

South West Queensland



visitor guide

Featuring

Culgoa Floodplain National Park

Currawinya National Park

Lake Bindegolly National Park

Mariala National Park

Thrushton National Park

Tregole National Park



Photo: Alicia Wittington, Qld Govt.

discover South West Queensland

Budgerigars in flight

Outback Queensland is far from being an empty, silent place. Explore this land of life and colour to be rewarded with many memorable experiences.

An ancient landscape

The Great Artesian Basin supplies the outback with reliable water from deep underground and underpins the region's geological and pastoral history.

When the centre of Australia sagged and filled with sediments from rivers and lakes about 220–200 million years ago, layers of porous, water-holding sandstone were created. Then 110–100 million years ago, sea levels rose creating vast inland seas. Sea-bed sediments formed into bands of impermeable rocks that trapped water below and preserved fossils including shellfish and dinosaurs.

Millions of years of weathering and erosion have left flat-topped hills of hard, weather-resistant rocks rising above a vast, wide landscape.

Stories in the land

Today's landscapes contain reminders of the people who once lived and travelled there—from artefact scatters, quarries and midden sites to abandoned stations.

South West Queensland has always been home to numerous groups of Aboriginal people; the rich and varied landscape providing food, materials and opportunities to maintain a thriving social, cultural, religious and economic lifestyle over thousands of years. Aboriginal sites of the Paroo River date back to about 14 000 years ago and connections with the land continue today.

European exploration in the early nineteenth century was followed by settlers moving stock over thousands of kilometres to establish runs and properties. Bullock-teams brought supplies and returned with wool and hides to the coast. Minerals were discovered and settlements grew into towns. Our parks contain reminders of

Different parks, different experiences

Lakes, rivers and wetlands in Currawinya, Lake Bindegolly and Culgoa Floodplain national parks are a stark contrast to the harsh, semi-arid outback landscape.

'Soft' mulga covers sandplains over much of Thrushton and Currawinya national parks, whereas the rocky ranges and scarps of Tregole and Mariala have stunted 'hard' mulga.

Ooline trees growing at Tregole are unusual given the area's hot, dry climate.

Thrushton National Park has areas of spinifex from which colourful wildflowers burst into bloom in spring.

Tregole and Lake Bindegolly national parks are just off the bitumen, whereas Currawinya, Culgoa Floodplain and Mariala are isolated parks accessed via long, dusty, unsealed roads.

the fluctuating fortunes of those living in a challenging environment faced with droughts, floods, depressions and the occasional good season.

Changing climates Mulga lands

Outback Queensland has not always been a dry place. Rainforests once covered much of the land, but with the onset of a cooler, drier climate about 30 million years ago, these were gradually replaced by grasslands and eucalypt forests, and seasonal dryness. Fire then started to influence vegetation.

Today's climate zones, where northern and central Australia receives mainly summer rains, were only established 2.5 million years ago. Fluctuating climates then continued to shape the landscape—creating sandridge deserts and drainage patterns and subsequently the arid-adapted plant communities seen in today's outback.



Photo: Robert Ashdown, Qld Govt.

Covering the semi-arid lands to the west of the brigalow belt, the mulga lands stretch from northern New South Wales and cover about 12 per cent of Queensland. The bioregion lies mostly in the Murray–Darling Basin.

Flat-to-undulating plains and low ranges are dominated by drought-tolerant mulga *Acacia aneura*, with patches of grasslands and eucalypt-acacia woodlands. Much of the region is used for grazing cattle and sheep.

In eastern areas with higher rainfall, poplar box *Eucalyptus populnea* and other eucalypts co-dominate the canopy.

To the north, the heavily-timbered mulga lands contrast sharply with the open clay plains of the Mitchell grass downs. To the west the mulga gets shorter and sparser, eventually merging into the braided floodplains of the channel country—where unpredictable rainfall creates cycles of boom and bust.

Southern Brigalow Belt

Named after brigalow *Acacia harpophylla*, this bioregion stretches from central inland Queensland into northern New South Wales. Vegetation includes eucalypt woodlands, native grasslands and shrublands where plants such as brigalow predominate.

The brigalow belt has been greatly affected by clearing for agriculture, altered fire regimes, grazing livestock and introduced species. Three mammal and one bird species are now presumed extinct. Ten species including birds, mammals and reptiles are classified as vulnerable to extinction and 35 species of vertebrates are regarded as rare. Over 144 plants are classed as threatened.



Photo: Fiona Leveington, Qld Govt.

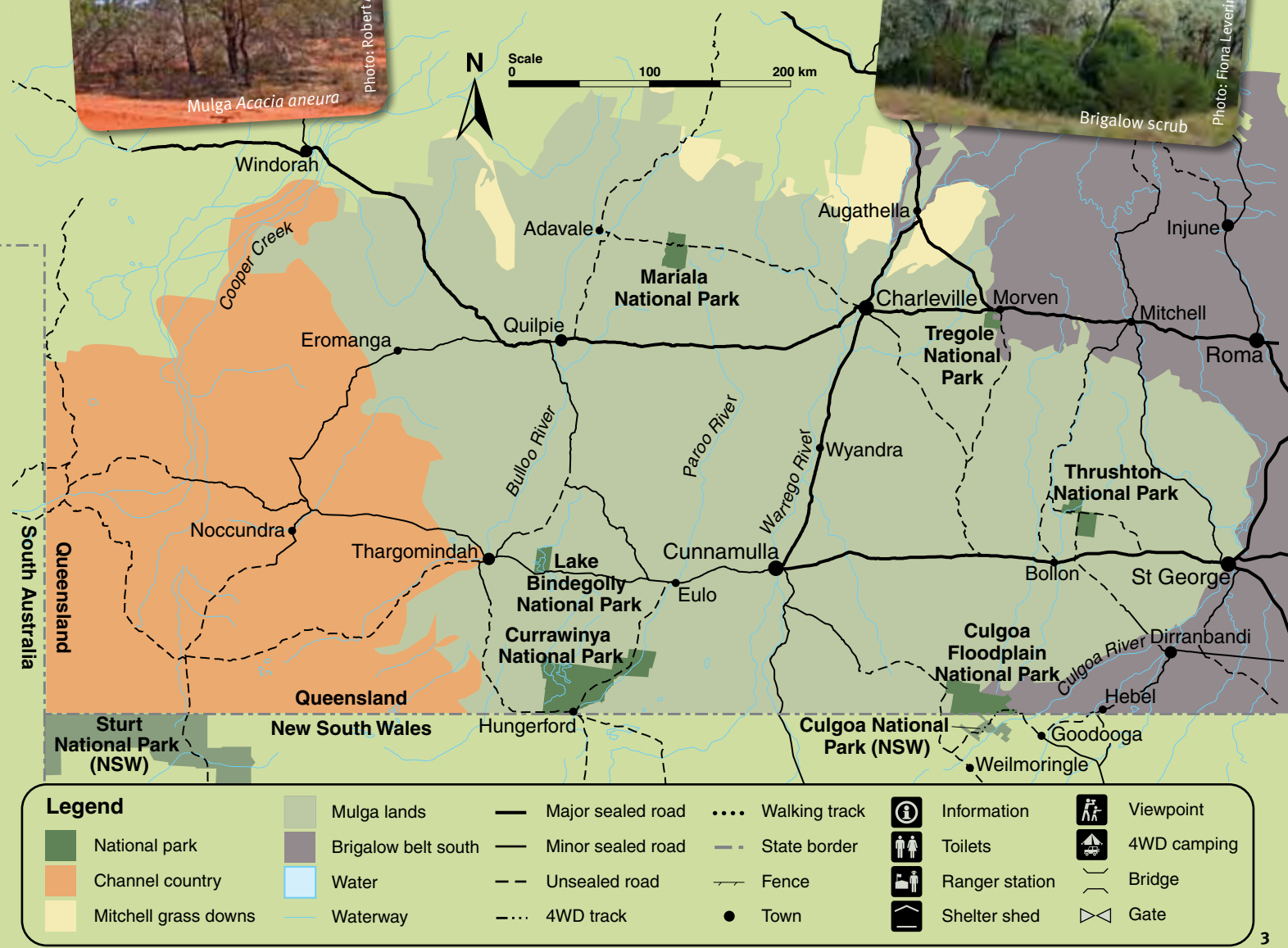


Photo: Robert Ashdown, Qld Govt.

Sapphire flats of Lake Bindegolly National Park

Planning your trip

Dusty road through mulga

Photo: Robert Ashdown, Qld Govt.



Warning!

