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Numbat populations and other native species are on the rise in the Dryandra Woodland, aided by a program to reduce feral cat numbers.
Photo credit: Trails WA

Status upgrade for the Dryandra

The Dryandra Woodland, home to some of Australia's rarest and most vulnerable wildlife, has been formally declared the WA Wheatbelt's first national park.

This important and scenic nature conservation area is located about 180 kilometres south-east of Perth, near Narrogin. It is a rare remnant of the open eucalypt woodlands which covered much of the wheatbelt prior to land clearing which started from the 1890s and is known particularly for its extensive stands of wandoo, powderbark wandoo and salmon white gum.

Its best known inhabitant is WA's animal emblem, the elusive numbat. Among many other animals and birds seen in the woodland are woylies, brushtail wallabies, chuditch, quenda and the mound-building malleefowl. In winter and spring, its wildflower displays are a delight.

The conversion of the former State forest to national park, including the creation of two class A nature reserves, will help ensure the future protection of native animals living in this biodiverse and beautiful woodland.

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Ahoy beachcombers and bird lovers – your observation skills needed!



Little Penguin with chick on Penguin Island. Photo credit: Dr Belinda Cannell

New research to better understand the pressures on WA's Little Penguins has a citizen science element. Volunteers are sought to walk the Cockburn Sound shoreline to help scientists collect data on the causes of mortality on the area's Little Penguins.

The project, led by The University of Western Australia, is part of the Western Australian Marine Science Institution Westport Marine Science Program. This is a major collaborative initiative to improve understanding of Cockburn Sound's unique marine environment.

The penguin data collected will help provide information about the dramatic population decline in the Penguin Island colony, the health of the Garden Island colony and the project provides a great opportunity for the community to get involved.

Little Penguins, protected under *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, are particularly vulnerable to human activities and climate change pressures.

Lead researcher Dr Belinda Cannell from UWA's Oceans Institute has been monitoring Little Penguins on Penguin and Garden islands for more than 20 years. On Penguin Island, she said, there had been an 80 percent decline in their number in the past decade.

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Bringing back mussels for river health



Installing limestone substrate at Point Walter in the Swan River. Photo credit: Tony Jupp

By David de Vos, Park Ambassador

Sometimes it's educational to google an interviewee before you chat. So, I did, and found "*Demersal fish assemblages of South Passage and Blind Strait, Western Australia*" – a Master's thesis submitted by Jock Clough, my prospective interviewee.

Demersal? I went to the Oxford and learned that demersal, pertaining to fish, means living near the sea bottom. In this case the bottom of Shark Bay.

Jock Clough will have spent a lot of his life on the sea bottom, and also at mid-levels and on the surface. From a very young age, he says, he lived with the sea and the river. He walked the shores, swam, sailed, taught himself spear fishing and skin diving. He threw kylie in the shallows to catch mullet.

Millennia before Jock's water-based activities, the Swan and Canning Rivers supported the Whadjuk people, and then, after 1829, the British settlers who were strangers in a strange land. By the 1960s the general expectation of the settlers' descendants was that those beneficent rivers would keep on giving.

Not so. In our time algal blooms suffocate river life, fish are found dead and the summer blue of

Freshwater Bay hides mussels you must not eat.
That's official.

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Return of the Dibblers



Reintroduction of dibblers bred at Perth Zoo began in 2019. Photo credit: Perth Zoo

Dirk Island National Park is the new home of 36 dibblers bred in captivity at the Perth Zoo. Dibblers, not much bigger than a house mouse, are among Australia's rarest marsupial.

This latest rewilding by scientists from the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions is the third release of this species onto the island, bringing the total number to 93.

Although these totally cute little animals are not easy to monitor, there is evidence that those previously released are successfully breeding.

The re-introduction of the dibblers to Dirk Hartog Island to a feral cat free habitat is part of the 'Return to 1616' ecological restoration project.

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Survival action for imperilled plant



Giant andersonia (*Andersonia axilliflora*). Photo credit: Leonie Monks

The Giant Andersonia (*Andersonia axilliflora*), a rare shrub endemic to the Stirling Range National Park in WA's South West is at risk of extinction.

