

John Forrest NP interactive walk launched

NEARLY 1000 people flocked to John Forrest National Park on a recent sunny Sunday. They were there for one thing—the inaugural Forest Walk.

Four months in planning by Barry Hooper and other CALM staff from The Hills Forest, the event offered two separate routes and a variety of activities.

The routes—a six kilometre walk with a three kilometre extension for those wanting to go a little further—were planned to take in various aspects of the park that displayed key features of management, and staff and volunteers were sought to help organise and see that the event ran smoothly on the day.

Interactive walk

The walk was guided, but interactive, which meant people could set off when they liked between 10 am and 2 pm and walk at whatever pace suited them, while being informed about the forest, park, local history, fire management, dieback, plants and animals.

This was accomplished using 'talking points'—individual stations at strategic points along the walk where walkers would stop to hear commentaries from

by David Gough

CALM staff and volunteers.

At the first stop, John Forrest National Park ranger David Briggs told walkers how to recognise the various trees in the park, by using the leaves, barks and different-sized gum nuts; most walkers could identify at least three species by the time he'd finished his talk.

Dieback

The same pattern was repeated at each of the stations as we learnt about dieback from Dennis McDonald from Mundaring, the history of the area from members of the Mundaring Historical Society, and fire management from CALMfire's Bruce Telfer and Greg Standing.

But the highlight for my two children was hearing about some of the mammals that live in the park and stroking an echidna.

They, and most of the other kids, were fascinated by this somewhat secretive creature. Although I've been in Australia for more than six years, I'd never seen an echidna.

So when the animal finally managed to drag itself away from a bunch of eager kids trying to force-feed it with ants, we strolled downhill, beckoned by the appetising aromas of soup and damper.

After the soup and the damper, made by Heather Bailey, a former Queensland cattle station owner, we are ready to hit the trail again. The final two topics covered wildflowers and reptiles, and again the children enjoyed seeing lizards at close quarters.

The last part of the walk took us along part of the John Forrest Heritage Trail, which runs along the route of the old railway tracks.

Old bridges

We saw the waters of Jane Brook cascading over National Park Falls and the remains of the old bridges that carried the trains full of visitors over the narrow valleys until the 1960s.

Forest Walk '95 was well organised, and most participants had an enjoyable time exercising and learning about the park at the same time.

Based on its success, the Forest Walk is likely to become an annual event—here's to the next time.



Mundaring forest ranger Ian Gale shows Ben and James Gough an echidna. Photo by David Gough

Heritage Walk pics by David Lyneff - mid 1995

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