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Wildlife of the lake

The Yalgorup lake system is significant for waterbirds and is recognised under the international Ramsar Convention (named after the place where it was signed in Iran). The lakes provide important habitat for the international trans-equatorial waders that migrate from the northern hemisphere. These waders include the bar-tailed godwit, red-necked stint, greenshank, red knot, whimbrel and three species of sandpiper. Other waterbirds that use the lakes include the banded and black-winged stilts, red-necked avocet, hooded and red-capped plovers, Australian pelican and coot.

Surveys show that the Yalgorup lakes support high numbers of musk ducks, Pacific black ducks, black swans and shelducks.

The quacking frog, turtle frog and slender tree frog are among the eight frog species that inhabit the park and the long-necked oblong turtle is present in Lake Clifton.

Things you need to know

Yalgorup National Park offers visitors panoramic views of the beaches, dunes and lakes from several high spots. Peaceful settings among the patches of tuart forest and woodland, and sweeping views over the tranquil lakes, give the area a wilderness feel.

Where is it? 50km south of Mandurah.

What to do Walking, sightseeing, photography, birdwatching, camping and viewing wildflowers in season.

Walks

- Walk trails at Heathlands, Lime Kiln, Lake Pollard and Lakeside loop.

Facilities

- Picnic Tables are provided at Lake Hayward, Heathlands, Lake Pollard and Lime Kiln walk trails.
- No picnic/day use facilities are provided at Martins Tank Campground.
- An observation boardwalk over the thrombolites, picnic tables as well as an information bay and toilets, are provided at Lake Clifton (Mount John Road).
- Please note, no firewood is provided at Martins Tank campground. No drinking water is available in the park. There is no access to the lakes in Yalgorup National Park for swimming, boating or fishing.

Camping

- Camping, gas barbeques, a camp kitchen, tables and toilets are provided at Martins Tank Campground for campers.
- Fees apply and bookings are essential.
- Book online: parkstay.dbca.wa.gov.au

Best season Spring and autumn.

Safe walking tips

To protect yourself against heat stroke, wear a hat and loose protective clothing, drink 3 to 4 litres of water per day when walking and walk in cooler times of the day.

Caring for the park

Please report any incidents to the ranger on (08) 9303 7750.

Be kind Do not disturb animals and plants. No firearms or pets are permitted in national parks. There is no access to the lakes in Yalgorup National Park for swimming, boating or fishing

Be responsible Fire restrictions apply. Fires are only permitted in communal fire pits outside the fire ban season. Check current campfire conditions online:

exploreparcs.dbca.wa.gov.au/current-campfire-conditions

Be clean Please take your rubbish out of the park when you leave.

Be careful Your enjoyment and safety are our concern but your responsibility. Stay on marked trails and roads.

How to get there

Yalgorup National Park lies on the western edge of the Swan Coastal Plain just south of the Dawesville Channel, near Mandurah.

Situated only 80 minutes drive south of Perth, 45 minutes drive south of Mandurah or 45 minutes north of Bunbury, Yalgorup National Park offers panoramic views of the local beaches, peaceful settings of forest and woodlands and sweeping views over tranquil lakes.

More information

Parks and Wildlife Service Mandurah Work Centre

432 Pinjarra Road
Mandurah WA 6210
Ph: (08) 9303 7750
dbca.wa.gov.au

Camping

Book online:
parkstay.dbca.wa.gov.au

Front cover Thrombolites at Lake Clifton, Yalgorup National Park.
Photo – Alex Bond



