

DENMARK

GIVING THE **WOW** FACTOR

The Wilderness Ocean Walk (WOW) Trail near Denmark has recently been extended, linking up with the Bibbulmun Track, Munda Biddi Trail and iconic Waterfall Beach to Elephant Rocks Trail, to create a 15-kilometre coastal adventure that takes full advantage of the picturesque landscape.

by Bron Anderson





The 6.2-kilometre WOW Trail was first opened in 2017, taking visitors from Lights Beach to Denmark Community Windfarm. The second stage of the trail adds a further 3.2 kilometres of dual-use coastal trail all the way to Sinker Bay.

Denmark, in the south-west of Western Australia, is known for its amazing beaches. The area the WOW Trail passes through, Pooryungup, is part of a wider cultural landscape that provided local Noongar Aboriginal peoples with everything they needed for their way of life.

Iconic attractions including Waterfall Beach and Elephant Rocks are now all connected as the WOW Trail links with the Bibbulmun Track and Munda Biddi Trail and the Waterfall Beach to Elephant Rocks Trail, creating a 15-kilometre coastal trail between Sinker Bay and Greens Pool in William Bay National Park.

The trail passes through dense coastal heath that comes to life with colour in the wildflower season, and lookout points provide convenient rest stops with stunning vistas over the coastline.

Looking east on a clear day, the coastal views extend from Wilson Inlet and Ocean Beach along the cliffs to Knapp Head and all the way to West Cape Howe, the southernmost point of Western Australia.



Not to be outdone, the view to the west boasts a star-studded lineup of some of the best beaches in south-west WA—Back Beach, Lights Beach, Waterfall Beach, Madfish Bay and the wide sweep of Mazzoletti Beach leading to Parry Beach. Tucked just out of view are the famous Elephant Rocks and Greens Pool of William Bay National Park.

Owners, the Shire of Denmark and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) as most of the new section of the trail is on land managed by the Shire of Denmark, including Pooryungup/Ocean Beach Reserve with a small portion of the trail aligned through the Denmark Community Windfarm.

“We are really pleased that this project has produced such a quality outcome, through a partnership with the Shire of Denmark,” DBCA’s Assistant Director, Parks and Visitor Services, Rod Annear said.

GETTING CONNECTED

The creation of the new trail was a true partnership between Traditional

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Main Start of the WOW trail near Lights Beach.

Photo – Cliff Winfield

Inset left Looking out over Ratcliffe Bay.

Photo – Benji Anderson

Top inset Southern right whale (*Eubalaena australis*).

Photo – John Anderson

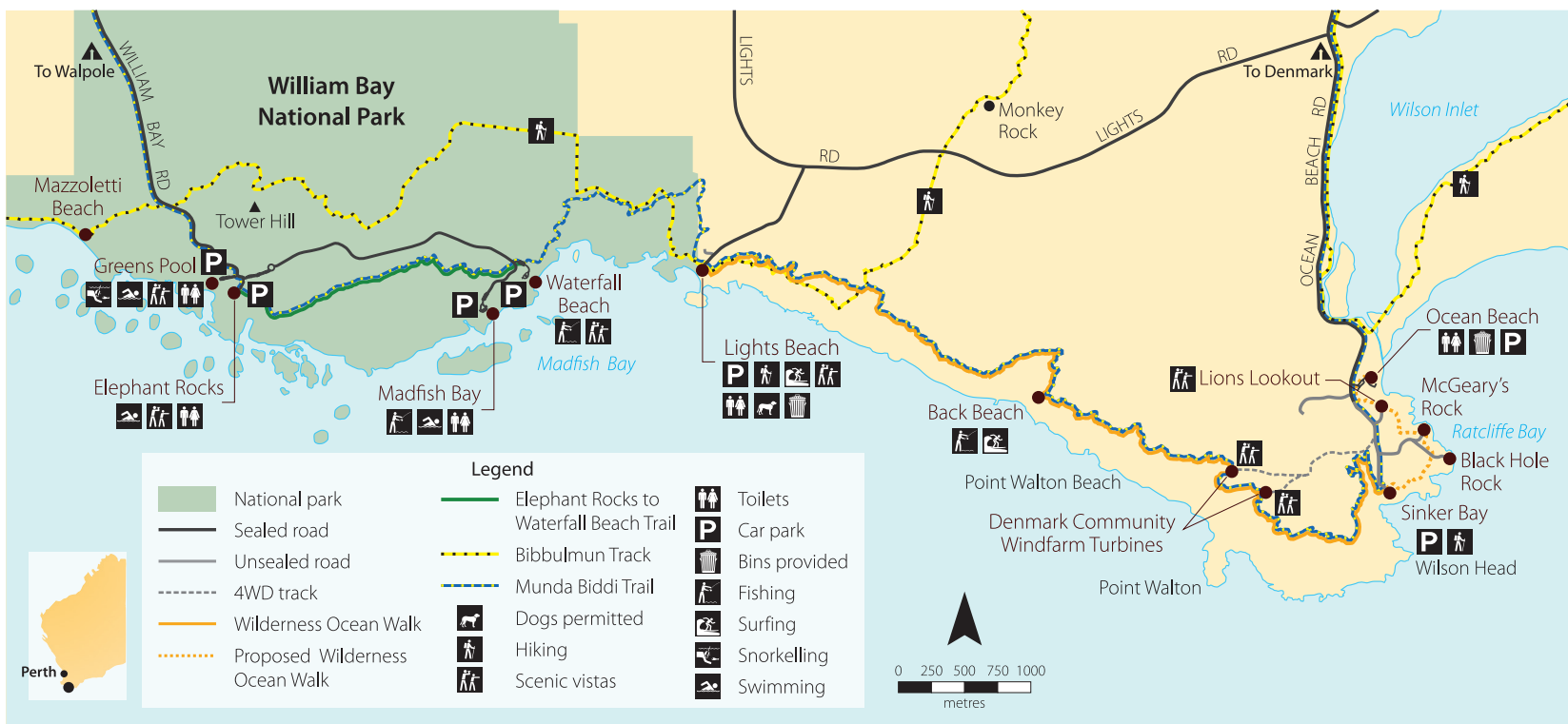
Inset right Shining fanflower (*Scaevola nitida*).

