

A River Forever..?

(Mason's Landing to Hester Park)

The trail continues past the historic Woodloes Homestead then through the jungle-like vegetation downstream of the Nicholson Road bridge. You will then pass under the bridge and up to the large open recreational reserve of Hester Park. The upstream boundary of the Canning River Regional Park is defined by the Nicholson Road bridge.

The Canning River is unique, special, precious - something to be cherished and conserved for all us, and for our children's children. We can only do that with everyone's help.

Further Information

Do you want to know more about the Canning River, its wildlife or the volunteer programs in the area? Contact the City of Canning on 9231 0655 or explore the website at:

<http://www.canning.wa.gov.au>; or for information about the wildlife check the Waters and Rivers Commission website at <http://www.wrc.wa.gov.au>.



Code of Conduct

Your safety is essential. Always canoe with an experienced canoeist, wear an appropriate Personal Flotation Device, plan your trip well and make sure your equipment is in perfect condition.

Look after the river by:

- Protecting refuge areas by keeping to the main channel.
- Avoiding overhanging branches which provide shade for the river's inhabitants.
- Fishing for the future. Only take as much as you need for a fresh feed, and avoid damaging banks and fringing vegetation when digging for bait.
- Using only gas rings, or the barbecues supplied. No open fires – or camping – please.
- Taking your rubbish home with you – or put in the bins provided. Rubbish in the river is a serious danger to wildlife.
- Joining one of the Canning River volunteer programs to assist in the protection of this unique environment (for information, contact the City of Canning).



City of Canning



CANNING RIVER CANOE TRAIL

Stage 2 - Riverton Bridge - Hester Park



The Canning Canoe Trail Project is supported by the Commonwealth Government through the Federation Fund.

The Canning River

The Canning River – bringing water from the hills to the thirsty plains and providing a green belt of food and shelter for a large variety of animals – a river of life.

And what better way to appreciate such a unique linear ecosystem than by canoe?

The Canning River canoe trail extends from the Mt Henry Bridge to Hester Park upstream.

Stage 2 of the canoe trail is covered by this brochure, and extends from Riverton Bridge to Hester Park – a distance of about 8kms. For most of its length the trail runs through the Canning River Regional Park – the first such Park in the State. The Park is managed jointly by the Department of Conservation and Land Management, the City of Canning and the Swan River Trust, and is registered as part of the National Heritage Estate.

If canoeists can arrange pick up at Hester Park – a relaxing trip will take about 2-3 hrs – otherwise the return journey will be a leisurely full day canoe allowing time from lunch at one of the recreation areas provided along the route.

Canoeists can start or finish at either end of this trail – or can join it at any of the designated launching areas marked on the map.

There are no areas of rapids or white water – this is not a trip for an adrenalin junkie – but rather for the jaded city dweller who wants to be gently reminded of the wonders of nature in our backyard.



River of Contrast

(Riverton Bridge through the sedge islands)

SHHH. BREEDING AND FEEDING IN PROGRESS IN SHALLOWS – Please keep to the central channel!

A hundred metres from busy suburbia where cars, houses and people abound, barbecue areas, lawns and buildings rule, you enter a world where nature is queen.

All animals, not just people, have favourite feeding, resting, and nesting areas. Birds like spotless crane and buffbanded rail eat the seeds of the fringing native sedges and reeds. Blue billed ducks, coots and swamp hens nest here, while a variety of animals use the area to hide from predators. The open water areas are like supermarkets for the birds of prey - ospreys, whistling kites and sea eagles. Other fish eaters like grebes, darters, cormorants and pelicans also favour the open waters for feeding. They can dive deep to catch bottom dwelling animals and plants.

On the muddy banks and shallow islands you may see some smaller wading birds. Some of these come from as far away as Siberia in September each year, using the jetstream to assist their epic flights. They moult and feed over summer and build up fat so they are able to make the return journey to the northern hemisphere in March.

Because the water at this part of the river is usually salt (particularly during summer), you might see some of the waterbirds shaking their heads violently. What they are doing is flicking away the concentrated salt water secreted by glands at the base of their beaks.