The species is listed as Critically Endangered under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (Western Australia). Now, its national conservation status is being assessed for elevation from Endangered to Critically Endangered under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

The Giant Andersonia, with its distinctive triangular shaped leaves and cream flowers, is confined to the upper slopes and summits of the eastern peaks of the range. It grows in shallow rocky soil and its main threats are disease e.g., susceptibility to dieback, fire, climate change related drought and grazing herbivores. Subpopulations are declining.

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Pick up a paddle for fitness and fun!



Dog paddling! Photo credit: Margaret River Discovery Co. [WAPF Member discount](#) for tours.

Scenic waterways and sunny days – a perfect marriage for kayaking, canoeing and paddle boarding. These recreational activities are growing in popularity in Western Australia and there are superb locations across the State, including some where you can hire gear, with the option of paddling alone or enjoying a guided tour. It's an excellent way to build fitness and explore.

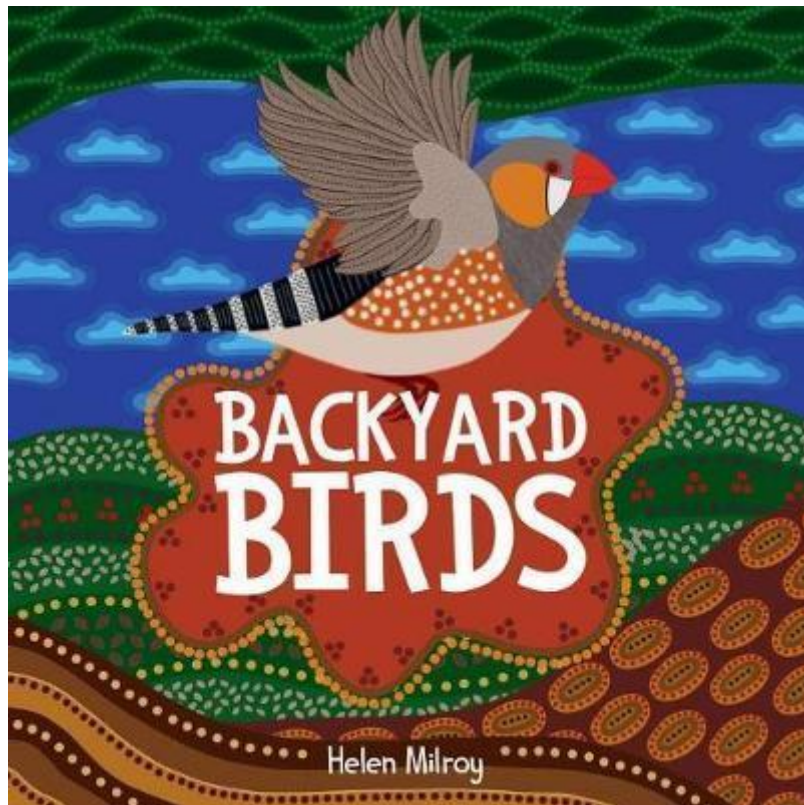
Around Perth, there are some great trails. On the Swan River, the RAC recommends North Fremantle to Chidley Reserve, Mosman Park or Maylands to East Perth or Ascot.

Exploring the upper reaches of the Canning River in Perth is another opportunity to enjoy, setting off from the Riverton Canoe Launch on the south side of the Riverton Bridge.

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Award winning kids

book promotes joys of nature



Backyard Birds by Professor Helen Milroy

Encouraging children to get out and about in nature is an enduring theme in the work of the WA Parks Foundation.

Right on message is a call by The University of Western Australia's Professor Helen Milroy, a prominent child and adolescent psychiatrist, for parents to help children to rediscover the joys of nature "as a way back from the pandemic".

Professor Milroy recently won the Whitley Award's Young Children's Reader Category for her book Backyard Birds. Presented annually, the Royal Zoological Society of New South Wales Whitley Awards acknowledge outstanding publications that profile the unique wildlife of Australasia.

Her boldly illustrated book celebrates the birdlife found in Australian back gardens, from laughing kookaburras to prancing mudlarks, and is

described as 'a fun and lively read for the very young'.

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