

STAR SWAMP—A METROPOLITAN NATURE RESERVE

A feather in the cap for Fisheries and Wildlife Minister Mr. Peter Jones and a first-up for Western Australia, in that a metropolitan natural bush area is to be set aside purely for environmental education.

Star Swamp is a freshwater swamp, about 2 hectares (5 acres) in area supporting depauperate faunal and floral communities. It is surrounded on the west by a residential area, and on the north, east and south by a remnant tuart forest which is worthy of protection because such forest formations are becoming depleted on the Swan Coastal Plain. Large areas of reeds and rushes provide nesting sites for waterfowl while the centre of the lake is thick with paperbark trees.

Although no large numbers of waterfowl were recorded on a recent inspection, numerous Grey Teal, Black Duck, Coots, Western Swamp Hen and White-faced Heron were sighted. Summer inspections could reveal greater numbers and more species.

Pollution and associated midgie plagues are not problems of the swamp, because much of the swamp's catchment is not yet residentially developed. Another reason would be that direct overland flow of pollutants into the swamp would be checked by surrounding vegetation.



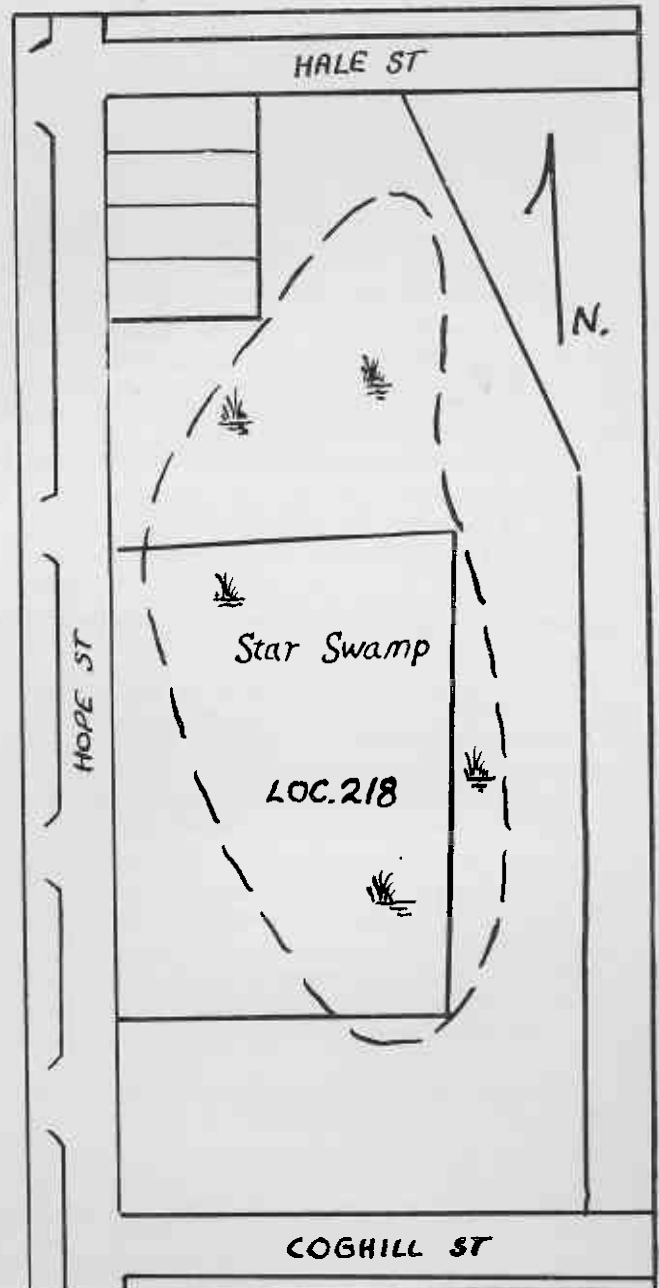
Portion of Star Swamp showing typical stands of paper bark trees.

The biological value of the swamp is low, although several species of birds share the habitat. *Melaleuca* spp. (the swamp's dominant vegetation) are in healthy condition. Existing vegetation plays a role in utilizing pollutants in the waters of the swamp and the adjoining water table of the coastal plain aquifer.

The swamp's great value lies in its continued use as an accessible nature study area for children of the nearby North Beach Primary School. For this reason

alone the swamp warrants protection, and protection will certainly be needed when approximately 34 hectares (100 acres) of nearby State Housing Commission land are developed.

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The location in North Beach showing close residential blocks in the top left hand corner and Stirling City's location 218 within the reserve.

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The continuing value of the swamp as a nature study area is largely dependent on two factors: Firstly, the swamp is a natural basin, and if its integrity is to be protected, then those planning development of its catchment would need to direct surface drainage away from the swamp rather than directly into it. Secondly the future use of Stirling City's 2 hectares (5 acres) of the reserve (Location 218) which is now held in fee simple by the City could conflict with an educational use of the swamp. However, it is anticipated that all bodies concerned with development in the area will help preserve the status of Star Swamp as an uncontaminated nature reserve.