River of Secrets

(moving through the narrowing channel after the islands)

Your paddle blade dips through the brown water stained from the tannins of the vegetation along the river – but what is below? What dwells in the secret places below the surface skin of the river?

What lies beneath you now is a tangle of snags and logs that shelter a range of animals like long necked turtles, polychaete worms, shellfish, gilgies, insect larvae, and fish. The snags also serve to slow down water flow.

At one time black bream and marron abounded. When Castledare was a boys' home only these boys were allowed to fish along this stretch of the river, catching food for their kitchens.

Seagrass occurs in clear waters where sunlight can penetrate and provide the necessary energy for photosynthesis. Seagrasses are flowering plants that use water rather than wind or animals to distribute their seed. They are important for the small invertebrates that shelter and feed amongst them and as a nursery for fish and crustaceans which shelter from predators here as well as feeding either on the invertebrates or on the decaying plants.

The secret channels to the right of you should remain that way – they are special zones for breeding and roosting of the range of birdlife – spoonbills, egrets, little grebes, ibis, and swans.

If the water level is low you may spy another, man-made secret. The black poly pipe ensures oxygenation of the water to reduce the toxic blue-green algae blooms.

River of Dreams

(approaching Castledare to Kent St Weir)

The Canning River (or 'Dyarlgaard') is Nyungar country with the Beeliar people being one of the traditional owners.

The river provided a plentiful and varied source of food for the families – fish, eggs, snakes, lizards, freshwater mussels, turtles, marron, and birds were all favourite targets and selected wetland plants (for example, *Eleocharis* & *Typha*) were roasted or eaten raw.

Summer migration of aboriginal groups to the river was affected by the arrival of europeans. When aboriginals began taking sheep for food, there were violent reactions from the new settlers. In the 1830's european and aboriginal blood was spilled beside these waters.

In the 1890's, the dreams of the new settlers started to express themselves in the riverine landscape. Convicts operating the dredge, 'Black Swan' cleared the channels of the Swan and Canning rivers removing snags to improve access.

In 1928, the dreams of Archbishop Clune were made reality by the purchase of Castledare for a shelter for orphans – and later underprivileged, and post-war migrant boys. By the 1950's, fee paying students were being accepted to help meet the costs of running the facility. The Castledare School closed in 1977. The buildings, which are now Heritage-listed, are destined for use by the community. The grounds are used on the first Sunday of every month by the miniature railway.

The current Kent St weir was built in 1928 and is the product of decades of debate about developing a barrier in the river to stop the movement of salt water upstream in summer.



The fertile alluvial flats along the Canning were important farming areas. Salt water encroachment destroyed crops, and made the water useless for the requirements of stock or people. A weir was argued as being a reasonable solution to this problem. Arguments raged about the location, who should pay and what the design should be. The existing weir is registered on the Register for Historic Places (Heritage of Western Australia Act 1990).



