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THROUGH THE PAST

YINJIBARNDI PEOPLE

The broad area of land straddling the Fortescue River from the Hamerslèy Range through to the Chichester escarpment is the homeland of the Yinjibarndi people. Ngarrari (Millstream) was an important camp site for inter-tribal meetings. Visitors camped beside Chinderwariner Pool. There they feasted on fresh fish and edible plant roots, harvested wood for spears and collected rocks for ritual purposes.

MILLSTREAM PASTORAL STATION

Millstream was named in 1861 by the explorer F. T. Gregory, who reported its favourable grazing prospects. The pastoral lease, first taken up in 1865, changed hands several times before it was taken over by Les Gordon in 1925. In its heyday the station covered more than 400 000 hectares and ran 55 000 sheep. The present homestead, built in 1920, housed the Gordon family until 1964. It was a tavern between 1975 and 1986, when the lease was purchased by the Department of Conservation and Land Management. It is now a visitor centre.



THE NATIONAL PARK

Previously two separate parks, the area was expanded into one park in 1982. Yinjibarndi people have been trained and employed as rangers and contract workers.

FURTHER INFORMATION

National Park rangers are always glad to help make your visit more enjoyable and informative. They regularly visit camping and day use areas. Do not hesitate to contact them if you need information or assistance.

MILLSTREAM-CHICHESTER NATIONAL PARK

PO Box 835, Karratha WA 6714
Phone: (091) 84 5144
Facsimile: (091) 84 5146

PILBARA REGIONAL OFFICE

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DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND
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MILLSTREAM- CHICHESTER

National Park



VISITOR INFORMATION AND WALK TRAIL GUIDE



DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
AND LAND MANAGEMENT

Most of the 200 000-hectare Millstream-Chichester National Park is a landscape of rolling spinifex hills, spectacular escarpments and winding tree-lined watercourses. In contrast, there is the lush oasis of the Millstream wetlands.

The arid-land plants and animals respond dramatically to infrequent rainfall events. The wetlands support many plant, bird and insect species, some of which are related to species in the more tropical Kimberley region.

The area has an interesting cultural history. It was a focal point for the Yinjibarndi people and an active pastoral station for more than 100 years. It is now recognised as a national park with significant natural, recreational and cultural values.

The park's shady camping areas near deep pools attract tourists and locals all year round, although winter is the best time to visit.

When you visit the park, call into the newly refurbished Millstream Homestead Visitor Centre, where you can obtain information on the many features of the park.

THE WAY OF WATER

The water that feeds the Millstream oasis springs from an aquifer, or natural underground reserve, contained in the porous dolomite rock. This aquifer is fed by the Fortescue River catchment, which includes run-off from the Hamersley Range. The aquifer has an estimated area of 2 000 square kilometres and is believed to contain 1 700 million cubic metres of water.

Used in tandem with the Harding Dam, the aquifer supplies water to the people of Wickham, Dampier and Karratha. The water level is constantly monitored and, in times of low water, pumps can be used to keep the Millstream pools topped up and flowing, an essential safeguard for the long-term survival of the wetland and its dependent wildlife.

WILDLIFE

Wildlife is seldom seen during hot, dry days, which are prevalent most of the year. Life is governed by the need to conserve water and keep cool. Plants flower after rain, when blankets of mulla-mulla and Sturt pea cover the landscape. The soft yellow flowers of the wattles and the orange cockroach bush provide a dramatic contrast to the hard red earth. Generally, the winter months, from June to August, are the best time to see Pilbara wildflowers.

Plants more typical of the tropical north grow near permanent water pools. Of special interest is the Millstream palm (*Livistona alfredii*), with its fanned, grey-green leaves and smooth bark. Introduced species such as date palms and cotton palms planted by pioneers have now spread throughout the Millstream Delta. Other weeds include the Indian water fern and the water lily.

Twenty-two species of dragonfly and damselfly have been recorded in the Millstream wetlands. Resident mammals include the black flying fox and the euro (the common kangaroo of the rocky country). A variety of spectacular birds can be seen during the cooler hours of the day, especially near water.

