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# Fitzgerald River National Park



East Mount Barren.

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. There are also more species of animals living here than any other reserve in south-western Australia, so if you love nature, this is the place to be!

The park has improved sealed road access and recreational facilities to provide a wide range of opportunities for world class nature-based activities. This brochure outlines some of the short walks you can do on the eastern side of the park.

Access to the eastern side of Fitzgerald River National Park is from the town of Hopetoun or South Coast Highway west of the town of Ravensthorpe.

## 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.

**Conserve 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 3–4L per person per day) as there are no reliable drinking water supplies within the park.



## Information and short walk trail guide



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Barrens Lookout.



## Barrens Lookout and Walk

250m gravel path with  
universal access to lookout

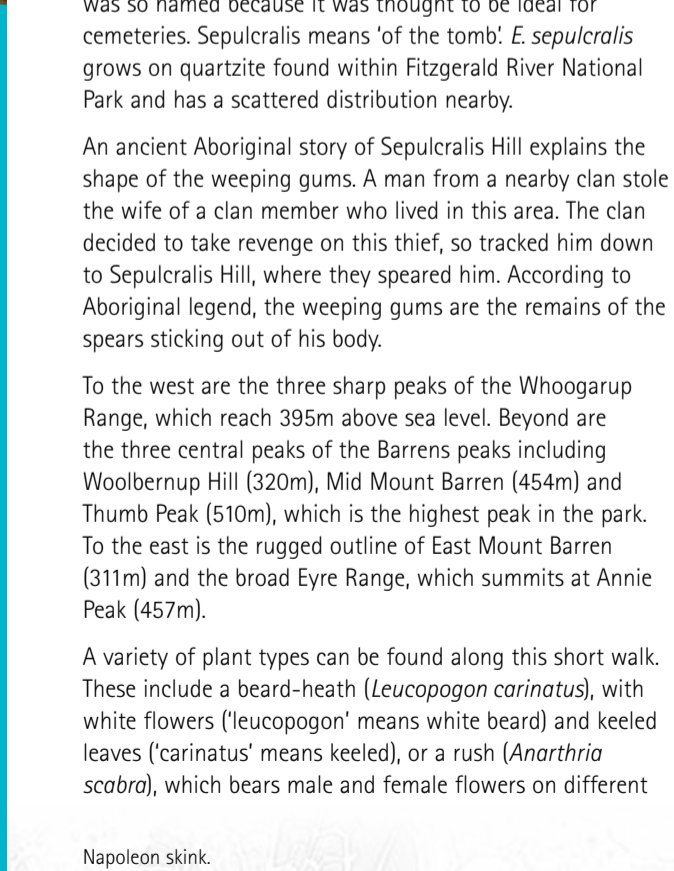
This is a short and easy walk to Barrens Lookout and is classified a **class 2** walk. Allow 30 minutes return. The walk trail starts at the car park, which is accessed from Hamersley Drive on the south-east side of East Mount Barren. Unassisted wheelchair access is possible from the car park along a concrete pathway to the lookout, where you can enjoy breathtaking views over Barrens Beach, Four Mile Beach, Culham Inlet and beyond to Hopetoun.

The walk meanders through spectacular quartzite formations and the variety of plants provide an ever-changing year-round display. Species include the Barrens regelia, Qualup bell, oak-leaved dryandra, mountain banksia and various clawflowers.

The quartzite rocks provide a home for the south-western crevice or Napoleon skink (*Egernia napoleonis*), named in honour of Napoleon Bonaparte. French naturalists explored the south coast in 1792 and 1803 in separate expeditions and many plant, animal and geographic names are accredited to their endeavours. The English explorer Matthew Flinders, aboard *HMS Investigator* in 1802, was unaware of the unique life forms of the park, as he referred to the peaks as 'barren hills', naming them West, Mid and East Mount Barren. He couldn't have been more wrong!

A number of threatened animal species have been found in this area, including a small carnivorous marsupial called the dibbler and the western whipbird, which sounds like the repeated creaking of an unoiled cart-wheel.

Migratory humpback and southern right whales are often seen moving along the coast between May and October.



Napoleon skink.



## Sepulcralis Hill

600m return – allow 30 to 45 minutes

This is a moderately easy walk up to Sepulcralis Hill Lookout and is classified a **class 3** walk. Allow 30–45 minutes return. Sepulcralis Hill is 175m above sea level. The trail starts at the car park, which is accessed from the gravel section of Hamersley Drive (about 10km from East Mount Barren).

