

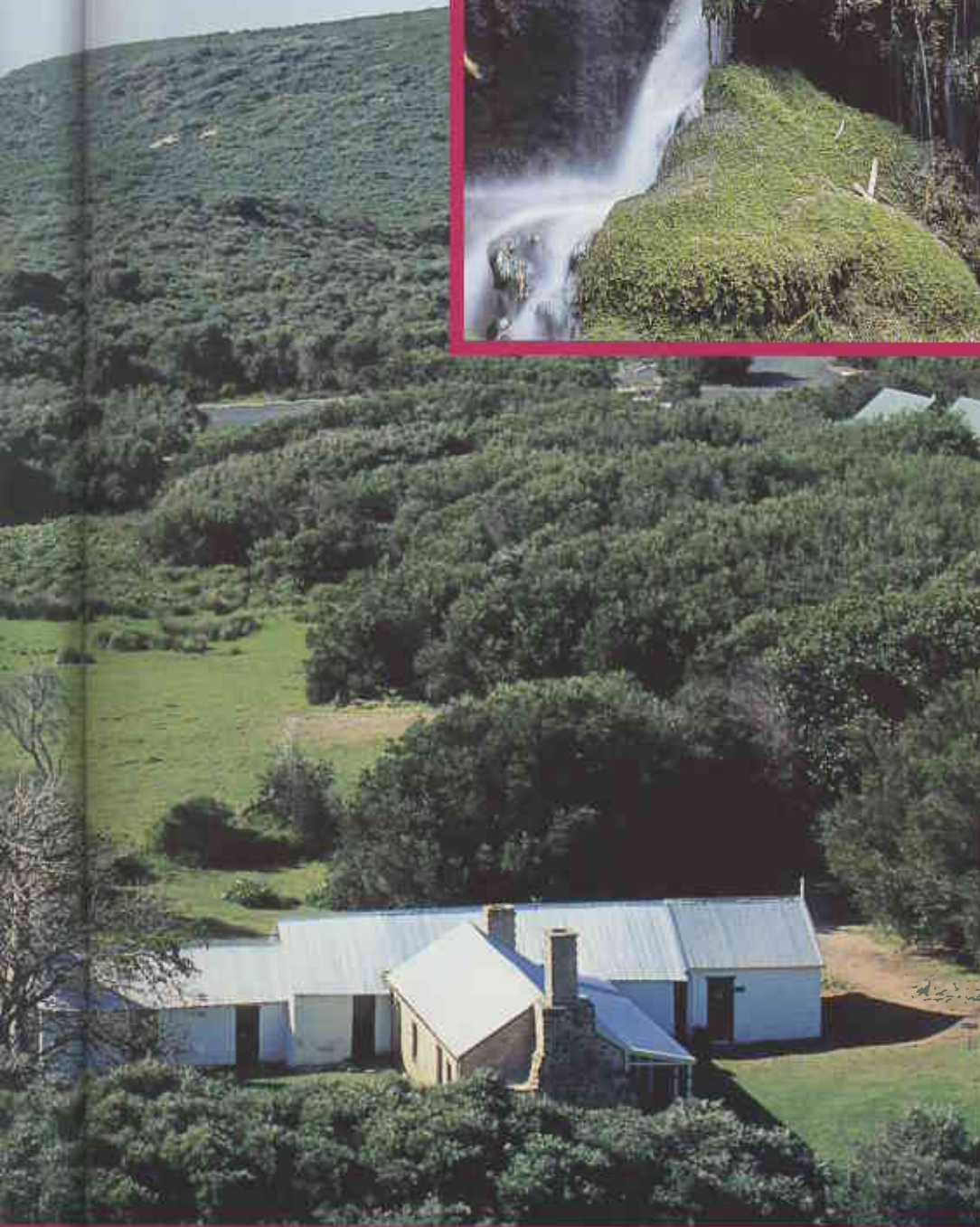


Bushwalking in the South-West



From the tall timber country in the heart of our karri forests to the mountains of the Stirling Range National Park, and the pristine beaches and soaring sea cliffs along our coast, Western Australia's south-west has a diversity of experiences to offer bushwalkers. A new book provides a guide to some of the best walks in the region.

by Carolyn Thomson-Dans



The south-west of Western Australia boasts some magnificent scenery. Most of the walktrails provided in national parks and forests of this region lead to delightful attractions, such as Bluff Knoll (the region's tallest mountain peak), the Bicentennial Tree in Warren National Park, or the Blowholes in Torndirrup National Park. What better way to see our State, while contributing to fitness and a sense of well being?

