



Vis-à-vis V.I.S.

• CALM's Visitor Interpretation Section (VIS) Quarterly Update •

FOREST SCIENCE LIBRARY
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
AND LAND MANAGEMENT
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Issue 3 - Winter '97

Writing an Interpretive Theme

Lotte Lent

From a visitors point of view probably the single most important step an interpreter can take is in writing a **theme** for their interpretive project.

A good interpretive presentation (written or oral) has a clear theme and it is this that the visitor will recall when all other details have been forgotten. Think of a theme like the plot of a movie - anyone can sum up what a recent movie was about in one sentence and an interpretive presentation should be no different.

Themes should be:

1. A short, simple, complete sentence.
2. Contain only one idea
3. Reveal the overall purpose of the presentation
4. Be specific
5. Be worded in an interesting manner (active verbs are best)

Adapted from Ham (1992)

For example, a theme for a reserve where the prominent natural feature is granite outcrops might be:

Granite outcrops are distinctive and demanding environments

This theme can then serve as the basis for sub-themes perhaps at different sites within the reserve such as:

1. Tread lightly - plants and animals of granite outcrops are fragile.
2. Granite outcrops are like islands and require careful management
3. Exploring granite outcrops reveals many surprises.



Remember that the topic or subject of an interpretive presentation IS NOT THE SAME as a theme. Rather the theme is the key message about the subject that you want to get across to visitors. The theme always answers the question, "So what?" with respect to the topic, because a topic can have many themes depending on what you (the interpreter) wish to communicate.

Examples of topics:

1. Wetlands
2. Endangered species
3. Wheatbelt plants
4. Reptiles
5. Aborigines
6. Caves



Examples of themes:

1. Healthy native plants make our wetlands cleaner.
2. A poisonous plant is saving native species in Western Australia.
3. A tiny plant can have a giant impact on boulders.
4. Some plants are out to get other plants.
5. Some plants have strategies to deceive invertebrates.
6. Many Australian species adjust their behaviour to conserve body moisture.
7. To understand Aboriginal people in this area, one must understand their connection with the land.
8. Everything is on its way to becoming something else.
9. Underground is a carefully balanced plumbing system.
10. Water movement created the unusual cave formations in this park.

However broadscale themes in an Interpretive Plan are a little different. More on that later.

Valley of the GIANTS Tree Top Walk 1 Year New!



Rod Hillman

On the 6th August the Valley of the GIANTS Tree Top Walk turned 1. It has been a year of pleasant surprises and new challenges with excellent feedback from visitors and the local community. The Valley project has been embraced by

business groups in Walpole and Denmark with the effects being felt from Albany to Pemberton. Tour operators are accepting the site and most now include the Tree Top Walk in their itineraries and feature it in their marketing. Employment has been created locally both directly and indirectly through staff on site and a flow on effect throughout the community.

Visitor numbers to the site have exceeded expectations with over 200,000 people in our first year, nearly 90% choosing to experience the Tree Top Walk. The project has successfully entered and won a series of awards with another major award expected to be announced soon:

Western Australian Civic Design Award 1996
Specific Feature Award

Western Australian Civic Design Award 1996
Premiers Award

National Project Award in Landscape
Architecture 1996
Design Category

Christine Wrench has now left and moved back east. Rod Hillman has taken over and would welcome any comments from interested people on the future direction of the site. Key challenges to be addressed in the next year include revision of the site design plan, the development of an interpretive activities program and the preparation of an interpretation plan.

The Valley of the GIANTS needs to grow and develop to maintain the great start. Next time you're in the Southwest call in to see what's happening and become involved, phone (08) 98408200.



Coastal Plain Walk Trail

Therese Jones

Step into Spring ... by following the footprints of the Emu, along the new Coastal Plain Walk Trail.

This 90 km hikers trail from Yanchep to Walyunga is close to completion with the southern half of the trail to be officially opened on 11 October (the northern half was opened on 4 June).