The forlorn-looking weeping gum (*Eucalyptus sepulcralis*) was so named because it was thought to be ideal for cemeteries. Sepulcralis means 'of the tomb'. *E. sepulcralis* grows on quartzite found within Fitzgerald River National Park and has a scattered distribution nearby.

An ancient Aboriginal story of Sepulcralis Hill explains the shape of the weeping gums. A man from a nearby clan stole the wife of a clan member who lived in this area. The clan decided to take revenge on this thief, so tracked him down to Sepulcralis Hill, where they speared him. According to Aboriginal legend, the weeping gums are the remains of the spears sticking out of his body.

To the west are the three sharp peaks of the Whoogarup Range, which reach 395m above sea level. Beyond are the three central peaks of the Barrens peaks including Woolbernup Hill (320m), Mid Mount Barren (454m) and Thumb Peak (510m), which is the highest peak in the park. To the east is the rugged outline of East Mount Barren (311m) and the broad Eyre Range, which summits at Annie Peak (457m).

A variety of plant types can be found along this short walk. These include a beard-heath (*Leucopogon carinatus*), with white flowers ('leucopogon' means white beard) and keeled leaves ('carinatus' means keeled), or a rush (*Anarthria scabra*), which bears male and female flowers on different

## Walk trail classifications

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 require walkers to be fit, experienced and suitably equipped. Check trailhead signs at the start of walks for specific information.



## 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.**

Fishing safety information, including videos in English, Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese, is available at [exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au/know/fishing-boating-and-snorkelling](http://exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au/know/fishing-boating-and-snorkelling).

## 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 the 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.**



View from Sepulcralis Hill towards East Mount Barren.

plants. Many banksia species can also be seen along the track with descriptive names including creeping banksia (*B. repens*), nodding banksia (*B. nutans*), and violet banksia (*B. violacea*). The banksia genus was named after the naturalist Joseph Banks, who accompanied Captain Cook on his voyage of discovery in 1770.



## No Tree Hill

6km return – allow 2 hours

This is a moderately easy walk to No Tree Hill and is classified a **class 3** walk. Allow 2 hours return. No Tree Hill is 262m above sea level. Access to the walk trail is from John Forrest Road (turnoff from the Hopetoun-Ravensthorpe Road). Drive along this gravel road to its end then continue for a further 5km on the four-wheel-drive track to the signposted walk. Look out for the western brush (or black-gloved) wallaby as they are often seen crossing this track. It can be distinguished from the more common western grey kangaroo by its smaller size, black and white ears, black hands and feet, and a crest of black hairs on the tail.

The No Tree Hill walk is an opportunity to enjoy the natural beauty of the park's heathlands. Throughout the year there are flowers to delight the eye, at every step there is a different species, providing an ever-changing canvas of colour. The different leaf shapes and textures, from the prickly to the soft and silky, are adapted to reduce evapotranspiration during hot, dry summers.

Song birds, including the New Holland and tawny-crowned honeyeaters, provide a background melody. These active and vigorous birds are important pollinators for a number of flowering plants in the area.

## More information

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

Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

### Rangers (West)

Jacup/Jerramungup  
Ph: (08) 9835 5043

### Ranger (East)

Barrens Beach Road  
Ph: (08) 9838 3060

### Parks and Wildlife Service

#### Albany District office

120 Albany Highway  
Albany WA 6330  
Phone: (08) 9842 4500  
Fax: (08) 9841 7105  
Email: [Albany@dbca.wa.gov.au](mailto:Albany@dbca.wa.gov.au)

Visit [exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au/park/fitzgerald-river](http://exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au/park/fitzgerald-river) for more information on the park.

Other Fitzgerald River National Park brochures include:

- *Fitzgerald River National Park visitor guide*
- *Western short walks*, which includes the short walks to Mount Maxwell, West Mount Barren and the Point Ann Heritage Trail
- *Mamang Walk Trail*
- *Hakea Walk Trail*



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

The brochures are available from park entry stations, walk trailheads or download copies online [exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au/park/fitzgerald-river](http://exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au/park/fitzgerald-river). Park podcast series can also be found at this site.