These parks are remote and do not have a consistent ranger presence, fuel or supplies. Be self-sufficient and prepared for emergencies like breakdowns or stranding after rain. You are responsible for your own safety.

Travel information

Before you visit, go to www.nprsr.qld.gov.au/parks and click on 'Park alerts' for the latest information on access, closures and conditions. Or phone 13 QGOV (13 74 68). Mobile phone charges may apply.

Check current road conditions and river heights with RACQ or local police (see back page).

Obtain weather forecasts from the Bureau of Meteorology at www.bom.gov.au.

Camping permits

Camping is not permitted in all parks, check before you go.

Before camping overnight you must first obtain a camping permit, pay fees and display a camping tag at your camp site.



Emu chicks

Photo: Qld Govt.

See www.nprsr.qld.gov.au/parks or phone 13 QGOV (13 74 68) for details of current camping arrangements and how to obtain camping permits for the park you intend to visit.

Plan your trip

The parks of South West Queensland are remote. Be self-sufficient in every way.

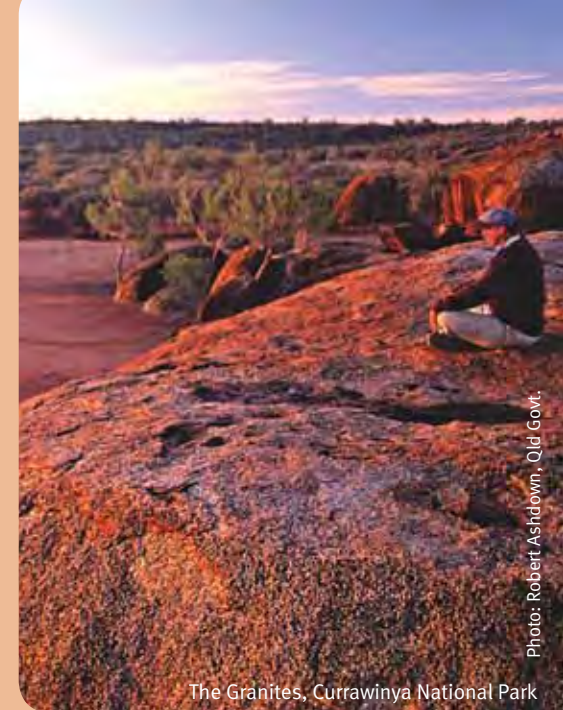
- **Obtain a good road map.**
- **Use maps to plan refuelling points** and calculate fuel requirements. Frequent low gear and 4WD travel uses fuel more quickly, and don't forget to account for travel while you are within the park!
- **Pack enough water, fuel, food and emergency supplies.**
- Carry seven litres of water per person per day (for drinking, cooking and limited washing), plus some extra in case of emergency.
- **Bring a portable stove.** Fires may not be permitted.
- **Pack a complete first-aid kit and know how to use it.** Help may be days away. Include sun and insect protection and prescription medications.
- **Take vehicle spares and repair equipment** including two spare tyres, engine coolant and oil. Carry vehicle retrieval equipment and ensure it is in working order before you go.
- **Be familiar with your equipment and experienced** with inland Australian conditions. Ensure one person has sound mechanical knowledge of your vehicle and consider travelling with another vehicle.

- **Leave a copy of your itinerary** with a friend or relative. Include travel routes and/or check-in points.
- **Pack for hot and cold conditions.** Outback Queensland can be very hot during the day and very cold (below freezing point) overnight.
- **Bring sturdy rubbish bags** and sealable, animal-proof containers. No bins are provided.

Be safe

Be aware of potential dangers and take care of yourself.

- Avoid travelling in hot summer months. Start longer walks at cooler times of the day to avoid heat exhaustion.
- Keep to designated roads and tracks and drive with caution. Dirt roads may have gutters, washouts or loose edges (especially after rain). Dust may seriously decrease visibility. Animals can appear on roads at any time.
- If your vehicle breaks down, stay with it! A vehicle is much easier to find than a person.
- Always carry drinking water, whether walking or driving. Boil, filter or treat water from all sources (bores, streams, rivers or waterholes) before drinking.
- Carry communication equipment, such as a satellite telephone or UHF radio.



The Granites, Currawinya National Park

Photo: Robert Ashdown, Qld Govt.

- Watch your step. Escarpment edges can be unstable due to natural weathering—stay away.
- Never jump or dive into a waterhole. It may be shallow or hide submerged objects.
- Never walk alone. Stay on the tracks unless you are very experienced and well-equipped.
- Supervise children at all times.
- Be aware of your surroundings at all times and be on the lookout for animals and insects that could scratch, sting or bite.
- Wear protective clothing. Put on a hat, sunscreen, a long sleeved shirt and sturdy footwear (not thongs).

Visitor facilities and opportunities



Gidgee trees

Photo: Qld Govt.

	Ranger station	Patrolled park	Toilet	On-site information	Drinking water	Shelter shed	Rubbish bins	Picnic table	Walking track	Gas barbecue	Camping	4WD recommended
Culgoa Floodplain National Park	P6	●	●								●	●
Currawinya National Park	P8	●	●	●	●			●	●		●	●
Lake Bindegolly National Park	P12		●	●		●		●	●			
Mariala National Park	P14		●								●	●
Thrushton National Park	P15		●								●	●
Tregole National Park	P16		●	●	●	●		●	●	●		



Photos: Robert Ashdown, Qld Govt.

Culgoa Floodplain National Park



Canegrass swamp

Photo: Craig Eddie, Qld Govt.

Flood waters from far upstream break out from the river across vast, often-parched floodplains and can isolate this park for long periods.

Floodplains lightly timbered with coolibah and black box cover most of this 61 900 ha park on the Queensland–New South Wales border.

See Aboriginal cultural sites and relicts of an extensive pastoral heritage including Hillview Homestead, Redbank Hut, old wells, fences and yards.

The park was gazetted in 1994 and takes in the former Byra, Myola, Toulby and adjacent properties.

Access

A 4WD vehicle is essential to reach the park, 130 km south-west of Dirranbandi.

Take the sealed road from Dirranbandi to Hebel. Then travel 45 km to Goodooga along an unsealed black-soil road which becomes impassable after rain. Turn right at Goodooga into Brenda Road. After crossing the cattle grid on the border take the left fork in the road and follow the 'Byra 7 km' sign.

Camping

Bushcamping is permitted at several sites, but there are no facilities. Contact the ranger on arrival for a detailed map of access tracks and camp sites open to visitors. This park is remote—visitors must be self-sufficient and well-equipped.

Things to do

Wildlife watching

Culgoa Floodplain National Park is a birdwatcher's haven and home to at least 150 bird species.

See some of Australia's most beautiful parrots, including red-winged, red-rumped and mulga parrots and Major Mitchell's cockatoos. All six species of Australia's woodswallows live here, as do at least 10 species of honeyeaters including the vulnerable painted honeyeater.

