



# Parks *for* People

by Christine Silbert and Tim Bowra

Perth has one of the best open space systems of any city in Australia. It presently has about 50,000 hectares of land reserved for regional parks, which represent the majority of land reserved for parks and recreation in the metropolitan area.



Photos by Michael James

Over the years, land for regional parks has been identified, progressively purchased and managed by the Western Australian Planning Commission. In 1997, responsibility for managing and protecting eight regional parks began to be transferred gradually to the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM). The parks—Yellagonga, Herdsman Lake, Rockingham Lakes, Woodman Point, Canning River, Beeliar, Jandakot (Botanic) Park and Darling Range—include river foreshores, ocean beaches, wetlands, banksia woodlands and the Darling Scarp. They contain a number of features and land uses, including reserves for recreation purposes, managed by relevant local governments. Each park has its own unique history.

### BUSH IN THE CITY

Formed two years ago, CALM's Regional Parks Unit works closely with local councils and community groups to manage these diverse, multipurpose parks for the enjoyment of local residents

#### Previous page

**Main:** Boardwalks in Perth's regional parks take visitors close to wildlife.  
**Insets:** Red and green kangaroo paw (*top*) and blue leschenaultia (*bottom*), both found at Jandakot Regional Park.

**Above right:** Neil Hawkins Park, within Yellagonga Regional Park.

**Below:** Early morning view from Kalamunda National Park, within the Darling Range Regional Park.



and visitors. With local involvement, the Unit aims to develop facilities to create a place for people to use, enjoy and develop a feeling of ownership.

The eight regional parks span the map from Joondalup in Perth's northern suburbs to Port Kennedy just south of Rockingham and inland to the Darling Range. These urban parks are used on a daily basis by the community, becoming part of people's lives through organised sport, the daily walk or run, leisure activities, as a social gathering place, for school nature study trips, and for some, simply as their 'back yard'. Regional parks are part of the urban landscape, keeping the bush in the city. Their attractions also draw a large number of tourists, including international visitors.

Given the complex issues and the need to closely monitor parks on a regular basis, working cooperatively with local community groups and local governments is very important. The parks benefit from council rangers, local citizens and CALM officers working together on management issues.

Each regional park may have special physical features, plants and animals, environmental education facilities or projects of interest. Each has a colourful history often influenced by its early European settlement, Aboriginal heritage or Asian culture.

### HERDSMAN LAKE

Herdsman Lake is a beautiful wetland just six kilometres from the Perth CBD. It provides a wildlife





sanctuary where many species of waterbird feed or breed. Breeding species include the little bittern, marsh harrier, black swan, dusky moorhen, purple swamphen and several species of ducks. At the lake's southern end, the viewing platform at the Wildlife Centre is a wonderful place to see waterbirds. Birdwatching trips are organised by Birds Australia and the Gould League. The Gould League runs the Wildlife Centre and arranges visits for 7,000 to 8,000 schoolchildren each year.

Before responsibility for Herdsman Lake was transferred to CALM in 1997-98, it had a diverse history. In the 1920s, the lake was drained so it could be farmed for market gardens, but the soil wasn't suitable and was invaded by bulrushes. In the 1960s, the whole lake was taken up as a mining lease for diatomaceous earth, mainly for commercial products such as kitty litter, and at one time it was earmarked for a second airport. Today, in addition to the wildlife viewing centre, playground facilities, kilometres of dual-use paths (for the shared use of cyclists and pedestrians) and a recently refurbished settler's cottage attract many visitors to Herdsman Lake.

## YELLAGONGA

The ancient lakes, wetlands and natural bushland of Yellagona Regional Park are a 'stone's throw' from the City of Joondalup, which is the regional focus of Perth's north-western corridor. Lakes Joondalup and Goollellal and the Walluburnup and Beenyp Swamps support a wide variety of



wildlife and provide a summer refuge for migratory birds. One hundred and twenty-two bird species have been recorded in the park, 18 of which breed in the area. Six frog species, mammals such as the quenda, echidna, rakali (water rat) and western brush wallaby, and at least 122 species of macro-invertebrates also inhabit the park.