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

**Front cover** East Mount Barren from Barrens Beach. Photo – Clodagh Irwin.



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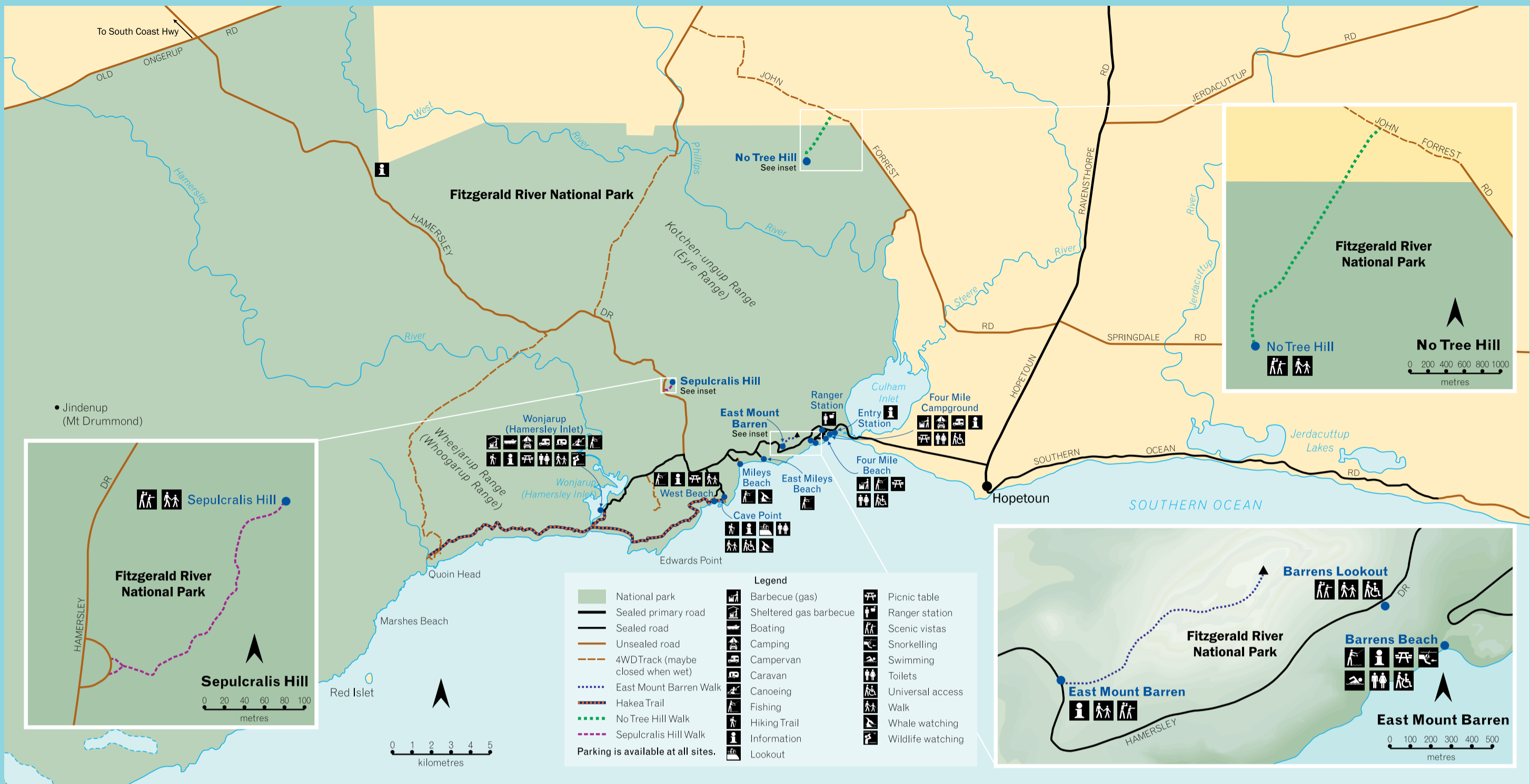


**Top** *Calothamnus validus*. **Above** *Banksia nutans*. **Above right** *Banksia violacea*.

The path leads gently uphill, passing through a grove of weeping gums, to a false summit. The final few hundred metres cross a shallow gully before a short, steep climb takes you to the real summit. The hilltop offers views across the Phillips River Valley to Culham Inlet and Eyre Range, prominent features named by J.S. Roe in 1848. The river and inlet were named after his son-in-law Samuel Pole Phillips of 'Culham' at Toodyay. The range honours Edward John Eyre, who walked from South Australia to Albany with Wylie, his Aboriginal guide, in 1841.

Annie Peak in the Eyre Range is mentioned by the explorer John Forrest in 1870 as being "the steepest hill I have ever attempted to ascend". One of his horses was named 'Annie Laurie' so possibly the peak was named after this horse. The successful crossing by Forrest from Perth to Adelaide laid the foundation for the construction of the Intercolonial Telegraph Line in 1875–1877, which ran through the present day park. The telegraph line played a significant part in the settlement of Western Australia, improving communications between the eastern and western states.





