgerald River National Park is no exception.

**Stand back from rocky headlands and cliff edges.** Many areas within the park have steep, rocky slopes that can be unstable underfoot.

**Choose fishing or swimming sites with great care.** The Southern Ocean is unpredictable, making rock fishing and swimming especially dangerous. Huge waves and swells can suddenly occur even on calm days. Rocks become slippery when wet. Rip currents are common along the coastline. *Wear a lifejacket at all times when fishing from rocks.*

## No pets

Pets are not permitted in the park. Please leave your dogs, cats and other domestic animals at home as they can harm native wildlife and environment. Foxes and cats are predators to native animals, so the park is baited with 1080 poison to control the numbers of these introduced predators. Native animals are naturally resistant to 1080, but the baits will kill your pets.



Please heed visitor risk warnings shown on signs that display this symbol.

Doubtful Islands can be seen on a clear day to the south east. This island was the site of Western Australia's first whaling station, which operated between the years of 1836 and 1867. Every winter small wooden boats would leave the sheltered bays of Doubtful Island to hunt both humpback and southern right whales. In the early years of European settlement these small shore whaling parties

- East Mount Barren, over 60km away to the north east, is accessible from the eastern entry to the park.
- Mount Bland (258m) 5km to the east, the closest peak, in Fitzgerald River National Park.

### Features visible from the summit include:

A striking feature on the climb to the summit is the variety, shape and size of the flora. Around the car park plants are taller, leaves larger and there is a greater diversity of species than at the higher altitudes. Toward the ridge there is an increase in cover of sword sedges, and the shrubs are mainly eucalypts, banksias and hakea. The summit is almost exclusively plants with short narrowed leaves which are needle like, such as the Barrens clafflower with its distinctive red flowers (July to October), the dense clafflower and boronia species. The narrow shape of the leaves is an adaptation to prevent water loss in this usually dry, windswept environment where soils are shallow and nutrient poor.

On the walk you are likely to find a flowering shrub called the Qualup Bell, which was first discovered by early botanists on the slopes of this hill. This spectacular looking shrub generally grows to 1m high and can be adorned with up to 100 bells. The best time to see the flowering Qualup Bell is between June and October.

### 1.7km return – allow two hours

This is a moderately difficult walk and is classified as class 4. Allow 2 hours return. West Mount Barren is 372m above sea level. The walktrail starts at the car park at the base of West Mount Barren, which is accessed from Pabelup Drive or Quiss Road.

## More information

National park rangers are available to provide information. Don't hesitate to contact them if you need assistance.

Rangers (West)	Ranger (East)
Jacup/Jerramungup Tel (08) 9835 5043	Barrens Beach Road Tel (08) 9838 3060
<b>Department of Parks and Wildlife Office</b> 13 Morgan Street Ravensthorpe Tel (08) 9838 1967	<b>Department of Parks and Wildlife, Albany District Office</b> 120 Albany Highway, Albany WA 6330 Tel (08) 9842 4500 Fax (08) 9841 7105 Email Albany@dpaw.wa.gov.au

Visit the Department of Parks and Wildlife's website [www.dpaw.wa.gov.au](http://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au) for more information on the park.

Other Fitzgerald River National Park brochures include:

- *Fitzgerald River National Park information and recreation guide*
- *Eastern short walks*, which includes the short walks to Barrens Lookout, East Mount Barren, Sepulchral Hill and No Tree Hill
- *Mamang Walktrail*
- *Hakea Walktrail*



For general information about the park, including a park map and details of access roads please refer to the *Fitzgerald River National Park information and recreation guide* brochure.