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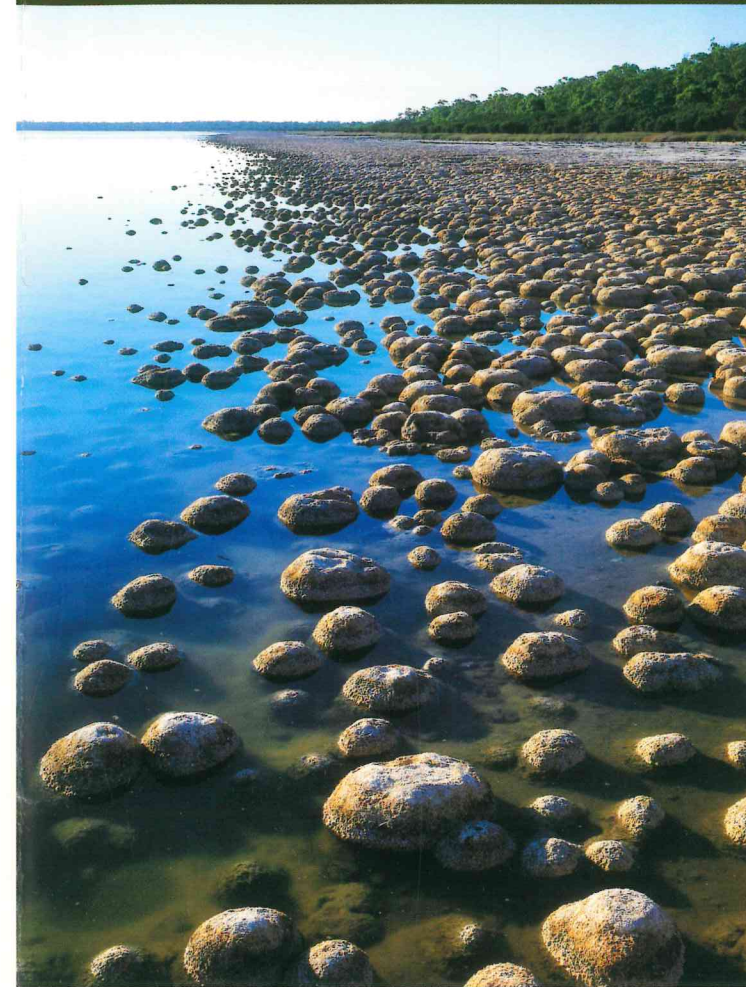


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Yalgorup National Park



Visitor guide



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Above Magnificent grasstrees dominate this opening in the tuart forest.
Photo – Gordon Roberts/DBCA

Yalgorup National Park

Yalgorup National Park lies on the western edge of the Swan Coastal Plain just south of the Dawesville Channel near Mandurah. The name Yalgorup is derived from two Noongar Aboriginal words; yalgor, meaning 'a swamp or lake'; and up, meaning 'a place of'. It is an appropriate name because the park protects 10 lakes that run in a chain.

History

Europeans first visited the area around 1829, when Lieutenant-Surgeon Alexander Collie and Lieutenant William Preston named lakes Preston and Clifton while exploring the coastline between Mandurah and Bunbury.

In the 1850s, shortly after the introduction of convict labour into the State, the 'Old Coast Road' south of Mandurah was rebuilt by convict road gangs. For most of its length, the road ran through well-timbered, sandy limestone country of little value to agriculture. There were few settlements or holdings.

Yalgorup National Park was formally established in the 1970s to protect the coastal lakes, swamps and tuart woodland between Mandurah and Myalup Beach.



Above *Diplolaena dampieri*. **Above right** Early morning at Lake Hayward.
Right Tuart forest gives way to coastal heathland at Yalgorup National Park.
Photos – Gordon Roberts/DBCA



Soils from the sea

The soils of Yalgorup National Park originated from the sea, mostly comprising calcareous material derived from seashells and other marine organisms. These soils, deposited in a series of dune ridges parallel to today's shoreline, illustrate the past changes in sea level. As the polar ice caps grew during the last ice age, about 130,000 years ago, the sea level fell. About 18,000 years ago it was 130m below its present level. The ice age ended about 10,000 years ago, causing the sea level to rise, producing the shoreline we see today.

The dune systems at Yalgorup National Park are the result of these changes. The limestone rocks and soils at the surface, inland from the coast, are derived from the older Spearwood dune system which formed in the past 10,000 to 140,000 years. The Spearwood dune system has leached sands at the surface and creamy yellow to reddish-brown subsoils. Superimposed on the Spearwood dune system, up to 2km from the beach, are the sand dunes of the Quindalup dune system that have been blown in from the sea or washed ashore over the past 10,000 years.

Yalgorup has 11 lakes that form three distinctive lines parallel to the coast. Lake Preston is extremely elongated and lies closest to the coast. The lakes behind the next ridge are far more broken, comprising (from north to south) Swan Pond, Duck Pond, Boundary Lake, Teal Lake, Lake Pollard, Martins Tank Lake, Lake Yalgorup, Lake Hayward and Newnham Lake. Lake Clifton is the furthest from the coast and the nearest to the Old Coast Road. It is also extremely elongated.



