

Kennedy Range National Park

Mundatharrda



Visitor guide



Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions



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Above Honeycomb Gorge – formed by wind and water spray from a seasonal waterfall. *Photo – Janine Guenther*



Above A male painted finch. **Above right** A *Senna* species. *Photos – Janine Guenther*

Natural history

The Kennedy Range is an eroded plateau located on the rim of the Gascoyne River catchment about 160km from the coast. The range experiences a desert climate.

Around 250 million years ago, the Gascoyne region was a shallow ocean basin off the edge of the ancient Australian continent. It filled with sediment, which later became compressed to form layers of sandstone and shale. Movements in the Earth's crust brought these above sea level where erosion has stripped away much of the rock. Today, marine fossils can be found in the range's sandstone strata.

The Kennedy Range is a remnant of the land surface that elsewhere has been worn away but here forms a mesa some 75km long and up to 25km wide, and oriented north south.

The southern and eastern sides of the range have eroded to form spectacular cliffs that rise 100m above the Lyons River Valley plain. These are dissected by a maze of steep-sided canyons, which have short-lived streams after rain. Much of the range's western boundary has a substantial geological fault system and springs are common along its base.

Rows of red sand dunes dominated by spinifex with scattered acacia, grevillea and banksia are found on the top of the plateau.

More than 400 plant species have been recorded in the park, including 80 species of annual wildflowers such as the mulla mulla and everlasting daisies. After good rains, wildflowers flourish from July to September.

Euros are the most visible native animal within the park, but there are 19 other mammal species, including nine bat species. More than 100 bird species have also been observed, including the splendid fairy-wren and the rufous-crowned emu-wren. Some 33 reptile species have been recorded.

Aboriginal history

Mundatharrda is the name for the Kennedy Range in the local Inggarda language. This is an extremely important spiritual place for the traditional owners of the area and to those of the wider Gascoyne region. The whole range is extremely sacred and within the range there are many important archaeological and ethnographic cultural sites. For the traditional owners the significant sites throughout country tell many stories that are central to their culture. These stories continue to be handed down through the generations.

Despite the impacts of colonisation, the traditional owners of this area have maintained an extremely close connection to Mundatharrda. Many people and families grew up and worked on surrounding pastoral stations where they were able to continue to carry out their responsibility to care for the range. They continue to shoulder these responsibilities today and take their children and grandchildren out to show and teach them about the stories, country and the spirits in the range.

Mundatharrda was also an important place for Inggarda people to meet with Thudgari, Wajarri, Baiyungu and other people from the area. The old people would meet here to trade, gather medicine, drink from the fresh water springs and hold ceremonies.

Visitors to Mundatharrda are asked to show their respect to the country by following all cultural protocols. These include those indicated on signs, avoiding places signed as restricted heritage sites, keeping to marked tracks and areas, and only camping in designated camping areas. Going to the wrong places can be dangerous for both visitors and the traditional owners. Some stories and places can only be spoken about or visited by certain people. Visitors need to be particularly careful at water holes and show their respect to the *kajurra* (water snake) as well as be careful of the spirits in the range after sun down.

Artefact scatters found in many parts of the park provide evidence of the long history Aboriginal people have with the area. All Aboriginal sites in Western Australia are protected under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972*. Visitors finding artefacts should leave them where they are found and inform the Parks and Wildlife Service of their location.

Visitor information

Access

The unsealed road to the eastern escarpment is usually suitable for two-wheel-drive vehicles. Access to the western side of the park via the Gascoyne River is recommended only for those with a high-clearance and high-capability four-wheel-drive vehicle. On the western side there are no marked walk trails and the track is rough. There is one information shelter located on the southern side of the Gascoyne River and one located about 35km north of the Gascoyne River (on the track entering from the west). Roads may be closed after rainfall. Watch out for wildlife.

Flights over Kennedy Range are available on request through visitor centres at Carnarvon and Denham. Seasonal day trips are available from Carnarvon. Alternatively, search for Kennedy Range tours online for other opportunities.

Overnight

Camping is available at Temple Gorge Campground at the base of the eastern escarpment (see map). A communal fire pit is on-site. The Parks and Wildlife Service encourages visitors to collect wood outside the park and use the communal fire pit to minimise use of wood. The Temple Gorge campground has caravan access, but has limited space for manoeuvring long vans. Accommodation is available at Gascoyne Junction – about 60km from the park.

Always carry ample supplies of fuel and drinking water. Pastoral stations surround the park and access through stations is only permitted with the manager's approval.

Further information and emergency contacts

Parks and Wildlife Service campground hosts are usually based in the park at the Temple Gorge Campground from May to October.

**Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions
Parks and Wildlife Service Carnarvon Office**
Phone: (08) 9941 3754
dbca.wa.gov.au

Shire of Upper Gascoyne
Phone: (08) 9943 0988

Carnarvon Police
Phone: (08) 9941 7333 or dial emergency number 000

Carnarvon Hospital
Phone: (08) 9941 0555

Information current at April 2018.
This document is available in alternative formats on request.

Front cover Entrance road to Temple Gorge Campground. *Photo – Janine Guenther*



Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions



Above The purple mulla mulla is prolific during the wildflower season. *Photo – Janine Guenther*

European history

Francis Thomas Gregory explored areas of the Gascoyne and Murchison and named the Kennedy Range in 1858 in honour of the then Governor of Western Australia, Arthur Edward Kennedy.

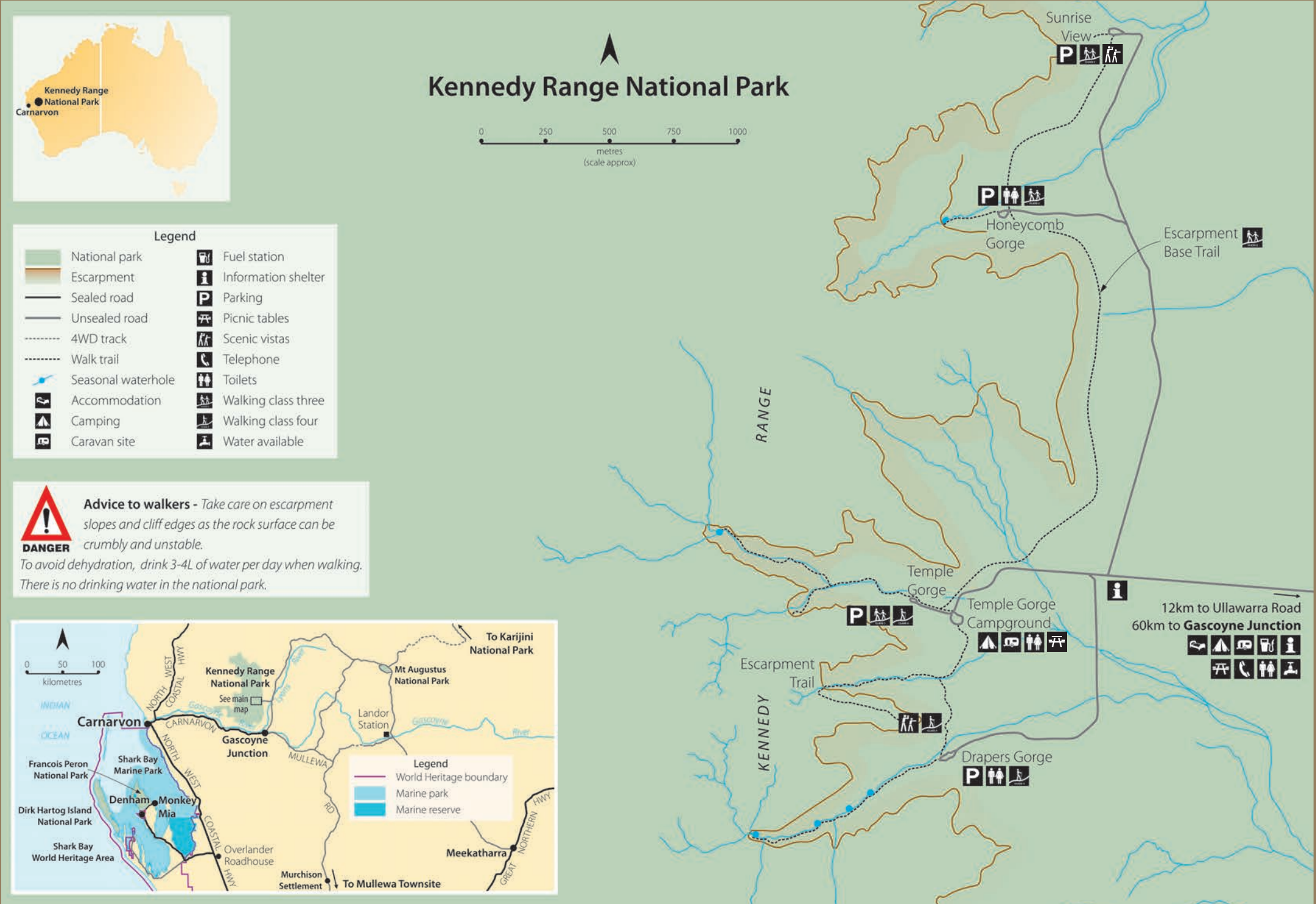
Within 20 years, pastoral leases were taken up along the Gascoyne and Lyons rivers. Jimba Jimba was the first station established near the range in 1878. Lyons River Station was first taken up in the 1880s and developed into a prosperous wool-producing station.