THE ENVIRONMENT

The Chichester Range rises sharply from the coastal plain and includes rocky peaks, tranquil gorges, and hidden rock pools. Scattered white-barked gums and pincushion spinifex clumps cover the stony plateau, which gradually slopes down to the bed of the Fortescue River before rising again to the vast bulk of the Hamersley Range.

Along the river lies the Millstream oasis with its string of deep spring-fed pools fringed by sedges, palm groves and paperbark forest.

Fires caused by lightning strikes do occur, but burnt areas recover quickly after rain and provide a variety of food and habitats for local wildlife.

CLIMATE

The Pilbara is classified as the arid tropics. During the summer, between October and April, temperatures rise above 40° Celsius, and cyclones and local thunderstorms can flood roads and watercourses. The cool season, between May and August, experiences little rain, with day-time temperatures around 26° Celsius. Nights at this time of year can be cool, so don't forget to bring warm clothes.



CARE FOR THE PARK

Be clean: Put your litter in bins or, better still, take it with you.

Be cool: Avoid causing wildfires. Only light fires in the fireplaces provided. Firewood is collected for these. Please do not collect your own.

Be kind: Do not disturb animals, plants or rocks. Pets and firearms are not permitted. Kangaroos around the Homestead have been hand reared, but are still wild animals. Please do not feed them or encourage children to approach them.

Be cautious: Follow the signs in the park and stay on the roads marked on the map. Roads may be closed after heavy rain. Check travel conditions with the Main Roads Department (telephone 008 01 3316).

Be wise: Leave the natural environment as you find it for all to enjoy. Several weeds threaten the park; please brush seeds from clothing and equipment before moving on.

Be gentle: Please do not use soap in streams and pools as it kills wildlife. Stay on formed trails.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

MILLSTREAM HOMESTEAD VISITOR CENTRE
Start your visit by calling into the visitor centre, which features rooms dedicated to the Yinjibarndi people, the early settlers and the natural environment. Other displays inform you of the park's attractions and management issues. The park office is also in the centre.

CAMPING

Shady bush-style camping areas with pit toilets are provided at Crossing Pool, Deep Reach Pool and Snake Creek. You may camp only in these areas. The former two are equipped with gas barbecues and fireplaces (wood is provided for these, please do not collect your own). If using a generator please turn it off before 9 00pm.

PICNICKING

Gas barbecues are available in day use areas at the Homestead and Deep Reach Pool.

FEES

Entrance fees and camping fees are charged.

WATER

Drinking water is available in the Visitor Centre carpark, but always carry plenty of your own.

