



Rockingham Lakes Regional Park

This popular regional park, located 39 kilometres south of Perth's CBD, attracts people who come to enjoy water sports such as swimming, scuba diving, snorkelling, fishing, kayaking and boating and to marvel at the park's unique natural and cultural history. And now, upgraded walk and cycle trails, a new lookout and improvements to heritage sites are providing even more to experience.

Just 39 kilometres south of Perth, Rockingham Lakes Regional Park is a patch of paradise nestled within a developing urban area. On the right day,

Above View to Bird Island and Gull Rock from Point Peron.

Photo – Robert Campbell/DBCA

Top right Tiger snakes are one reptile known to occur in the area.

Photo – Sallyanne Cousins

Above right Red-necked stints are protected under international agreements.

Photo – Rob Drummond/Lochman Transparencies

its white sand and sparkling turquoise water provide an idyllic launching pad for water sports such as swimming, scuba diving, snorkelling, fishing, kayaking and boating in the adjoining Shoalwater Islands Marine Park. But there's plenty to discover on dry land too, including some of Earth's earliest life forms and some very special feathered visitors.

NATURALLY BEAUTIFUL

Rockingham Lakes Regional Park was established in 1997 to protect a unique and important network of coastal, wetland and woodland ecosystems. Its location, relative to other conservation reserves in the area,

makes it important on a regional level, as it contributes to a corridor of bush for native plants and animals to persist in the rapidly changing landscape of the metropolitan area.

The diverse landforms that exist in the regional park are represented in the varied vegetation that occurs there. Coastal shrubland can be found on the northern and southern parts that fringe the ocean, while stands of tuart, jarrah and marri surround permanent and ephemeral wetlands. These wetlands are recognised on a state, national and international level for the role they play in attracting and supporting populations of birds, including



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Rockingham Lakes
Regional Park

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Above left The spectacular beaches of Rockingham Lakes Regional Park make it popular for visitors.

Photo – Robert Campbell/DBCA

Above Cape Peron K-Battery Complex.

Photo – Tim Fisher/DBCA

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trans-equatorial migratory birds such as red-necked stints, curlew sandpipers and the common sandpiper. These birds, which are protected under international agreements and the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, travel from Eurasia each year.

The area is also significant for mammals, and western grey kangaroos, black-gloved wallabies, echidnas, bush rats, dunnarts and quenda are known to occur in the park. Meanwhile, sand plain, moaning, Glauert’s, marbled burrowing, western banjo, slender tree and motorbike frogs exist in the park and make themselves known in the evenings and after rain. Oblong turtles occur in lakes Richmond, Coo loongup and Walyungup, and carpet pythons, tiger snakes, dugites, Gould’s and racehorse monitors and bobtails can occasionally be spotted making their way across the park’s paths. The local invertebrates plays a key role in the ecosystem by providing a food source for the park’s bird population. And some visitors may be lucky enough to spot a colourful yellow admiral butterfly, which breeds in the coastal areas of the park.

ANCIENT FEATURES

While at first glance they may not appear to be living creatures, the thrombolites of Lake Richmond are another significant organism that occurs in the park. In fact, they represent the oldest living organisms on Earth, having been formed by complex associations of different types of bacteria and microalgae. The thrombolites grow and survive in the fresh waters of Lake Richmond, which is rich in carbonate, bicarbonate and calcium. These minerals are believed to have come from the groundwater that has passed through the sand dunes that surround the lake.