### East Mount Barren Walk Trail 3km return – allow 2–3 hours

This is a moderately difficult walk to the top of East Mount Barren and is classified a **class 4** walk. Allow 2–3 hours. East Mount Barren is 311m above sea level. The trail starts at the East Mount Barren car park situated on the western side of East Mount Barren, which is accessed via Hamersley Drive.

Begin by walking along a timber boardwalk, followed by a steep 200m ascent along the west ridge to the summit. The trail is marked by markers, which may become difficult to find toward the summit, so keep to the path and be sure to always keep an eye out for the next marker. The first ridge and final 50m to the summit are rough underfoot, steep and often slippery. The section of path near the summit looks like a forbidding rock wall, however the path leads through clefts in the rock.

The East Mount Barren walk has been a favourite walk of visitors for generations, particularly in the spring when the variety of flowers make the walk to the summit plateau a pleasurable discovery of plant species diversity. At the summit the view spans across Culham Inlet and Hopetoun to the east, to the north-west the Eyre Range, and to the west the Whoogarup Range, Hamersley Inlet and (in the distance) Mid Mount Barren and Thumb Peak, which is the highest peak in the park. The view to the south highlights the enormity of the Southern Ocean. Forty kilometres to the north, the botanical and mineral-rich Ravensthorpe Range can be seen.

View from Barrens Lookout.



East Mount Barren plateau.

### Geological origins

The coastal peaks, collectively known as the Barrens, are the most distinctive landforms in the national park. The Mount Barren group is made of sedimentary rocks about 1300 million years old. Australia was then part of the supercontinent called Gondwanaland and Antarctica was adjacent to the southern coast of Western Australia. The Antarctic continent was moving northwards, generating a mountain range along its northern margin. Erosion of the range provided sediment that was deposited on the shores of an inland sea to become the Mount Barren group. The continued northward movement of Antarctica caused the group to bend and buckle, generating great folds. During folding, the rocks were buried to great depths, sometimes up to 25km, and subjected to pressure and intense heat. Sandstone was transformed into hard, white to cream-coloured quartzite. Siltstone was transformed into flaky rocks called Kybulup schists with sparkly mica within (good examples can be seen at West Beach). These rocks were then uplifted and tilted by movements of the Earth's crust.

The Barrens are a prominent feature because quartzite, which has a crystalline structure, is more resistant to weathering and erosion than other rock types in the park. However, over time, lines of weakness in the exposed rock have fractured and enlarged, creating boulders and then smaller rocks. Crèches that form in the rock piles provide a refuge for a diversity of wildlife.

Changing sea levels have left a wave cut platform at the seaward base of East Mount Barren, evidence that sea levels over 40 million years ago were more than 100m higher than today. The ancient mountain tops rising above the sea provided island refuges for primitive plants and animals when the peaks were surrounded by water.



Top Honey possum. Above Barrens regelia (*Regelia velutina*).



Top Honey possum. Above Barrens regelia (*Regelia velutina*).

### The living environment

The quartzite peaks and slopes of East Mount Barren have become a refuge for many unique species, with 1665 plant species occurring in the park. More than 60 of these are found nowhere else. Of these endemics, 24 are only found on the quartzite peaks and ridges, including the slopes of East Mount Barren.

At the base of the peak there is a mallee-heath community. Mallee refers to those eucalypts that can regrow from a large underground lignotuber with numerous stems rising from the base. Heath refers to a complex community of plants less than 2m tall. The heaths of the park are extremely rich in plant species and dominated by myrtles (*Melaleuca*, *Beaufortia*), banksias and members of the pea family.

Outcroppings of quartzite are characterised by the tall, narrow, silver-leaved Barrens regelia flowering from September to November, that only grows on the central Barrens and eastern side of the park. The silky hairs on the leaves of Barrens regelia protect them from the drying effect of the wind and salt spray. Other species on East

Mount Barren include the mountain banksia and the Barrens clawflower. Higher up the peak are many varieties of trigger plants, buttercups, clawflowers and jugflowers, with the vegetation becoming more luxuriant towards the summit.

Birds, marsupials and insects play an important role in the pollination of plants. The large-flowered banksias and eucalypts are very attractive to the many honeyeaters that live here (17 species have been recorded in the park), while more discrete flowers, that are closer to the ground, provide an important food source for honey possums.

In warm sunny weather skinks bask on the rocks at the summit area. They may be the Napoleon skink or the red-legged skink. Kestrels, wedge-tailed eagles and brown falcons often take advantage of uplifting winds around the mountain and may be seen around the summit. Welcome swallows inhabit the rocky crags of the mountain top.

### Dieback

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 park's 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 bushwalkers' 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. Bushwalkers 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.