Above Boardwalk over thrombolites at Lake Clifton. *Photo – Steve Dutton/DBCA*

Microscopic masterbuilders

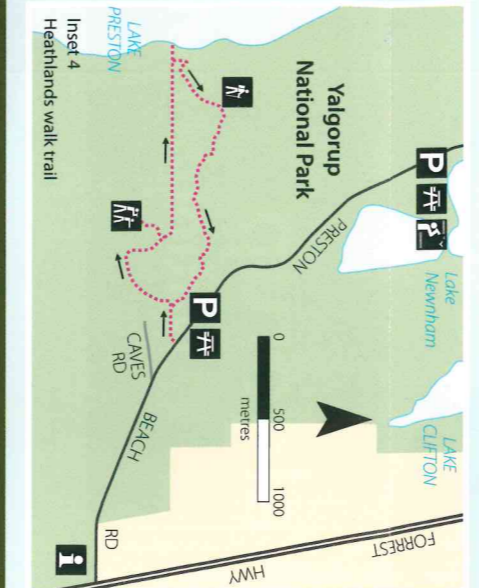
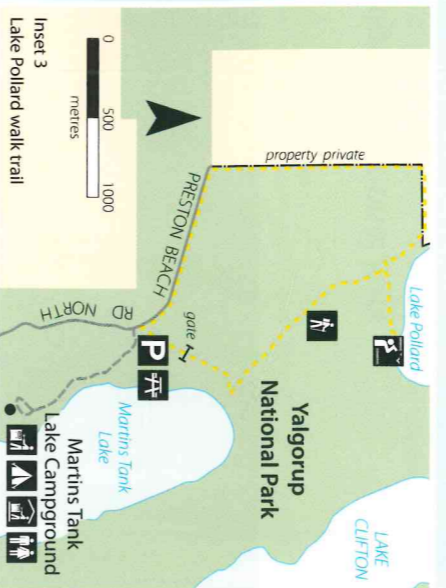
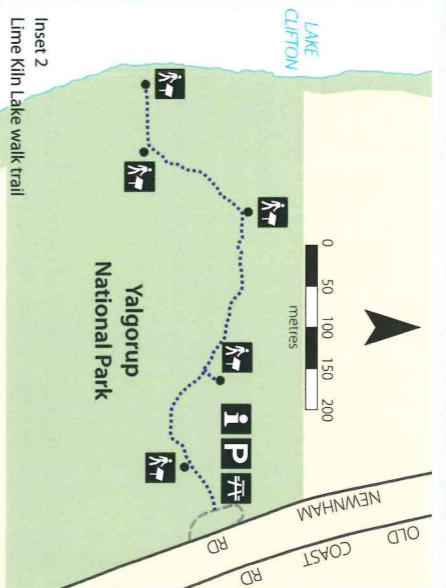
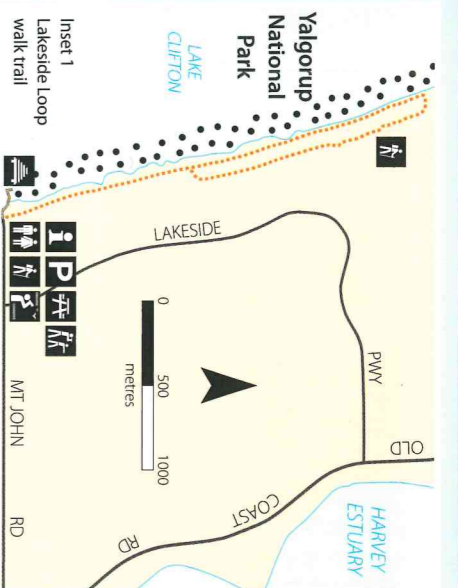
Yalgorup National Park protects the lakes and important waterbird habitat, along with attractive coastal vegetation that is diminishing all too rapidly. It is also significant because it provides a unique look at what life was like at the dawn of time.

Rock-like structures known as thrombolites are on the edge of Lake Clifton. Like the famous stromatolites of Hamelin Pool, in Shark Bay, the thrombolites are built by microorganisms too small for the human eye to see. Within these structures of Lake Clifton are living communities of diverse inhabitants with population densities of 3000 per square metre! Lake Clifton is one of only a few places in Western Australia where living thrombolites survive. These peculiar structures live on the eastern edge of the lake and are most easily seen in March and April. Microbial mounds, which are the remains of thrombolites, can also be seen at nearby Lake Preston.

The thrombolite-building microorganisms of Lake Clifton resemble the earliest forms of life on Earth. These organisms were the only known form of life on Earth from 650 million to 3,500 million years ago. The thrombolites and stromatolites they constructed dominated the clear, shallow seas of this period and formed extensive reef tracts rivalling those of modern coral reefs.

Today, living examples of these once completely dominant organisms are restricted to only a few places in the world.