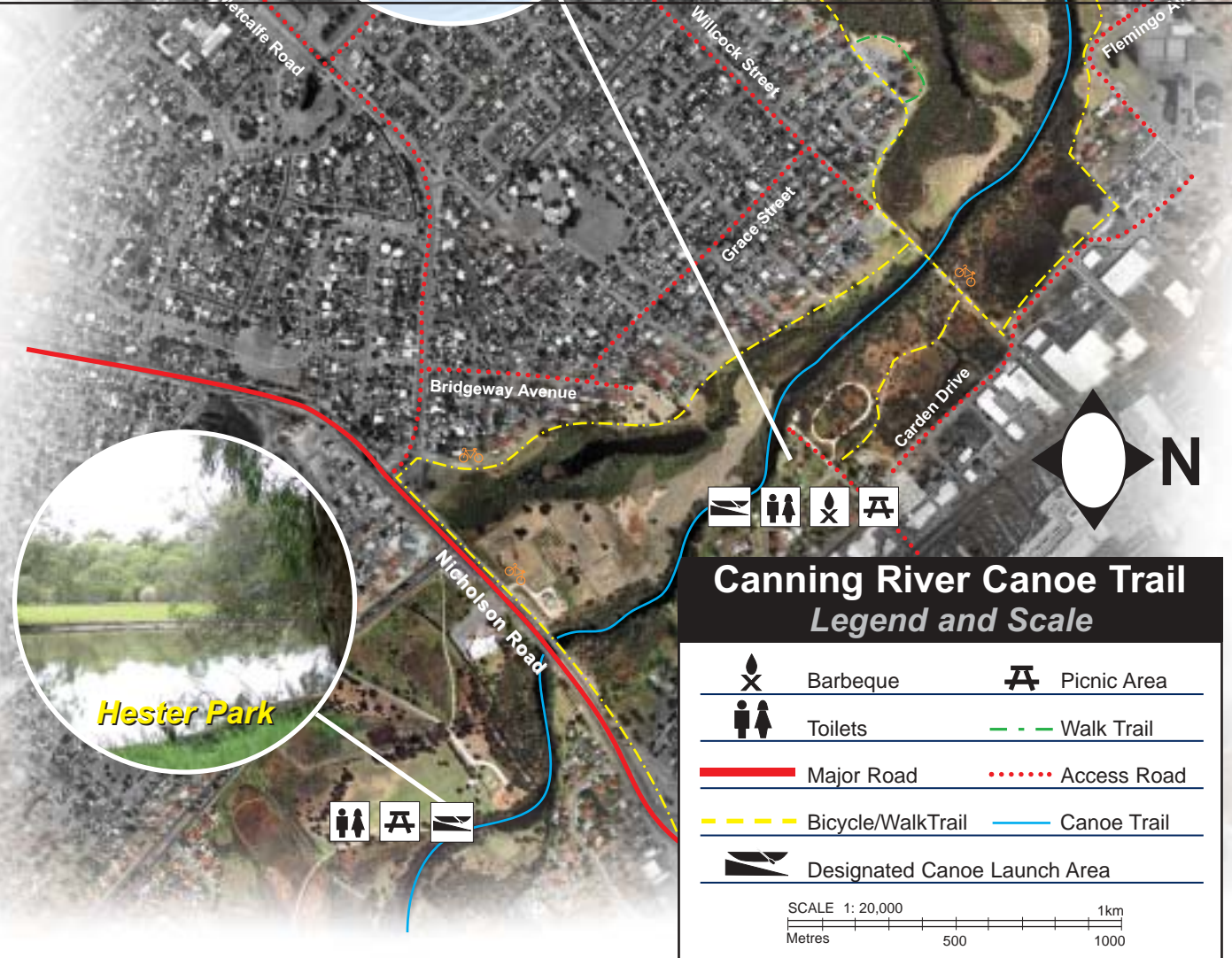
River of Change

(the weir to Masons Landing)

FROM JULY- SEPTEMBER, THIS IS AN IMPORTANT AREA FOR WATERBIRD BREEDING. PLEASE CONSIDER STAYING BELOW THE WEIR AT THIS TIME.

We move into the freshwater regime above the Weir. You will almost immediately notice a change in the fringing trees – below the Weir the soft needled swamp sheoak, and the salt tolerant paperbark with samphires and a range of herbs in the understorey dominate. In the freshwater environment, freshwater paperbark, river banksia and flooded gums take over with areas of reeds covering the wetlands adjacent to the channel. These different species are due to differing soil types and water depths, timing and duration of flooding and the length of the dry period.

Estuarine plants also live well in non-saline areas – but they simply can't compete successfully with other species for light, space, and germination, so they are restricted to areas where their adaptations allow them to flourish.



Most aquatic invertebrates (polychaete worms, snails and mussels) are marine, so the variety of these animals decreases upstream. Animals like shrimp however, are more tolerant and can be found both up- and down-stream.

Most of the significant changes to the river have been by people - removing or degrading fringing vegetation and introducing weeds like arum lily, kikuyu, hydrocotyle; introducing animals like koi, gambusia, cats and foxes; modifying the channel through drainage, damming, removal of snags; pollution and recreational activities.