The trail showcases a tapestry of natural features including tranquil wetlands, jarrah, marri and tuart stands, banksia woodlands, forest fauna, spectacular wildflowers and breathtaking views of the Swan Coastal Plain, the Indian Ocean and the Darling Scarp.

The trail has been purpose built to provide the people of Perth and beyond with a new low impact recreational opportunity, catering for all levels of walkers by providing day walks for beginners and a 4 day trek for the more adventurous.

There are four camping areas along the trail approximately a days walk apart, each equipped with a shelter, water tank, picnic tables, tent sites, a fire ring and bush toilets.

The length of the trail is marked with distinctive "sky-blue" triangles. The emu has been chosen as the symbol for the trail and each triangle is printed with black emu footprints.

Additions to the trail network include the Yanchep Rose Walk Trail, an overnight circuit for weekend walkers and school groups in Yanchep National Park and the Neerabup Walk Trail designed to link walkers from Lake Joondalup to the Coastal Plain Walk Trail.

A trail register of long distance walkers has been provided at Yanchep National Park, with Walkers Comments books at each of the camp shelters. We are also negotiating a Friends of the Trail program with the Scouts Association of WA to monitor the trail and make observations about user groups.



Future extensions of the trail are currently being negotiated, with the hope of lengthening the trail from Yanchep National Park to Two Rocks.

Updates on Bits & Pieces:

A new feature to revisit issues/ideas raised in previous issues of **Vis-à-vis V.I.S.**

An International Perspective on Interpretation (Issue 2)

Thanks to all of you who supported this proposed workshop, however due to unforeseen circumstances John Veverka has had to cancel his trip to Australia.

New Publications (Issue 2):



"Best Recipes for Interpreting Our Heritage. Activities for Ecotour Guides and Others" is still on the drawing board, although much closer to print than last reported. Gil has employed Jan Knight on contract to pull together the final threads and make this exciting publication happen as quickly as possible.

"Interpretive Activities Design Workshop Leaders Manual" (and participants coursebook). This manual has been held up through various factors outside our control, such as it being corrupted on the disc not once, not twice, not even three times but **FOUR!!!** Then the editor Lotte had the fortune to fall pregnant, with the misfortune of morning sickness in the extreme. However, she is now working on the manual again (from scratch) at home.

The VIS Home Page (Issue 2)

Well its nearly finished, and should be on-line soon. When we are up and running we would love your feedback, especially if there is something you think should be added, or even if you just like it and found it easy to use.



New Technology (Issue 1)

The full colour vinyl signs (with scanned images of hand drawn and coloured illustrations and text) reported in Issue 1 have been well received in their ochre coloured frames, by visitors to Dryandra Woodland. The colours are holding up well. Only time will tell if we get the full five years guaranteed by the company that produced them.

Regional Roundup ...

What's Happening Around Our State



Kimberley

A successful Visitor Activity Program has been held again in Mirima National Park from May to August with slide nights, bush tucker walks, sunset walks and birdwatching walks. Taking a walk back through time to learn how the Kimberley landscape formed was a new activity for this year's program.



A highlight of the program was the visit by Tom Smith, an astronomer from the Perth Observatory presenting several astronomy evenings in both Mirima and Purnululu National Parks. Following an informative slide presentation, Tom set up telescopes allowing visitors to view fascinating objects in the night sky such as the "Jewel Box" star cluster, the Omega Centauri globular cluster and the planet Jupiter with its dark bands and moons.

The new walkway and birdhide at Marlgu Billabong have made the birdwatching sessions held at Parry Lagoons Nature Reserve very enjoyable. A spotting scope has been purchased with money raised from the fees charged for last year's activities program. The scope gives brilliant views of the birds with exceptional clarity and colour and makes the birdwatching sessions attractive to experienced birdwatchers as well as beginners.



The Mid West

Gil will be conducting an Interpretive Activities Design Workshop at Kalbarri 14-18 September for Mid West Region and other interested staff including hopefully some tour operators.

