

Lake Grace

SALT LAKE





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Lake Grace is a large, shallow salt lake situated ten kilometres west of the Lake Grace townsite. It comprises two separate water bodies - *Lake Grace North* and *Lake Grace South* - and is one of Western Australia's biggest inland salt lakes, measuring 25.75 kilometres long and 7.24 kilometres at its widest point.

Lake Grace is a major landmark; its massive, organic form as it meanders through the agricultural land is easily identified from the air. Further to its aesthetic beauty, the lake is of local importance for drainage and, nationally, for nature conservation and wetland research.



Lake Grace is part of a chain of salt lakes - stretching more than 100 kilometres from Pingrup, north to Kondinin - that formed a segment of an ancient river system 20 million years ago. When the climate became more arid and seasonal, about five million years ago, the rivers slowly dried up and became the dotted chain of lakes that exist today. Contrary to popular belief, the lakes still flow underground. Each year water retraces the ancient path north to Kondinin and gradually westward to become part of the headwaters of the Avon River, and eventually the Swan River.





The salt in the lakes has been deposited and built up from rainfall and wind over thousands of years. Salt lakes such as *Lake Grace* act as huge evaporative basins for groundwater. As the water evaporates the salt concentrates on the surface to form a stark white, crystalline crust. This makes *Lake Grace* a spectacular sight from the air and, when in view of the numerous surrounding lakes, it looks as if a watery brush has been trailed across the green-brown landscape. Water, sediment and bacteria work to make each lake a slightly different hue of white, blue, green, mauve and even pink.

Despite their vast and barren appearance, the salt lakes are home to a diverse range of plants and animals.

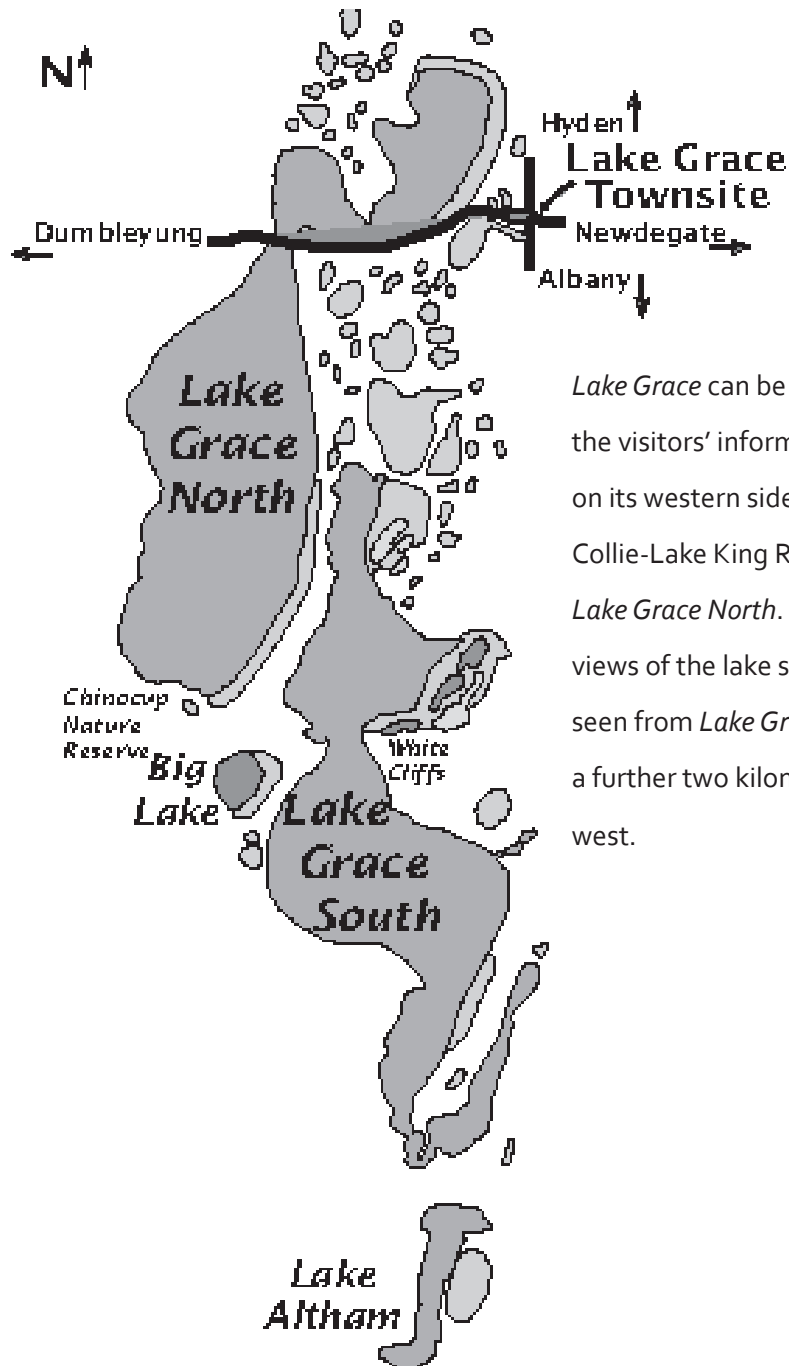
Samphire, a pink and green succulent, and other saltbush thrive on the lake edges. Low shrubs such as Swamp Sheoak, Saltwater Paperbark and TeaTree occur on the drier rises, while taller trees such as Kondinin Blackbutt and Salmon Gum can be seen further away.



