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Talking Tourism with the Department of Conservation and Land Management

Attractions and facilities



OPENING OF THE NEW BIBBULMUN TRACK

Environment Minister Cheryl Edwardes officially opened the new Bibbulmun Track on 13 September at the Albany Tourist Bureau.

The 'Building a Better Bibbulmun Track' Project involved the re-alignment of 90 per cent of the original Track and construction of 200 kilometres of new trail along the coast between Walpole and Albany. There are 48 new campsites at between 10 and 20-kilometre intervals, each with a three-sided timber sleeping shelter, a bush toilet, rainwater tank and tent sites.

The Bibbulmun Track is becoming increasingly popular for tour groups, with 14 tour operators now licensed to lead walks on the track.

The full length of the Track is covered by eight separate maps, which can be obtained in handy four map packs for both the northern and southern halves of the Track. Individual maps are \$5.50 and packs are \$19.50.

The guide books, *A Guide to the Bibbulmun Track – Northern Half* and *A Guide to the Bibbulmun Track – Southern Half* are also available. They have several detailed maps, comprehensive track notes, distances, and background information including vehicle access and terrain profiles. Other information includes advice about trip planning, equipment, suggestions for short walks, distance tables, handy hints and overviews of the track's natural and human history.

For further information, contact CALM Bibbulmun Track office on (08) 9334 0265 or Friends of the Bibbulmun Track on (08) 9481 0551.

Also see CALM's *NatureBase* website at <http://www.calm.wa.gov.au>



ACTIVITIES GALORE AT THE HILLS FOREST

Tour operators looking for some interesting activities to spice up itineraries or programs may find some ideas at The Hills Forest. Located 40 minutes from central Perth, the Hills Forest offers unique 'hands-on' bush experiences to suit the needs of varying nature-based enthusiasts.

It may be a wildflower wander to enjoy the feast of colour and perfume through a bushland of spring flowers, or an 'up-close-and-personal' encounter with native marsupials. There are also activities such as abseiling, canoeing or guided walk along the Bibbulmun Track.

Activities for the craft-minded include bush paper-making, nature painting and wood carving using old-fashioned techniques and recycled timber. Often considered a highlight, The Hills Forest can organise billy tea and 'original recipe' damper.

Activities can be tailored to suit tour schedules and catering can be arranged where required. For further information, 'phone the forest' on (08) 9295 2244.

SHANNON AND D'ENTRECASTEAUX NATIONAL PARKS MANAGEMENT PLAN

The management plan for these parks is in the process of being reviewed. Public consultation is important and tour operators are encouraged to make a submission to the planning process. If you want to know more about the plan review, please contact Rod Annear at CALM's Pemberton office on (08) 9776 1207.

Around the Regions

SOUTHERN FOREST

Valley of the Giants up for national recognition

As stated in the last edition, the Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk received a Western Australian Tourism Award in the category of Significant Regional Attractions. This award recognised the project's social and economic benefits in the region of Walpole and Denmark, where tourism infrastructure has now developed and opportunities for local operators has occurred. Derren Foster, the manager of the Walpole Tourist Board, has noticed a doubling of visitors to the Tourist Office since the opening of the Tree Top Walk, and local businesses in the area are reporting similar gains. "It's a win-win situation where the forest is being protected and the local community is receiving real and measurable benefits," said Rod Hillman, the manager of the Tree Top Walk.

This award now puts the Tree Top Walk up against the nation's best at the national awards, to be held in Brisbane in October.

Since receiving the award, the Valley of the Giants has been granted accreditation from the Ecotourism Association of Australia in recognition of its commitment to the principles of ecotourism. The Valley will be the subject of a major presentation and case study at the upcoming 6th Annual Australian National Ecotourism Conference held at Margaret River in October.

D'Entrecasteaux National Park

Mandalay Beach Road is to undergo a major upgrade to facilitate access for two-wheel-drive vehicles and tourist coaches. The road is currently only open to four-wheel-drive vehicles, yet it is an important tourist access road into D'Entrecasteaux National Park.

The road will be closed for upgrading from mid-September until November, but four-wheel-drive access will be open to Long Point and Hush Hush Beach. CALM recommends those with conventional vehicles wishing to explore the coast for the spectacular scenery, diverse flora and fauna or recreational pursuits, to visit Conspicuous Cliff, 15 kilometres east of Walpole.

Please contact the Ranger in Charge at the CALM Walpole office on (08) 9840 1027 for further information or alternative coastal access.

Boorara Tree/Lane Poole Falls

This pretty site east of Northcliffe is being upgraded. The picnic site at the old lookout tree is still open, but the walk trail to the falls is closed until a new lookout is constructed in October.

MID-WEST

Nambung National Park

The construction of a new timber lookout at the Pinnacles Desert has recently been completed. The lookout offers magnificent views over the Pinnacles to the coast and surrounding area. It is accessible for visitors with disabilities and features a timber deck, interpretive material, ramps and a boardwalk. The car park has also been relocated to compliment these improvements.

