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Talking Tourism with the Department of Conservation and Land Management

Attractions and facilities

NEW HEART FOR YANCHEP NATIONAL PARK

The new heart of Yanchep National Park—an Aboriginal Wangi Mia ('talking place'), which was officially opened in September, 2000—will be the axis of a number of up-graded facilities. These include the refurbishment of the Yanchep Inn and the new tearooms, both completed in January, 2001.

The new visitor facility is part of more than \$3 million of work to beautify and improve Yanchep National Park. Future works include foreshore improvements, new car parks, barbecues and walk trails, up-graded caves access, renovated toilets and administration buildings, improvements to the golf course, and more accessible picnic areas.

The Wangi Mia was part of a commitment by the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) to create a cultural focus for the park, using staff and equipment from its Aboriginal Heritage Unit.

It is a meeting point for social groups, families, tours and school groups, and creates an opportunity to capture and educate visitors about the significance of the park from both CALM and Aboriginal perspectives.

Up to 200,000 visitors a year will be able to experience and learn about Aboriginal culture in this charming building, and take part in cultural heritage tours.

CALM's Aboriginal Heritage School Tours attract 15,000 primary, secondary and tertiary students a year. This effective education program provides these young people with an opportunity to learn about the traditional Aboriginal way of life, with hands-on experience in tool-making, bush foods, mias (shelters or bush camps) and cross-cultural understanding.

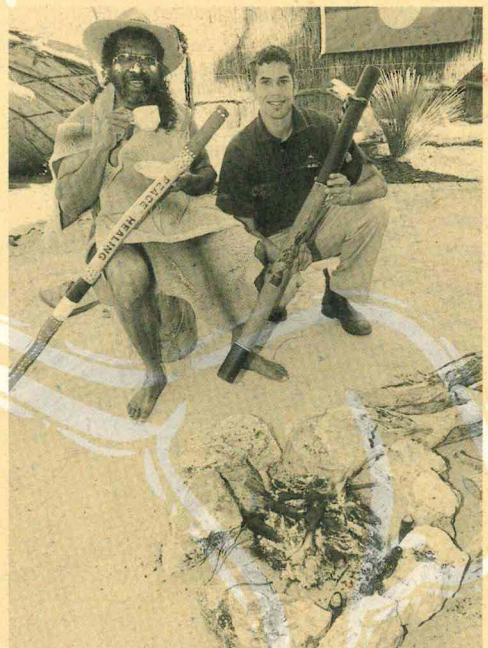
Each year, coach tours bring a further 40,000

people to visit the park to view the koalas and the caves, or take part in Aboriginal Heritage Tours.

The Wangi Mia Visitor Shop value-adds to the facility by providing visitors with an opportunity to purchase Aboriginal and wildlife memorabilia.

CALM's partnership with Balga TAFE's pre-apprenticeship stonemasons and carpenters, Mission Australia's Work for the Dole group and Main Roads redeployees had resulted in more than 3000 hours' work, representing a significant cost-saving for CALM.

Aboriginal Visitor Services staff also contributed countless hours of assistance in the creation of the Wangi Mia—an attraction that they, and all CALM staff and volunteers will, no doubt, feel proud to show to visitors.



Playing a didgeridoo is thirsty work, calling for a nice, hot, cross-cultural cuppa (Indian or China) tea. Photo by Ernie McLintock

STAR TREKKING - THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE!

Have you ever wondered if life extends beyond our universe? Are you or your visitors looking for something to do after dark? Australia's sole-remaining operational State astronomical observatory is currently offering a range of day and night tours for the inquisitive individual.

That's right, Perth astronomical researchers have adjusted their lenses and focused on providing a quality range of educational experiences.

The popular Star Viewing Nights now include the new Millennium Telescope Building opened in August, 2000.

"Star Viewing Nights not only allow visitors to view the many celestial objects, they also learn about the equipment used by staff," Government Astronomer Dr Jamie Biggs said.

"The new building will eliminate the congestion formerly experienced in the one building which, until now, had to house two of the three telescopes used in the Observatory's program."

The Observatory also offers customised day tours that incorporate a variety of experiences.

"Visitors can tour the museum, admire modern and historic telescopes, view the 'Highlights of the Universe' slide show or observe the sun's sunspots," Dr Biggs said.

"The Observatory also brings transportable telescopes to you, allowing you to view the stars almost anywhere in Western Australia.

"As in all our star-viewing activities the objects available to view vary, but may include the

moon, any of the available bright planets, double stars, star clusters, nebulae and galaxies."

Bookings can be made by contacting the Observatory on (08) 9293 8255 between 9.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m. Monday to Friday.