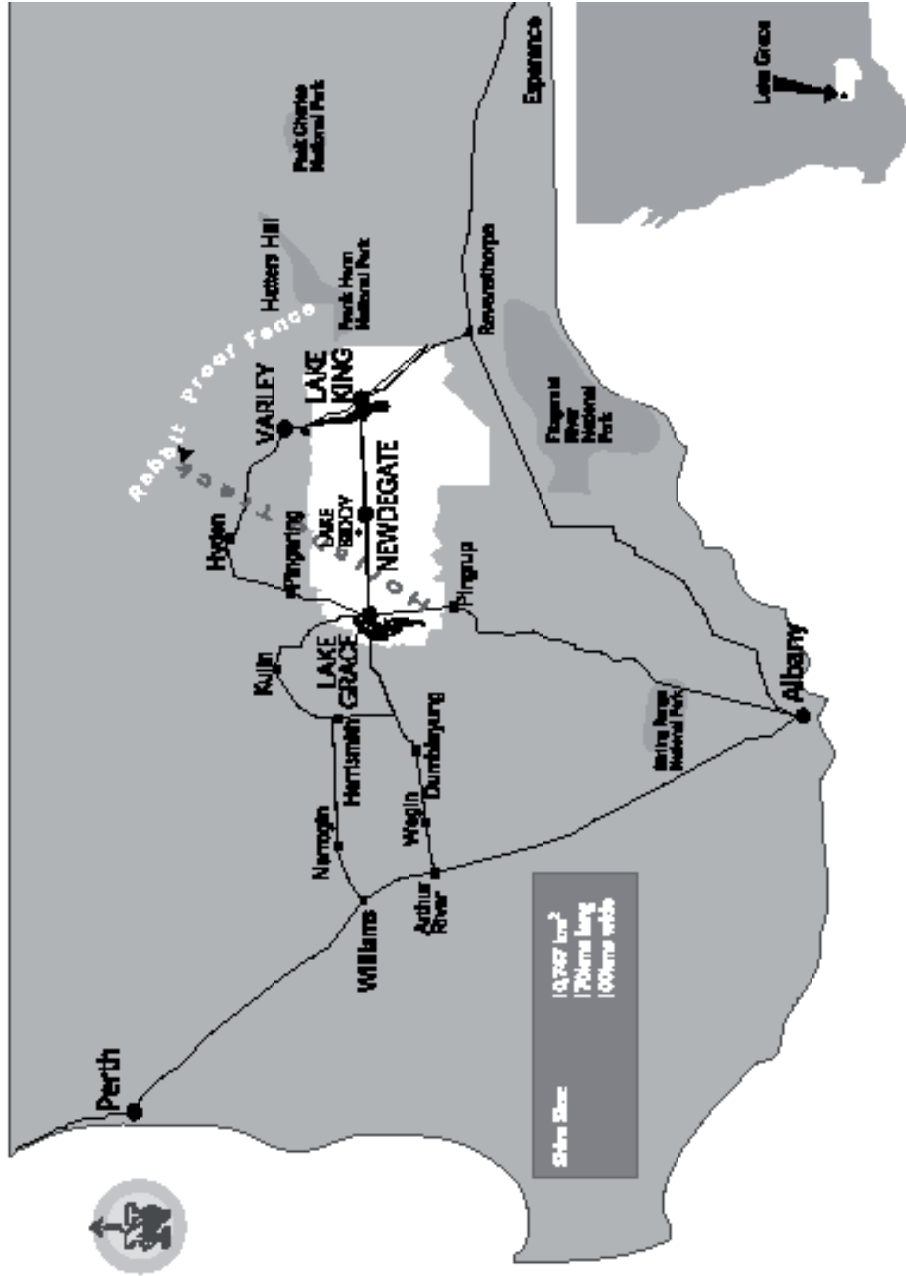
This environment provides an important habitat for a variety of birds. At times, the lake and its shoreline become breeding grounds for waders, ducks and even Black Swans. The samphire marshes fringing the lake are favoured by Banded Stilts endemic to Australia. In wet years or after flood events, thousands of Banded Stilts - plump-bodied birds with long orange legs - flock to the lake to breed in the large, shallow, saline waters. At one stage, more than 12,000 Banded Stilts were counted at *Lake Grace*, accounting for a significant percentage of their national population.

The surrounding bushland is home to birds such as Wedge-tailed Eagles, Tawny Frogmouths, honeyeaters, parrots and more. A variety of small mammals, including the Western Mouse, White-tailed Dunnart and Mitchell's Hopping Mouse, inhabit the area, along with kangaroos, wallabies, echidna and various reptiles.





Lake Grace can be viewed from the visitors' information bay on its western side, where the Collie-Lake King Road crosses *Lake Grace North*. Panoramic views of the lake system can be seen from *Lake Grace Lookout*, a further two kilometres to the west.



13,767 km²
 20km long
 100km wide



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