



Geocaching

at Yanchep National Park

Geocaching – a real-world treasure hunt – is a craze sweeping the globe. And now there are ‘caches’ hidden along a trail in Yanchep National Park. If you can find them . . .

by Jennifer Green

Remember the days of being sent on a treasure hunt to search for messages that would eventually direct you to a hidden prize? Nowadays, the traditional treasure hunt game has now morphed into a high-tech worldwide craze of the 21st century.

Geocaching, or ‘caching’, was first developed in 2000 in Oregon, USA, by computer engineer Dave Ulmer who placed trinkets in the woods outside Portland and announced their locations on a GPS online newsgroup. These trinkets were found within a day and, within a month, newsgroup viewers from around the world had followed Ulmer’s example and planted more items in their own countries, including Australia. Today, trinkets are accompanied by a log book and placed in a container or ‘geocache’, hidden from view, to be found by GPS or smartphone along a geocache trail. There are more than 2.4 million active geocaches and more than six million geocachers worldwide.

CLOSE TO HOME

In December 2013, Parks and Wildlife opened its first geocache trail in partnership with cadets from Duncraig Senior High School *Bush Rangers*. The *Bush Rangers* program is Parks and Wildlife’s school-based conservation and community development program. The 2.7km geocache trail is located on the Wetlands Walk, which circumnavigates

Loch McNess at Yanchep National Park and was named Nyanyi-Yandjip after the traditional tribal name of the park.

Gary Thirlwell, Duncraig Senior High School *Bush Rangers* program instructor, initiated the project.

“My nephew first introduced me to geocaching and I was looking at new projects for the cadets, and thought there was potential for us to develop a geocache trail. At the time, I was organising our upcoming cadet orientation camp at Yanchep National Park and thought

the park would be a perfect location to develop a trail. Thankfully we also received some education funding from BP Australia, which made the development of the trail a viable option,” he said.

More than 30 students made several visits to the park during 2013 to scout for suitable locations for the trail.

“We decided to use the Wetlands Walk Trail for the geocache trail because of its close proximity to the park’s main recreation area and the walk’s accessibility. We also wanted to promote our water



Opposite page

Main Geocaching is a popular craze being enjoyed all around the world, including at Yanchep National Park.

Photo – Alicia Dyson

Above right On the Nyanyi-Yandjip geocache trail.

Photo – Gooitzen van der Meer/Parks and Wildlife

Right Using a smart phone to navigate the trail.

Far right The geocache trail follows the Wetlands Walk.

Photos – Sandra Herd



Above Geocaching can be carried out using a smart phone.

Above right Kangaroos abound throughout the park.

Below right Overlooking the beautiful Loch McNess.

Photos – Gooitzen van der Meer/Parks and Wildlife



Do it yourself

Where is it? Yanchep National Park is located an easy 45 minutes drive north of Perth.

What else is on offer in the park? The 2842ha Yanchep National Park offers visitors a variety of opportunities and facilities. The park is rich in Aboriginal and European cultural heritage, protects a fascinating cave system and boasts one of WA's largest koala colonies. In season, there is also a stunning array of wildflowers and the park plays host to the old-world charm of Tudor-style buildings and gardens. There is an extensive network of walk trails in the park and visitors can take part in Aboriginal cultural activities or cave tours. Facilities at the park include picnic tables and barbecues, and a visitor centre.

How can I get involved in geocaching? To take part in the Nyanyi-Yandjip geocache trail, bring along your own smart phone and download the information from geocaching.com, or hire a geocache receiver and trail guide from McNess House Visitor Centre for \$10 plus a \$50 deposit. For more information visit www.geocache.com.

For more information about Yanchep National Park visit parks.dpaw.wa.gov.au.

wise message, and this trail, which circles Loch McNess, was a good place to start. The trail is also relatively short when compared to others in the park, and we didn't want the first trail to be overly ambitious," Gary said.

Yanchep National Park manager, Julia Coggins welcomed the opportunity to develop a geocache trail and said it was a great opportunity for Yanchep to join the worldwide craze.

"The Nyanyi-Yandjip geocache trail at Yanchep is a fantastic idea that uses technology and encourages people to get active outdoors. It leads people through our stunning Australian bush, where they can share the details of their finds and of their experiences to the world online," Julia said.

"It's a terrific example of how technology can complement natural experiences and it's great that WA has embraced this global craze."