The lookout will reduce pedestrian related erosion on the existing natural lookout hill, while providing a superior vantagepoint. CALM and the Commonwealth Office of National Tourism, through the National Tourism Development Program, provided joint funding for the project.

PILBARA

Dampier Archipelago and Montebello Islands

Tour operators visiting the Dampier Archipelago and Montebello Islands are invited to take part in a turtle inventory. Where operators sight turtles (or turtle tracks), it would be appreciated if they could keep a record of the location, number of turtles and species sighted (where possible). For further information, contact Warren Boggs at CALM Karratha office on (08) 9143 1488.

An advisory committee for the proposed marine parks in the Dampier Archipelago and Montebello Islands is being established. Tour operators who visit these areas and are interested in joining the committee should contact Chris Muller at the CALM Karratha office on (08) 9143 1488.

Visitors to Trimouille Island in the Montebellos will now be able to observe a group of mala (rufous hare-wallabies) that have been translocated to the island from the Tanami Desert. The introduction of this rare species follows a successful rat eradication program on the island. It is important to maintain a high standard of quarantine, and all vessels visiting the area are asked to carry approved baits such as talon to remain free of rodents. Please report any sightings of feral animals to CALM's Karratha office.

KIMBERLEY

King Edward River Crossing

CALM and the Shire of Wyndham-East Kimberley have jointly provided a composting toilet in the main camping area at the King Edward River Crossing on the Mitchell Plateau. The toilet has made a significant difference to the management of effluent, enhancing the camping experience of all visitors to the site.

CALM or the Shire does not directly manage the site, but the toilet has been provided in the interests of public health and the environment. The toilet is a community asset, so all tour drivers and guides using the site are asked to help keep it clean. Any inquiries can be directed to Rob Harris at the Shire on (08) 9168 1677, or Mark Pittavino at the CALM Kununurra office on (08) 9168 0200.

Hot of the Press

Another CALM dive guide, *More Dive and Snorkel Sites in Western Australia*, has just been published. Our first book in this series, *Dive and Snorkel Sites in Western Australia*, has been widely acclaimed by divers and snorkellers, and the diving industry. It also won the Media Category of the 1997 WA Tourism Awards. Its follow-up, *More Dive and Snorkel Sites in Western Australia*, has 46 dive and snorkel sites, which range from easy snorkelling sites suitable for the whole family to more challenging boat dives that would appeal to experienced SCUBA divers.

Additional areas covered in the second book include Esperance, Albany, Mandurah, Jurien Bay (a proposed marine park) and the Dampier Archipelago.

Continuing the marine theme, CALM has also produced an exquisite full-colour, 108-page book on *The Marine Life of Ningaloo Marine Park and Coral Bay*. Originated by Bill Brogan and written by Ann Storrie and Sue Morrison, this book delves into the secret lives of sponges, shellfish, crustaceans, corals, fish, whales, dolphins, and marine reptiles, such as sea snakes and turtles, found in the area. There is also a section on Aboriginal and European history.

CALM would like to acknowledge all those from the tourism industry who assisted with the two books. Both books will sell for \$14.95. Operators who purchase at least 10 copies will be able to buy them at wholesale prices for resale to the public.



Inside CALM

The **Regional Parks Unit** has recently been formed to coordinate and manage Perth's metropolitan regional parks. The management of these parks is being transferred to CALM from the Western Australian Planning Commission.

CALM now manages the Yellagonga, Herdsman Lake, Canning River, Woodman Point, Beeliar, Jandakot and Rockingham regional parks. The Darling Range Regional Park will be the last to be transferred to CALM in July next year.

The parks cover large areas of urban bushland and extensive wetlands offering unique conservation values and recreation opportunities.

Partnerships with local councils and community groups are recognised as essential in the operation of the unit, with management plans still to be completed for most of the parks. Tour operators and special interest groups, such as tourism associations, will have the opportunity to comment on the draft management plans during the public submission stage.

Tim Bowra, Regional Parks Unit Coordinator can be contacted on (08) 9405 0742 for further information.

Terry (Koodah) Cornwall has joined the Aboriginal Tourism, Education and Training Unit in Fremantle as an Aboriginal Heritage Officer. Koodah has come from the Manjimup Aboriginal Corporation, where he held the position of Chairman for the last ten years while also running a 4WD tourism business. Koodah will be working with Noel Nannup to conduct Aboriginal heritage programs for tour groups and school classes, with activities such as tool making, bush foods, boomerang and spear throwing, and Aboriginal storytelling.



In Short

GUIDE TO WA'S NATIONAL PARKS AND FORESTS

CALM has recently produced an attractive colour guide and map detailing the facilities and services provided at most national parks and forest recreation areas around the State. The guide is useful for planning day or extended trips and is free of charge from most CALM offices or CALM's customer service centre. Phone (08) 9334 0333 to be sent a copy.