To that end, the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) has published a new book to encourage residents of and visitors to Western Australia to enjoy the region's natural assets. *Bushwalks in the South-West* is the third book in an already popular series. It follows on from the successful *Family Walks in Perth Outdoors* and *More Family Walks in Perth Outdoors*. It contains maps and descriptions of 49 walks, ranging in length from a few hundred metres to 15 kilometres, and is punctuated with fascinating features on plants and animals.

The 49 walks explore the natural areas between Mandurah and Esperance. There are walks near most of the major towns frequented by holiday makers, including Bunbury, Busselton, Dunsborough, Margaret River, Augusta, Pemberton, Walpole and Albany. The



walks are ideal for families and most of them can be completed in a couple of hours. All of them are intended to provide interest, variety and exercise. Each walk has a 'mud map' and a description of some of the things walkers might see along the way.

Bushwalks in the South-West is divided into five sections, based on the five major natural communities of the region. They are the limestone coast between Mandurah and Augusta; the jarrah forest from the Darling Range to Manjimup; the karri forest from Manjimup to Walpole; the mountains and sea cliffs of the South Coast; and the

scenically grand coastline of the vast South-East. Each of these communities offers different experiences.

THE LIMESTONE COAST

Tuart trees, with their lush understorey of peppermints, dominate the limestone coast between Mandurah and Busselton. Belvidere Estuary Walk, in the Leschenault Peninsula Conservation Park, is only 30 minutes north of Bunbury. At various times in its history, the peninsula has been used for farming, effluent disposal (the ponds have now been rehabilitated), and as a commune for alternative lifestyles in



Previous page
The historic Ellensbrook homestead (*main photo*) in Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park is the start of a walktrail to the stunning Meekadarabee Falls (*inset*).
Photos - Gordon Roberts/CALM (*main*); Marie Lochman (*inset*)

Above: The walk to Bluff Knoll is one of the most challenging walks in the south-west.
Photo - Rob Olver

Left: A walk leads from the picturesque Warren River to Bicentennial Tree in Warren National Park.
Photo - Rob Olver

the 1960s and 70s. Now, most of the park is closed to motor vehicles, so you can only walk or cycle in to this unique coastal area. The four-kilometre walk takes in a lookout over the Leschenault Estuary, makes its way along the water's edge beside dense peppermint woodland, then turns inland through mature tuart woodland.

Another walk that explores the limestone coast is one of the most unusual in the book. The Possum Night Spotlighting Trail, in the Tuart Forest National Park near Busselton, is a self-guided one-and-a-half-kilometre loop. It is designed to be completed at night with a spotlight or large torch, so as to come face to face with the nocturnal inhabitants of the tuart forest. This area has one of the largest populations of the rare western ringtail possum and the densest populations of brushtail possums ever recorded in Western Australia, so you are very likely to see these and other creatures during your walk. Red reflectors on the trail markers and information plaques guide the way. Spotting the animals is up to you!