When they contain water, Byra Lagoon and other creeks and waterholes are



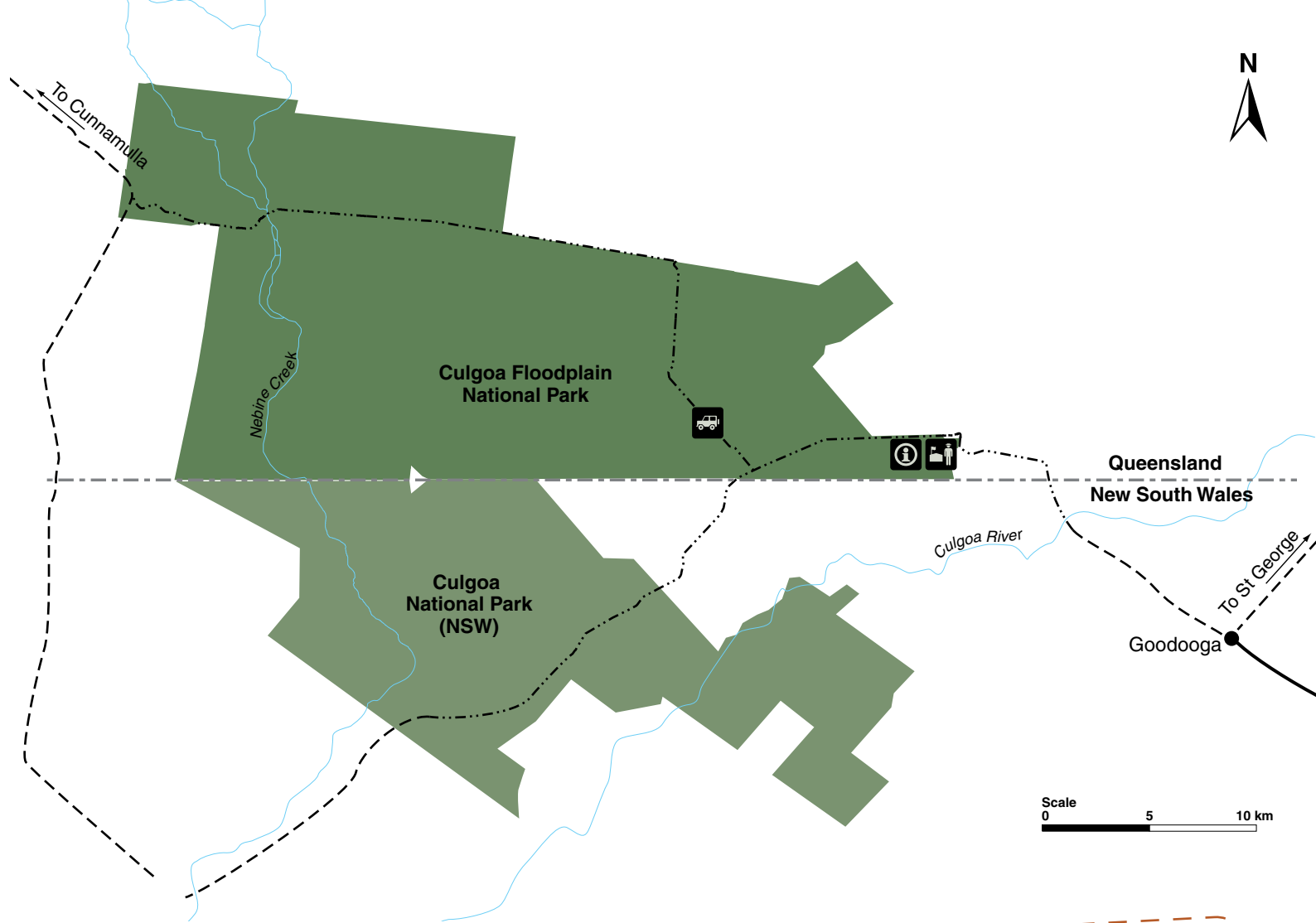
Redbank hut

Photo: Bruce Cowell, Queensland Museum

great spots to watch waterbirds early in the morning and late in the afternoon.

Red and eastern grey kangaroos live in most areas of the park, with darker western grey kangaroos in the park's north-western sections. Small mammals including narrow-nosed planigales and several species of dunnarts hunt at night for a meal of insects, spiders, insect larvae and other invertebrates.

After rain the elusive water-holding and burrowing frogs can be heard and seen. They include the rough collared frog which is considered vulnerable to extinction. So too is the yakka skink which lives in logs or in the burrows made by reptiles or mammals in deep sandy soils.



Exploring habitats and landscapes

Low ridges clad in silver-green mulga separate the floodplains of the Culgoa River system in the east (in the Maranoa–Balonne catchment) to the creeks and artesian springs of the Warrego–Paroo catchment in the west.

Coolibah and black box grow along the floodplains over a cover of native grasses, including never-fail grass. The black box woodlands are significant and in Queensland are confined to small areas around the Paroo, Culgoa, McIntyre and Moonie rivers but more typical of areas further south.

To the west, away from the Culgoa River, brigalow and woodlands of pungent-scented gidgee grow on the flat plains. Red earth and stony ridges in the park's north-west support mulga scattered with western bloodwood. It is here that the rare mulga heath-myrtle *Thryptomene hexandra* is found.

At Tego Springs and other locations, water flows naturally from the Great Artesian Basin into open pools. Because areas of artesian springs are isolated from each other, they tend to have unique communities of plants and animals. Fences have been constructed to protect the springs from the impact of grazing wildlife and feral animals.

Floods give life to floodplains

While floods can seem like a disaster, they also bring life to the floodplains. Flood waters spread out over the floodplains to give parched plants a drink, move seeds into new areas and provide breeding opportunities for frogs, birds and other wildlife. After waters subside, many plants burst into flower and seeds germinate in the nutrient-rich sediments left behind.



Royal spoonbill



Culgoa Floodplain National Park

Photo: Qld Govt.

Photo: Craig Eddie, Qld Govt.



Yakka skink

Photo: Copyright © Boobook



Every now and then the park lives up to its name

Photo: Andy Coward, Qld Govt.



Photo: Karen Smith

Currawinya National Park

Rich and diverse wetlands of international importance are a stark contrast to dry red sandplains and mulga scrubs.

Two vast lakes—Wyara and Numalla—are the centrepiece of 154 870 ha Currawinya National Park, but they are not the only reasons to visit.

Currawinya is rich in nature and cultural heritage. Visitors can birdwatch, fish or enjoy the solitude of camping beside the Paroo River.

Access

Near Hungerford on the Queensland–New South Wales border, all access roads to Currawinya are unsealed and impassable when wet. A 4WD vehicle is recommended.

From Cunnamulla, drive 70 km south-west to Eulo, then a further 4 km west before turning south towards Hungerford. The final 97 km to the park office takes 1–1.5 hours to drive.

From the south, enter the park via Hungerford, 217 km north-west of Bourke. The park office is 20 km north of Hungerford.

Access is via working pastoral properties. Take care to avoid stock on unfenced roads and leave gates as you find them. Please respect the rights of property owners.

After good rains (either locally or far upstream) flooding isolates the park for long periods and can submerge camp sites along the Paroo River.

Check conditions before travelling and always carry extra supplies in case of stranding. The nearest fuel and supplies are located at Cunnamulla and Thargomindah.

Camping

Bushcamp at Ourimperee Waterhole behind the Woolshed (close to flushing toilets and a bush shower), or at sites on the Paroo River near Caiwarro at the park's northern end.

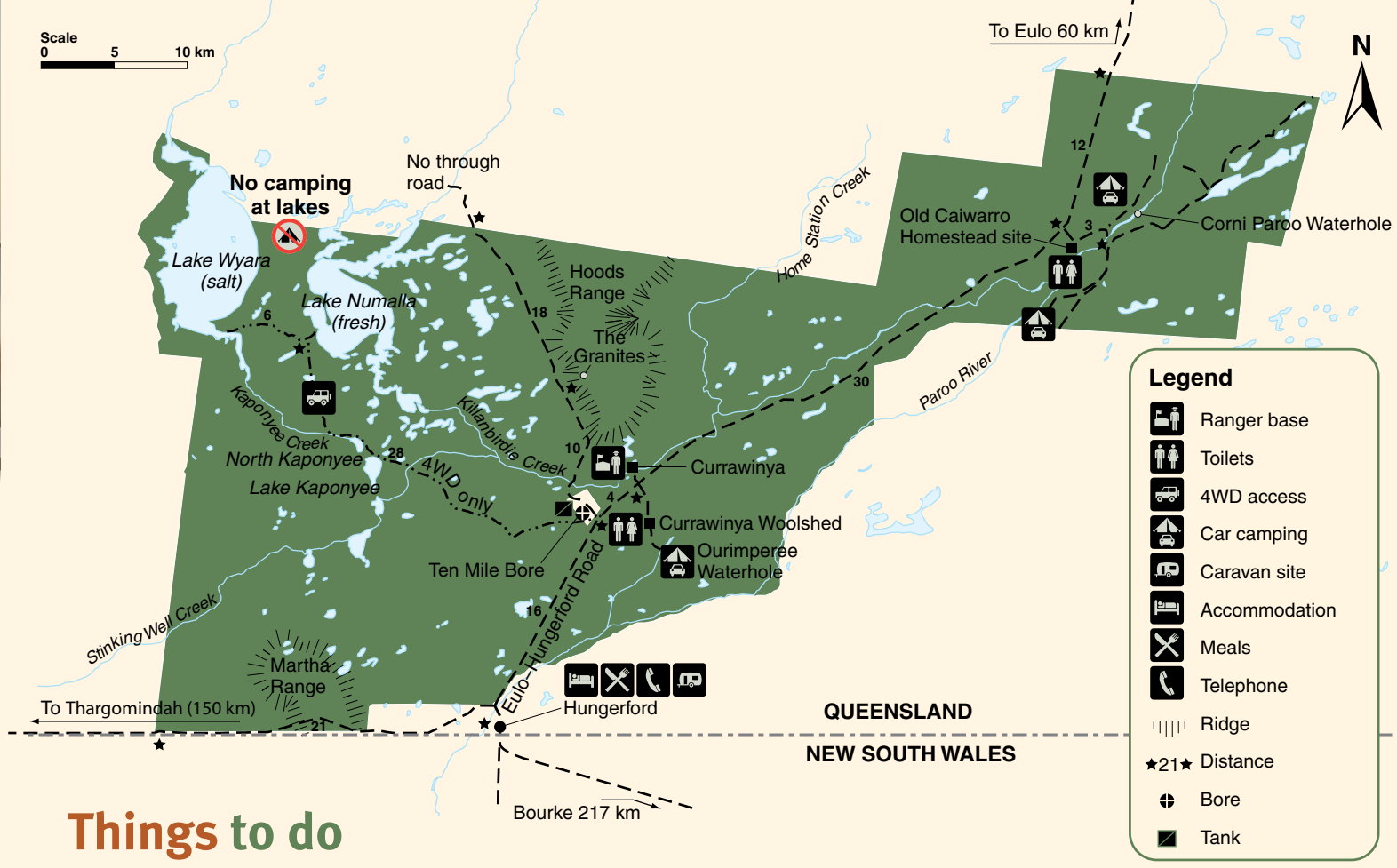


Photo: Copyright Trevor Quested



Photo: Robert Ashdown, Qld Govt.