The thrombolites are scientifically significant, visitors walking on the fragile structures can degrade them. Visitors can view these fascinating structures from the purpose-built observation walkway.



Lakeside Loop Walk Trail

Length 5km

Class 2 (a well defined trail with gentle gradients)

Walk time 2 hours

Where is it? 32km south of Mandurah (follow the sign to the thrombolites)

Travelling time About 35 minutes from Mandurah or 50 minutes from Bunbury

Facilities Information shelter, toilets, picnic tables and boardwalk over lake

Best season Late winter and spring

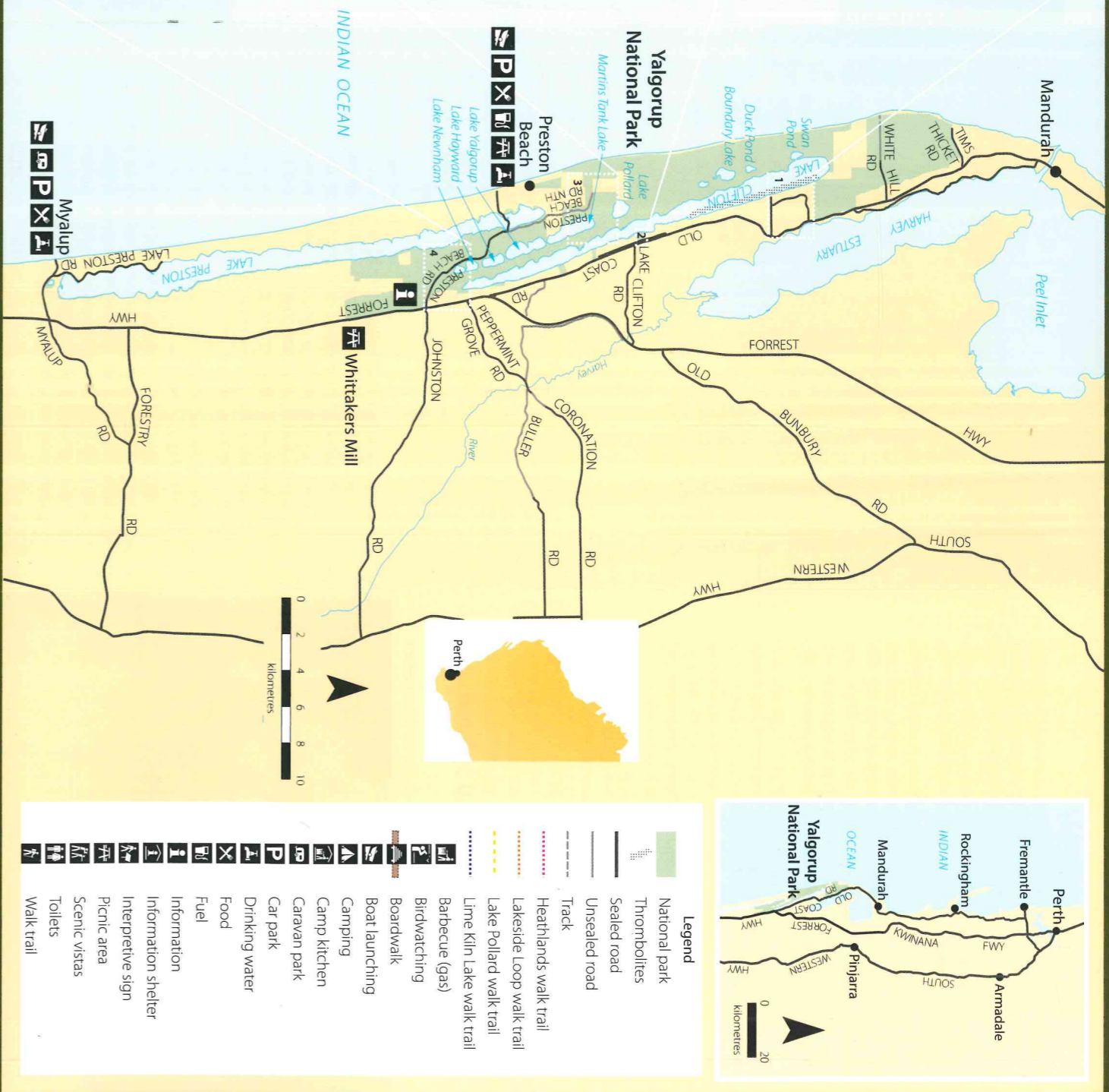
Lake Clifton contains the largest known community of living thrombolites in the southern hemisphere and is an important refuge for waterbirds.

