

Adventure out

Kayaking on the Canning

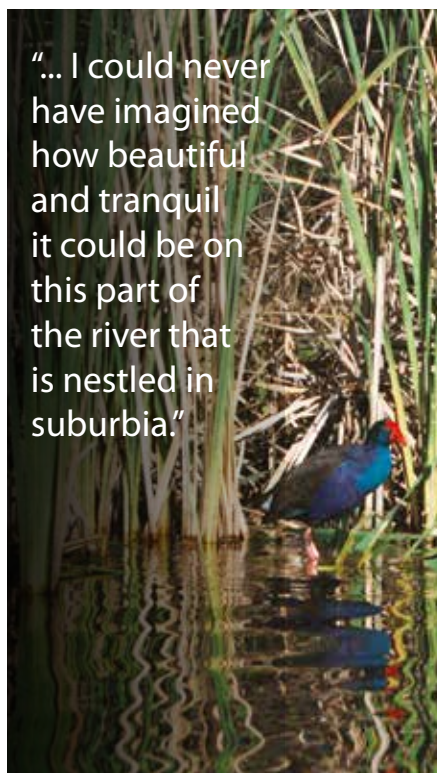
Tucked away in Perth's southern suburbs is the Canning River Regional Park and the river that runs through it – a tranquil oasis that provides an important habitat for a range of waterbirds. This beautiful area also offers people an escape from the hustle and bustle of city life to enjoy a moment of peace and quiet surrounded by nature, especially when explored on the water.

BY RHIANNA KING





“... I could never have imagined how beautiful and tranquil it could be on this part of the river that is nestled in suburbia.”



Top left The tranquil Canning River.

Left Kent St Weir bridge connects the north and south sides of the river.

Top A purple swamphen takes shelter in the fringing weeds.

Photos – Rhianna King/Parks and Wildlife

Above Cormorants are one of many bird species that frequent the area.

Photo – Michael James/Parks and Wildlife

On a particularly chilly winter morning, my dad Brian Mooney and I journeyed to Kent Street Weir – just 9km from Perth’s CBD – to explore the Canning River on a kayak. I had expected that it would be a nice morning out, but I could never have imagined how beautiful and tranquil it could be on this part of the river that is nestled in suburbia.

Despite the 4°C temperature, Kent St Weir was busy with people walking their dogs and riding their bikes. But a few minutes after launching off on the still, calm water we were in a world of our own. Literally. Except for the occasional rumble of a plane flying overhead on its way to or from Perth airport, and the sporadic glimpse of a building through the trees, it was easy to forget our close proximity to houses, roads, businesses, parks and reserves. In fact, in the two hours of leisurely-paced paddling towards Mason’s Landing and back, we saw just a handful of people.

LAUNCHING OFF

When it’s open, the Canning River Eco Education Centre provides a wealth of information about the natural and cultural history of the area and is a great place to visit before you head out to explore the river and surrounding Canning River Regional Park. The ‘Getting to know the locals’ display gives you an overview of some of the birds you’re likely to see in the area. But it doesn’t take long before you’ve seen more species than you can count on your hands.

We had barely paddled 20m from the weir when we spotted a male Australasian darter standing guard over its nest in the fork of a tree overhanging the river. The paperbarks, sedges and reeds, and fringing woodlands provide sanctuaries for a range of local and migratory birds, including spoonbills, swamphens, moorhens, coots, egrets, grebes, ibis, galahs, magpies and swans. The riverbanks and the outlying reserves are home to dugites, western tiger snakes and western bearded dragons, while, in the water, long-necked turtles, shellfish, gilgies and fish species such as Perth herring, tailor, common flathead,



Top Black bream is one of the fish that can be found in the area.
Photo – Matt Kleczkowski

Centre Western bearded dragons can be found in the regional park.
Photo – Jiri Lochman

Above Monitoring buoys control delivery of oxygen from plants used to oxygenate the Canning River.
Photo – Rhianna King/Parks and Wildlife

yellow-eye mullet, black bream and cobbler live among the seagrass, snags and logs. These species provided an abundance of food for the Beeliiar people who travelled to the area during the summer months and referred to the river as ‘Dyarlgaard’.

Thanks to the Kent St Weir, the species found upstream are different to those found downstream. Built in 1928, the weir was designed to stop the movement of salt water upstream in summer so freshwater could be used for agriculture. Instead of the salt-hardy paperbarks found below Kent St Weir, upstream you’ll see the freshwater paperbarks, river banksia and reeds which all prefer the freshwater.

GIVING NATURE A HELPING HAND

On our way to Mason’s Landing, we passed yellow monitoring buoys, one of the three oxygenation plants on the

Do it yourself

Where is it?: The Canning River starts on the Darling Scarp and joins the Swan River at Melville Waters, just downstream of the Canning Bridge. Canning River Regional Park consists of the Canning River foreshore and adjacent areas between Nicholson Road Bridge in Cannington and Shelley Bridge in Riverton.

Kayak hire and tours: Guided tours and kayak and canoe hire is available from Kent St Weir. Contact visitor centres for more information.

Facilities: Barbecues, walk and cycle paths, picnic tables, playgrounds, Canning River Eco Education Centre, cafe, toilets, parking and lookouts.

Canning River Canoe Trail: The Canning River Canoe Trail runs from Mt Henry Bridge to Hester Park and takes between two and three hours. It can be done as a return day-trip with lunch at one of the cafes it passes along the way or as a picnic on the riverbank. Or it can be broken up over several shorter paddles, which are perfect for less experienced paddlers.

Canning River and paddled alongside sections of pipe delivering the oxygenated water. These are part of an effort to oxygenate the stagnant river, which began in 1998 in response to severe blue-green algal blooms upstream of the Kent Street Weir. Decomposing organic matter such as agricultural waste, debris and wastewater overflow caused the low oxygen levels in the river, which were made worse by the lack of water movement and algal blooms. This resulted in fish deaths and compromised the health of the river ecosystem. Today, water is taken from the bottom of the river and mixed with oxygen under pressure. It is then piped back into the river where it works to maintain a healthy environment.

Until 1 July 2015, the Swan River Trust managed the Swan Canning Riverpark while Parks and Wildlife, together with the City of Cannington, looked after the surrounding Canning River Regional Park. This area will be afforded even better care



Beyond the water

For those who prefer to stay on dry land, a series of walk and bike trails throughout the regional park offer a variety of ways to see this special place. Many of these are suitable for wheelchairs and prams and offer a perfect way to take in the historic Woodloes Homestead, which includes a small museum showcasing the area's history, and Castledare Miniature Railways, as well as lots of other picnic and recreation spots along the journey.



with the amalgamation of the Swan River Trust into Parks and Wildlife, providing a more integrated management approach. This will ensure these areas are managed effectively so they are protected for the use and enjoyment of many future generations. After all, having access to these magnificent natural gems right on our city's doorstep should never be taken for granted.

HOMEWARD BOUND

As we paddle back towards Kent St Weir we soak in the last moments of peace and quiet before the sounds of barking dogs and laughing kids grow louder. Fortunately, once we got the kayaks back onto the roof of the car, my weary arms still had enough strength to wrap my hands around a nice hot cup of coffee at the Canning River Café. What a perfect morning.

Above The banks of the river provide a range of recreation opportunities.
Photo – Michael James/Parks and Wildlife

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