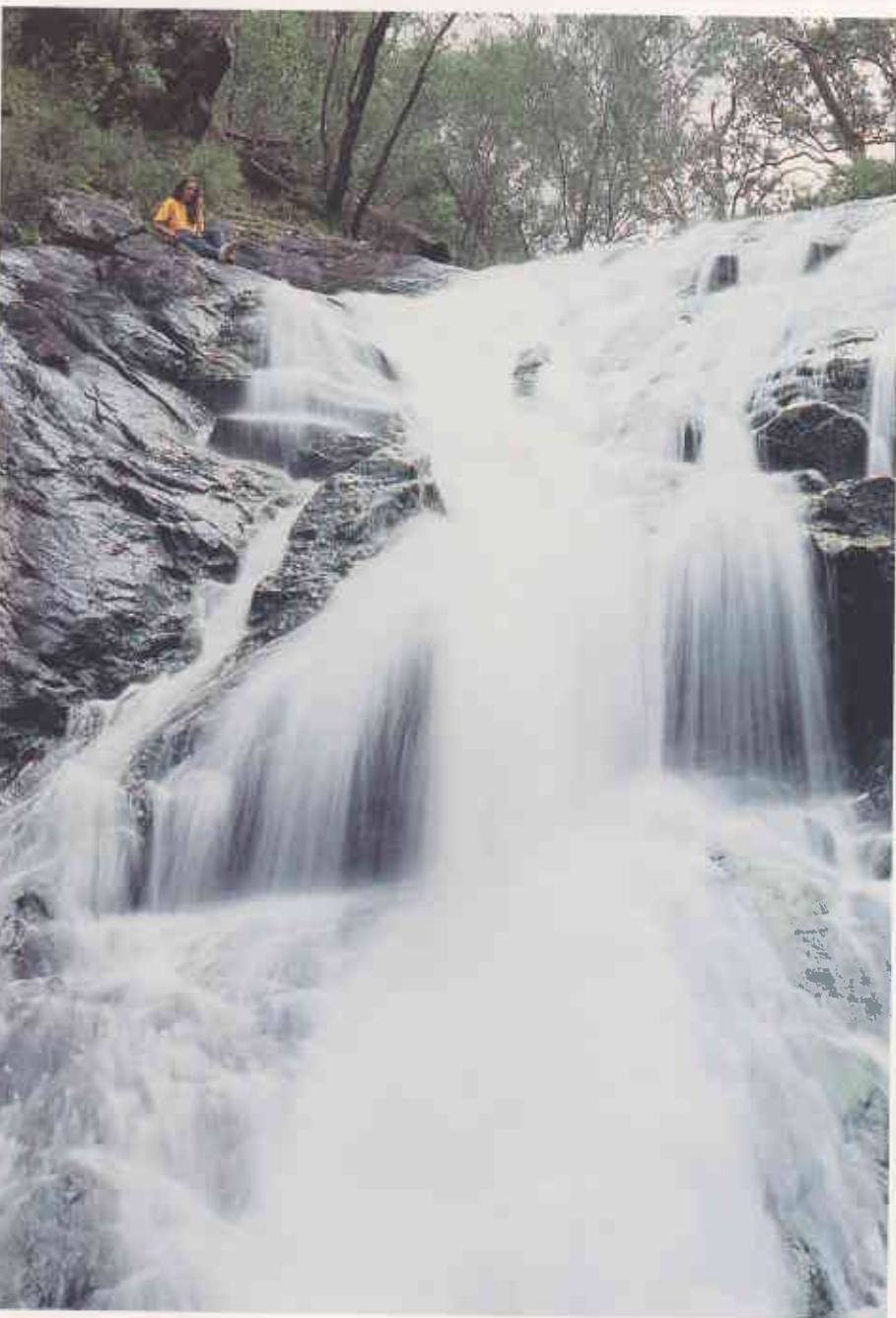
The views along the largely coastal Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park are outstanding, and a Cape-to-Cape Walk Track is being developed, so that bushwalkers can make the most of this delightful area. The 140-kilometre track will eventually extend from Cape Naturaliste to Cape Leeuwin. When it is finished, walkers will be able to experience a hike of several days' duration if they wish, or choose from a multitude of alternative shorter walks of varying distances and difficulty. A few of the shorter walks (up to 13 kilometres long) are mapped and described in *Bushwalks in the South-West*.

Above left: You are likely to see brushtail possums if you explore the Possum Night Spotlighting Trail, near Busselton. Photo – Hans & Judy Beste/Lochman Transparencies

Above right: Karri cowslip orchids (*Caladenia flava* subsp. *sylvestris*) in Shannon National Park. Photo – Gordon Roberts/CALM

Right: If you don't want to hike for several days, the Cape-to-Cape Walk Track can be broken into a number of shorter walks. Photo – Chris Garnett/CALM





Separate brochures for Section 1 (with a total length of 18 kilometres), Section 4 (29 kilometres) and Section 5 (29 kilometres) are available for a nominal fee from local CALM offices and tourist outlets.

Among the better known walks are a few surprises. A two-kilometre walk to Meekadarabee Falls takes visitors to one of the lesser known, but surprisingly beautiful, attractions in the south-west. The trail and all its facilities are accessible to people with disabilities. The walktrail begins at Ellensbrook Homestead, in the Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park, and makes its way through paperbark and peppermint trees to a gorgeous waterfall. Meekadarabee is the local Nyoongar Aboriginal name meaning 'the moon's bathing place'. The offshoot path just before the waterfall takes you to the spring behind it.