Above Cycling near Sinker Bay.

Right Traditional Owners, community and project team members work together on Country.

Photos – Bron Anderson





“This is a great community resource that will benefit the locals and tourists for years to come”.

Along with *Phytophthora* dieback mapping of the area as well as flora and fauna surveys, there has been extensive consultation with the Traditional Owners with several on-site visits prior to the start of construction. An archaeological survey was undertaken to ensure there were no impacts on Aboriginal cultural heritage, which informed the trail alignment.

Traditional Owners undertook green card training and were on-site during construction to ensure that any earth disturbance was kept to a minimum and if any artefacts were turned up, work ceased to allow a closer examination.

Interpretive signage at various lookout points is being developed after

a consultation session with Traditional Owners to develop the themes that will focus on the indigenous and natural values of the area.

“This is a great community resource that will benefit the locals and tourists for years to come,” Rod said.

For those who are more technologically minded, the two 50-metre turbines of Denmark Community Windfarm are standout features along the trail. The windfarm is owned by a public company whose 120 shareholders are mainly local residents. Commencing commercial generation of renewable energy in 2013, the Denmark Community Windfarm supplies 50 per cent of Denmark’s annual power demand.

NATURAL VALUES

Many of the plants growing along the trail have cultural significance such as the wonil (peppermint). The leaves of this tree can be crushed, and the vapour inhaled to relieve congestion.

Above right White-bellied sea-eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*).
Photo – John Anderson

Right Bull Banksia (*Banksia grandis*), one of the plants growing along the track.
Photo – Bron Anderson

Discover more about the WOW Trail

Scan this QR code or visit Parks and Wildlife Service’s ‘LANDSCOPE’ playlist on YouTube.





Fan flowers, pimelias and hibbertias add to the rainbow of colour. Shady peppermint groves offer cool relief from the sun and Banksia and Hakea thickets provide a food source for Carnaby's and Baudin's black cockatoos.

Denmark local and convenor of the Denmark Bird Group, Kirsty Anderson, is a regular user of the WOW Trail.

"There are a good variety of birds including shining bronze and fantail cuckoos, Carnaby's and Baudin's black cockatoos, and on the parrot bush, scrubwrens, fairy wrens, red-eared firetails and currawongs," Kirsty said.

"We have seen many different species of seabirds including yellow-nosed and black-browed albatross, gannets, shearwaters and we occasionally see the white-bellied sea-eagle skirting along the cliff edge."

From June to November, humpback (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) and southern right whales (*Eubalaena australis*) are regular visitors to the sheltered waters of Ratcliffe Bay. Humpback whales leave their feeding grounds in Antarctic waters in late autumn as the temperature drops and head north to breed in the warmer waters off the west coast of Australia. From the lookouts, whales can be seen breaching and slapping their tail flukes and fins on the water.

Locals of the more dangerous variety are at home in the thick coastal heath at Pooryungup. Dugites (*Pseudonaja affinis*) and tiger snakes (*Notechis scutatus*) can sometimes be seen sunning themselves along the trail or moving quickly out of the way.

LOVED BY LOCALS

Local resident and cyclist, Jane, thinks it's a great trail that is perfect for the whole family, including dogs in some sections.

"To have nine kilometres of trail that winds around the coastal cliffs and dunes to Lights Beach is amazing," Jane said.

"The views along the whole trail—the Wilson Inlet, the cliffs and ocean and Mt Hallowell—are just so picturesque."

Former Denmark Shire President, Ceinwen Gearon, said the extended WOW Trail is already a treasured community asset, despite its short life.

"I'm delighted that after working together with DBCA and thanks to detailed and appropriate consultation with Traditional Owners, we now have a continuation of this popular trail. It means we can all enjoy even more of WA's stunning coastline by foot or bicycle," Dr Gearon said.

Planning is underway for the last section of the WOW Trail between Sinker Bay and Ocean Beach.

Above Looking west from one of the lookouts on the trail.

Photo – Bron Anderson

Below Red-eared firetails (*Stagonopleura oculata*) have been spotted on the trail by Denmark Bird Group.

Photo – Jiri Lochman

It is envisaged that long-distance Munda Biddi Trail riders and Bibbulmun Track walkers will also take advantage of the new alignment and use the specially hardened trail surface to travel closer to the coast for the spectacular views over the Southern Ocean.



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