

Fitzgerald River National Park coastal walk trail

Department of Environment and Conservation



CLIENT:

Department of Environment and Conservation

LOCATION:

Fitzgerald River National Park,
Great Southern Region

SERVICES:

- Level 2 vertebrate fauna survey
- Short-range endemic invertebrate survey
- Impact assessment for fauna

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Successful implementation of the program in an extremely remote location
- Recorded 20 of WA's rarest and most vulnerable vertebrate species
- Several new invertebrate species recorded
- Adhered to strict *Phytophthora* Dieback hygiene protocols
- Effectively managed several mobilisation setbacks due to adverse weather conditions

In 2010, the Department of Environment and Conservation entrusted Phoenix with the terrestrial fauna studies required to assess the impact of the proposed Fitzgerald River National Park Walk Trail Project.

The park represents the core of the Fitzgerald River Biosphere Reserve, a reserve of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere program. It hosts a wide range of rare and threatened species as well as a high proportion of endemics. It is listed as an Important Bird Area (IBA) for Malleefowl and the south-west endemics and the Fitzgerald Inlet system is a wetland of national importance (WA025).

The proposed coastal walk trail from Point Ann at Bremer Bay to Hopetoun was divided into four one-day sections, traversing the southern part of the park. Phoenix completed vertebrate fauna and SRE surveys along the entire alignment over three field trips.

Phytophthora Dieback is a major threat to the values of the park and therefore stringent dieback hygiene protocols were required to be maintained, including full vehicle and equipment wash-downs, and inspection and close monitoring of weather conditions before and during mobilisation. Phoenix liaised extensively with south coast DEC officers in this regard.

The remoteness of the park meant that each team had to be fully self-sufficient for up to 10 days, including all fuel, food and water, in addition to all required field gear. This was a mammoth task. Daily changing weather conditions caused delays in start dates to which we responded by maintaining a flexible schedule and being ready to mobilise at short notice.

The survey outcomes reinforced the high conservation values of the park in relation to fauna with 20 conservation significant vertebrate species recorded (nine mammals, 10 birds and a reptile) and eight SRE species collected. The results provided important data to inform the environmental impact assessment for the project.



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