A photograph of a wetland landscape. In the foreground, a large, gnarled tree trunk with thick, exposed roots dominates the left side. The background shows a body of water, likely Lake Joondalup, surrounded by dense vegetation and trees. The lighting is warm, suggesting a sunset or sunrise, with golden light filtering through the trees.

**Yellagonga Regional
Park protects the
nationally important
wetland of Lake
Joondalup, known
to Aboriginal people
as 'the lake that
glistens'.
The park provides a
natural haven in the
modern and rapidly
growing suburban
areas of Joondalup
and Wanneroo.**

by Verna Costello



Glistening attraction

Yellagonga Regional Park

Yellagonga is one of eight regional parks (see 'Parks for People', *LANDSCOPE*, Summer 2000–2001) within the Perth metropolitan area managed by the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM). Covering 1,400 hectares, it lies about 20 kilometres north of Perth city and six kilometres from the Indian Ocean. The park has natural, cultural and recreational importance.

Its dominant landscape features are lakes and wetlands. Lake Joondalup—the largest of these water bodies—lies in the northern half of the park, Walluburnup and Beenyup swamps are in the centre and Lake Goollelal is in the southernmost part of the park. Yellagonga was named after the leader of the Mooro clan of the Nyoongar

people, who inhabited the region north of the Swan River at the time of European settlement.

Aboriginal history

The land now in the park was an important camping area for local Nyoongar Aboriginal people. It was used for watering, food gathering, tool making, hunting, corroborees and summer social life.

In the Aboriginal seasonal cycle of camp movements, Yellagonga was an east–west staging point between the foothills and the ocean, and a north–south staging point between Mount Eliza (Kings Park, Perth) and Moore River. The location was ideal as a camp due to its centrality within the Mooro district, close proximity to the ocean

and other lakes, and the abundance of bush tucker, including waterfowl, kangaroos and bulrushes (*Typha* species).

Yellagonga Regional Park continues to be important to present-day Nyoongar people. According to their Dreaming beliefs, Lake Joondalup was created when the Waugal (rainbow serpent) went north from the Swan River underneath Kings Park, and came up and shaped Lake Monger, Karrinyup Lake, Lake Joondalup and Yanchep Lake.

At first, the relationship between European settlers and the Nyoongar people was amicable. However, it seems that both parties erred in their assumptions about the other's relationship with the land. Within two years, misunderstandings, exacerbated by language difficulties, caused the disintegration of relations between the two groups, and the indigenous inhabitants gradually moved off the lands that had supported them for millennia. It is likely that Yellagonga's nephew, Yagan, sought refuge around Lake Joondalup after he was outlawed following his attacks on settlers and their property (which followed an attack on Aboriginal people in 1833 by a settler).

Today, a bronze statue of a Bibbulmun Yorga (woman) can be seen on the left hand side of steps at the entrance to Neil Hawkins Park. 'Bibbul' means 'breast', hence the



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Freshwater paperbark trees at Lake Joondalup.
Photo – Marie Lochman

Above left Yellagonga Regional Park is a popular place for various recreational activities.
Photo – Michael James/CALM

Far left Ducks and moorhens at Neil Hawkins Park.

Left A statue of a Bibbulmun woman and a dingo denotes the importance of the area to Nyoongar people.
Photos – Rob Oliver



Top Ruins of a single roomed limestone cottage at Yellagonga Regional Park.

Above The former primary school building at Perry's Paddock.

Photos – Michael James/CALM

Bibbulmun clan name indicates that they were a matrilineal society (succession was via the mother).

European settlement

The European history of Yellagonga took root in its fertile soils and abundant fresh water to establish market gardens, dairies and vineyards.

A bronze plaque is all that remains of the Wesleyan Mission Farm on the eastern shore of Lake Goollelal. Established in 1844 by the Reverend John Smithies, the mission's purpose was to encourage Aboriginal people to learn agricultural skills. It was unsuccessful at this location and moved to York in 1850.