Work is continuing on concept designs for the Monkey Mia Visitor Centre, to culminate in a workshop with local staff.

The Peron Peninsula Visitor Centre is developing, awaiting the completion of Greencorp refurbishments before progressing with the detailing of display design.

A proposal for a Visitor Centre is being considered for Nambung National Park with an initial site options assessment recently completed.

Wheatbelt

Spotlighting tours were recently held for, and well received by Western Power employees, camping at Dryandra during a four week tree planting program.



The "Wonders of the Woodland" interpretive activities program held at Dryandra State Forest will be run again during the October school holidays.

Como/Fremantle Studio Works

Current projects include The Hills Forest information panels, RAMSAR panels for Peel-Harvey Estuary sites, Gladstone Plynth signs for Mid West and various other small jobs. Projects recently completed have been signage for the Bibbulmun Track, including appreciation plaques for the various shelters along the Track, and the brass plaques commemorating the opening on the new Northern half (Kalamunda to Brockman Hwy), numerous risk signs and management signs for most regions and districts. One recent cause for comic relief was the misspelling of Gorge on a road sign. Somehow it ended up reading Geikie George Boat Tours. Easily fixed I say, just employ someone called George to run the tours. Gerry Deegan, now 'George' Deegan?

University of Notre Dame



Gil has now completed the contract with UND to run the Environmental Interpretation and Management course. 14 students, 4 CALM staff and 2 staff from other agencies attended the workshop. The "Footloose in FreO" activities program was conducted over the school holidays with some of the activities attracting up to 20 participants. Both the university and CALM were impressed by the success of the course and its activities program and it is probable the course will be repeated in 1998.

Interpretation Australia Association Conference

Gil will be presenting his paper "Origins of the Interpretive Urge" to the Interpretation Australia Association conference in September. A pre-conference presentation to CALM staff will be on Thursday 28th August at 3.30pm. Phone Gil if you wish to attend.



Planning and Managing for Visitors in Natural Areas Workshop in South Australia

A joint SA Department of Environment and Natural Resources and CALM workshop on Planning and Managing for Visitors in Natural Areas is to be held on Kangaroo Island in October. CALM presenters include Wayne Schmidt, Richard Hammond, Tracy Churchill, Steve Csaba, Gil Field and Stev Slavin.

Sharing the Dreaming

CALM's Aboriginal Tourism, Education and Training Unit's schools, tours and special events programs continue to prove popular. The unit has two trainees, Dale Kickett and Kevin Hill for the proposed Swan River Tour and others.



Swan Region

John Forrest/Serpentine

Revised display panels have recently been installed in both parks replacing those damaged by vandalism and faded by time. They were originally installed in 1987.

Southern Forest

As mentioned in the Valley of the GIANTS article, Christine Wrench has left the project and we welcome Rod Hillman as the VOG Coordinator.

We would also like to extend a welcome to Jacki Baxter, the new interpretation officer in the Region assuming the duties previously carried out by Cliff Winfield as Visitor Services and Interpretation Officer. Jacki was Senior Interpretation Officer for the Katherine Region for the NT Parks and Wildlife Commission, where she recently completed an icon project. This involved working as a member of the Nitmiluk Management Board in the Planning of the New Commercial Centre. Nitmiluk National Park is owned by the Jawoyn people and jointly managed by the Jawoyn and the Parks and Wildlife Commission. The centre accommodates interpretive displays, tour booking centre, mini supermarket and bistro/coffee lounge. The interpretation presents the theme of fire and Jawoyn culture and how these affect the park. The centre was funded by the Joint Venture Commercial Operations and NT government. Additional funding was received from the Commonwealth for a major external project - a children's interpretive

playground. This project was a challenge and certainly rewarding as an example of working together in management with traditional land owners of the park.