Stop Press

TREE TOP WALK WINS NATIONAL AWARD

The reputation of Western Australia's Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk was further recognised in December when it was judged the most significant regional attraction in Australia at the national tourism awards. This 'must see' feature of the South-West gained the national title over winners of various State and Territory tourism awards.

Since its opening, more than 700,000 visitors have experienced the thrill of walking among the tingle canopy.

The Valley of the Giants team and the Walpole community are to be congratulated for their ongoing support and commitment since the Tree Top Walk opened in August 1996.

Recent changes to the CALM Act

Tour operator licensing will now be extended into State forests. Individuals who are interested in conducting tours in State forests should liaise with their local CALM office before operating on CALM-managed lands. Operators currently conducting tours in State forests should contact Sean Bryce on (08) 9334 0119 or email licensing@calm.wa.gov.au for further information.

Around the Regions

SOUTHERN COAST REGION

The severe wildfires at **Stirling Range National Park** in November contributed to the loss of about 32,000 hectares of vegetation around Bluff Knoll and Mondurup Peak. The walk trail to the peak of Bluff Knoll suffered extensive fire damage and remained closed to the public until it was rebuilt in early December.

Fitzgerald River National Park: Hammersley Drive has been inaccessible from Hopetoun since summer storms destroyed the causeway over the Cullham Inlet in February last year. Repair work commenced in November and access will be restored for the summer holidays.

The Southern Coast Region experienced a spectacular whale-watching season from July through to October. As numbers of southern right whales continued to increase, Rangers reported that it was common to see 20 whales in the bay at Point Ann. Complementing this natural phenomenon were the spectacular wildflowers seen during September and October.

A newly constructed entry station will be open for the summer holiday season at the **Cape Le Grand National Park**. The new campers' kitchen at Le Grand Beach camping area will also be available. Campground host and former CALM Regional Leader for Parks and Visitor Services Terry Passmore, and his wife Nancy, will manage the campground this season.

SOUTHERN FORESTS REGION

Pemberton District staff have started developing the **Karri Forest Explorer Tourist Drive**. Once completed, they will package Pemberton's premium forest attractions, together with the services and facilities of local tourism businesses, to create a number of 'days of things to do' for visitors. They will help CALM to develop environmental protection strategies that ensure local tourism operations are ecologically sustainable.

With major construction work planned for several sites during the summer and autumn months, every attempt will be made to minimise the impact and ensure visitor satisfaction.

Warren National Park's Heartbreak Trail will be closed from February 5, 2001 for at least two months. Road works have commenced along the Rainbow Trail and Tramway Trail in the Big Brook Dam area, and visitors should be aware of the restricted access during this construction.

For the latest information, visitors and tour operators are encouraged to contact the Pemberton District Office on (08) 9776 1207 prior to their visit.

SWAN REGION

Yanchep National Park: The popular Cabaret Cave has 'reopened its doors' to cater for the highly demanding 'MICE' market (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions). Weddings, meetings and other functions have been extremely successful, with park staff anticipating a huge demand for this extraordinary venue.

Mr Tony Jupp has been employed as Program Leader for Swan Region Visitor Services and Manager of Yanchep National Park. Yanchep has also employed six new visitor-services staff to operate activities and services in the park. A caving expert, a marine and fauna biologist, three trained cultural staff, and a tour guide with five years' industry experience are the new faces you will see in the park.

The new kiosk and tearooms are under construction and due for completion in January 2001. This kiosk will add value to existing park facilities. Another improvement is the flooding of Crystal Cave to save several endangered species of macro invertebrates. Readers will be kept up to date as this important project continues.

The grounds and facilities crew have made a vast improvement to the look of the park, and Gerald Drummond can be proud of his team and their work. Park staff are delighted with its atmosphere and appearance.

For the latest information, contact Yanchep National Park on (08) 9561 1004.

MIDWEST REGION

Monkey Mia: It is anticipated that the new Visitor Centre will be launched before March 2001. Fabrication of interpretive displays and landscaping of the surrounding environment will continue during January and February 2001. The Centre will operate and distribute public information during these periods.

Development of the new car park at **Francois Peron National Park** will improve access to the Visitor Centre and minimise earlier difficulties with vehicle access and visitor safety. Operators and visitors to the area may experience some inconvenience during its construction. For further information, contact Sue Hancock on (08) 9921 5955.

PILBARA REGION

Cape Range National Park: The Exmouth to Yardie Creek road has been sealed, courtesy of the Shire of Exmouth and Main Roads WA. Visitors can now enjoy a smooth drive, while admiring the natural attractiveness of the park. However, visitors and tour operators are warned to reduce vehicle speed and be cautious of wildlife, which are particularly abundant at dawn and dusk.