ABORIGINAL HERITAGE WALK

CALM's Aboriginal Heritage Officer is conducting an Aboriginal Heritage Walk in Fremantle. The walk visits Bathers Beach and the Round House, where the Nyoongar history and cultural significance of the area is told. The walk is conducted every Monday from 2.00pm-3.00pm and costs \$10 per person. Bookings can be made at *WA Naturally*, 47 Henry Street, Fremantle or by phone on (08) 9430 8600.

POPULARITY OF CALM SITES CONTINUES TO RISE

Figures taken from CALM's 1997-98 Annual Report show an estimated 8.1 million visits to CALM-managed lands and waters for the last financial year. This represents a 28 per cent increase from the previous year, where 6.3 million visits were estimated. These figures are reflective of the trend of increasing use of parks and forest areas, combined with more intensive sampling of recorded visits.

CALM's Recreation and Tourism surveys detail positive feedback from visitors with 89 per cent of respondents extremely or very satisfied with their visit. Satisfaction with facilities and services provided by CALM was also high, and respondents indicated that the natural attractiveness of the areas visited and, location and condition of sites were most important to them.



Info Updates for Tour Operators

CHANGES TO NATIONAL PARK FEES

Please be reminded that from 1 October 1998, daily visitor fee for passengers on commercial tours will rise from \$2 to \$3 where visitor fees currently apply. In addition, visitor fees have been introduced at **Mirima, Fitzgerald River** and **D'Entrecasteaux** national parks. National park camping fees will also rise on 1 October.

The fee changes were announced in October 1997, and implemented in January this year. Tour operators have been given a 12 month lead time to account for these national park fee changes. All money collected from fees is directed back to the parks from where it was collected, and used for maintenance and development of visitor facilities and services.

MARINE MAMMALS NOTICE

The Minister for the Environment released a new marine mammal management strategy in mid-September, 1998.

All recreational users and tour operators who interact with whales, dolphins, dugongs, fur seals or sea lions will need to adhere to certain rules adopted by the strategy to ensure that visitors have a safe and enjoyable time. The new arrangements regulate interactions, and provide contact and approach zones and interaction limits.

The new arrangements aim to manage interactions between humans and marine mammals in a sustainable and safe manner. The new measures are enforceable and they apply to all commercial and non-commercial interactions, whether from a vessel, aircraft, or land.

NOTE: If you are a commercial aquatic charter operator interacting with marine mammals, you require a Marine Mammal Interaction Licence. For further information please phone the CALM Wildlife Branch on (08) 9334 0455 or facsimile on (08) 9334 0278.

CALM Staff Profile

MEET MATT SAPSWORTH

Matt Sapsworth should be a familiar name for most of CALM's licensed tour operators. Matt has worked with the Department since 1995 as a Project Officer and is responsible for administering the licensing of tour operators.

A commercial tour operator licence is required for all commercial activities on CALM-managed lands and waters, so the Department can monitor the level of organised tourism being conducted within these areas.

Over the past three years, Matt has seen the number of operators licensed with CALM rise from 64 to over 320, highlighting the increasing demand for nature-based tourism experiences.

Tour operators may be interested to know that:

- ☉ in terms of CALM regions, the Pilbara Region has the greatest number of licensed tour operators (139);
- ☉ with respect to individual parks, Kalbarri National Park has the greatest number of licensed tour operators (81), followed closely by Leeuwin-Naturaliste (78), Windjana (77) and Nambung (76) national parks; and



- ☉ the most common commercial activities are sightseeing, bushwalking, camping and four-wheel driving.

Benefits for CALM's licensed tour operators, other than this regular newsletter, include a complimentary subscription to CALM's **LANDSCOPE** magazine and a listing of tour booking details on CALM's Internet site, '**NatureBase**', at <http://www.calm.wa.gov.au>. (Operators are reminded that an image can be included along with the booking details on the web page – just send a photo to Matt.)

Matt has also been involved in the production of CALM's nature based tourism CD-ROM, **Wild about Western Australia**. The CD-ROM provides information on national parks, plants and animals, and activities available in CALM-managed areas. The CD-ROM retails for \$39.95, but a 20 per cent discount is offered to CALM-licensed tour operators. Orders can be made with Marcus Benbow on (08) 9334 0385.

Matt can be contacted in CALM's Park Policy and Tourism Branch on (08) 9334 0119 or email matthews@calm.wa.gov.au

YOU WERE WONDERING?

Touring Western Australia is a newsletter produced by CALM to keep the tourism industry informed about developments affecting the industry. If you have a query about any of CALM's tourism policies, activities or developments, we would be pleased to answer these in future issues of the newsletter. Enquiries can be sent to Touring Western Australia fax: (08) 9334 0253 or email kateh@calm.wa.gov.au