Dual-use paths, walkways and viewing platforms thread through the 1,500-hectare park, which is a popular picnic and playground spot. These access some important remnants of early European settlement, such as Perry's Paddock. The park management plan includes a wildlife monitoring program, education to discourage hand feeding of birds and the potential to develop commercial recreation enterprises such as Luisini's Winery.

**Top left:** A boardwalk at Herdsman Lake Regional Park allows people to view the prolific bird life.

**Top:** Black swans with their young at Herdsman Lake.

**Above:** Horseriding is permitted in one small area of Herdsman Lake Regional Park.

## ROCKINGHAM LAKES

From the coastal limestone outcrops at Point Peron to the unique flora of the Coo loongup and Walyungup lakes further inland, this area has significant conservation and recreational values.

The Port Kennedy Scientific Park, a nature reserve to protect wildlife associated with Holocene dunes, lies within the regional park. The scientific



park contains parallel sand ridges, which were deposited along former shorelines over the past 7,000 years. Unlike most other coastal areas near Perth, it is undeveloped, and has an interesting community of plants and animals that is now uncommon in the metropolitan area. Some of the valleys between the dunes contain a threatened ecological community, and CALM has initiated a recovery plan to return it to a healthy state. The scientific park is managed to minimise human activity, but visitors are welcome to walk around the reserve.

The swimming and recreation area of Point Peron has a vulnerable stretch of coastline that expresses past sea levels and points of geological interest, making it a focal point for geology excursions. To protect visitors and the

coastline CALM has erected signs explaining the fragility of the geological structures and their potential danger.

Walktrails traverse another section of the park defined by lakes, swamps and stands of tuart and jarrah trees. Lakes Coo loongup and Walyungup, Paganoni Swamp and the wetlands at Port Kennedy form an important chain of wetlands. A threatened thrombolite community extends over about three hectares at Lake Richmond. Thrombolites are rock-like structures built by micro-organisms too small for the human eye to see.

### WOODMAN POINT

Woodman Point Regional Park, on a gentle curve of coastline just south of Fremantle, is popular for diving, fishing, sailing, cycling and picnicking.



With its proximity to the beach and jetty, it lures visitors from all over the metropolitan area.

Since CALM assumed management of the area from the Ministry of Sport and Recreation, a range of improvements have been proposed to meet anticipated pressure on Woodman Point from the burgeoning surrounding suburbs during the next 10 years. An implementation plan is being prepared to guide further development in the park, including

**Above left:** Point Peron was once an offshore island that was 'captured' by the advancing outgrowth of sand.

**Above:** The jetty in Woodman Point Regional Park is a favourite fishing spot.

**Below:** Walkways at Point Peron, within the Rockingham Lakes Regional Park.





developing facilities north of the recreation area, planting more shade trees, managing weeds and restoring the natural bushland.

The Children's Playground has already been transformed into a fantastic fun experience for kids. Since opening in April, the playground has become increasingly popular with families and picnic groups. Two caravan parks at Woodman Point, together with cottages and dormitories available for hire, attract many visitors to the white beaches and clear waters on weekends or summer holidays. There are also boat launching and storage facilities. An old quarantine station and Army munitions facilities provide historic interest. Seabird nesting areas and the only remaining extensive natural stand of Rottne Island pine on the mainland are also found at Woodman Point.

### CANNING RIVER

This beautiful riverine system nestles between the Shelley and Nicholson Road bridges, south-east of Perth. It is popular all year round for cycling, walking, swimming, canoeing, boating and fishing, with the additional attractions of Castledare Miniature Railway and the historic Woodloes Homestead.

There are five important wetlands within the park—Wilson's, Adenia Reserve, Nicholson Road, Mason's Landing Lagoons and Greenfield Street. Unfortunately, weeds are a serious problem and community involvement in preventing their spread and replanting native species will be the key to restoring the natural vegetation.

The Canning River wetlands were important to Aboriginal people as a source of food and materials for shelter and artefacts. There is also an interesting Asian connection with a Sikh Cemetery you can visit along one of the walks in Adenia Reserve.

### BEELIAR

The 3,400-hectare Beeliar Regional Park protects banksia woodlands, 26 lakes and many associated wetlands in two main chains of swamps and lakes. It is also a popular recreation and picnic location linked by dual-use paths.