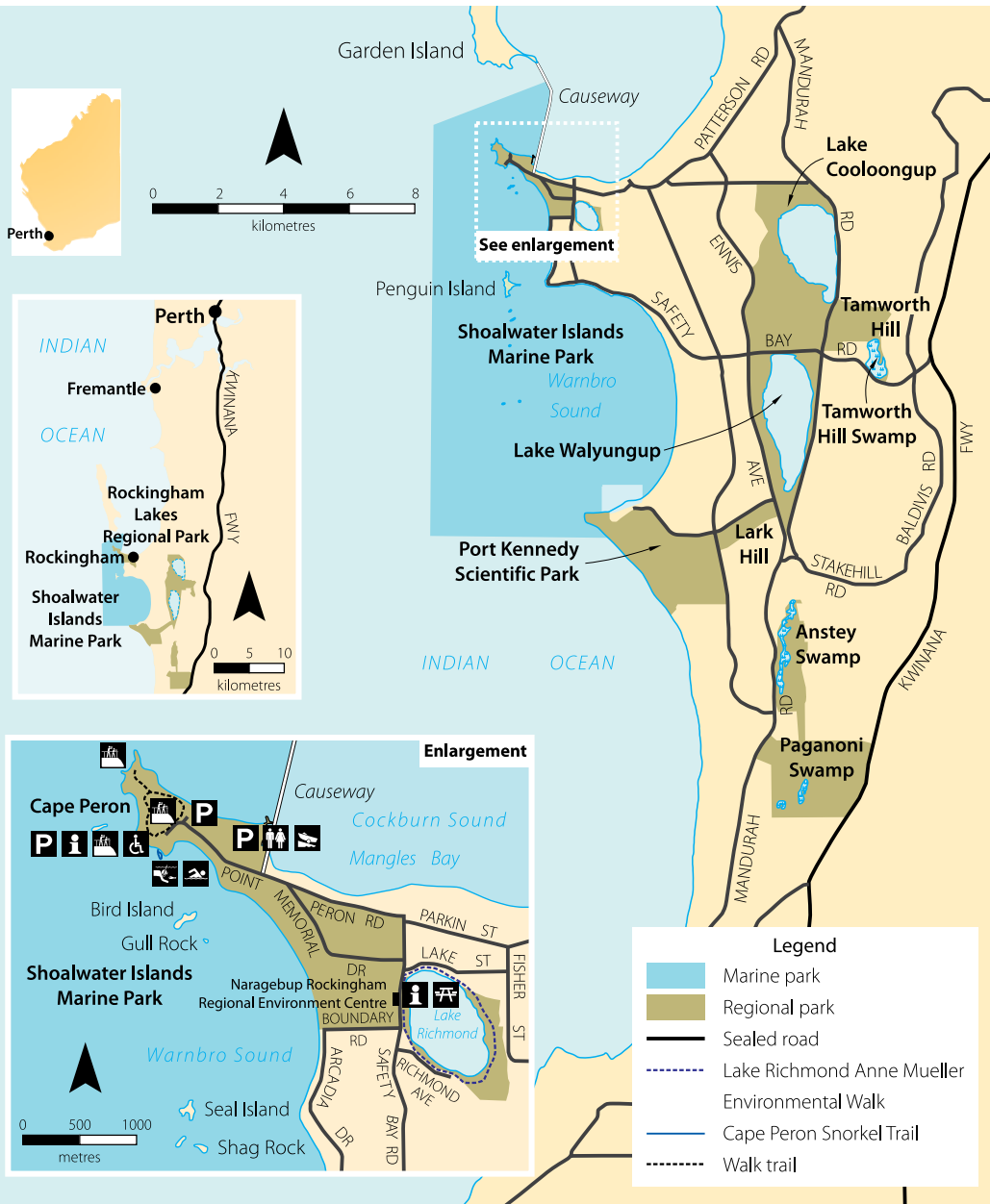
HUMAN INTEREST

What is now Rockingham Lakes Regional Park has been known to the Nyoongar people for eons. The Rockingham area is significant to Aboriginal people and contains a number of sacred sites. The wetlands in the park are believed to have provided the local people with food and were possibly where trade and ceremonies took place. Nyoongar people are known to have camped at Lake Richmond, which is also spiritually significant. According

to Dreaming stories, lakes Coo loongup and Walyungup are also significant as the place where the Sea Waugal laid her eggs. These areas got their names from the Nyoongar expressions for ‘place of children’ (Coo loongup) and ‘place where Nyoongars talk’ (Walyungup). Karnup, which surrounds Paganoni Swamp, means ‘place of dreaming’ and is thought of as a place for spiritual beings.

More recently, the park had its name entered into history books for its use during World War II. Gun emplacements, located at the north-western tip of what is now known as Cape Peron, as well as at Garden Island, Rottnest Island and Buckland Hill, were crucial to the local coastal defence system (see also ‘Adventure out: Rottnest Island tunnel tour’ on page 38). Today, the 1.5-kilometre John Point Walk Trail takes in the Cape Peron K-Battery Complex, which is listed on the Rockingham Municipal Heritage Inventory and on the Register of

Parks for people Rockingham Lakes Regional Park



Top The boardwalk at Lake Richmond takes in the ancient thrombolites.
Photo – Tim Fisher/DBC

Above Black-gloved wallabies are known to occur in the area.
Photo – Jiri Lochman

the National Estate. The primary circuit, which provides access for prams and wheelchairs, has been recently upgraded as part of a \$375,000 two-stage capital works investment. The new pathway replaces a well-trodden track and will cater to the site's 900,000 visits each year. A second stage of improvements at Cape Peron has seen the upgrade of the surrounds of the observation post and the development of a new lookout at John Point. This lookout takes in some of the best views in the park out across the Indian Ocean and Garden Island and is expected to be open before Christmas.

Those wanting to explore one of the park's lakes can enjoy Lake Richmond on the Anne Mueller Environmental Walk. This three-kilometre walk provides an opportunity to see some of the park's spectacular birds and thombolites and can be broken up with a visit to the Naragebup Rockingham Regional Environment Centre or a picnic along the way at one of the tables on the lake's edge.

Meanwhile, those wanting to get their feet (and bodies) wet can explore the underwater wonders of the adjacent Shoalwater Islands Marine Park along the 300-metre Cape Peron Snorkel Trail.

Do it yourself

Where is it? Rockingham Lakes Regional Park is 39 kilometres south of Perth's CBD.

Total area: 4270 hectares

What to do: Walking, snorkelling, diving, fishing, kayaking, boating, birdwatching, cycling.

Facilities: Boardwalks, lookouts, walk trails, boat launching, environment centre.