The brochures are available from park entry stations, walktrail heads or download copies online <http://parks.dpaw.wa.gov.au/park/fitzgerald-river>. Park Podcast series can also be found at this site

*Thanks to the Friends of Fitzgerald River National Park for contributions.*



Front cover: West Mount Barren and *Banksia coccinea*. Photo – Clodagh Irwin

Mount Maxwell was probably named after the bushman George Maxwell who accompanied the explorer and botanist James Drummond in 1847. Drummond discovered and named the royal hakea—which bears the scientific name *Hakea victoria* after Queen Victoria—when he camped a few kilometres from West Mount Barren. His description was "an extraordinary plant ... this most splendid vegetable production I have ever seen". He is said to have jubilantly carried one specimen all the way to Cape Riche and then onto to Albany, however, by the time he arrived at King George Sound, he was disappointed to find that the dazzling colours of the leaves had faded.

A short stop here on the way to the park entrance is a great introduction to the park. It also provides an opportunity to see some of the many and varied plants for which the area is renowned, such as the park's iconic royal hakea and a number of banksia species.

This is an easy walk to the Mount Maxwell lookout platform and is classified a class 2 walk. Allow 30 minutes return. Mount Maxwell is 184m above sea level. The walktrail starts at the car park which is accessed from Devils Creek Road or Pabelup Drive if entering from Quiss Road, and is located a short distance from the western park entry station. The unsealed access road is suitable for two-wheel-drive vehicles. Views from the platform at the peak span the western side of Fitzgerald River National Park, from West Mount Barren and Mount Bland to the east (with the wilderness peaks of Mid Mount Barren and Thum Peak in the distance), to Gordon Inlet to the south east and Twertup to the north. Mount Drummond can be seen 40km to the north-east.