Jacki's prime role will be reviewing and revising on-site interpretation, preparing publications in the Southern Forest Region and developing holiday activities programs at Walpole and Pemberton. She is available to do jobs in other regions on an overheads and travel costs recovery basis, and will be canvassing recoup projects outside of CALM.

South Coast



Stirling Range National Park

Two new interpretive panels are now in place at the start of the path to Bluff Knoll. The old panels quickly deteriorated in the harsh climatic environment on the side of Bluff Knoll. The new panels will have a much longer life as they are photoanodised with a black on gold finish.

Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve

Construction is well underway for the new Visitor Centre. The objectives of the centre are to increase visitor awareness of the extremely high conservation values of the area, the importance of research in the successful threatened species program, and enhancing visitor experience of the natural and cultural history of the area.

B i b b u l m u n T R A C K

The new upgraded and realigned northern half of the Track opened for public use on 14th August.

Thanks to the efforts of TAFE Advertising Design students, a new logo and design concepts for future merchandise have been produced. The new logo, available in three different formats, will be incorporated into all future publications and signs on the track. The signs are black on white, with the background behind the word Bibbulmun being an earthy gold, and the area behind track being an ochre red. In keeping with this theme, all routed timber signs produced for the track will now be painted in the earthy gold and ochre red colours featured in the processed graphic signs.



From the editor...

Before compiling this newsletter, I was musing about the state of interpretation within CALM. With less staff, shrinking budgets and the constantly changing focus within Regions had interpretation started to falter and die within CALM?

At first glance one would perhaps say yes, with less interpretive but more management signs being produced through the studio, big ticket items such as the Valley of the Giants, the Forest Heritage Centre and the CD ROM project taking the \$\$ previously dispersed across the state, and the fact that we have less staff solely dedicated to interpretation, one could indeed wonder.

However on reflection I would utter a loud NO!! Yes, interpretation has changed, and okay, it is now integrated into officer's workloads instead of having dedicated staff, and yes there is less money to go around. But I'm heartened by the passion of those with interpretation as part of their duties. They are out there chasing external money, and promoting the interpretation cause internally, and through their efforts we have:

- ❖ 4 visitor centres either on the drawing board or close to construction.
- ❖ New activities programs popping up throughout the whole state.
- ❖ A new full time interp officer in the SFR.
- ❖ External agencies using CALM expertise and earning us \$\$ in the process.
- ❖ The continued call for interpretation activities design workshops.
- ❖ Management signs now incorporating interpretation techniques.

So, on the whole I would say that "Interpretation Is Indeed Alive and Well in WA".

Newsletter Contributions

Your contributions to **Vis-à-vis V.I.S.** are welcomed. We're interested in short blurbs (up to 200 words) on what's happening with interpretation in your area, tips for staff, notices of training, new ideas etc. Send copy to **Vis-à-vis V.I.S.** Editor/Designer, Karen Shaddock [e-mail: karens@calm.gov.wa, mail: VIS, Locked Bag 104, Bentley Delivery Centre, 6983 or fax (08) 9334-0583].

Next copy deadline : 5th Dec 97

Signs, Signs Everywhere There Are Signs

Panel produced for Mid West Region, Turquoise Coast theme, artwork and design by Kellee.