The Granites



Things to do

Learn about the park

Visit the information display at the turnoff to the park office.

Drive to the lakes

See some of inland Australia's most important wetlands and the variety of mulga lands' habitats along the way. A 4WD vehicle is needed for the 85 km round trip from the park office to lakes Wyara and Numalla. The road may be closed after rain.

Walk to The Granites

Take the Boorara Road for 10 km north of Ten Mile Bore where a short walk leads to a small granite outcrop. Views from atop the outcrop extend over the park. Walk carefully—the track is uneven and rocks may be slippery. Carry drinking water.

Value heritage

Currawinya has a large number of sites significant to Aboriginal people. These and any associated artefacts are protected by law—please respect this and leave areas and artefacts as you find them.

Lakes and waterholes are of particular importance to the Traditional People of this area and those from neighbouring areas, especially as gathering places during the waterbird breeding season.

Heritage enthusiasts should visit the old Caiwarro homestead site, 37 km north of the park office. Bulldozed prior to the pastoral property becoming national park, the remains of several buildings, including a levee bank and machinery can still be seen. Please take care near

ruins and treat such reminders of our pastoral history with respect.

Visit Hungerford where the historic Royal Mail Hotel, built in 1870, still operates.

Boating and fishing

Fishing is permitted along the Paroo River and in selected areas of Lake Numalla. See the ranger or on-site signs for details. Only live bait caught within the Paroo River system can be brought into the park.

Canoeing, kayaking and swimming are permitted on Lake Numalla; however motorised boats and jet skis are not permitted on any of the lakes. Signs at lakes Wyara and Numalla show the activities permitted in particular areas.



Photo: Robert Ashdown, Qld Govt.

Currawinya Woolshed



Photo: Robert Ashdown, Qld Govt.

River red gum, Paroo River

Along the Paroo River

This 600 kilometre-long river has a catchment of over 70 000 square kilometres, and is the last free-flowing river in the Murray–Darling Basin. In wet times it forms a floodplain of over 800 000 ha. In the dry season, the river becomes a string of waterholes such as Ourimperee and Corni Paroo waterholes in Currawinya National Park.

During the day whistling kites dive into the water to scoop up fish while rufous night-herons roost on shady branches nearby. After dark, little pied bats skim for insects just above the water surface.

Currawinya also has a small population of the greater bilby. Captive-bred bilbies have been reintroduced to Currawinya inside a 25 square kilometre predator and feral animal-proof enclosure funded by public donations and built with the assistance of volunteers.

Visitors to Currawinya cannot visit the bilby fence or see bilbies, but can learn about them and the re-introduction project from a display near the woolshed. To see a bilby up close, contact www.murweh.qld.gov for details about 'The Bilby Experience' in Charleville.

Exploring the landscape

Lake Wyara is lined by salt-tolerant samphire plants, whereas black box, river cooba and boobiella border Lake Numalla and many, smaller temporary lakes. Channels and floodplains of the Paroo River and other creeks are fringed with yapunyah, coolibah and river red gum.

Elsewhere, mulga dominates the sandplains. Turkeybush *Eremophila* spp. has gradually replaced understorey grasses, and is a subject of ongoing scientific research.

The pungent aroma of gidgee fills the air before, during and after rain. Poplar box, beefwood, emu apple, leopardwood and whitewood are common trees. Uncommon and important shrubs and trees include inland belah *Casuarina cristata* subsp. *pauper*, *Melaleuca*

densispicata and black bluebush *Maireana pyramidata*.

Low-lying eroded dunefields are dominated by shrublands of turpentine and hophbush; whereas 'Bastard' mulga and lancewood grow on Hoods Range in the park's north.



Photo: Bruce Thomson

Eremophila latrobei



Photo: Robert Ashdown, Qld Govt.

Lake Numalla shoreline

Currawinya's Lakes

Currawinya National Park is a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

Currawinya's lakes are important breeding and refuge sites for a spectacular array of waterbirds, including waders migrating from across Australia and the world. Currawinya's wetlands regularly support up to 100 000 waterbirds.

Of particular importance are lakes Numalla and Wyara—no other wetland complex in arid or southern Australia is thought to consistently support such large populations of waterbirds.

Separated by only a few kilometres of sand dunes, each has different water conditions. Lake Numalla receives floodwaters more frequently from the Paroo River and is usually permanent. It holds fresh water, while the slightly larger Lake Wyara is saline and regularly dries to a vast, white claypan.

Different bird communities live on each of the lakes at different times. Lake Wyara supports a greater number of waterbirds while Lake Numalla has a greater diversity.

Smaller waders and plant-eating waterbirds feed in the clear, salty waters of Lake Wyara, which has more aquatic



View over Lake Numalla to Lake Wyara (left)

Photo: John Porter, University of New South Wales

vegetation and invertebrates. Shallows are the home to sandpipers, godwits, snipes, rails, dotterels and stilts. At times thousands of black swans, coots and grebes can be seen; as can ducks—including pink-eared, hardhead, black and wood ducks and the rare freckled duck. Lake Wyara provides a safe breeding ground for red-necked avocets, silver gulls, Caspian terns, cormorants, black swans, Australian pelicans and many other species. Pelicans that breed at Lake Wyara often fly to Lake Numalla and other surrounding lakes (including Lake Bindegolly 80 km away) to feed.

Large waders and fish-eating species prefer the turbid (muddy) waters of Lake Numalla. Egrets, herons, cormorants, ibis, plovers and brlolgas are most common.

When seasonal waterholes, lakes and claypans fill after good rains, waterbirds scatter across the park. Spoonbills, great egrets and straw-necked ibis can be seen.

Keeping watch on Currawinya's birds

Researchers from the University of Newcastle and rangers have been studying the effects of the changing water levels and conditions of birds in these outback lakes.

When water levels are low, lake water can be 10 times as salty as sea water, yet when full the water can be quite fresh. High plankton levels lead to an influx of filter-feeding birds such as pink-eared ducks.

During drought, more than 10 000 freckled ducks have been seen. Researchers have also been studying breeding colonies of pelicans and other bird species.

Studies of Lake Yumberarra, a smaller lake which is fresh or salty depending on the season, has recorded 58 of Currawinya's 73 known waterbird species. It has more species than the larger lakes.

Wildlife watching

The variety of landscapes and permanent water make Currawinya rich in wildlife.

Kangaroos, wallaroos and emus are readily seen. Reptiles are plentiful, as are birds of prey.

Currawinya is home to more than 200 species of birds. Spot Major Mitchell's cockatoos, mulga parrots, chestnut-crowned babbler, orange chats, white-plumed honeyeaters and splendid fairy-wrens.

Along the river, look for water rats hunting small animals in the early morning and evening.



Photo: Qld Govt.

Greater bilby *Macrotis lagotis*



Photo: Karen Smith

Nesting waterbirds, Lake Wyara, Currawinya National Park



Photo: Mark Handley, Qld Govt.

Lake Bindegolly National Park

Lake Bindegolly when full

Pull off the bitumen to see salt and freshwater lakes and rare *Acacia ammophila* trees.

A string of separate lakes—Hutchinson, Toomaroo, Lake Bindegolly—join to form a vast ribbon of water after heavy rain.

More than just lakes, 14 000 ha Lake Bindegolly National Park was gazetted in 1991 to protect the rare tree *Acacia ammophila* that grows along nearby sand dunes.

This diverse park also contains samphire flats, claypans, sand dunes, hard and soft red mulga country, gidgee woodlands and *Eremophila* shrublands.