THE JARRAH FOREST

Bushwalks in the South-West also features short sections of the 950-kilometre Bibbulmun Track, which is proving very popular with the public after having been realigned and reopened in August. Some of these sections are set in the jarrah forest and some are farther south in the karri forest.

An eight-kilometre return walk from Harris Dam takes you along a section of the realigned Bibbulmun Track. You can park your car at Harris Dam picnic site, about 20 kilometres north of Collie, then walk to a campsite—purpose-built for long-distance walkers on the Bibbulmun Track—and return via the same route. The trail features views over the dam and takes you through some attractive jarrah forest.

Two other magnificent walks in the jarrah forest are the Sika Circuit and the Greenbushes Loop. The Sika Circuit was part of the old Bibbulmun Track, but remains a lovely walk in its own right. This challenging nine-and-a-half-

Above left: The Sika Circuit near Collie is a nine-kilometre loop that follows the Collie River for part of the way.

Photo – Dennis Sarson/Lochman Transparencies

Left: Beedelup Falls, in Beedelup National Park, can be viewed along a walktrail and from two bridges and a lookout.

Photo – Jiri Lochman

kilometre circuit passes through mature jarrah and blackbutt forests and gives excellent views of the Collie River Valley. The track follows the river for part of the way, passing rock outcrops, deep pools and several rapids, and is quite steep in places.

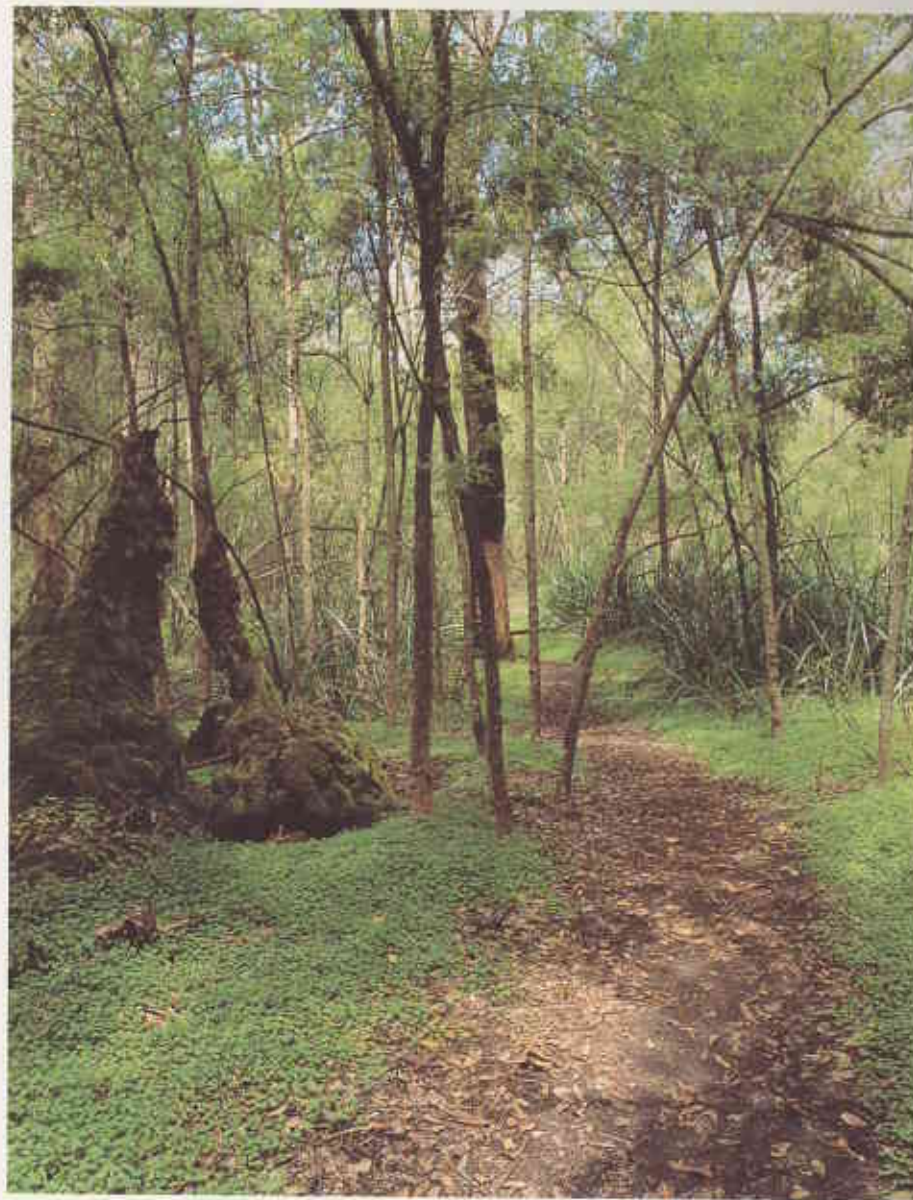
The Greenbushes Loop is a 15-kilometre walk via dams, waterfalls and creeks, with views over forest and farmland. It follows the Bibbulmun Track for five kilometres, but begins and ends at the Greenbushes Eco-Cultural Discovery Centre, the headquarters of a voluntary community organisation.