Climatic factors have influenced the summer turtle-nesting and hatching season with the numbers of nesting green sea turtles very low, therefore, difficult to find. Visitors may be fortunate to catch a glimpse of the turtles nesting, or hatchlings from the buried eggs digging their way to the surface in search of water around the Exmouth and Coral Bay areas. For more information, visit the Milyering Visitor Centre or contact Arvid Hogstrom on (08) 9949 1676.

Karijini National Park: The new Visitor Centre, car park and access road have been completed. The Visitor Centre displays are currently being fabricated and are expected to be completed by the end of February.

Both Karijini and Milstream-Chichester National Parks have experienced wildfires this season, but, with the onset of the cyclone season, it won't take long before the parks are carpeted in annuals and the spinifex has regrown.

Millstream-Chichester National Park: The Deep Reach camping area will remain closed following the extensive erosion caused by cyclonic rains. The alternative temporary campground is open, but it is some distance from popular river pools. Visitors are cautioned that the Crossing Pool campground is unsuitable for group camping. For further information, contact Judy Mae Napier on (08) 9949 2113.

CAVEMAN PREACHES 'ENVIRONMENT FIRST'

One of the highlights for delegates attending a recently held annual seminar was hearing internationally acclaimed keynote speaker—John 'Caveman' Gray—founder of SeaCanoe International, which operates in Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines and Fiji. (See www.seacanoe.com).

Winner of five major ecotourism awards in the past four years, Mr Gray was speaking at the 6th Annual Seminar held by the Forum Advocating Cultural and Eco Tourism (FACET), and sponsored by CALM.

In his passionately delivered address he emphasised his labour of love, his commitment to a no trade-off environmental policy and the importance of marketing.

"Ecotourism is more than a business opportunity. It involves pride in your product, activity knowledge and environmental commitment, combined with a spirit of cooperation—not competition," Mr Gray said.

"It involves putting the environment first, through increasing community awareness and encouraging people to maintain your already high environmental standards.

"To attain a sound, prosperous, nature-based tourism business, a central element is excellence and innovation in marketing."

Mr Gray stressed the importance of having 'fun' with it all by trying to create a new 'mentality'



From left to right; Susan Toby, FACET Executive; Dr Ross Dowling, Edith Cowan University, FACET Deputy Chairperson; Dr Syd Shea, University of Notre Dame Australia; John 'Caveman' Gray, SeaCanoe International. Photo courtesy of Claire Savage, WATC.

among employees and consumers, bringing environmental issues to the fore.

The other 17 speakers included experts from the WA Tourism Commission, CALM, Fisheries WA, Tourism Council Australia, Gascoyne Development Commission, Rottneest Island Authority, Leeuwin Ocean Adventures and the University of Notre Dame Australia. Also among them were industry experts from Capricorn Kayak Tours, WA Maritime Museum, WOW Wilderness Tours, Fremantle Chamber of Commerce, Cape Dive and Swan Wreck Dives.

The seminar took place last November in Fremantle at the University of Notre Dame Australia.

Its aim was to identify benefits and opportunities for regional communities through the development of marine tourism. It focused on developing an awareness of current issues, trends, initiatives and impediments to the future growth of marine tourism in regional Western Australia.

Attracting more than 130 delegates from as far north as Karratha to Esperance in the south, this seminar was a clear indication that Western Australia's coastline and complementary tourism opportunities were valuable resources, and in high demand.

The seminar covered a range of issues on marine tourism from State and international perspectives. It included factors influencing the growth and management of marine tourism in regional areas. These factors included marine wildlife, infrastructure, market research and market trends, and regulation and legislation.

Justifiably pleased with the success of the seminar, FACET's Deputy-Chairman and host Professor Ross Dowling said the seminar provided professional information-sharing and networking opportunities between marine tourism industry delegates.

"The seminar showed that FACET had come of age in WA, and is now recognised as the industry association leader in ecotourism and cultural tourism issues," Professor Dowling said.

FACET organisers are to be congratulated on a successful seminar that emphasised the importance of environmental management, and ensuring that the opportunities we have today will also be available for future generations.

YOU WERE WONDERING?

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

Touring Western Australia
***Would you like to receive your e-mailed copy of
the Touring Western Australia newsletter?***

Touring Western Australia is a quarterly newsletter published by the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM). It is distributed free to over 1300 people involved or interested in nature-based tourism.

CALM would like to send you this information electronically. To do so, CALM requests the e-mail addresses of its valuable readers. While gathering this information, we would like to hear what you think of the newsletter and its current content.

Please spend five minutes to fill out the information below.

Name: _____ **Position:** _____

Company or organisation name: _____

Company description: _____

E-mail address: _____

Comments: _____

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