Access

Just off the sealed Bulloo Developmental Road (Adventure Way) 150 km west of Cunnamulla, 40 km east of Thargomindah.

Camping is not permitted at Lake Bindegolly National Park.



Photo: Robert Ashdown, Qld Govt.

On Lake Bindegolly circuit

Things to do

Picnic and day-use area

A shelter adjacent to the road shades picnic tables and displays about the park.

Open fires are not permitted.

Walking

Lake Bindegolly circuit
9.2 km, 3 hrs return
Class 4 (Australian Standards)

Skirt the eastern edge of Lake Bindegolly to return via low, grass-covered sand hills. Stop to look for waterbirds at an observation point located at the edge of the lake. **Note: sections of the walking track may be covered by water when the lake is full.**

Please stay on the track. Although able to withstand high salt levels and long periods both in and out of water, samphire (salt-tolerant) plants are easily destroyed by trampling. Samphire plants trap sediments and nutrients and help stabilise the lakes' edges.

Leave your vehicle at the shelter near the bridge and walk to the lakes. To protect the fragile lake margins and samphire flats from damage, vehicles are not allowed on the park.

Wildlife watching

A birdwatcher's paradise, Lake Bindegolly is home to more than 195 species of birds and is a vital refuge for wildlife of the arid zone.

Parrots, galahs, cockatoos, honeyeaters, fairy-wrens and birds of prey are among the many birds seen.

Of the 60 species of waterbirds that may visit, some appear almost overnight after water arrives and can disappear again just as quickly once water starts drying up. Black swans and a few other species stay on in large breeding flocks when conditions are suitable.

Kangaroos come to drink at the lakes while tiny marsupials hide in the samphire—just some of more than 80 other vertebrate animals that live in this harsh environment. Reptiles are plentiful and include the tiny box-patterned gecko, skinks, painted dragons and sand goannas. Many of the 14 species of frog recorded at the park can only be seen after rain.

Waterbirds of Lake Bindegolly

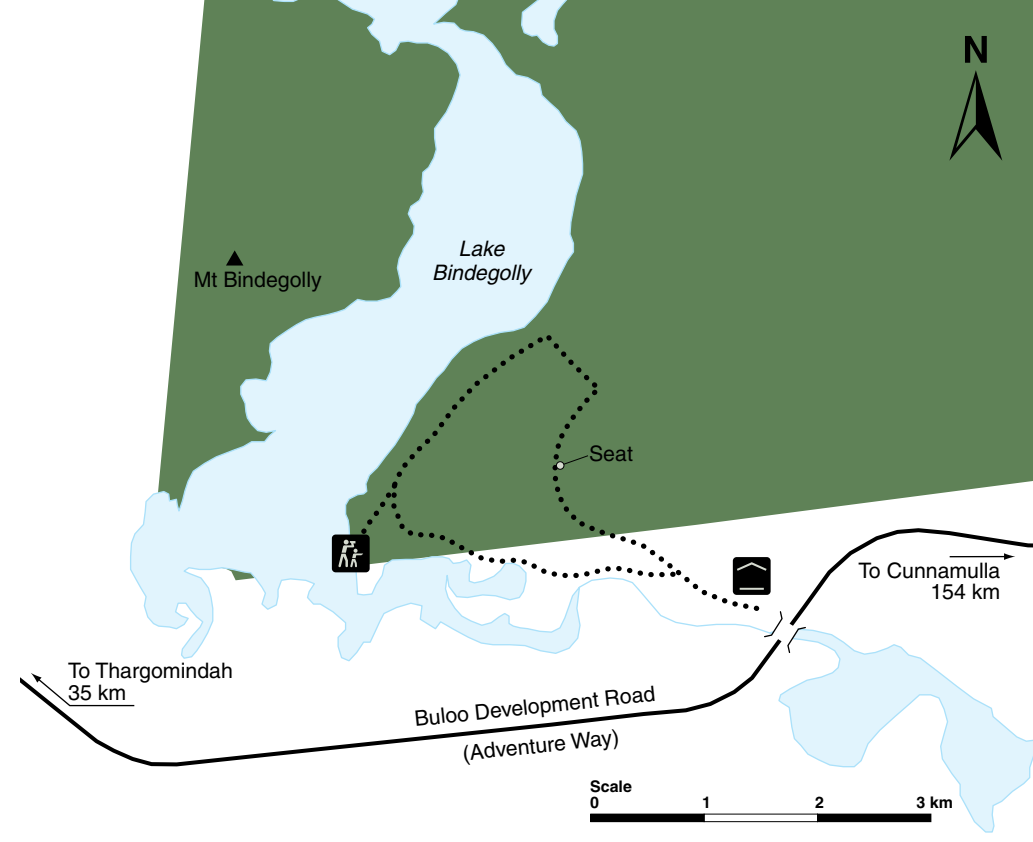
When water arrives in the lakes, so do the birds. Red-necked avocets, pied stilts, pink-eared ducks, grey teal and hardhead ducks are usually the first waterbirds to arrive.

Waterbirds are attracted by the diverse invertebrates such as shrimps, yabbies and insects, which explode in numbers, and the fish and aquatic plants that develop. These birds are followed by spoonbills, cormorants, black swans, terns, gulls, coots, grebes, and even more ducks including the 'near-threatened' freckled duck. Most of these birds usually stay on through to the final stages of the lakes' drying-up with the fish-eating birds the first to leave.



Birds at Lake Bindegolly

Photo: Robert Ashdown, Qld Govt.



Unusual Acacia

Of Lake Bindegolly National Park's 300 species of plants, *Acacia ammophila* is the most significant.

This is one of two known populations of this type of wattle, listed as 'vulnerable'

to extinction. The seeds of this plant are eaten by parrots and its seedlings by livestock, but those that survive flourish into gnarled trees with beautiful yellow 'puff-ball' flowers—mainly after rain, from March to October.



Samphire flats

Photo: Robert Ashdown, Qld Govt.



Photo: Vicki Cramer, Qld Govt.

Acacia ammophila, Lake Bindegolly National Park

Mariala National Park

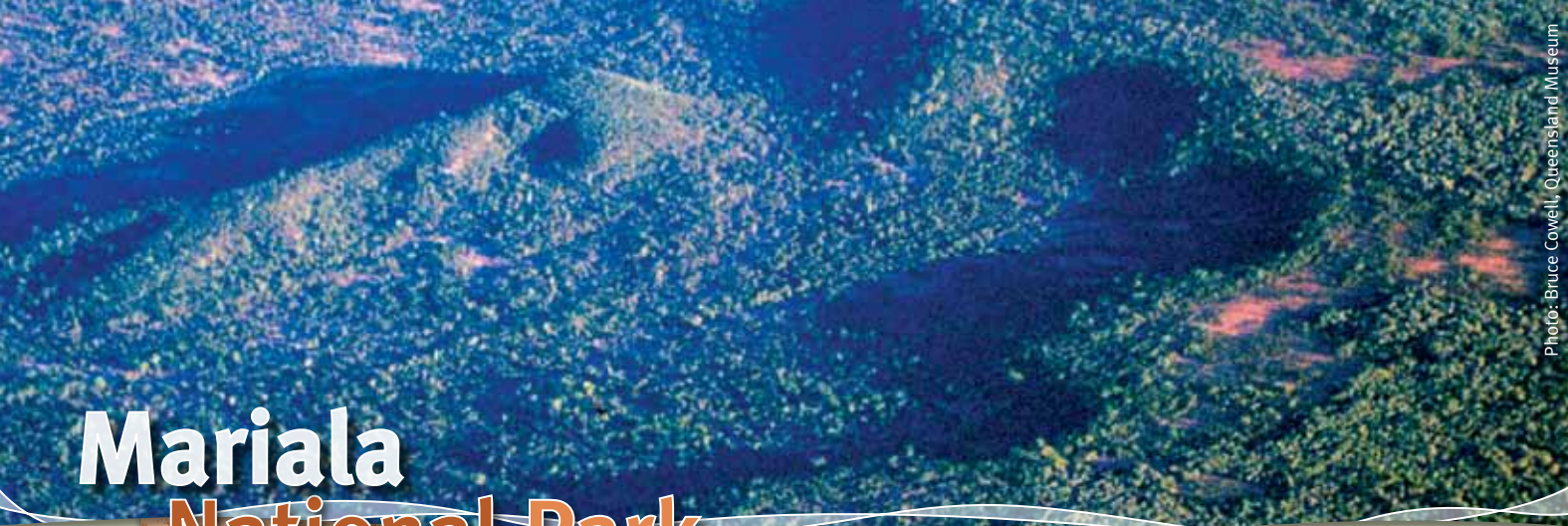


Photo: Bruce Cowell, Queensland Museum

Mariala National Park

'Hard' and 'soft' mulga communities dominate the first national park gazetted in Queensland's mulga lands.

