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February 2022



Bullara Station Stay near Exmouth and Ningaloo Reef. Photo credit: Tourism Western Australia

Popularity surge for camping and caravanning

Growth in camping and caravanning in WA has heightened the need for advance bookings. As the demand is high, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions advises to plan well ahead and reserve camping and caravan sites online to guarantee a spot.

In 2021, about 120,000 campsite bookings were processed resulting in around 971,000 camper nights. Online campsite bookings for DBCA campgrounds increased by 35% and camper nights by 46%.

Overall, DBCA statistics show an estimated 8.5% increase in visitations from 2019-20 to 2020-21 and 21.25 million visits to parks in 2020-21.

Celebrating the surge in visits to our national parks, the WA Parks Foundation is running two [prize draws](#) throughout March. Buy a WA Parks Foundation membership and go into a prize draw to win a framed landscape photograph of Lucky Bay, Cape Le Grand by [Richard Smyth – Wild Earth Images](#) (valued at \$350) or a deluxe picnic hamper (valued at \$200).

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SPRING INTO THE WA PARKS FOUNDATION PRIZE DRAW

Win a stunning framed landscape picture of the iconic Lucky Bay at Cape Le Grand National Park (valued at \$350), a deluxe picnic hamper (valued at \$200) or a free Foundation membership.
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New plan to protect vulnerable fairy terns



Hardyheads are among the preferred prey species for our Fairy Terns.
Photo credit: Claire Greenwell

Protecting the threatened fairy tern on the coastline from Fremantle to Bunbury is the aim of a community-led strategy launched recently.

The Lower West Coast Conservation Strategy for the Australian Fairy Tern was prepared by the participants in the WA Fairy Tern Network, supported by a grant from Fremantle Ports.

The new strategy provides a framework for organisations and community groups to help protect fairy tern colonies during their crucial breeding period.

Supporting organisations include the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Fremantle Ports, Bunbury Ports, the Ministry of Defence, the cities of Melville, Cockburn and Mandurah, Birdlife Western Australia and coast care groups.

One of Australia's smallest and rarest seabirds, the fairy tern measures less than 25cm from bill to tail and is distinguished by a distinctive black 'head cap' and bright orange bill.

It is estimated that WA has fewer than 3,000 breeding pairs and of these, around 700

pairs breed in the Perth Metropolitan region.

[Read more](#)

Where's Whaley?



Blue Whale in Perth Canyon. Photo credit: Associate Professor Chandra P. Salgado Kent

The krill-rich waters of the Perth Canyon, about 22 kilometres west of Rottnest Island, are an autumn feeding ground for blue whales. For recreational whale watchers lucky enough to sight these elusive creatures, the experience is awesome.

Blue whales are the [largest creatures](#) known to have existed on the planet, reaching up to about 30 metres in length and weighing up to 200 tonnes.

Once abundant, blue whales were hunted to near extinction, but have been globally protected since 1966. They are classified as endangered and populations are down to a fraction of what they were prior to commercial whaling, according to Edith Cowan University's Associate Professor Chandra Salgado Kent.

“Last season, we saw more blue whales visiting our coastline earlier than in previous years but we don’t know why.

“This makes long-term monitoring critical so we can detect whether this is related to serious impacts such as global warming, over-fishing and dwindling food sources.”

Associate Professor Salgado Kent is Research Committee Chair of [Geographe Marine Research](#) and Director of Oceans Blueprint.

[Read more](#)

Walyunga joins the Smartreka maps in WA’s National Parks



Walyunga National Park covers 1,800 hectares of the Darling Range, tucked behind the Darling Scarp covering both sides of a steep valley. Photo credit: Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA)

Western Australia’s national parks have some of the most dramatic landscapes on the planet, with breath-taking views, magnificent forests, pristine

beaches, spectacular waterfalls and astounding biodiversity of plants and animals.

Making it easier to navigate these natural wonders are the WA Parks Foundation's [Smartreka maps](#), delivered with the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) and in partnership with BHP.

The maps use built-in GPS capabilities on smartphone or tablet to plot real-time location. If downloaded while network access is available, this can be done without a network connection and without roaming charges.