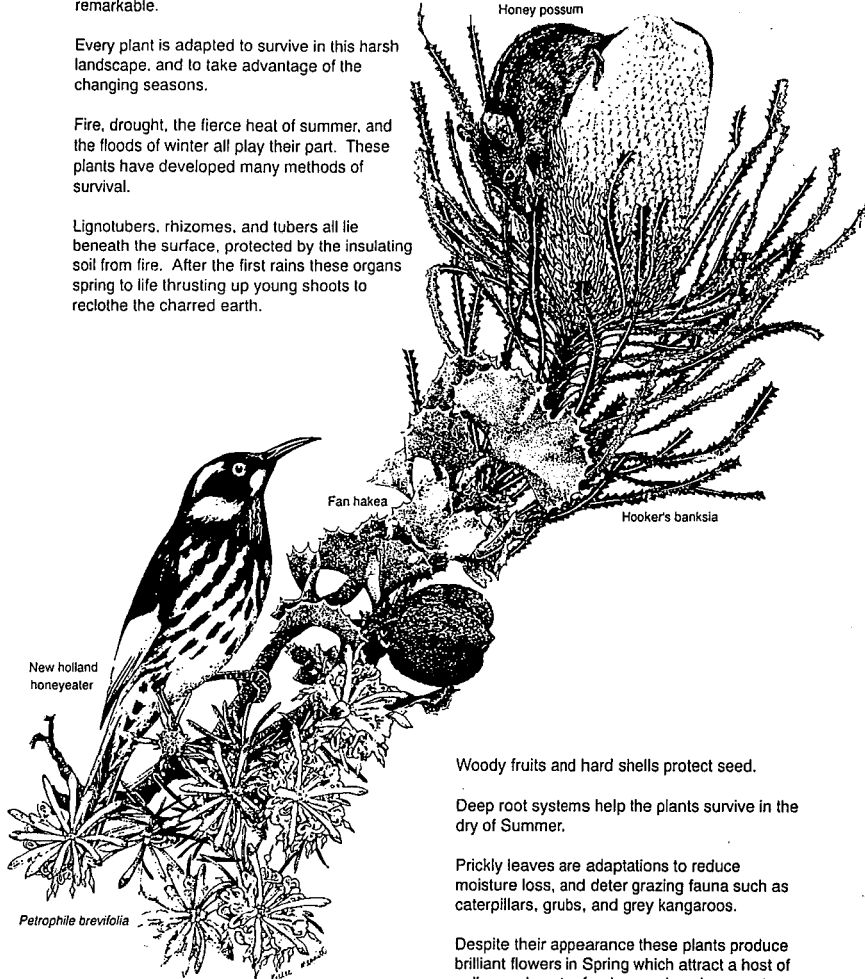
The Survivors of the Kwongan

The kwongan is a remarkable plant community. Look closely and you will see just how remarkable.

Every plant is adapted to survive in this harsh landscape, and to take advantage of the changing seasons.

Fire, drought, the fierce heat of summer, and the floods of winter all play their part. These plants have developed many methods of survival.

Lignotubers, rhizomes, and tubers all lie beneath the surface, protected by the insulating soil from fire. After the first rains these organs spring to life thrusting up young shoots to reclothe the charred earth.



Woody fruits and hard shells protect seed.

Deep root systems help the plants survive in the dry of Summer.

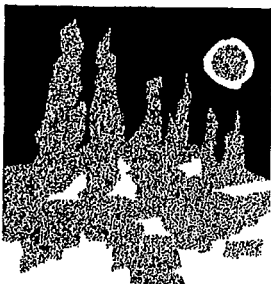
Prickly leaves are adaptations to reduce moisture loss, and deter grazing fauna such as caterpillars, grubs, and grey kangaroos.

Despite their appearance these plants produce brilliant flowers in Spring which attract a host of pollen and nectar feeders such as honeyeaters, and the tiny honey-possum with its brush-tipped tongue. These in turn help to pollinate the flowers.



Department of Conservation and Land Management *Caring... Naturally*

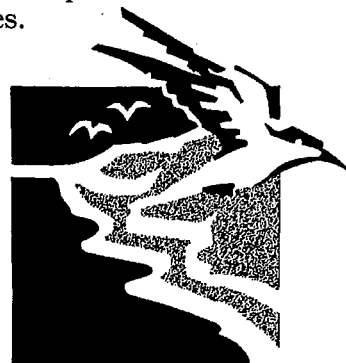
Icon identification for panels produced for the Turquoise Coast. Three separate sites were covered - 1 at Nambung National Park, 1 at Hangover Bay and 1 at Cervantes.



Nambung



Hangover Bay



Cervantes