



Bush at the beach

Woodman Point Regional Park

Woodman Point has had a chequered history. It has been a failed settlement, a quarantine station and an explosives reserve. Now a regional park, it is finally coming into its own as a recreational focal point for people from surrounding areas wanting to use its beautiful beaches, go fishing and enjoy other pursuits.

by Carolyn Thomson-Dans

Woodman Point Regional Park, on a gentle curve of coastline just south of Fremantle, is popular for diving, fishing, sailing, boating, swimming, cycling, walking and picnicking. With its proximity to the beach and jetty, it lures visitors from all over the metropolitan area.

The Department of Conservation and Land Management assumed management responsibility for the area from the Ministry of Sport and Recreation in 1998. A draft management plan was released in August 2002 to seek public comment on management of the park over the next ten years, to meet anticipated pressure on Woodman Point from the burgeoning surrounding suburbs.

Previous page
The Magazine Jetty at Woodman Point Regional Park.

Photo – Sallyanne Cousins

Below: Munitions magazines built to house explosives have significant heritage value.

Photo – Michael James



EARLY HISTORY

The Aboriginal name for Woodman Point—Nyyerbup—was recorded in November 1848 by Robert Austin. Not much is known about Aboriginal use of the area and there are no recorded archaeological sites, but after European settlement the area was used for beach camping. Aboriginal people used to collect mussels and catch cobblers there.

Woodman Point features in a Dreaming story told by local Nyoongar Trevor Walley. Gumbar Yondock Ancestral Crocodile travelled down from the north and pushed himself onto the land, where his tail cut a deep channel in Cockburn Sound (now known as Gage Roads) and pushed up Rottneest (Wadjemup). The sound of

rushing water woke the rainbow sea serpent (Waugal). Waugal smelled the salt and went out to investigate. A battle between the two pushed up Carnac (Ngooloomayp) Island. At Woodman Point, the Waugal manoeuvred and carved out Jervoise Bay with his tail. Waugal bit the tail of crocodile, who then gave up. Waugal heard the sea water come rushing into the Swan River (stirred up because of all the fighting) and anchored the severed tail across the entrance, using hair from his chin and armpit and the crocodile's toenails to anchor the tail down. This formed a reef across the Swan River mouth, and it was jagged like the tail of a crocodile (this reef once blocked the mouth of the Swan River at Fremantle, before it was removed to create Fremantle Harbour). Waugal then made crocodile walk back up north whilst his spirit remained as Garden Island. Hence, Garden Island is known as Meeandip Yondock (Yondock with tail missing).

Woodman Point was named in 1827 by Captain James Stirling after Thomas Woodman, the Purser of the HMS





Success. Between 1829 and 1830, 495 people arrived aboard three ships, the *Gilmore*, *Hooghley* and *Rockingham*, to settle on the peninsula. They set up makeshift camp under primitive conditions at 'Clarence', a township founded by entrepreneur Thomas Peel when he arrived at the Swan River Colony too late to receive fertile land along the river. In the first year, 40 settlers died of scurvy, dysentery and other ailments, and a further six died during childbirth. The settlement was a failure and was soon deserted.

KEEPING DISEASE AT BAY

In 1876, a few hectares at the tip of Woodman Point were designated as a quarantine station to isolate people arriving by sea who had contracted infectious diseases. The first recorded use of the station was in December 1886, by 127 passengers from the ship *Elderslie*, as there were two cases of scarlet fever aboard. An isolation hospital was one of the earliest buildings constructed in the park (1886 or later). An adjacent area of 170 hectares, which had been gazetted a quarantine ground for stock, was used extensively in 1897 when cattle diseases broke out in the Kimberley.

In 1903, the quarantine station for people was enlarged. A tramline ran from the isolation hospital to a morgue and crematorium, used to dispose of the bodies of unfortunate people who died of smallpox, leprosy, bubonic plague or other diseases. When the area was in

Above: The dining room of the former quarantine station at Woodman Point.

Above right: Bushland surrounding the old crematorium is now protected in a nature reserve.

Right: Ranger Lyal Woods in the old boiler room, where luggage and clothing was fumigated.

Photos - Carolyn Thomson-Dans

active quarantine, yellow flags would be flown and the gates kept closed.

Meanwhile, the rest of Woodman Point was made a reserve for the storage of mining industry explosives. It was serviced by a railway and fenced to restrict access. With the outbreak of the First World War, the Woodman Point headland was extended by about 400 metres to the west and 400 metres to the south-west, as it was planned to build a naval base in the area. After five years of work, however, the project was abandoned.

After 1918, the quarantine station was used to process returning servicemen, and new buildings were constructed for this purpose. The 'Fumigation Block' was built in 1923 and contained a boiler room, which generated steam for fumigation of luggage and clothing. Internees and Prisoners of War during the Second World War were placed in the 'Asiatics Quarters'. Machine gun towers are said to have stood near the beach to deter attempts to escape. The crematorium was last used in 1943, when four soldiers died of smallpox.