Thomsons Lake is recognised as an internationally important wetland under the Ramsar Convention because

of its size, pristine state and significant surrounding bushland. Migratory birds from Japan, Russia and China protected by the Japan-Australia and China-Australia Migratory Bird Agreements visit the wetlands. They include greenshanks, red-necked stints and sharp-tailed sandpipers. Other uncommon animals and plants in the park include western brush wallaby, quenda and Hackett's hop bush.



**Above:** Kent Street Weir, in the Canning River Regional Park.

**Right:** Canoeing near Riverton Bridge, in the Canning River.



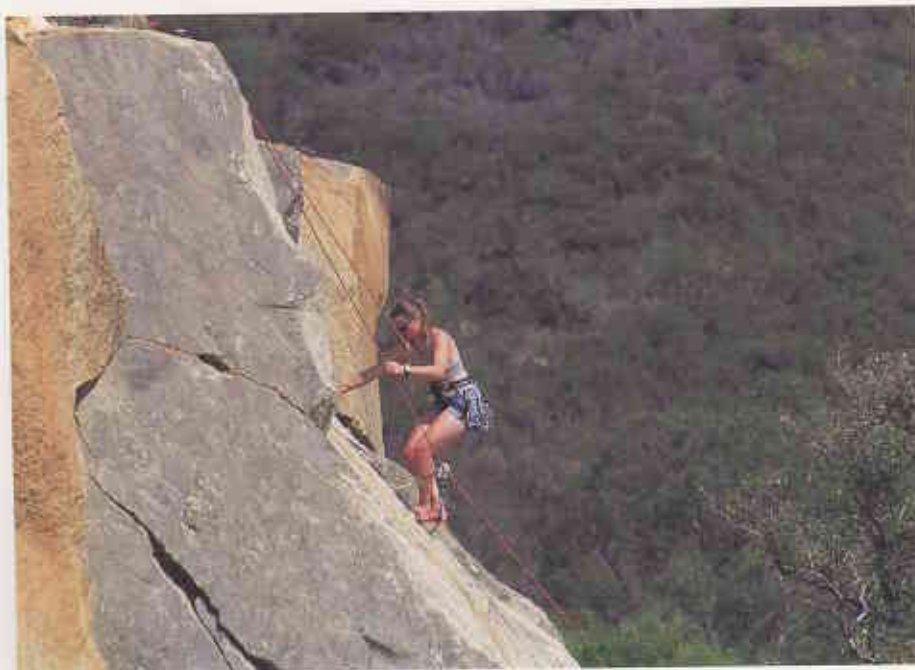
The Spectacles (named because of the shape of its two wetlands when viewed from the air) is being developed by CALM, in partnership with alumina company Alcoa of Australia, which owns part of the land, and Kwinana Town Council. Walktrails, boardwalks and bird hides have been built so people can view the wetlands, wildlife and wildflowers.

Working with sponsors, the City of Cockburn has developed the Cockburn Wetlands Education Centre at Bibra Lake, where full-time staff run programs for schools and community groups. Around Bibra Lake there are also fascinating bushwalks and a mini golf course. The heritage area at Manning Lake is a tourist attraction,

with a large population of black swans and wilderness environment.

Piney Lakes Reserve will have an Environmental Education Centre by the end of 2000, an initiative of the City of Melville and the Rotary Club of Melville. It will provide access to schools, higher education bodies, community interest groups and members of the public wishing to study the natural environment, and create greater awareness and understanding of renewable energy technologies.

Henderson foreshore, adjoining Jervoise Bay, features a cliff of Tamala Limestone with picturesque views to Garden Island. An offshore subtidal reef near the cliffs is popular for fishing and snorkelling.



## DARLING RANGE

The Darling Range forms the spine of Perth's biggest regional park, which spans 85 kilometres and features hills, bush, streams, waterfalls, valleys and gorges. It links Avon Valley, Walyunga, John Forrest, Lesmurdie Falls, Serpentine, Gooseberry Hill, Kalamunda, Serpentine national parks, and also links the inland rural region to the picturesque Swan Valley and the city. Besides being one of the prettiest parks, it contains important forest, mineral and water resources, making it one of the most complex regional parks to manage.