From the information shelter at the start of the walk there is a short walk to the boardwalk from where the thrombolites can be best viewed. Retrace your steps and the loop trail begins near the information shelter. Head north along the limestone track from the trail head sign.

The track runs parallel to the eastern shore of Lake Clifton. The vegetation consists of paperbarks, melaleucas, peppermints and tuarts.

On the east side of the track are some old fences and a cattle ramp. Farming was established in this area in the early 1900s. At this point a fork occurs in the track – stay to the left and continue heading north.

At the T-junction turn right and follow the track about 100m before turning right again. As you head south to the car park area you will notice the change in vegetation. These ridges of Tarnalia limestone have shallow soils and support shrubland vegetation such as wattles, banksias and grass trees.



Lime Kiln Lake Trail

Length 1.2km

Class 1 (a well defined all-access trail)

Walk time 1 hour

Where is it? 40km south of Mandurah

Travelling time About 40 minutes from Mandurah or Bunbury

Facilities Picnic tables

Best season Late winter and spring for wildflowers

Home to the remains of an original lime kiln which was part of the Western Australian Portland Cement Company's lime project, this walk meanders along a gentle trail among peppermint and melaleuca trees.

The kiln was constructed in 1922. It's operation was short-lived as it was discovered the lime marl from the lake was of unsuitable quality and the mine closed in 1923. About 100m along is the turnoff to the talking circle. A small clearing with seating and six artworks which represent the six Noongar seasons.

Continuing towards the lake, the trail passes through the former settling ponds. Those with a keen eye will notice the raised pond banks forming a distinct, square pattern. Exposed footings on the edge of the track represent the foundation of what used to be the kiln operations power station. The adjacent shallow well provided the ideal water source for the turbine.

At the end of the walk, you will find a perfect example of ecological communities transitioning between wetland and woodland areas. The lake still holds vestiges of its short mining past. Remnants of the dredging infrastructure still exist – a row of timber used to moor pontoons protrudes across the lake.

Lake Pollard Walk Trail

Length 6km

Class 2 (a well defined trail with gentle gradients)

Walk time 2 hours

Where is it? 60km south of Mandurah

Travelling time About 45 minutes from Mandurah or Bunbury

Facilities Picnic table and bird hide. Gas barbecues and toilets are nearby at Preston Beach car park.

Best season Lake Pollard is renowned for its high numbers of Black swans between October and March.

This walk takes in tuart, peppermint and grass tree outcrops, with an opportunity to birdwatch in the hide overlooking Lake Pollard. Walking in a clockwise direction provides a good view to Lake Pollard while walking.

The parking area for the trail can be located about 6km along Preston Beach Road North, at the entrance to Martins Tank campground. The walking track is clearly marked, flat and easy going, and follows a sandy vehicle access track.

About two kilometres along the track is a sign-posted T-junction directing a right turn towards the bird-hide. You know you're getting close to the lake when white trunked saltwater paperbark trees replace the tuarts and there is shell grit along the path. A small track leads to the wooden bird-hide, which sits on stilts at the edge of the lake.

Leaving the bird-hide is a choice of retracing your steps along the flatter route or continuing on a steeper loop trail that follows a fire break and a private property fence before following Preston Beach Road north back to the parking area.

Heathlands Walk Trail

Length 4.6km

Class 3 (moderately difficult with short steep sections and in some places the surface is soft and sandy)

Walk time 1.5 hours

Where is it? 55km south of Mandurah

Travelling time About 45 minutes from Mandurah or Bunbury

Facilities Picnic table, also nearby at Lake Hayward picnic site.

Best season Late winter and spring for wildflowers

This walk explores the many different vegetation types of Yalgorup National Park, from the towering tuarts to the delicate flowers of the limestone ridges.

The Heathlands Walk Trail starts at a small carpark along Preston Beach Road. It is signed to be walked in a clockwise direction.

The first part of the trail is fairly flat, but before long it starts climbing gently over the limestone ridge. There is a short rock side trail to a lookout, with views out over Lake Preston and the ocean beyond.

The trail continues towards the lake. At the western most point there is another side track that takes you through a tunnel of trees to the water's edge.

Returning from Lake Preston the trail meanders up and down along the ridge and at times you can see over the surrounding countryside. During the springtime this walk's provides walkers with a wide array of wildflowers.



Above: Ring-tailed possum. Photo – Russell Hyde