

Brian Everingham
Trip Report
August 2024
Volume 2.2

Kalbarri



Thursday 8th August 2024

Our alarm clock is a Singing Honeyeater. It beats the sun by a considerable margin. The first calls I registered today were at 5.40am. Sunrise is roughly 6.59am. It is a most melodious wake up call.

When the sun did come out, it did so with glaring intensity. Thankfully we walked in a sea breeze but there was no shade to speak of. We stopped at Pot Alley first. The rocky ledge afforded stunning coastline views to the south and amazing rocky formations.





And then we walked down through a gully to the beach below. There were three fishermen there, carefully avoiding the large seas, and one had caught a reef shark, a youngster. He unhooked it and threw it back. The big surf drove it back onto the beach. Once we were aware of its plight, aided by frantic hand gestures from Faye who was looking down from a ledge above, we managed to get it back into the sea in surf that saturated my shoes and sox but may have done the trick.



We then drove to the northern start of the Bigurda Track where we left the car and walked south through Goat Gully to Grandstand Lookout before retracing our steps, making that walk 8 kilometres of rough limestone rocks or loose, soft sand. While there was little altitude gained, it was tough going.



Mind you, the flowers, even at this time of the year, were special and we did see one Euro (Bigurda) as well as heaps of humpback whales who were exceedingly active. But secretly, my highlight was sighting a Red-eared Firetail.







Pleasingly now, in terms of mammals, we have seen dozens of Humpback whales, several Red Kangaroos, one Euro (or Wallaroo) and one Black-flanked Rock Wallaby.

And as it has been all week, after we return home from our walks and after we have showered, we all retire to unit 1 for a shared meal with the amazing chef, Winnie Mau. We have been thoroughly spoiled.

Friday 9th August 2024

One of the sites we visited today was a memorial to the Zuytdorp, a Dutch ship that disappeared enroute to Batavia in 1711 (if you believe Wikipedia) or 1712 (if you believe the memorial). European settlers were first made aware of the sinking in 1826 but in that local indigenous concept of time the Europeans assumed that the sinking had just happened and rushed to the scene, without result.



The view from the lookout takes in the passage in and out of Kalbarri

It was not until 1926 that the site of the wreck was found and investigated. That began under Playford, no doubt inspired by the pile of silver coins said to be onboard. The site is just over 6km north of the mouth of the Murchison.

The memorial is located on the hill overlooking the entrance to the Murchison and the narrow passage around the rocky reef, then parallel to that reef before a passage through the waves must give everyone on a boat certain palpitation.

Now I should also mention a certain *Grevillea leucopteris*, or White-plume Grevillea. It's not currently flowering but the stalks that arise from the plant are already budding. We are therefore not going to smell the mass of flowers at dusk which provides its common name of "smelly socks".



As for our walk, we drove to the southern end of the Bigurda Trail, visited the Natural Bridge and Island Rock lookouts and smiled at our forethought in coming so early before anyone else was around.





We then walked north, along the coastal track, perched on the hard limestone capping while below us was crumbling sandstone. It made for a very flat top, sharp edges and talus slopes that plunged into deep, blue ocean.





Australian Kestrel



Euro

There were very few flowers out on this walk through to Shell House and Grandstand Rock but we did see more whales, several Euros, a number of Australian kestrels and a cooperative Australian Pipit.



We all walked there and back by 11.30, even allowing for me taking my time for photography. Unfortunately, the visiting to the Blue Holes was truncated because the water levels were too high to truly enjoy the beauty of the reef and what was hidden in the holes on the Lee of the reef.

But after we returned home, got the washing out and rested, we tried once more. The Blue Holes were a disappointment to me. The reef is eroded limestone covered in various algae and there was little by way of rock pool life. Perhaps it would be richer to snorkel over it at a higher tide but we bailed out.





Sooty Oystercatchers

Of more interest was the Red Bluff Beach. The red sandstone sloped into the water, with the occasional channel for sea water to rush through and there were also two Sooty Oystercatchers and at least one active Tern.