THE KARRI FOREST

Bushwalks in the South-West also caters for people who are not so fit, but still keen to venture into the bush. The walk to Beedelup Falls is just 300 metres long, and visitors to Pemberton should not miss this short but extremely scenic walk. The falls are the major attraction of Beedelup National Park, and are in full flow during winter and spring. They cascade for 100 metres over a series of steep granite rocks and can be viewed along a walktrail, which incorporates large sections of boardwalk, a lookout and two bridges that cross the brook. One of the bridges, a newly-built suspension bridge, offers a real sense of adventure, as you can see the rushing waters through the wooden slats beneath your feet.

The Great Forest Trees Walk is a new eight-kilometre walk in Shannon National Park. The walk begins about four kilometres north of the Shannon campsite and connects the arms of the one-way (23-kilometre) northern loop of the scenic Great Forest Trees Drive. The 53 500-hectare park includes some of the most magnificent karri country in Western Australia's southern forest. The walk follows an old forestry track and is steep in places, particularly where it crosses the Shannon River.

Mount Frankland, in Mount Frankland National Park, is featured on the front cover of *Bushwalks in the South-West*. The two-kilometre return walk boasts some of the most breathtaking scenery of all the walks in this book. You have to negotiate steep metal stairs and concrete steps to reach the summit, 411 metres above sea level. On top is an operational fire spotter's



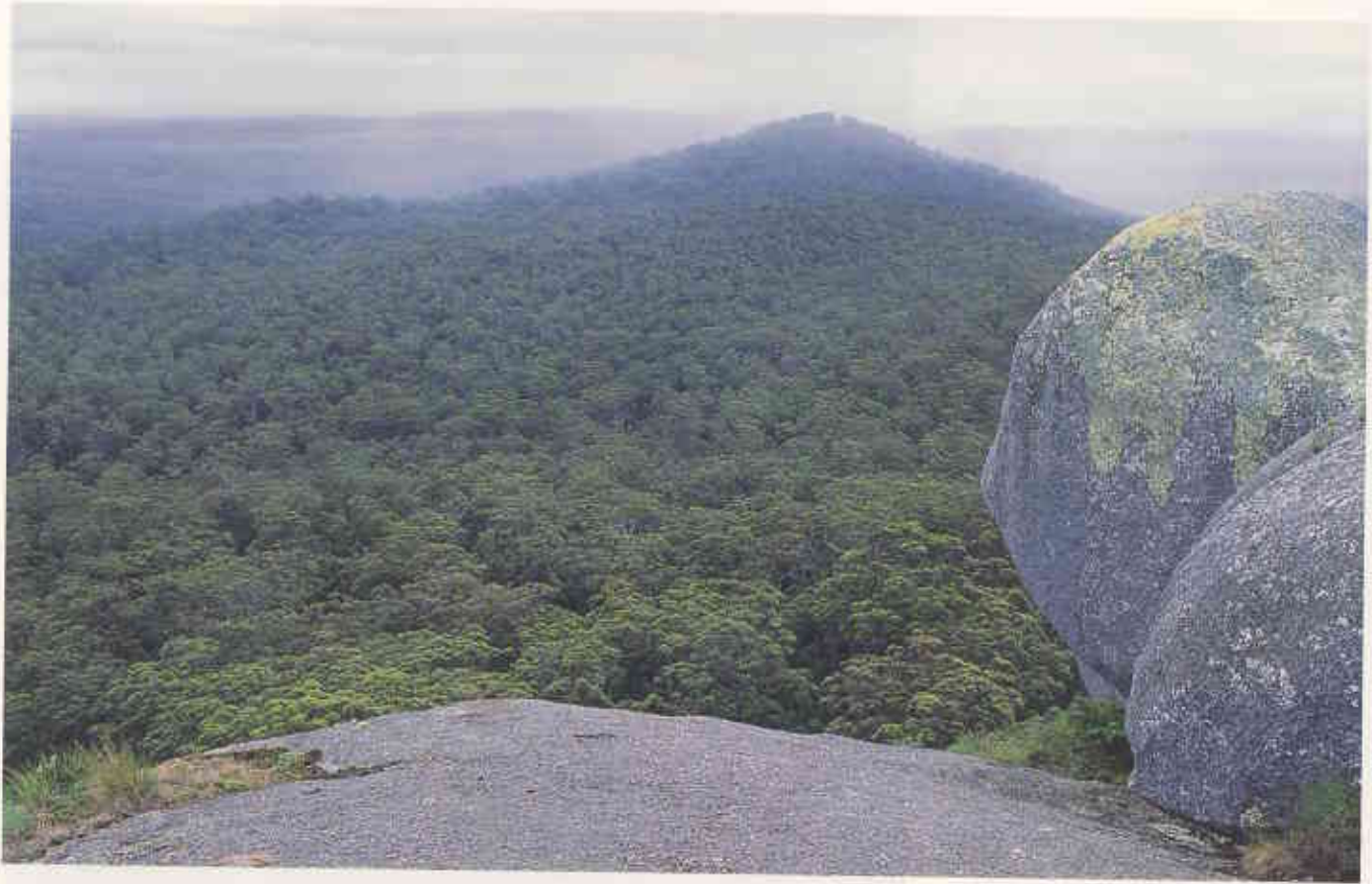
tower. On a clear day you can see the Stirling and Porongurup Ranges, and to Chatham Island, near Walpole. You then partly retrace your steps and return around the base of Mount Frankland through beautiful karri forest sprinkled with wildflowers.