In 1942, during the Second World War, three munitions magazines were built to house explosives. The buildings still exist and each is surrounded by a distinctive barrier, built from a stack of concrete 'pillows' designed to absorb the impact of a possible explosion. The munitions magazines have significant heritage value, as no other similar structures were built in Western Australia.

During the 1950s, thousands of immigrants passed through the quarantine station on the day of their arrival in Australia, to have their clothes and luggage fumigated as a safeguard against accidental introduction of foot-



and-mouth disease. However, the quarantine station closed in 1979 and the explosives reserve was vacated in 1982. The area came under the management of the Department of Sport and Recreation, who converted the quarantine station buildings into a recreation camp. Public boat-launching facilities and private sailing clubs were established on the southern coast after 1980. In January 1993, part of the bushland at Woodman Point was gazetted as a nature reserve, to protect some of the best areas of vegetation. In 1997, the State government announced that Woodman Point would be

Above left: A stone memorial marks the passing of Sister Rosa O’Kane.

Above: Woodman Point contains important stands of Rottnest cypress (*Callitris preissii*).

Photos – Sallyanne Cousins

Left: Gnarled tuart at Woodman Point Regional Park.

Photo – Carolyn Thomson-Dans

established as a regional park to be managed by the Department of Conservation and Land Management.

TERRIFIC TREES

Mainly because of the area’s history, Woodman Point has largely been spared from the frequent fires that have ravaged areas of remnant coastal vegetation elsewhere in the metropolitan area. As a result, Woodman Point’s vegetation features mature, well-developed specimens of summer-scented wattle, chenille honey-myrtle and quandong, and the creepers native wisteria and old man’s beard. Woodman Point also contains the only remnant stand of the fire-sensitive Rottnest cypress (*Callitris preissii*) of any size left in the mainland metropolitan area (the only other large population is at Garden Island). The tree’s scientific name commemorates celebrated German botanist Ludwig Preiss, who first collected it from this area in 1839. Visitors to Woodman

Point can easily recognise this tree because of its rich green foliage and typical conifer shape. It grows in dense thickets, where individual trees are closely spaced and all of similar height, as any projecting foliage is damaged by the salty coastal winds. Near the coast, Rottnest cypress is usually only about three to eight metres high.

Stands of tuart (*Eucalyptus gomphocephala*)—another tree species that has not fared well in the Perth metropolitan area since European settlement—are also found in a relatively healthy state at Woodman Point Regional Park, at the inland edge of the Rottnest cypress belt.

In their publication *Woodman Point: A Relic of Perth’s Coastal Vegetation*, Robert Powell and Jane Emberson explain why the flora of Woodman Point is so important:

‘Our native vegetation is part of our heritage. Just as we seek to preserve the memory of earlier ways of life, so too it is of value to remember the natural setting that our forebears knew. As bush round the city becomes steadily scarcer and more degraded, our knowledge of it may become more and more a matter of historical record.’

Fortunately, at Woodman Point we still have a chance to preserve part of this natural heritage.

DIVER’S DELIGHT

One of the park’s main attractions is the Magazine Jetty, about nine



Above: Many-pored sea star.
Photo – Eva Boogaard/Lochman
Transparencies

Right: The Magazine Jetty is home to a variety of fish, such as this mosaic leatherjacket
Photo – Alex Steffe/Lochman Transparencies



Below right: Extensive beaches at Woodman Point are popular for beachcombing.
Photo – Peter Dans

kilometres south of Fremantle. With a maximum depth of about seven metres, it offers an excellent dive site, as long as divers take care to avoid fishing lines dangling on either side of the jetty.

The pier posts are covered with a great variety of invertebrate life. White, purple and pink sponges, feather duster worms, lacy stinging hydroids, a variety of anemones, sea stars, colourful sea slugs, octopuses and other molluscs crowd onto each post.

At the end of the pier, the marine environment has reclaimed rejected logs and debris of an earlier era. Here, in the deeper water, the larger fish take advantage of the rich source of food. Marine life is particularly diverse on the northern side of the jetty, where you'll find a variety of fish feeding and sheltering among the invertebrates. Old wives, damselfish, leatherjackets, blennies, yellowtails and boxfish are all found in large numbers. A profusion of colourful sea stars and sand dollars litter the sand between the posts.





Above left: Large numbers of youngsters use the redeveloped playground.

Above: The Magazine Jetty is an ideal platform for fishing.

Left: A grand plan during the First World War for a naval base at Woodman Point led to the headland being extended.

Photos – Michael James



FAMILY FUN

With its uncrowded beaches, clear waters and other attractions, Woodman Point Regional Park has an estimated 500,000 visits per year. The most popular area within the park is John Graham Reserve, where facilities such as barbecues, grassed areas, toilets, superb playground equipment and the adjoining Magazine Jetty promote continued use by families. Since opening in 2001, the boat-shaped playground has come alive with families and picnic groups. Woodman Point also offers excellent swimming, snorkelling, scuba diving, sailing and fishing, and is an ideal place for family barbecues.