Sections of what is now the national park were progressively taken up as pastoral lease. Much of this area is waterless and during the period under pastoral operations, heavy sheep-grazing did not occur over large areas of the park, leaving its natural systems relatively intact.

In 1977 the unviable Binalthya pastoral lease was acquired by the State, which led to the formation of Kennedy Range National Park in 1993. Additional lands have since been added to form the current area of 319,037ha.

Below Sand goanna. *Photo – Janine Guenther*







Walking in Kennedy Range National Park

There are several trails in the park that give you the opportunity to explore the park's range country and its plants and animals. Most of the walk trails follow creek lines and are often rocky. Rock pools are seasonal and not fit to drink from. Visitors should read the information on signage for each trail, taking particular note of the difficulty rating.

These walk trails have been graded according to the *Australian Standards for Walking Tracks*. Look for the different coloured markers indicating the trail class. The following two classes apply to the walks in Kennedy Range.

-  **CLASS 3** – Users require a moderate level of fitness. Trails may be slightly modified and include unstable surfaces.
-  **CLASS 4** – Trails are in relatively undisturbed environments and are often rough with few if any modifications. A moderate to high level of fitness is required. Users should be prepared and self reliant.

Above Enjoy being close to the range at Temple Gorge Campground. *Photo – Tourism WA*

Far right The eastern scarp of the Kennedy Range.

Below left Western euro. **Below right** Dawson's burrowing bee (one of Australia's largest native bees) on a blue bell flower. This bee species is unique to Western Australia's north-west – predominantly the Gascoyne. *Photos – Janine Guenther*



Visitor sites and trails

Temple Gorge Trail (Class 3 and 4) 2km return, 1–2 hours

Starting at the Temple Gorge day-use site, the first part of the trail is Class 3 and leads to a fork in the creek under a prominent rock face referred to as The Temple. The left fork is a short picturesque walk, and apart from a few step-ups, is relatively easy. The right fork is rated at Class 4 and is a longer, tougher, boulder-strewn walk up to a small seasonal rock pool. Care should be taken scrambling up and around large boulders on this section.



Honeycomb Gorge Trail (Class 3) 600m return, 20–40 minutes

This fairly easy, but rocky trail takes walkers to a large amphitheatre containing a seasonal waterfall and pool. Marvel at the honeycomb cavities that have been eroded into the cliff face.

Drapers Gorge Trail (Class 4) 2km return, 1–2 hours

A progressively harder route that features a series of seasonal waterfalls and small rock pools along its length. Walkers completing the whole walk will have to scramble up escarpment slopes and along rock ledges in some areas. Caution should be applied in these areas because of loose and crumbly rock.



Sunrise View Trail (Class 3) 300m return, 15 minutes

This raised viewing area, a short walk from the car park, has a good view of the battlement-like face of the range. Sunrise is a particularly good time to experience the view.

Escarpment Base Trail (Class 3) 5.8km return, 3–4.5 hours

This walk links Temple Gorge campground with Honeycomb Gorge and Sunrise View walk trails. There is interesting geology as well as sandalwood (*Santalum spicatum*) to observe between Temple Gorge campground and Honeycomb Gorge Trail. A lookout area is a feature of the section between Honeycomb Gorge and Sunrise View trails.

Escarpment Trail (Class 4) 3.4km return, 1.5–3 hours

Start at either Drapers Gorge car park or Temple Gorge campground. The trail leads into a narrow gorge that ascends to the top of the range for spectacular views. This trail is steep with loose rocks and traverses near exposed cliff edges. Take care.



Caring for the park and your safety

- Be kind** Do not disturb animals, plants or rocks. No firearms or pets are permitted in the park.
- Be responsible** Use your portable gas stove. Dead wood is habitat for wildlife.
- Be clean** Take your rubbish out of the park when you leave.
- Be careful** Stay on the paths and help prevent erosion. Look out for falling rocks. Your safety is our concern but your responsibility. **Take care on escarpment slopes and cliff edges as rock surfaces can be crumbly and unstable.**
- Be prepared** The trails are rough and steep in places. Wear sturdy footwear and carry drinking water at all times. **To avoid dehydration, drink 3–4L of water per day when walking. There is no drinking water in the park.**
- Be considerate** Fossicking and collecting rocks, gemstones and fossils is not permitted.