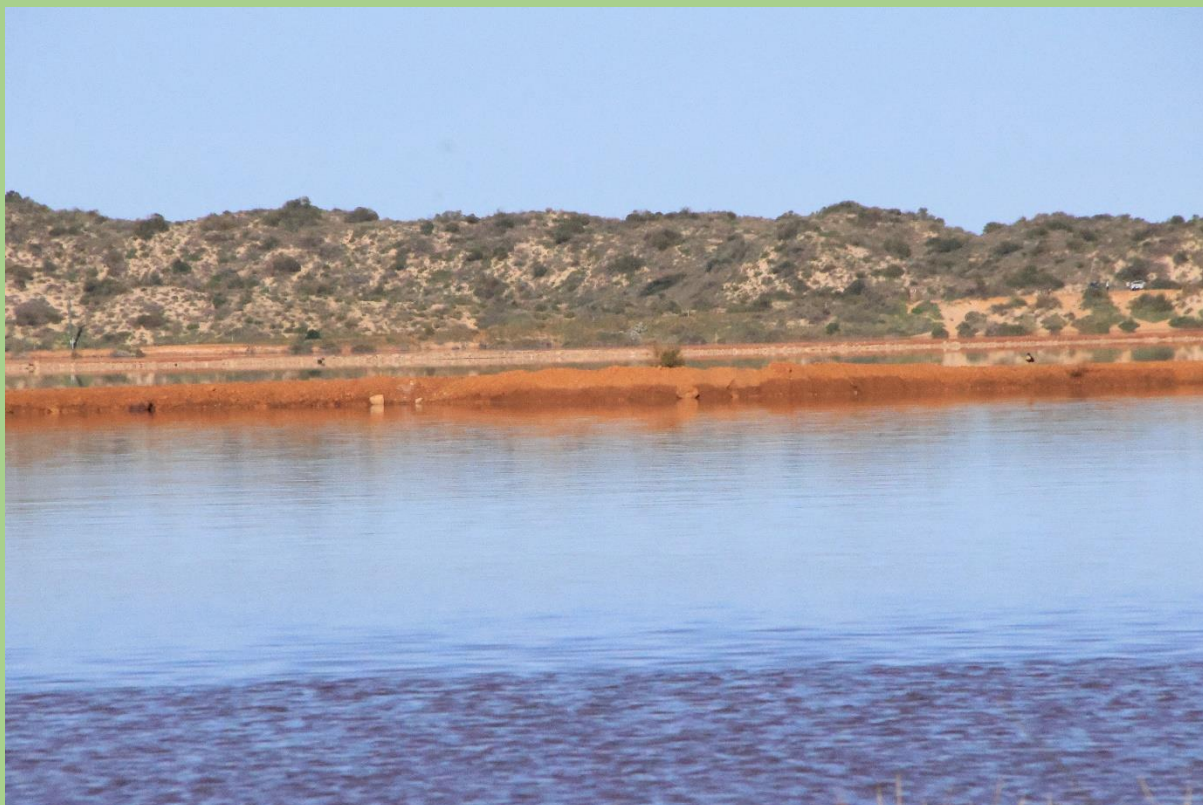
Leaving us once more to the mercy of Winnie's cooking! The prawns, scallops and calamari went so well with the noodles. Contented, indeed!!

Saturday 10th August 2024

On a rather hot day, and on our last day in and around Kalbarri, we had a lay-day, so to speak, and drove south, stopping enroute to look at some banksias and other plants.



We also stopped at two locations on the western side of the Hutt Lagoon to get early views of the “pink lake”. We were close to the BASF operation. BASF harvests some of the beta-carotene here. The company initials come from its German name: Badische Anilin-und Sodafabrik, the largest chemical producer in the world.



Samphire



Now this lagoon is a few metres below sea level and some call it the Pink Lake. Its beta-carotene is produced by algae called *Dunaliella salina*. And, indeed, once we were on the eastern side, it glowed a soft pink. No wonder Amherst held a pretty in pink fashion show here.

But before that we dropped in to the Lynton Convict ruins. The property, Lynton, was to have been a town and was named after Lynton in Devon. I can't think of two places less alike.



The Lynton site operated as a convict facility for the distribution of workers for mining and pastoral industries not much different to how both industries seem to use overseas workers

now). It operated from 1853-1857. The main work site was the Geraldine Lead Mine. The government closed the site down because it was too costly to run. The community suffered from scurvy, due to the lack of fresh vegetables and the small cemetery was testament to its impact.

The big homestead was Sanford House. Situated some distance away, it was first built for Captain Sanford, the superintendent of the convicts. He resigned after just one year to pursue other interests and the house was used for a variety of other roles, including as a boarding house but is now deserted though being slowly achieved.



While we were there the property had two crop duster planes landing and taking off to distribute urea onto 150 hectares of land. The exercise costs \$30 approximately per hectare. That does not include the cost of the urea. Faye enjoyed watching these exercise.





Orb Weaver Spider hovers over the Pink Lake

After seeing the Pink Lake from the eastern side (by now quite pink), we had lunch under a shelter shed on the beach front at Port Gregory. The wharf was directly in front of us but so

much sand was there that it would be just a small boat that could use it. As for the coast, it had a fringing barrier of a stone reef (probably limestone) with just three small openings to the open sea.



Pacific Gull



Joanne's friend

We were back home just before 2.00pm, just in time to have an iced coffee around the corner from our place and meet with one of the staff, a young Californian girl on Filipina/Mexican heritage with a cheery disposition and a positive attitude who seemed to suggest she'd like to stay on In Kalbarri forever. I wonder.

And the girls cornered the local Indonesian cook for takeaway tonight. All done! While I cleaned out the car.