A path for the dual use of walkers and cyclists links the park to Fremantle. This pathway provides access to Coogee Beach and Jetty, Poore Grove, John Graham Reserve and the public boat-launching facility at Jervoise Bay, in the

south of the park. The boat launch ramp at Jervoise Bay is one of the most valued in Perth, offering excellent access to Cockburn Sound and to nearby islands.

The Woodman Point Recreation Camp is still managed by the Department of Sport and Recreation. It provides overnight accommodation for up to 272 people, with four dormitories and three fully self-contained cottages, and remains popular with schools and community groups. There are also two privately run caravan and camping parks within the regional park.

FUTURE PLANS

Despite its chequered past, Woodman Point now has an excellent outlook for the future. Relics of its history will be preserved and appreciated, care will be taken to protect its outstanding vegetation

communities and facilities will be improved to provide an enjoyable environment for all park visitors. Great care will be taken to get small details right—such as making sure plant material used during rehabilitation is sourced, where possible, from within the park's boundaries—and to actively encourage as much community involvement as possible in implementing the management plan. Everyone can get involved by the simple step of obtaining a copy of the draft management plan and making a submission. Ultimately, we will all reap the benefits of preserving and enhancing this unique area.

Carolyn Thomson-Dans is co-editor of *LANDSCOPE* and Senior Projects Officer for the Department of Conservation and Land Management. She can be contacted on (08) 9389 8644.

Carolyn used publications produced by Robert Powell, Jane Emberson and Rae Burrows, and the draft management plan for Woodman Point Regional Park, to help write this article. She would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Tim Bowers, Lyal Woods, and other members of the Regional Parks Unit.

059973



The first stage of a long-distance mountain bike trail, that will ultimately lead from Mundaring to Albany, is now open. See page 49.

Winner of the 1998 Alex Harris Medal for excellence in science and environment reporting.

LANDSCOPE



VOLUME EIGHTEEN, NUMBER 2, SUMMER 2002-2003



Discover the underwater wilderness of the Geographe Bay, Leeuwin-Naturaliste, Hardy Inlet area, a potential marine conservation reserve, on page 18.



Little was known about the distribution of the dalgyte, or bilby, in the south-west forests until scientist Ian Abbott interviewed old timers. Turn to page 28.



Older piles of the Busselton Jetty are crowded with marine life, but it was not always so. How do marine animals gradually colonise the piles? See page 34.



The Stirling Range National Park experiences many extremes of weather, from snow falls to bushfires. Find out why on page 10.

FEATURES

A STIRLING CLIMATE: CLOUDS, SNOW AND FIRE
JOE COURTNEY.....10

THE CAPES COAST
CAROLYN THOMSON-DANS, KYLIE RYAN & ANDREW HILL.....18

REMEMBERING THE DALGYTE
RHIANNA MOONEY.....28

LAST IN, BEST DRESSED
PETER MORRISON.....34

BUSH AT THE BEACH: WOODMAN POINT REGIONAL PARK
CAROLYN THOMSON-DANS.....42

MUNDA BIDI: PATHWAY THROUGH THE FOREST
VERNA COSTELLO & THERESE JONES.....49

REGULARS

BUSH TELEGRAPH.....4

ENDANGERED
HERBACEOUS ASSEMBLAGES ON BENTONITE LAKES.....27

URBAN ANTICS
BOOBOOK OWL.....54

Executive editor: Ron Kawalilak.
Editors: David Gough, Carolyn Thomson-Dans.
Bush Telegraph editor: Verna Costello.
Scientific/technical advice: Keith Morris, Kevin Kenneally, Paul Jones, Chris Simpson.
Design and production: Tiffany Aberin, Maria Duthie, Gooitzen van der Meer.
Illustration: Gooitzen van der Meer.
Cartography: Promaco Geodraft.
Marketing: Estelle de San Miguel ☎ (08) 9334 0296 Fax: (08) 9334 0498.
Subscription enquiries: ☎ (08) 9334 0481 or (08) 9334 0437.
 Colour Separation by Colourbox Digital.
 Printed in Western Australia by Lamb Print.
 © ISSN 0815-4465. All material copyright. No part of the contents of the publication may be reproduced without the consent of the publishers.
 Please do not send unsolicited material to LANDSCOPE, but feel free to telephone the editors.
 Visit NatureBase at www.naturebase.net
 Published by the Department of Conservation and Land Management, Dick Perry Avenue, Kensington, Western Australia.

COVER

Quandong (*Santalum acuminatum*) is one of the most widespread plants in Australia. This small, upright tree is most easily recognised by its bright red fruits, which are edible and also contain a nutritious nut. It belongs to the same genus as the famous sandalwood, which was one of Western Australia's major exports in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Members of this genus are root parasites. Quandong grows in dense stands in some areas within the Woodman Point Regional Park (see story on page 42).

Cover illustration by Philippa Nikulinsky