James Cockman and his wife settled in the area in about 1850, where they ran a 45-hectare dairy farm and market garden, located on what is now the eastern side of the park, south of Ocean Reef Road. The family's second house was built in 1870 on the foreshore of Walluburnup Swamp. It had 18-inch-thick limestone walls and a timber and shingle roof. This house is the oldest surviving residence in Wanneroo and is listed on the State Register of Heritage Places.



Luisini Winery can be seen off Lakeway Drive, near Lake Goollelal. Businessman Ezio Luisini purchased the 20 acres (8.1 hectares) on which he established his winery in 1924. Once one of the largest wineries in the southern hemisphere, it is now being restored by the National Trust. The revamped site will include a museum, café/restaurant and an environment centre.

Perry's Paddock, located on the first land grant in Wanneroo (surveyed in 1838), is adjacent to the southern tip of Lake Joondalup and Beenyup and Walluburnup swamps. It became known as Perry's Paddock after grazier Jack Perry bred racehorses on the property around the turn of the 20th century. It was a popular venue for horse racing and picnic days, that were

a social focus for the relatively isolated community. Ruins of a single-room limestone cottage, similar to those built by early settlers in the area, can also be seen in Perry's Paddock. The prominent Shenton family owned the site, then the Perry and Duffy families, all long-time residents of the district. The former Wanneroo Primary School building (which is owned by the City of Wanneroo) was also relocated to Perry's Paddock in 1992. Today, Perry's Paddock is still a favourite venue for large community events such as the Wanneroo Rotary Fair and the Perry's Paddock Annual Picnic Day.

In 1963, the Metropolitan Region Scheme (MRS) reserved the lands surrounding lakes Joondalup and Goollelal, and Beenyup and



Left Lake Joondalup glistens in the winter sun.
Photo – Marie Lochman

Below far left The boardwalk and lookout at Lake Joondalup.
Photo – Rob Oliver

Below left Entrance to Neil Hawkins Park.
Photo – Michael James|CALM



Walluburnup swamps for parks and recreation. Over the ensuing 40 years, State Planning Authorities have gradually acquired the lands up to the present park boundary, to protect open space of regional significance for conservation and recreation.

Lakes that glisten

The name Joondalup was derived from the Aboriginal name for the lake, Doondalup. Doondalup means 'the lake that glistens'. While walking along Lake Joondalup on a sunny, crisp winter morning, with the mist rising from its still waters, it is easy to understand why many visitors are attracted to Yellagonga Regional Park throughout the year. The park's attractions range from well-maintained grassed parkland, extensive views of open water and associated wildlife, to mature woodland areas. Lakes Joondalup and Goollelal are particularly striking and can be appreciated from many vantage points

around the park. Among these are the jetty at Neil Hawkins Park; the popular limestone lookout north of the jetty, with views to the east of Lake Joondalup and the Darling Range; and the boardwalk and lookout off James Spiers Drive on the south-eastern edge of Lake Joondalup. Accessibility has been improved between the grassed parkland and the limestone lookout at Neil Hawkins Park for people with disabilities, including those using wheelchairs.

Neil Hawkins Park, named after a chairman of the former Metropolitan Region Planning Authority, once formed part of a stock route that was pioneered in 1854. Its parkland setting is conveniently close to the centre of Joondalup while the adjacent natural features of Lake Joondalup are available to visitors wishing to relax in natural environments that are relatively undisturbed. The main recreation area is located beside Lake Joondalup's western shore, where family picnics,

barbecues, bushwalking, birdwatching and general nature observation can be enjoyed. Large group activities, such as outdoor concerts and performances, often take place here in summer. The less developed Picnic Cove Park and Beenyup Park are attractive to small groups opting for less active pursuits.

