



## Herdsman Lake Regional Park

This Perth-based regional park is a haven for birds, as well as city slickers seeking a retreat to nature.

**Above** View of Perth city from Herdsman Lake Regional Park.  
*Photo – Rob Olver*

*Opposite page*  
**Clockwise from top left** Oblong tortoise.  
*Photo – Jiri Lochman*  
Cycling around Herdsman Lake.  
*Photo – David Bettini*  
Olive Seymour Boardwalk at Herdsman Lake Regional Park.  
*Photo – Ann Storrie*  
Black swans and ducks at Herdsman Lake.  
*Photo – Rob Olver*

With rich wetland ecosystems, native vegetation and a profusion of birds, Herdsman Lake Regional Park offers a natural sanctuary in the heart of Perth's metropolitan area.

This 400-hectare park, just seven kilometres from the Perth Central Business District, is home to Herdsman Lake and wetlands which support a diverse bird life, including about 30 species that use the area as a breeding ground.

But Herdsman Lake Regional Park is not only a haven for birds. People also come here to escape the urban jungle and rekindle their passion for nature. So how is it that such an area has survived in the heart of an ever-growing city?

### History

Well before European arrival, Herdsman Lake was home to Aboriginal people who called the region Ngurgenboro and used it as a food source and meeting point. However, with the onset of European settlement, others too started relying

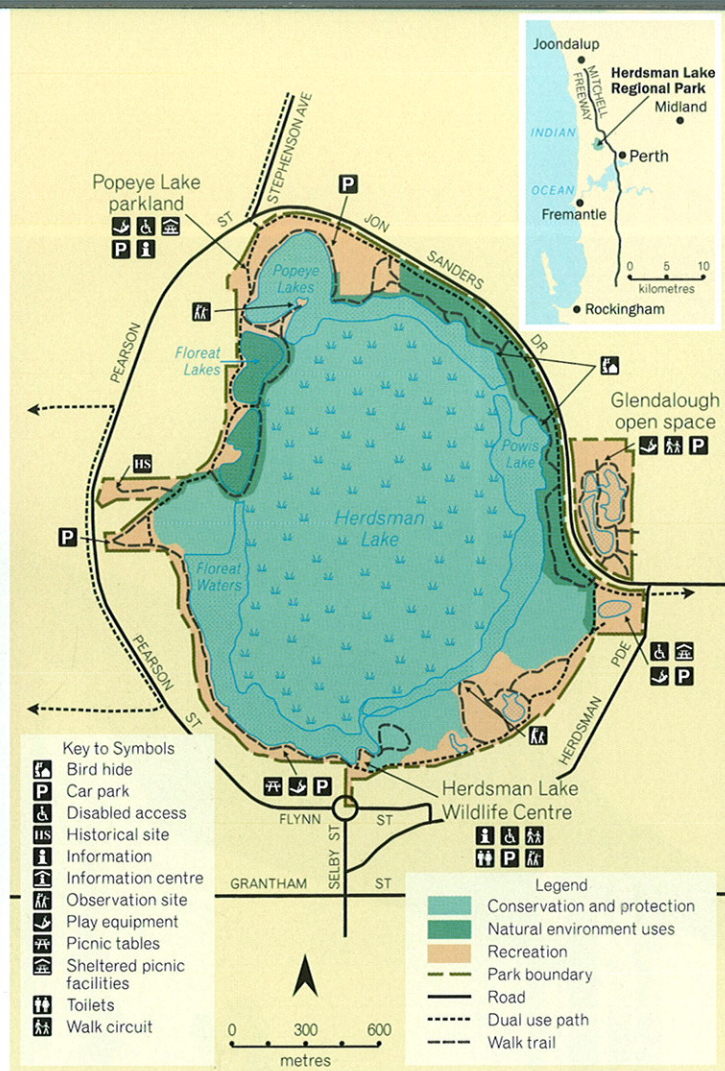
on the lake's resources.

By the late 1800s, the area was home to market gardens and crops as well as pig, cattle and poultry operations. Fears over flooding saw the area drained in the 1920s—a move which reduced water levels and contributed to altered vegetation, with weeds, particularly an exotic species of bulrush, replacing native plants in many places.

The area was also used for waste disposal, though a proposal to turn it into a rubbish dump was rejected thanks to a public outcry. Public passion for the area also saved it from peat mining in the 1970s. However, it wasn't until 1997 that Herdsman Lake Regional Park was declared and afforded proper protection. It is now managed by the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC).

Despite the pressure this important area has endured over the years and the alterations that have occurred to the environment, the park continues to play an important role as a wildlife refuge in an urban environment. The lake is now managed for conservation and recreation, with conservation





efforts focusing on weed management, re-establishment of native vegetation and improvement of water quality.

### Animal life

Despite the long list of pressures the park has experienced, nature proves itself hardy here. For, if there is any one thing people love about the park, it's the dazzling array of bird life. Birds Australia has recorded 107 species here while the Western Australian Gould League has recorded 162 species since 1929.

You can almost always delight in the sight of elegant black swans mirrored on the water's surface. These iconic birds use the area as a major breeding ground, meaning visitors can often see the swans' fluffy grey offspring cruising the lake's waters in the latter half of the year.

A myriad of other waterbirds also rely on the park—coots, Pacific black ducks, ibises and Australian shelducks among them. Then there are small, delicate species like the reed warbler as well as specially protected species like the peregrine falcon and Australasian bittern.

Many of the migratory birds that use the lake travel enormous distances from far-flung areas of the globe like Norway, Siberia or China to this city-based nature sanctuary. Just imagine them flying across the world, over towns,

oceans and land, with their mysterious autopilots set on Herdsman Lake.

Such a natural haven is also home to reptile species like the western tiger snake (*Notechis scutatus*), which is fast being lost from other areas near Perth. The oblong or long-necked tortoise (*Chelodina oblonga*) is also found in the area and can often be seen from the boardwalks and bridges in the park. The tortoises often use neighbouring gardens to lay their eggs, digging up plants like petunias!

Mammal species, however, have not adapted to urban encroachment as well. Species like the quenda, brushtail possum and western brush wallaby once inhabited the area, but have now disappeared.

### Back to nature in the city

Visitors to Herdsman Lake Regional Park can revel in its natural wonders by setting out on the Olive Seymour Boardwalk. This short walk leads you through a fairytale-like world of paperbark trees and travels above the lake's waters. Visitors can also step back in time at the Settler's Cottage for an insight into life here as an early settler.

The Gould League's Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, established in 1984, provides information on the area's history and biology, while also offering expansive views over the lake system.

Playgrounds and picnic areas also feature while extensive dual-use paths at the park provide for walking, jogging and bike riding—recreational pursuits enjoyed at one with nature while set in the suburbs of Perth.

### park facts

**Where is it?** Seven kilometres north-west of Perth CBD in the City of Stirling.

**Total area** About 400 hectares.

**What to do?** Visit Olive Seymour Boardwalk, WA Gould League's Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre and Settler's Cottage. Walking, cycling, picnicking, bird watching and wildflower spotting.

**Facilities** Picnic areas, WA Gould League's Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre, boardwalks, bird hides and Settler's Cottage. Disabled access is provided.

**Relevant DEC office** Regional Parks Unit, phone (08) 9431 6500, Level 1, 4-6 Short Street, Fremantle WA 6959.





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