Walpole-Nornalup National Park is known for three rare and wonderful eucalypts—the red, yellow and Rate's tingles. The park's Valley of the Giants—for decades one of WA's favourite tourist stops—features a boardwalk and rammed-earth trail over the forest floor. The first 100 metres are wheelchair-accessible. After finishing, you can then experience a stunning walk through the tingle forest canopy. The Tree Top Walk is the world's only rigid-structure walk in the canopy of a tall eucalypt forest. It comprises a series of lightweight bridge spans, each 60 metres long and four metres deep, supported between pylons.

The Nancy Peak Loop, in Porongurup National Park, is a strenuous walk up and over three granite peaks.
Photo – Jiri Lochman

The walkway rises with no steps, on a gentle grade suitable for children, wheelchairs and the elderly, up to 40 metres above the forest floor, where it crosses a valley.

Three other walks in the Walpole-Nornalup National Park begin at Conspicuous Beach and take in outstanding views from a limestone knoll, a stunning beach and rocky headlands. All parts of the beach are visible from a new whale-watching platform. Whales can be spotted frequently during winter and spring. Dolphins are often seen near the surface, surfing the waves in pods of a dozen or more. By August 1998, medium and longer walks via the new Bibbulmun



Track will be available. You will be able to continue east along the coast to the highest point on Conspicuous Cliff and onwards to Peaceful Bay.

MOUNTAINS, SEA CLIFFS AND THE VAST SOUTH-EAST

The walk up Nancy Peak, in the Porongurup National Park, provides strenuous exercise, with great views into the bargain. It covers five-and-a-half kilometres, making its way up and over three peaks, and takes you to the Tree in the Rock (a karri growing in a crevice) and beyond. You will need two to three hours to scale Hayward Peak, Nancy Peak and Morgans View, from where you can see the aptly named Devil's Slide, a large steeply sloping area of bare and moss-covered granite. The Baie des Deux Peuples Heritage Trail, 30 kilometres east of Albany, provides an excellent introduction to Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve. This stunning coastal area is home to the Gilbert's potoroo, the noisy scrub-bird, and several other threatened animal species. Two lookouts provide views of Mount Manypeaks across the bay and the lake systems of the nature reserve, with the Porongurup and Stirling Ranges visible on a clear day. The two-kilometre walk returns along the beach,

and noisy scrub-birds can sometimes be heard in the area. The starting point for this path is being redesigned and a linking path is being established to Little Beach. Before you start the walk you can learn about the area and its wildlife in a new information centre.