Mariala National Park's 27 300 hectares of scarps, ranges and deeply weathered red soil plains are covered in mulga.

This former grazing property was used to breed horses for the Cobb and Co. coachline in the early 1900s. Never extensively grazed or cleared, Mariala became a reference site for studies of long-term changes in the mulga lands in 1978. Then in 1982 it was made a scientific reserve, becoming national park in 1992.

Access

Drive west from Charleville for 128 km. The Charleville–Adavale Road dissects the park with entry points well signposted on the eastern side. Roads within the park follow old seismic lines and boundary fences.

All roads are unsealed and may become impassable when wet. A 4WD vehicle is recommended. Please leave gates as you find them.

Camping

Mariala has no designated camping areas or facilities; however bushcamping is permitted.

Things to do

The harsh beauty and peacefulness of Mariala makes it suitable for low-impact nature observation, photography and bushwalking.

Mariala has no visitor facilities or formal walking tracks. Visitors need to be mindful of their safety in this remote park. Take a compass when exploring as the vegetation is thick and terrain deceptively rugged.

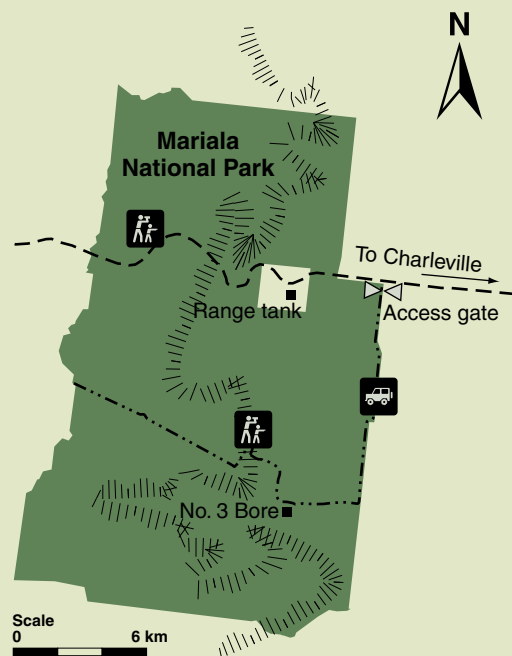
Wildlife watching

More than 145 different birds, 26 reptiles, 10 frogs and 27 mammals have been recorded at Mariala. Early morning brings the sights and melodic sounds of butcher birds, Hall's babbler, spiny-cheeked honeyeater, speckled warblers and brilliantly coloured mallee ringnecks. Look out for emus, echidnas and wallaroos.

A lookout adjacent to the Charleville–Adavale Road provides views over the northern section of the park. The rocky ridges and scarps that can be seen are favoured habitat for elusive yellow-footed rock-wallabies.

Mariala's mulga mosaic

In the park's east, communities of 'soft' mulga—with mulga trees up to 10 m high—grow on the deep red earth. Scarps and residual ranges in the west of the park support 'hard' mulga, where mulga shrubs rarely grow above four metres in height. Mountain yapunyah, Dawson gum, poplar box and a number of wattle species grow alongside the mulga.



Plants of significance include a rare *Hakea*, which has only been recorded in the Adavale–Cheepie area, and bowyacka *Acacia microsperma*, which is not well represented in other parks. *Dodonaea intricata* is known from one population on Mariala, where it grows on a barren plateau in a sparse, stunted *Acacia stowardi*, *Hakea collina*, *Calytrix tetragona* shrubland.



Yellow-footed rock wallaby, *Petrogale xanthopus celeris*

Photo: Bruce Thomson, Qld Govt.

Thrushton National Park



Mulga trees and native grass

Areas of spring wildflowers and spinifex add colour and variety to the blue-grey hues of mulga growing on flat, sandy plains.

In the heart of the mulga lands, 25 652 ha Thrushton is a park of dense mulga, dry eucalypt woodlands and flat spinifex plains.

Ruins of station buildings and yards are a reminder of the area's pastoral history. Long since abandoned, the Thrushton homestead was originally part of Dunkeld Inn, and was moved to its current site in 1921 upon carts drawn by 40 horses.

Access

Thrushton is roughly 40 km north-east of Bollon and accessible only in dry weather. A 4WD vehicle is recommended.

Access via Mitchell-Bollon Rd. Turn onto Homeboin–St George Road, 51 km north of Bollon or 156 km south of Mitchell. Continue east for 16 km to the park.

Access from St George. Head west along the Balonne Highway (Adventure Way) for 51 km, turning north onto Middle Road (also known as Cypress Tank Rd) for 36 km and turn left into Rutherglen Road. Travel a further 14.5 km to the eastern corner of the park.

The park has few internal roads, access is on foot. Do not attempt to cross bore drains in your vehicle. These stopped flowing in 2007 when bores were capped as part of the Great Artesian Basin Sustainability Initiative.

Camping

Thrushton has no visitor facilities; however bushcamping is permitted.

Things to do

Walking

Explore Thrushton by bushwalking and birdwatching. There are no formal walking tracks so visitors need to be mindful of their safety. Take a compass as vegetation is thick and terrain featureless.

Wildlife viewing

Spring wildflowers are a feature of this park and more than 100 bird species have been recorded here.

Scattered ironbark, cypress pine and kurrajong grow above areas of spinifex.

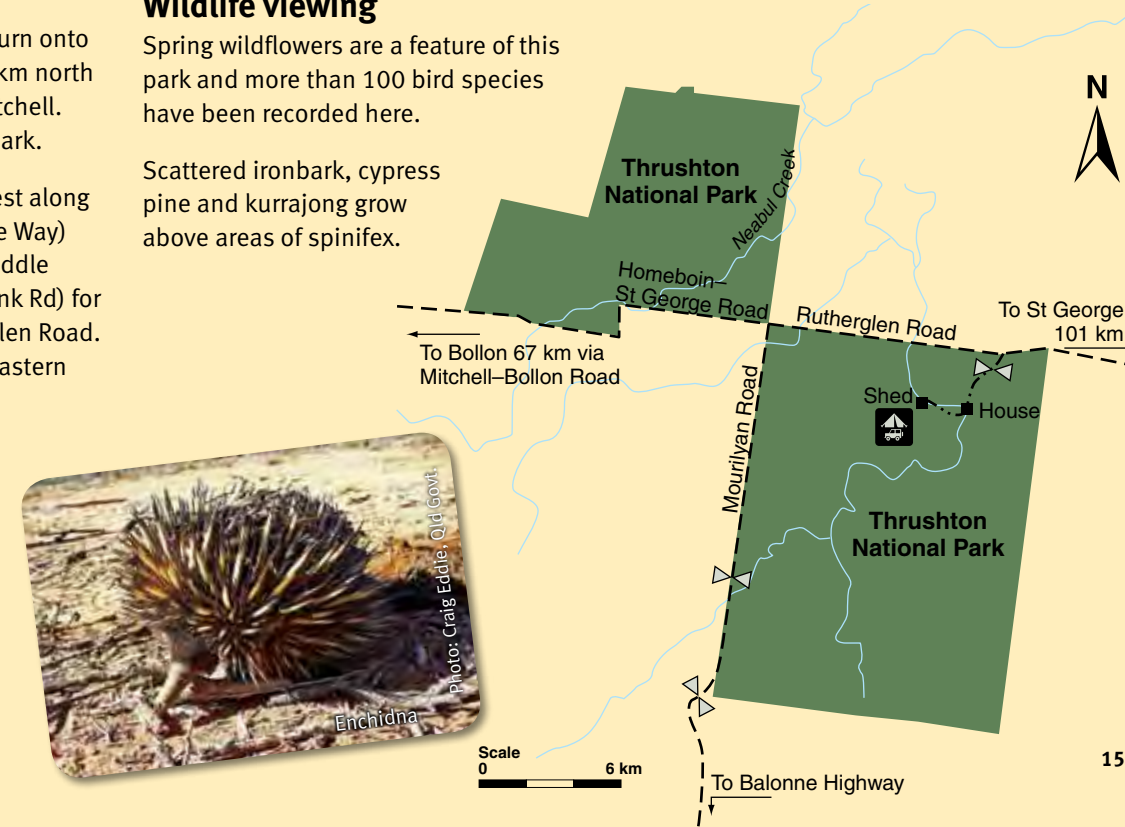


The old Thrushton stock yards

Photo: Mark Weaver, Qld Govt.