Walyunga National Park is the latest in the series. [Smartreka maps](#) are also available for Fitzgerald River, Stirling Range, Cape le Grande, Francois Peron, Cape Range, Karijini, Kalbarri, Purnululu, and Millstream Chichester national parks. Maps for Leeuwin-Naturaliste, Yanchep, Walpole-Nornalup and D'Entrecasteaux national parks will be launched later this year.

[Read more](#)

Record number of volunteers join annual Peel-Yalgorup shorebird count



Flock of red necked stints in spotting scope at Lake Preston. Photo credit: Ada Hortle

Guest contributors: Charlie Jones and Steve Fisher, Peel-Harvey Catchment Council.

The 2022 Shorebird Count conducted on 31 January within the Peel-Yalgorup Wetlands recorded nearly 40,000 waterbirds. It is the 14th consecutive year that the Peel-Harvey Catchment Council (PHCC) has worked with citizen scientists to conduct local counts as part of BirdLife Australia's Australian Shorebird Monitoring Program.

Volunteers across 25 teams headed out on foot and watercraft to count the waterbirds of the Peel-Harvey Estuary, Goegrup and Black lakes on the Serpentine River, the freshwater Lake Mealup and Lake McLarty, and the lakes of the Yalgorup

National Park (including Lake Preston and Lake Clifton).

The count focuses on water-dependent birds including migratory shorebirds spending the summer here before returning to the northern hemisphere to breed. Examples are the Red-Necked Stint, Sharp-Tailed Sandpiper and the critically endangered Eastern Curlew. Resident shorebirds such as the Red-Capped Plover, Pied Stilt, Hooded Plover and Pied Oystercatchers that live in Australia year-round are included, plus other waterbirds such as terns, gulls, pelicans, swans, ducks, cormorants and egrets.

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Improved access proposed for Murujuga



Murujuga is home to one of the largest, most significant and diverse collections of petroglyphs in the world. Photo credit: Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation

A proposed amendment to the Murujuga National Park Management Plan, aimed at improving access to one of Western Australia's most

culturally significant areas, is now open for [public comment](#).

Murujuga, in the Pilbara, is home to one of the largest and most diverse collections of rock art (petroglyphs) in the world. Its more than one million images capture at least 47,000 years of human existence and provide an archaeological record of traditional use of the area.

The engravings show human images, extinct animal species such as megafauna and Thylacines, as well as existing birds, animals and marine life. The area also features middens, fish traps, rock shelters, ceremonial places and stone arrangements.

The proposed amendment will allow for the construction of a new access road to Conzinc Bay, in the northern part of Murujuga National Park, where visitor facilities will be built. Currently, access is only available by four-wheel drive over very rough terrain.

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Bald Head walk trail upgrading



Bald Head walk trail, Torndirrup National Park. Photo credit: Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA)

A significant upgrading of the Bald Head walk trail on the Flinders Peninsula within the Torndirrup National Park is being undertaken by the Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.

The trail is open to the Isthmus Hill, about 15 mins along the trail, but currently closed beyond that point.

The Bald Head trail is a challenging 12.5km return trail traversing the ridgeline of the peninsula. It provides spectacular views of the Southern Ocean around to King George Sound and Albany city.

Due to increased visitation and the exposed nature of the trail, Parks and Wildlife staff have noted concerns around increasing sand blowouts, loss of vegetation caused by wind and water erosion, and a widening of the trail surface.

The current works will protect against further erosion and address existing impacts including stabilisation of trail edges for regeneration. Construction is expected to be finished by August 2022.

[Read more](#)

Ninetieth milestone for Pat Barblett AM



Pat Barblett celebrates her 90th birthday!

A 90th birthday celebration for one of the WA Parks Foundation's Founding Ambassadors, Pat Barblett AM was an opportunity to recognise her outstanding contribution to conserving and protecting the Western Australian environment.

Pat is a former Chair of the then Conservation Commission and of the Rottnest Island Authority, with a long record of service to both organisations.

She was also the founder of FACET (Forum Advocating Cultural and Eco-Tourism), a community-based organisation which aims to inspire and promote responsible tourism, and the Rottnest Foundation.

Pat has a remarkable record of achievement and has been an inspiration to the many people she has worked with during her lifetime of commitment

to conserving, promoting and building an understanding of WA's natural and cultural environment.

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