Management of the area involves upgrading firebreaks and managing fires, removing weeds and illegally dumped rubbish and protecting the area from further erosion. Tagasaste, a shrub-like woody weed, is one major problem species. Fortunately, the nearby minimum security Woorooloo Prison Farm has provided prisoner work parties to control some populations of tagasaste and to clean up rubbish.

Darling Range Regional Park is used for a wide range of recreational purposes. Local residents have taken great interest in its rehabilitation and local groups have been involved in tree planting projects. The draft management plan is still in its infancy and the process of community consultation will help to define the vision for the park.

## JANDAKOT (BOTANIC) REGIONAL PARK

Jandakot is an Aboriginal word meaning 'place of the eagle', or more accurately the place of the whistling kite, a large grey bird, often seen in the area, that makes a whistling sound as it flaps its big wings.

Like a bird perched ready for flight, Jandakot is a regional park waiting to take off. With six land estates forming a jigsaw puzzle of more than 3,800 hectares, recreational use of the park is not yet a major activity, except for bushwalking and horseriding. However,

**Above left:** A popular picnic area at Bibra Lake, in the Beeliiar Regional Park.

**Left:** Abseiling at Strathams Quarry, in Darling Range Regional Park.



**Above:** A darter dries its plumage in the Canning River Regional Park.

as its tag 'botanical' indicates, the banksia woodland area has an abundance of glorious wildflowers. These attract many sightseers and the regional importance of the banksia vegetation and wetlands is well

**Below:** Wetlands Conservation Society members removing pink gladiolus from Bibra Lake.

**Below right:** Pink fairy orchid (*Caladenia latifolia*) at Jandakot Regional Park.



recognised. There is also potential for education and research activities as the park contains threatened plant species.

#### WHY REGIONAL PARKS?

Regional parks are places where you can see a bit of nature in the metropolitan area. Each park has a local Community Advisory Committee, appointed by the Minister for the Environment, which has input into identifying local issues and concerns and plays a key role in the ongoing



consultation. Through these committees and by direct contact, as many local groups as possible have had the opportunity to have an input into the management plans that will guide each park's future.

The end result should be that Perth's regional parks will be parks for people—places where people can come face-to-face with nature, places for simple pleasures and places of special significance.

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Michael James is a freelance photographer commissioned by the Regional Parks Unit to capture the essence of Perth's regional parks.

Detailed articles on a number of regional parks are planned for future issues of *LANDSCOPE*.



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# LANDSCOPE



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Botanists rediscover a presumed extinct grass perched on the mountain tops of the Stirling Range National Park. See page 43.



How can we preserve the Leewin-Naturaliste caves while catering for increasing visitation? See page 16.



Salinity Strategy surveys are revealing that salinity threatens more than 850 Wheatbelt plant species. How can managers intervene? See page 36.



Discover Perth's eight regional parks and their special features and attractions on page 28.



Learn about the spineless wonders of the marine world and their clever disguises on page 42.

## FEATURES

**BRIMMING WITH BIRDS**  
ALLAN BURBIDGE.....10

**CAVES OF THE CAPE**  
ANNE WOOD.....16

**NURSING THE FUTURE**  
STEPHEN WHITE AND MANDY CLEWS.....23

**PARKS FOR PEOPLE**  
CHRISTINE SILBERT AND TIM BOWRA.....28

**WHEATBELT WONDERS UNDER THREAT**  
GREG KEIGHERY.....37

**DRUMMOND'S GRASS**  
ANNE COCHRANE AND SARAH BARRETT.....43

**INVISIBLE INVERTEBRATES**  
ANN STORRIE.....48

## REGULARS

**BUSH TELEGRAPH**.....4

**ENDANGERED**  
GREAT DESERT SKINK.....36

**URBAN ANTICS**  
WHAT...NO BIRDS?.....54


## COVER

More than 160 different bird species use Cape Arid National Park, which lies on the South Coast about 120 kilometres east of Esperance. The red-eared firetail is one of them. This exotic-looking finch is confined to south-western Australia. It is found in areas of dense heath and undergrowth in thick forest, never too far inland. Cape Arid National Park is the eastern limit of its distribution.



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