Neabul Creek is lined with river red gums and coolibahs, and is the place to look for koalas and echidnas.

The yakka skink, Major Mitchell's cockatoo, square-tailed kite (all rare and threatened species) are found at Thrushton. The golden whistler is near the south-western limit of its range in this park, while the skinks *Ctenotus brachyonyx* and *C. schomburgkii* are at their eastern limit of distribution.



Echidna

Photo: Craig Eddle, Qld Govt.



Photo: Robert Ashdown, QLD Govt.

Tregole National Park

Walk the Tregole circuit



Photo: Robert Ashdown, QLD Govt.

Ooline *Cadellia pentastylis*

Plants of Tregole National Park

	Common name	Scientific name
1	Mulga	<i>Acacia aneura</i>
2	Bitterbark, quinine	<i>Alstonia constricta</i>
3	Ooline	<i>Cadellia pentastylis</i>
4	Gum-topped box	<i>Eucalyptus pilligaensis</i>
5	Prickly pine	<i>Bursaria incana</i>
6	Silver-leaved ironbark	<i>Eucalyptus melanophloia</i>
7	False sandalwood	<i>Eremophila mitchellii</i>
8	Narrow-leaved bottletree	<i>Brachychiton rupestris</i>
9	Wild orange	<i>Capparis mitchellii</i>
10	Wilga	<i>Geijera parviflora</i>
11	Sticky hopbush	<i>Dodonea viscosa</i> subsp. <i>angustifolia</i>
12	Poplar box	<i>Eucalyptus populnea</i>
13	Rosewood, boonaree	<i>Alectryon oleifolius</i>
14	Vinetree, supplejack	<i>Ventilago viminalis</i>
15	Emu apple	<i>Owenia acidula</i>
16	Black orchid in ooline	<i>Cymbidium canaliculatum</i>
17	Mountain box	<i>Eucalyptus exserta</i>
18	Red ash	<i>Alphitonia excelsa</i>
19	View dense stand of ooline	<i>Cadellia pentastylis</i>
20	Termite nest	
21	Gnarled corkback	<i>Hakea fraseri</i>
22	Black orchid root system	<i>Cymbidium canaliculatum</i>
23	Black orchid in mulga	<i>Cymbidium canaliculatum</i>
24	Brigalow	<i>Acacia harpophylla</i>
25	Broombush	<i>Apophyllum anomalum</i>
26	Ironwood	<i>Acacia excelsa</i>
27	Wait-a-while	<i>Capparis lasiantha</i>
28	Gargaloo	<i>Parsonsia eucalyptophylla</i>
29	Orange root	<i>Denhamia oleaster</i>
30	Peach bush	<i>Ehretia membranifolia</i>
31	Yellow-berry bush	<i>Maytenus cunninghamii</i>
32	Belah	<i>Casuarina cristata</i>
33	Currant bush	<i>Carissa ovata</i>
34	Soft acalypha	<i>Acalypha eremorum</i>
35	Fuchsia bush	<i>Eremophila maculata</i>

Ooline forest at Tregole is unusual because of the area's hot, dry climate. Ooline survive here despite conditions being less favourable than further east.

Known for its almost pure stand of ooline trees, 7579 ha Tregole National Park straddles the boundary between the brigalow belt and the mulga lands.

Mulga-covered ridges, undulating lowlands of brigalow woodlands, alluvial plains of Mitchell grass scattered with poplar box or shrubs provide habitat for a wide variety of wildlife.

Tregole was a grazing property until 1995. Evidence exists of Aboriginal use of the area, however little is known of the cultural significance of the park.

Access

Tregole National Park is located between Roma and Charleville, 11 km south of Morven on the Morven–Bollon Road. The road to the park is sealed but narrow.

Camping is not permitted at Tregole National Park.

Things to do

Picnic and day-use area

Picnic tables and a pit toilet are adjacent to the car park. Use the gas barbecue provided—open fires are not permitted.

Walking

Tregole circuit
2.1 km, 45 mins return
Grade 4 (Australian Standards)

This short circuit leaves the day-use area to weave through the ooline forest, along a ridge and back. It is a pleasant walk for the reasonably fit and has rest points along the way.

Identify plants numbered along the track using the table to the right.

Watching wildlife

Learn about the park's plant and animal life from a display shelter in the day-use area.

Look for animals during the cooler parts of the day. Sand goannas prowl for an easy meal and caper white butterflies flit around wild orange *Capparis mitchellii* bushes.



Currant bush *Carissa ovata*

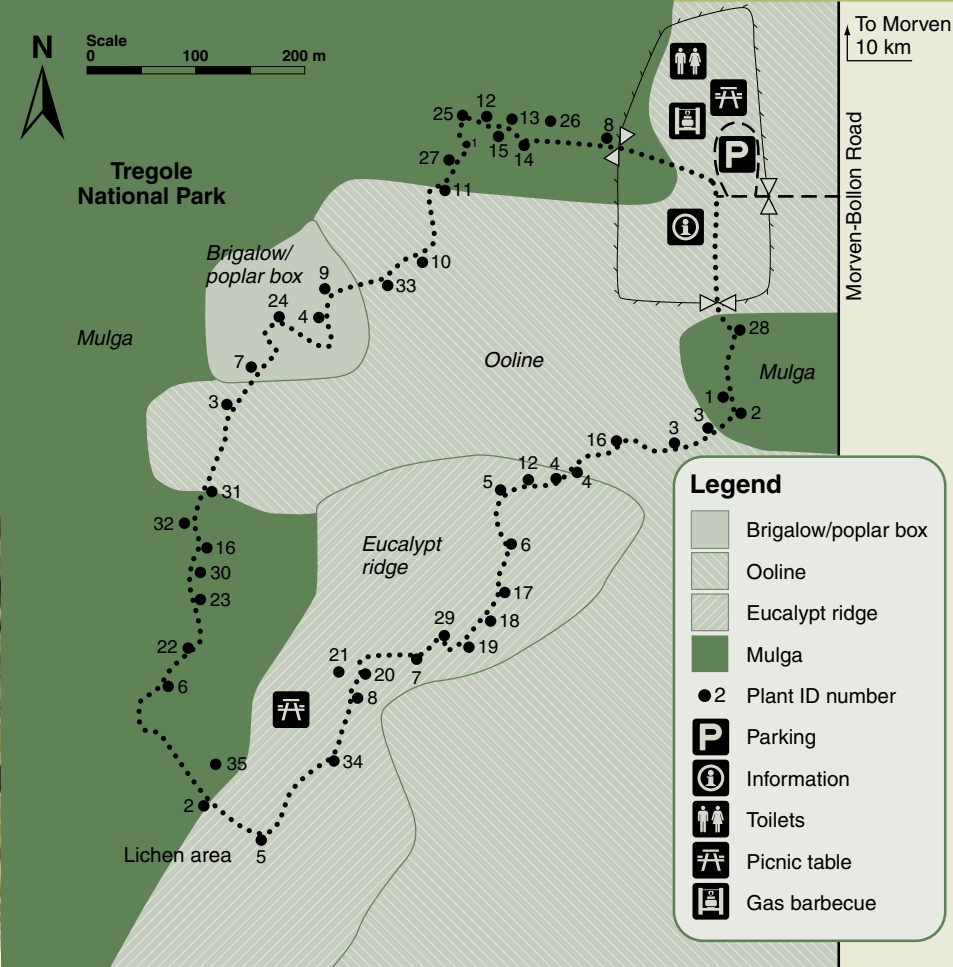
Birds to look out for include small brown forest birds. Tregole is home to weebills and warblers, five different species of thornbills, as well as brown or white-browed treecreepers that work busily up tree trunks prising insects from underneath bark.

Black orchids *Cymbidium canaliculatum* growing abundantly on tree trunks are a rare sight so far west. They are beautiful when in flower and attract many insects.



Photo: Karen Smith

Learn about Tregole at the information shelter



Ooline—tree with an ancient past

The south-eastern corner of Tregole protects a small but almost pure stand of ooline trees *Cadellia pentastylis*. Ooline is now uncommon and listed as vulnerable to extinction due to clearing over much of its former range. Ooline grows on the moderately fertile soils preferred for agriculture and pasture development.

Also known as scrub myrtle, ooline is a medium to large tree with bright green leaves and rough bark. It has rainforest origins, dating back to the Pleistocene Era (1.6 million to 10 000 years ago) when most of Australia was wetter than it is today.

Stands of ooline are also protected in Sundown National Park in South East Queensland and in the Moolayember section of Carnarvon National Park.