### 200m return – allow thirty minutes

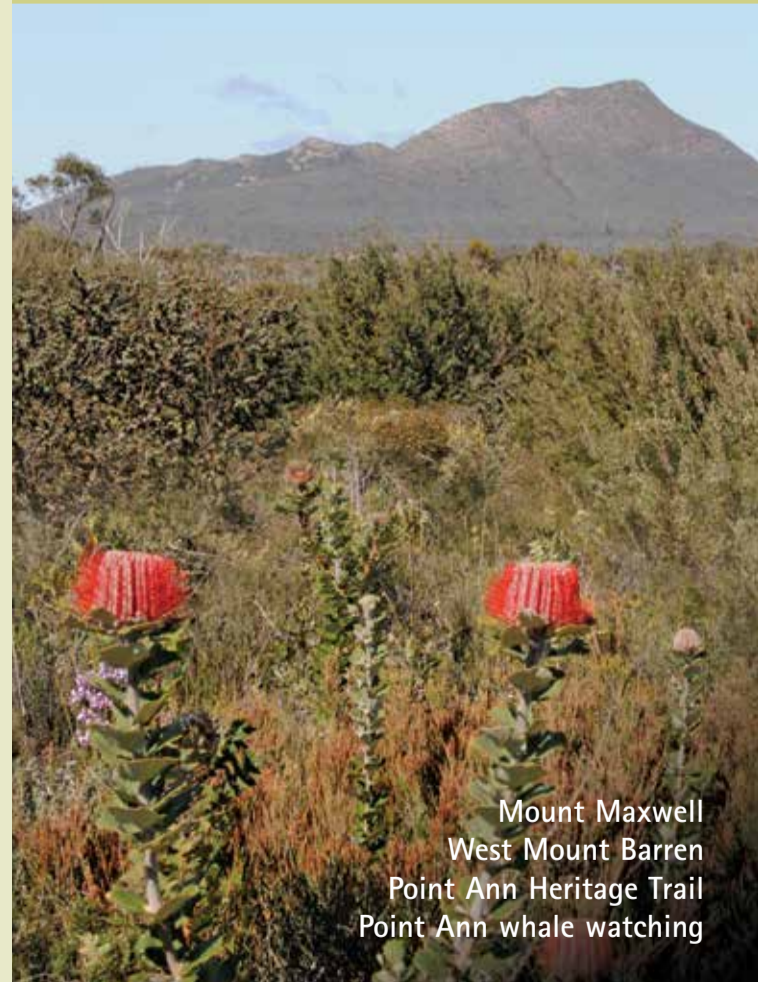
### Mount Maxwell



# Fitzgerald River National Park

Inland wildflowers to the whale bay coast

Short walks WEST



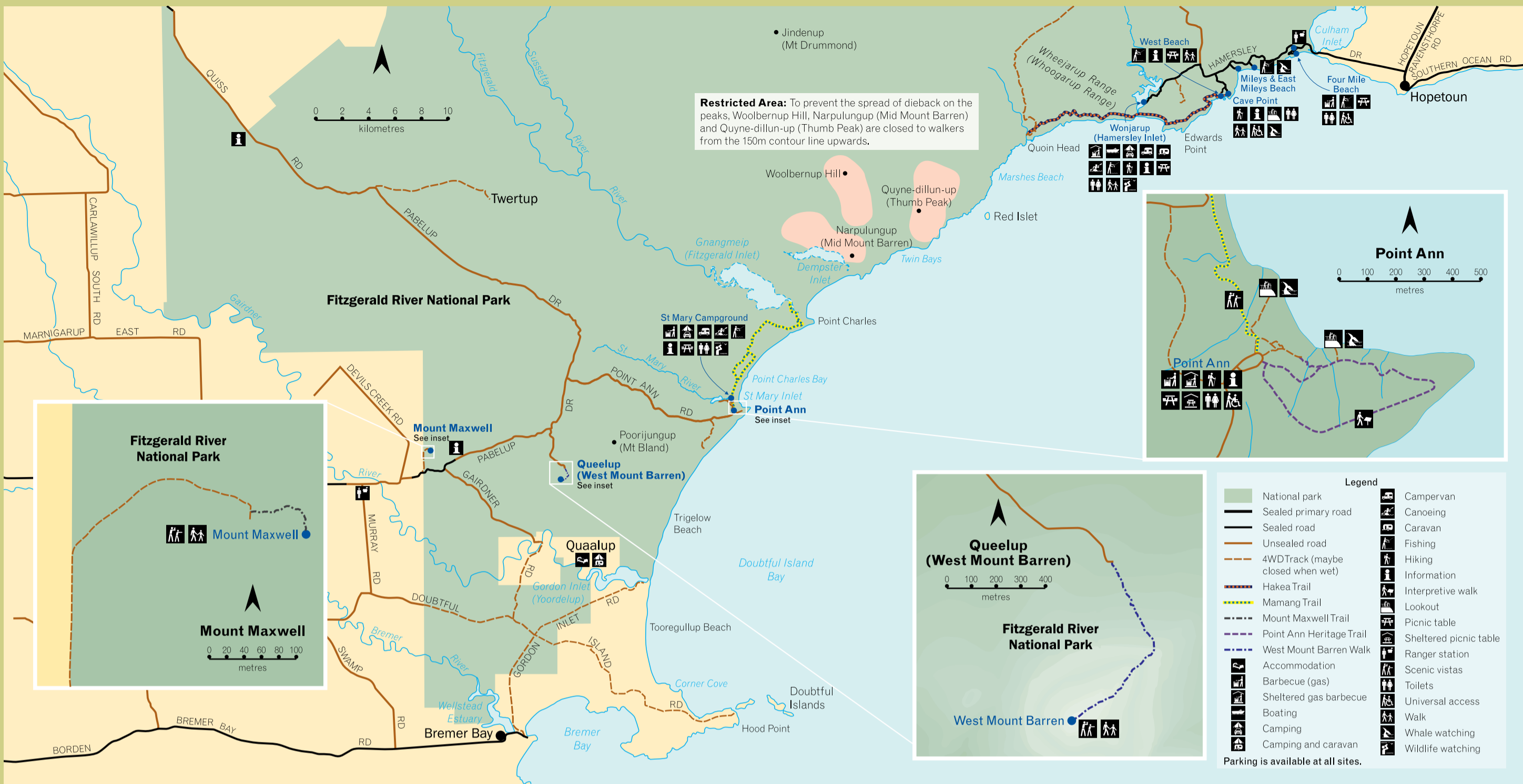
Mount Maxwell  
West Mount Barren  
Point Ann Heritage Trail  
Point Ann whale watching

## Information and short walk trail guide



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Point Ann.

