



## D'Entrecasteaux National Park

Spectacular coastal cliffs, pristine beaches, mobile sand dunes, extensive wetlands and even pockets of karri are the essence of D'Entrecasteaux National Park. Essentially a wild place, largely inaccessible to two-wheel-drive vehicles, the park offers isolated beach campsites and wild coastal vistas.

**Above** Point D'Entrecasteaux.  
Photo – David Bettini

**Facing page (top and bottom backgrounds)** Yeagarup Dune.  
**Centre left** Mandalay Beach.  
Photos – Cliff Winfield/CALM  
**Centre right** Wildflowers.  
Photo – David Bettini

Six major streams and rivers, including the Warren, Donnelly, Gardner and Shannon rivers, flow through D'Entrecasteaux National Park and into the Southern Ocean. High sand dunes and limestone cliffs on the coast give way to coastal heathlands and a series of lakes and swamps further inland. Due to high annual rainfall, scattered pockets of karri grow in the park. As well as Lake Jasper and Lake Yeagarup, these include an area known as the Blackwater—vast areas of wetlands behind the coastal dunes. Another outstanding feature is the Yeagarup Dune, an impressive mobile dune 10 kilometres long.

The park's different landforms have given rise to a diversity of vegetation types, including forests, grasslands, heath and sedge flats. Stunted jarrah, bullich, yate and peppermint trees form low woodlands, in places where the blasting from the prevailing southerly winds is reduced or blocked. Heavy swamps carry thickets of sword grass and wattle. Some dunes are completely bare; others have been colonised by

wattles, coastal spinifex, pigface and native rosemary. D'Entrecasteaux National Park is also home to the red swamp banksia (*B. occidentalis* subsp. *formosa*), which is only known to occur in two places. Here, it grows in a swamp near the tip of Black Point.

The basalt columns west of Black Point, a popular fishing and surfing spot, form one of the park's most stunning landforms. This feature originated from a volcanic lava flow, some 135 million years ago. The formation resulted from the slow cooling of a deep pool of lava, similar to the development of mud cracks. In the process of it cracking and shrinking, columns were formed perpendicular to the surface. The result was a close-packed series of hexagonal columns, now slowly being eroded by the sea.

### Water bodies

As well as being one of Western Australia's largest inlets, Broke Inlet is the only large estuary in the southwest that has not been significantly



altered, either by developments along its shores or within its catchment area. Lying at the park's eastern end, it is a large, shallow estuary, linked to the ocean by a narrow channel that passes through high ridges of windblown sand dunes. Sandy beaches along its shores are interspersed with low, rocky headlands of gneiss. The gneissic basement projects above water level in many places to form numerous small islands. The entire catchment area of this serene body of water is protected in the adjacent Shannon National Park.

Lake Jasper, in the western part of D'Entrecasteaux, is the largest freshwater lake in the southern half of WA. It also has cultural significance. Prehistoric Aboriginal artefacts have been found on the lake's floor. Archaeologists from the WA Museum have identified numerous tree stumps, balga stumps and stone artefacts, at various depths up to seven and 10 metres in the deepest part of the lake, showing that what is now a lake was once a woodland inhabited by Aboriginal people. Wood samples were taken, and revealed ages of between 3750 and 4000 years. The lake is thought to have formed as a result of a mobile sand dune blocking the path of a stream or river.



### Remoteness and solitude

Windy Harbour, Salmon Beach, Broke Inlet and Mandalay Beach are the only coastal areas of this large park accessible to conventional vehicles. Four-wheel-drive tracks lead to other coastal fishing and camping spots. Many places, such as the mouth of the Donnelly River, can be reached only by small boat. Significant areas inaccessible to vehicles provide those who are willing to hike with an opportunity to experience seclusion on a deserted beach. D'Entrecasteaux National Park, then, offers qualities of remoteness and solitude for visitors.

A draft 10-year management plan was recently released for D'Entrecasteaux and Shannon national parks.



### park facts

**Where is it?** The park stretches for 130 km between Black Point east of Augusta and Long Point west of Walpole, with its inland boundaries lying 8 km from Northcliffe and 25 km from Pemberton, approximately 350 km south of Perth.

**Total area** 116,686 hectares.

**What to do** Camp at Lake Yeagarup and walk on to the Yeagarup Dune in the moonlight. Fishing, beachcombing, surfing, camping, bushwalking and boating.

**Must see sites** The D'Entrecasteaux Drive and coastal cliffs walk at Point D'Entrecasteaux are the best way to appreciate both the rugged coast, and inland heaths and wetlands.

**Naming** The park takes its name from Point D'Entrecasteaux, named by the French Admiral Bruni D'Entrecasteaux, who sailed past the coast in 1792.

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