Dual-use (walk and cycle) paths and two heritage paths allow visitors to explore Yellagonga Regional Park. The Lake Joondalup Trail is a 27-kilometre, self-guided walk or drive trail that traces the development of Wanneroo around Lake Joondalup. The Yaberoo-Budjara Heritage Trail is a 28-kilometre track that links Lake Joondalup with Yanchep National Park, via Neerabup National Park, highlighting features of both local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultural significance. Over the past three years CALM, in conjunction with the cities of Joondalup and Wanneroo, has installed six kilometres of bitumen dual-use paths and upgraded six kilometres of limestone paths on this trail.

Plants and animals

The vegetation communities of Yellagonga Regional Park are highly significant, as they represent those once widespread on the (now mostly cleared) Swan Coastal Plain. Jarrah, marri and banksia woodlands grow on the upland areas and around the wetlands, with open forests of tuart, jarrah and marri elsewhere.

The park is not just a haven for people. Lake Joondalup is of national significance and is on the Register of the National Estate, a list documenting places of natural and cultural heritage that need to be kept for future generations. The wetlands are



Above Bull banksias are one of the many native species found at Yellagonga Regional Park

Photo – Jiri Lochman



Above right Straw-necked ibis are often seen in flocks in Yellagonga Regional Park

Photo – Ken Stepnell/CALM

important breeding grounds for local birds, and a summer refuge for a diverse bird population, many of which are transequatorial migratory wading birds. Eighteen of the 122 bird species known from the park also breed in the area. The straw-necked ibis, white ibis and blue-winged shoveler, though relatively uncommon elsewhere in the Perth metropolitan area, are found at the lakes. The specially protected Carnaby's cockatoo, Australasian bittern and peregrine falcon have all been recorded in the park. Robins, wrens, Australian shelducks and grey teal ducks can be seen in woodlands at the northern end of Lake Joondalup.

The native Swan River goby, pygmy perch and long-necked tortoise have been recorded in the lakes. Six frog species breed in the waters and inhabit temporary pools on low-lying ground, and the moaning and pobblebonk frogs may be found long distances from the water when they are not breeding. Various species of lizards and snakes also live in the park including bobtails, western tiger snakes and dugites, which are commonly seen, and rarely seen carpet pythons.

Yellagonga remains one of few places left in the metropolitan area where rakali (water rats) still thrive. They are abundant in the fringing wetland vegetation. In the denser habitats, the quenda—another mammal now uncommon in metropolitan Perth and indeed throughout the Swan Coastal Plain—has been seen. Other mammals include western grey kangaroos, brushtail possums and white-striped bats.

Park management


Yellagonga Regional Park is located in a highly urbanised environment, with the cities of Joondalup and Wanneroo being the fastest growing in the metropolitan area (5.6 per cent growth between 1992 and 2002), which places the park under increasing pressure. While much of the park reflects the Swan Coastal Plain environment prior to development, some sections of the park are greatly degraded due to past market gardens, poultry farms and horse pastures, and suffer from weed encroachment and frequent wildfires.

The community continues to play an important role in enhancing Yellagonga's environment. Over the past eight years, 40,000 native plants have been re-established in the park, the majority of which were grown at the Friends of Yellagonga's nursery at Landsdale Farm School. As Yellagonga is a relatively new regional park, CALM staff have been working to build and develop links with the community. A variety of community groups, including Friends of

Yellagonga, Kingsley Montessori School, Joondalup TAFE, Woodvale Waters Landowners' Association, Yellagonga Catchment Group and the Kingsley Scouts, have adopted sections of the park for weed removal and revegetation activities.

Although valuable work has already been carried out by CALM and volunteers, a number of key issues remain to be addressed. These include the deterioration of water quality in the wetlands, due to seepage of nutrients, which has led to plagues of nuisance midges, especially at Lake Joondalup. The management of key sites such as Perry's Paddock and Luisini Winery for future recreation, education, cultural and commercial uses, and incorporating wildfire and weed control into the plans, is vitally important.

The Yellagonga Regional Park Management Plan, which was released in June 2003, addresses these issues, and is accessible on CALM's NatureBase website (www.naturebase.net), along with further information about the park.



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