Caper white butterfly
Photo: Queensland Museum



Photo: John Augusteyn

Wildlife to watch for

Where there is water there is life

Wildlife of hot, semi-arid conditions possess adaptations and behaviours for survival between good seasons.

Some species are widespread or move regularly in search of food and water. Others are specialists living in particular habitats—hiding in vegetation or concealed in cracks, under rocks or in burrows.

Mammals are most active in late afternoon or at night. Birdwatching is best at dawn or dusk; encounter reptiles in the heat of the day. Search for footprints and other traces of animal life.

Wildlife on roads

Kangaroos, emus and other iconic Australians can be on or beside outback roads. They are great to see, but not to run into!

Wedge-tailed eagles feeding on road-kill need time to lift their huge bulk off the ground. Watch also for reptiles using sunny road surfaces to bask and warm themselves.

Minimise the chance of a collision by travelling at or below the speed limit. Avoid driving around dusk and dawn. Avoid swerving to miss wildlife as this can lead to vehicle roll-overs.

With pastel pink breasts, white wings and almost fluorescent crests, Major Mitchell's cockatoos (right) are spectacular birds. They favour seeds of paddy melons *Citrullus* spp., which grow in the table drains. After feeding, cockatoos are slow off the mark and easily hit by cars, so please be alert.

Fleeting feathers

The outback morning chorus is unmistakable. Chattering parrots, carolling butcherbirds, squabbling honeyeaters and babblers are joined by the fluid, ringing song of the crested bellbird. Galahs jostle for position before lifting to the skies in noisy, swooping flocks. Tiny finches and fairy-wrens flit through the understorey. Birds of prey soar across the sky.

Paradoxically, thousands of waterbirds live in the arid interior. On lakes and waterholes, ibis, egrets, herons, spoonbills and stilts wade in shallows searching for a meal. Darters spear at fish and ducks, swans and pelicans glide effortlessly across deeper water.

A. Whistling kites (below) and black kites work across wooded plains or up and down timbered watercourses in search of prey. They hold their wings flat, as opposed to wedge-tailed eagles and harriers that hold wings in a v-shape as they soar.

B. Under the cover of darkness, small mammals search the ground for spiders and insects. Stripe-faced dunnarts (below) and planigales are reasonably widespread. The tiny kultarr can be seen at Mariala and Currawinya.

C. Red kangaroos have black and white facial markings. Males are red but females can be grey-blue in colour.



Photo: Chris Crafter, Qld Govt.

Marvellous mammals

Five species of macropods live in South West Queensland. Kangaroos graze or rest in the shade on open plains and in lightly timbered areas. Eastern grey kangaroos are widespread and slightly smaller than reds. See western greys at Currawinya, Lake Bindegolly and Culgoa Floodplains.

Common wallaroos are darker and heavily-set and found in rugged or sloping country. Swamp wallabies are smaller with white facial markings and live closer to creeks or in more thickly timbered areas.



Wriggling reptiles

Eastern brown snakes are widespread, overlapping in range and diet with western brown and king brown (mulga) snakes. But sighting a woma python is a rare treat! They shelter in abandoned burrows and in soil cracks.

Of the larger lizards, sand monitors and black-tailed monitors are widespread—look for their tracks. Blue-tongued lizards are easy to identify when they open their mouth to scare off a predator.

Tiny tessellated geckos shelter in soil cracks and spider holes; other gecko species live in trees.

D. The range of the central bearded dragon (pink mouth) overlaps with that of the common bearded dragon (yellow mouth) at Culgoa and Thrushton.

E. A shingle-back skink's head looks much like its tail.

F. Tiny thorny devils are well-camouflaged inhabitants of sandy country as are painted dragons (below).

Above: Steve the carpet python. Photo courtesy Robert Ashdown.



Photo: Robert Ashdown



Photo: Qld Govt.



Photo: Robert Ashdown, Qld Govt.

Wetlands brim with wildlife

The arid outback is not where you expect to find wetlands. Yet the mulga lands alone have at least 59 of international significance.

Outback wetlands vary in type and location—permanent waterholes in the channels of rivers, creeks and floodplains; shrubby floodplain watercourses; temporary and permanent fresh and saltwater lakes; canegrass or lignum swamps; claypans and artesian springs. Streams and rivers flow only after rainfall events and most water exists as temporary waterholes or swamps that evaporate quickly.

G. The crucifix frog and other burrowing frogs are widespread and well-adapted. After rain, floodplains and creek banks become noisy, wriggling places as frogs emerge from buried fluid-filled 'cocoons' to feed and breed rapidly before it dries out again.

H. Thousands of shield shrimps hatch almost instantaneously after rain from eggs lying dormant in the mud of claypans and swamps.



Wetlands help control floods and provide birds and other wildlife with refuge from harsh, dry conditions.

It is hard to imagine arid lands could be home to fish and frogs. But in more permanent waterholes or hibernating underground, are a myriad of creatures waiting for rains to return.

I. Three turtle species inhabit South West Queensland. Look for the aptly-named snake-necked turtle (pictured) and the shorter-necked Murray turtle.

J. Spangled perch and bony bream are widespread in watercourses and lakes. But golden perch (yellowbelly), silver perch, catfish and smaller, specialist species such as desert rainbow fish occur only when and where conditions are right.



Photo: Robert Ashdown

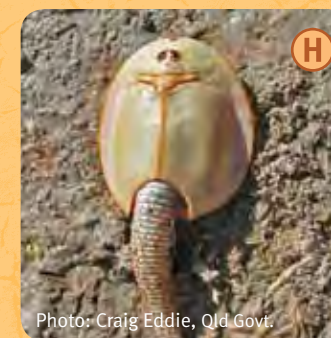


Photo: Craig Eddie, Qld Govt.



Paroo River, Currawinya National Park

Photo: Robert Ashdown, Qld Govt.



A

Photo: Robert Ashdown



B

Photo: Bruce Thomson



C

Photo: Qld Govt.



In an emergency

Mobile phone coverage is not reliable either on the way to or within parks of South West Queensland. Also, rangers are not usually close at hand.

Travellers are advised to have a UHF radio and/or satellite phone and an Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB).

Culgoa Floodplain

UHF Channel 15
Bollon Police (07) 4625 6200

Currawinya

UHF Channel 5 (duplex)
Eulo Police (07) 4655 4838
Hungerford Police (07) 4655 4088

Lake Bindegolly

Thargomindah Police (07) 4655 3200
Emergency UHF Channel 5 – police

Mariala

Adavale Police (07) 4656 4833

Thrushton

Bollon Police (07) 4625 6200

Tregole

Morven Police (07) 4654 8100

Caring for parks

- Everything within national parks is protected. Do not take or interfere with plants, animals, rocks or historic artefacts.
- Leave pets at home. Domestic animals are not allowed.
- Never feed or leave food for animals. It upsets the balance of nature and can make animals sick and/or aggressive.
- Be tidy. Take your rubbish with you. Do not bury rubbish—dingoes or other animals will dig it up.
- Use toilets where provided. Most parks have no toilets—bury toilet waste (and paper) 15 cm deep and at least 150 m from water. Please burn your toilet paper (if safe to do so) before burying your waste.
- Dismantle and pack away any firearms or weapons. They cannot be used in national parks.
- Never use soap or shampoo within 50 m of waterholes or creeks.
- Take care with fire. Light fires only in fireplaces where provided and extinguish with water before leaving. Preferably use a fuel stove.
- Keep to designated tracks. Arid landscapes are fragile and easily damaged. Plants grow very slowly.
- Do not drive on rain-affected roads. Even if you make it through, tyre marks damage the road surface and make it dangerous for other road users—consider the locals!
- Avoid spreading weeds. Clean soil and plant seeds from your vehicle, shoes and gear before entering each park.
- Practice responsible fishing. Comply with size and bag limits. Do not use frogs as fish bait.

For further information

Visit www.nprsr.qld.gov.au/parks for the latest information on access, camping permits, closures and conditions. Or phone 13 QGOV (13 74 68). Mobile phone charges may apply.

For fishing rules and guidelines, visit www.daff.qld.gov.au.

For information on road conditions, visit www.131940.qld.gov.au or phone 13 19 40.

Disclaimer

All information provided in this guide is correct at time of printing. Check for park alerts online or at the nearest accredited visitor information centre.

Front cover photo: Currawinya National Park.
Photo: Robert Ashdown, Qld Govt.

Back cover photo: View from The Granites across Currawinya National Park.
Photo: Robert Ashdown, Qld Govt.

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Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service,
Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing.
BP1991 July 2013
Printed on eco-friendly paper to save energy and resources.

