



Yalgorup National Park

Yalgorup National Park, established during the early 1970s, is the largest conservation reserve on the Swan Coastal Plain, covering an area of 12,888 hectares.

Above Thrombolites at Lake Clifton.
Photo – Alex Bond

Facing page

Top right Thrombolite-viewing boardwalk at Lake Clifton.

Photo – Jiri Lochman

Above right Martins Tank Lake camping area.
Photo – Bill Belson/Lochman Transparencies

Below right Cockies tongues.
Photo – Sallyanne Cousins

Yalgorup National Park, 50 kilometres south of Mandurah, incorporates ten of the remaining Yalgorup lakes that carry names such as Duck Pond, Lake Yalgorup and Boundary Lake. Lake Preston and Lake Clifton are the largest and most well known. Lieutenant Surgeon Alexander Collie and Lieutenant William Preston were the first Europeans to discover them, while exploring the coastline between Mandurah and Bunbury in 1829.

The park's wetland system is recognised by the Ramsar Convention as being of international importance. It provides significant habitat for many different species of waterbirds including Australian shelducks, musk ducks, black swans and Australian pelicans, as well as migratory shorebird species such as whimbrels and three species of sandpipers. The park boasts magnificent tuart and peppermint woodlands, and the unique blend of soils and the limestone rocks make for a terrain bountiful with many native plant species.

Microscopic masterbuilders

Though Yalgorup is glorious in its own right, it is possibly best known for the biological treasure it shelters in one of its largest lakes. Lake Clifton, which is furthest from the coast, contains rock-like structures known as thrombolites that are constructed by living organisms, and it is one of only a few places in Western Australia where they survive.

Like the famous stromatolites of Hamelin Pool in Shark Bay, (see 'Lilliput's Castles', *LANDSCOPE*, Summer 1991-92), the thrombolites are built by microorganisms too small for the human eye to see. Similar organisms were the only known form of life on Earth from 3500 million to 650 million years ago. Within the structures of Lake Clifton are living communities of diverse inhabitants with population densities of 3000 per square metre! These structures are built up at an incredibly slow rate and when the thrombolite reaches a metre in height, they are approximately 2000 years old. Lake Clifton is the only lake in Yalgorup



National Park that houses the live communities, but microbial mounds, which are remnants of thrombolites, can be seen at Lake Preston, suggesting that more of the lakes have harboured this treasure in earlier times.

Playground

Because of its beauty, accessibility and proximity to the coast, Yalgorup National Park is becoming increasingly popular with visitors. There are more than 134 species of birds in the park, largely because of the extensive wetlands and woodlands. The waterbirds observed on the Yalgorup lakes include some migratory bird species, and during summer the lake is a nesting area for waterfowl from inland areas. The bountiful bird life makes the park more than worthwhile for eager birdwatchers to spend the day

photographing and observing.

The area surrounding the magnificent lakes is the focus of most day-use activities, as well as some backpacker camping. Lake Preston is the only lake in the park that is zoned for recreational use because of the need for conservation of the fragile thrombolites and their remnants. The lower third of the lake can be used for canoeing or waterskiing. On the banks of Martins Tank Lake, on a cleared area among the majestic tuart and peppermint woodlands, is a formal campsite for vehicle-based camping.

The sheer size of the park allows for some extended bushwalking for the dedicated. For those who are looking for just a taste of the bush, there are nature walks to be strolled at a leisurely pace at Lake Hayward and Lake Preston before indulging in a barbecue or picnic.



park facts

Where is it? 120 km from Perth, just south of the Dawesville Channel.

Area 12,888 ha.

What to do? Birdwatching, photography, bushwalking, nature walking, picnicking, barbecuing, sightseeing, camping, waterskiing and canoeing in the lower third of Lake Preston.

Must see site? A boardwalk has been built to protect the thrombolites at Lake Clifton while enabling visitors to get great views of these incredible structures.

Notes The park's name was derived from two Nyoongar Aboriginal words, 'Yalgor', which means 'lake or swamp' and 'up' which is a suffix for 'a place'.

Nearest CALM Office Mandurah Work Centre, Lot 31 Pinjarra Road, Mandurah. Phone (08) 9582 9333.



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