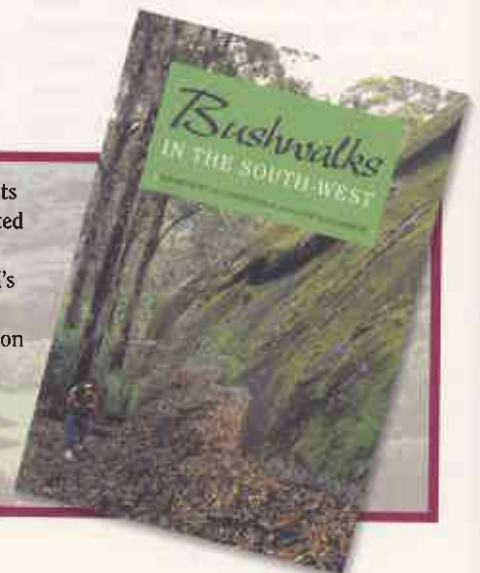
Point Ann, in the Fitzgerald River National Park, is one of five walks from the Esperance district in *Bushwalks in the South-West*. This one-and-a-half-kilometre walk is part of the South Coast Heritage Trails Network, established in 1988 as part of the Australian Bicentenary celebrations. The path is a pleasant circuit of Point Ann with plaques along the way; these focus on the history of the Rabbit-Proof Fence, and on the whales, which are frequently visible from the walk between July and October.

Mt Frankland boasts some of the most breathtaking scenery of all the walks in *Bushwalks in the South-West*.

Photo – Dennis Sarson/Lochman Transparencies

These are just a few of the walks in national parks and other places described in *Bushwalks in the South-West*. The new publication is available from most bookshops, CALM offices and other outlets, such as RAC shops, for \$14.95. If it is used in conjunction with other CALM publications such as Bush Books, walkers will be able to interpret the many different aspects of the bush they will discover along the way.

Carolyn Thomson-Dans is a Special Projects Officer for CALM. She has written and edited numerous publications about WA's natural environment and wildlife, including CALM's successful Bush Books. She compiled *Bushwalks in the South-West* in conjunction with other CALM staff and volunteers. Carolyn can be contacted by phone on (08) 9389 8644 or by email to carolynt@calm.wa.gov.au.



LANDSCOPE

VOLUME THIRTEEN NUMBER 3, AUTUMN 1998



CALM's fight against feral cats gathers ground on Peron Peninsula with the development and testing of a cat bait. See 'Approaching Eden' on page 28.



Roadside vegetation often provides vital links between remnant habitats. See our story on page 23.



What attracted early pioneers to this barren corner of Western Australia? Find out in 'Eucla Pioneers' on page 35.



A new CALM book gives bushwalkers a host of short and longer walks in Western Australia's south-west. See page 10.



Fire is an important part of Western Australia's environment. Scientists continue to discover just how important. See page 17.

FEATURES

BUSHWALKS IN THE SOUTH-WEST
CAROLYN THOMSON-DANS 10

A FIRE FOR ALL REASONS
NEIL BURROWS 17

ROADSIDES ... THE VITAL LINK
DAVID LAMONT 23

APPROACHING EDEN
DAVID ALGAR AND RAY SMITH 28

EUCLA PIONEERS
ALISON MUIR, JIM MUIR AND JOHN THOMSON 35

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?
CLEMENCY FISHER 40

JEWELS OF THE WEST
MATTHEW WILLIAMS, ANDREW WILLIAMS AND
TREVOR LUNDSTROM 49

REGULARS

BUSH TELEGRAPH 4

ENDANGERED
WESTERN PRICKLY HONEYSUCKLE 48

URBAN ANTICS
GRUBBY SPITFIRES 54

COVER

The splendid fairy wren was one of many birds collected by John Gilbert, whose collections of specimens have been fragmented over the past 100 years or so. Now, they are being tracked down in museums around the world, and a more complete picture of their original distributions is emerging from Gilbert's original notes and labels. See story on page 40.

Illustration by Philippa Nikulinsky



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Published by Dr S Shea, Executive Director
Department of Conservation and Land Management,
50 Hayman Road, Como, Western Australia