### Point Ann Heritage Trail

**1km return – allow one hour**

This is an easy walk and is classified as class 2. Allow 1 hour return. The walktrail starts at the Point Ann car park. This gentle walk provides spectacular views over Point Charles Bay and humpback or southern right whales are often seen during the winter months.

The trail follows a section of the No. 2 rabbit proof fence, which was constructed in 1905 to stop the influx of rabbits from the eastern states. By the beginning of the 1900s, rabbits had achieved plague numbers throughout Victoria and South Australia, and there was concern the same could happen to Western Australia as the rabbit populations moved steadily westwards. The fence ran north from Point

Ann for 1164km, passing the Wheatbelt town of Cunderdin and joining the No.3 fence north east of Geraldton. The fence required constant maintenance, which was carried out by boundary riders. The earlier fence riders used camels, horses and bicycles to patrol their respective sections of fence, some of which were in excess of 150kms. In 1960 the fence ceased to be maintained by the boundary riders.

In 1922 the Dallison brothers established a mallet bark stripping business at Point Ann for the extraction of tannin. Bark was stripped from mallet trees and carted by a six horse drawn dray to Point Ann, where it was loaded onto longboats and rowed out to waiting ships for transportation to Europe. The tannin extracted from the mallet bark was considered important in the early 1900s for tanning leather.

#### Whale watching at Point Ann

Point Ann offers a unique close viewing platform for spotting whales. Southern right whales visit the bay to calve and raise their young every year. The coastline between Doubtful Island and Hopetoun are a favourite gathering place for southern right whales and visiting humpback whales on their migration north from the Antarctic Ocean during winter and early spring (July -



Minke whale.

October). Bottlenose dolphins often come close to the shore to feed and surf the waves. Blue whales, minke whales and orcas travel migratory routes from the Antarctic north to warmer waters around the south coast and are also occasionally seen.

The southern right whale has a characteristic V-shaped water spout when it comes to the surface to breath. They also have unique patterns of white horny growths called callosities on their heads (outgrowths of barnacles and skin) which can be used to identify each individual whale. An adult can weigh up to 85 tonnes when mature and may reach 18m in length. In late winter to early spring, southern right whales come to sheltered bays, such as Point Ann, to give birth and nurse their young calves. At birth a calf weighs about one tonne and is 5.5m in length. The mother whale will suckle her calf for 4-6 months in these coastal waters. During this time she does not feed herself. As summer approaches she will return to deeper southern waters with her calf to feed. Females only breed every three to four years, staying in sub-Antarctic waters when not breeding.

The humpback whale is slightly smaller than the southern right whale. Most adults are 15m in length, although some can reach 18m, and weigh up to 45 tonnes. Humpback whales are noted for their haunting songs. When in a playful mood, they may put on spectacular displays, breaching, rolling, and slapping their pectoral fins. The humpback has large pectoral fins that are one-third of their body length and a humped dorsal fin which varies in size and shape. It is easily identified by its 'hump' back when submerging and its mushroom-shaped blow when breathing at the surface. Newborn calves are more than 4m long and weigh about



Top Southern right whale with calf. Above Humpback whale.

Boundary rider with camels.



Below Remains of rabbit proof fence. Below right Royal Hakea (*Hakea victoria*).

two tonnes. The mother nurses the young calf for about 11 months, by which time the calf can reach up to 9m long. Minke whales are the second smallest baleen (filter feeder) whale and have an average length of 8m. Minke whales arch their backs while diving but do not raise their tail flukes. Their blows are usually 2-3m high. Minke whales travel either singly or in small groups (2-4), although they can be found in large aggregations in the hundreds where krill is abundant. Minke whales may live for up to 60 years. Females give birth in winter, to a single calf about 2.5m long.