

Kennedy Range National Park Mundatharrda



Visitor guide



Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions



Download this now and take with you



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 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 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 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 in the park, but there are 19 other mammal species, including nine bat species. More than 100 bird species have also been observed, including small birds such as 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 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 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 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.

Artifact 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 artifacts should leave them where they are found and inform the Parks and Wildlife Service of their location.



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 Binthalya 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*





Hiking in Kennedy Range National Park

There are several trails in the park which give you the opportunity to explore the park's range country and its plants and animals. Several of the hiking trails follow usually dry, rocky waterways. Rock pools are seasonal and not fit to drink. Visitors should read the signage information for each trail, taking note of the difficulty rating.

These hiking 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 hiking trails at 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.



CAUTION

Avoid hiking in hot weather – the best months are May to August. Radiant heat from the rocky terrain increases temperature by 5-10 degrees Celsius.

Hike during the coolest times of day.

Physical fitness – match your fitness to the requirements of the trail class.

Drink water regularly – carry and drink 3 to 4 litres of water per person per day. There is no drinking water in the park.

Wear a broad brimmed hat, loose clothing, long sleeves, sunscreen – to minimise heat stress and sunburn.

Sturdy footwear – important for the rugged terrain and unstable surfaces.

Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) – in an emergency, a PLB could help save your life.

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. Hikers completing the whole length will have to scramble up escarpment slopes and along 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 considerate Fossicking and collecting rocks, gemstones and fossils is not permitted.



Above The eastern scarp of the Kennedy Range.
Photo – Janine Guenther.

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 via Mardathuna Station). Roads may be closed after rainfall. Watch out for native animals and stray livestock.

Overnight

Camping is available at Temple Gorge Campground at the base of the eastern escarpment (see map). The campground has a communal fire pit to minimise use of wood (habitat for native fauna). Firewood must be collected outside the park. The Temple Gorge campground has caravan access, but has limited space for manoeuvring long vans. An overflow area accommodates long vans when necessary. 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 volunteer campground hosts are usually based in the park at the Temple Gorge Campground from May to September.

Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions Parks and Wildlife Service

Shark Bay District
Knight Terrace, Denham WA 6537
Phone: (08) 9948 2226
dbca.wa.gov.au

Shire of Upper Gascoyne

Phone: (08) 9943 0988

Carnarvon Police

Phone: (08) 9941 7333 or in an emergency, dial 000.

Carnarvon Hospital

Phone: (08) 9941 0555

For park alerts visit alerts.dbca.wa.gov.au



Save the
app that
could save
your life



emergencyapp.triplezero.gov.au

Download the free Emergency+ app before your visit which can be used in the event of any emergency to call for assistance. If there is no mobile phone coverage you **WILL NOT** be able to call 000 but the app will provide you with GPS location details.

Information current at June 2021

This document is available in alternative formats on request.



Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions





Kennedy Range National Park



Legend

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| National park | Fuel station |
| Escarpment | Information shelter |
| Sealed road | Parking |
| Unsealed road | Picnic tables |
| 4WD track | Scenic vistas |
| Walk trail | Telephone |
| Seasonal waterhole | Toilets |
| Accommodation | Walking class three |
| Camping | Walking class four |
| Caravan site | Water available |

! DANGER
Advice to walkers - Take care on escarpment slopes and cliff edges as the rock surface can be crumbly and unstable.
 To avoid dehydration, drink 3-4L of water per day when walking.
 There is no drinking water in the national park.