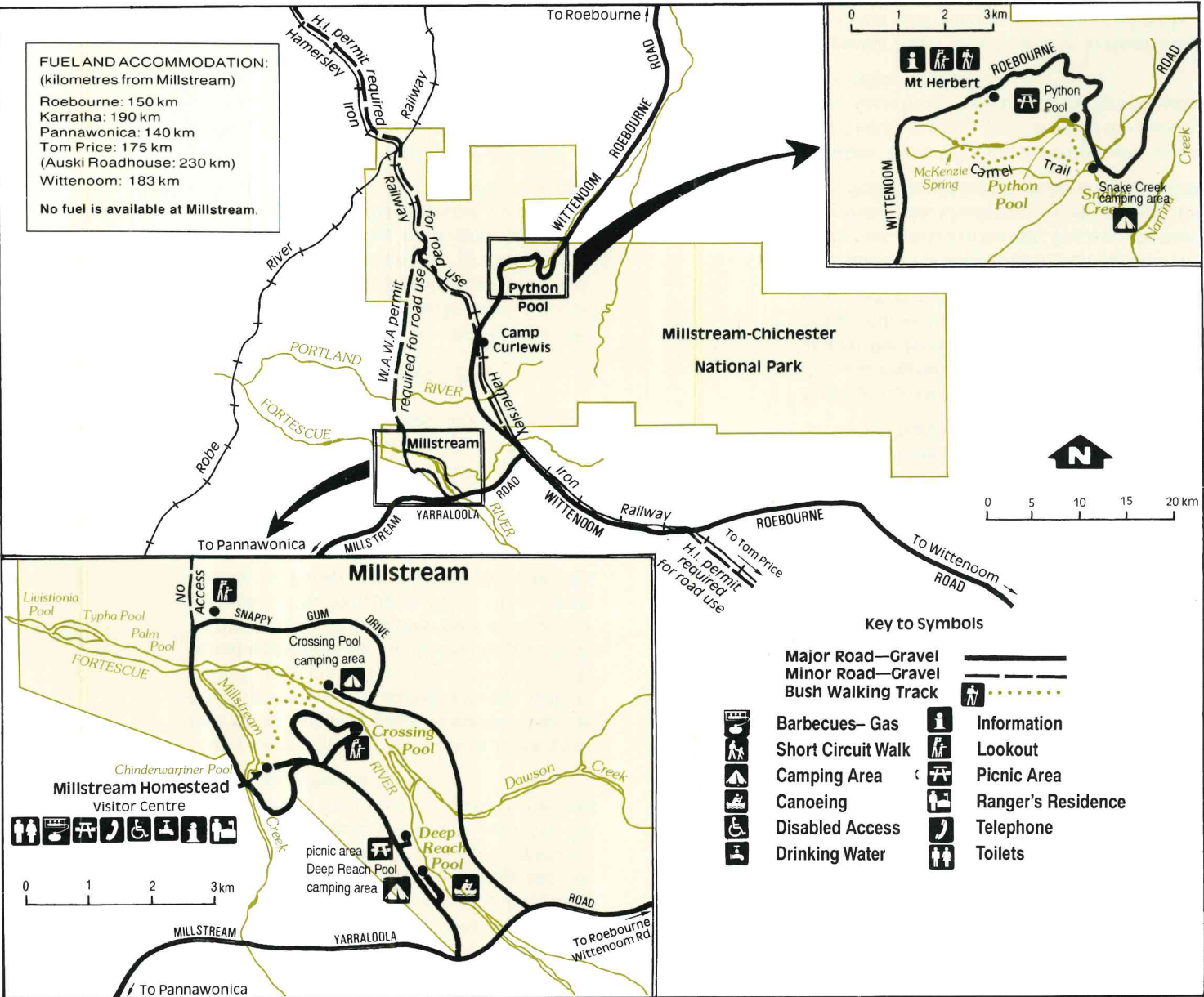
SWIMMING

Enjoy a swim in the cool, permanent waterholes but take care, especially with children; the water is deep and can be very cold in winter. Banks are steep and slippery so use embankment ladders for safe and easy access to and from the water.

There are designated swimming areas at both Deep Reach and Crossing Pool. Although they are checked for hazards, some may still occur. Please take care and observe signs.

BOATING

Row boats, canoes, rafts and wind surfers are welcome on Deep Reach Pool and Crossing Pool. Power boats are not permitted.



ROAD TRAILS

Millstream Circuit via Snappy Gum Drive (33km)

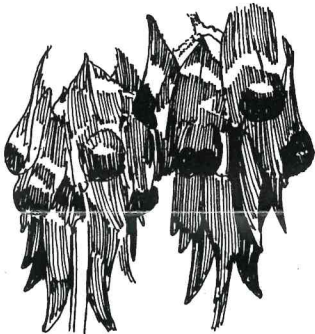
This trail links the Visitor Centre with Crossing Pool, Deep Reach Pool and Cliff Lookout. The drive derives its name from the robust snappy gums that dominate the hilltops.

Not suitable for caravans or trailers.

Scenic Drive (6km circuit)

The natural lookout provides a picturesque view of Crossing Pool and the extensive riverine forest dominated by paperbarks.

Use extra caution near the cliff edge as there is loose gravel that can be slippery underfoot.



WALK TRAIL GUIDE

TRAIL GRADES

Millstream-Chichester National Park offers walk trails that are classified according to their degree of difficulty and the level of fitness required. Please choose trails carefully and ask park staff for advice.

WALKS

Walks are short, easy and well formed, suitable for people of all ages and fitness levels. Some improvements have been made to the terrain.

TRACKS

Tracks are suitable for people with a moderate level of fitness. They have some short uneven stretches that may be loose or slippery underfoot.

ROUTES (LEVEL 1)

Routes (Level 1) are for experienced, fit walkers. Trails may be unmarked and go over steep, slippery and unstable surfaces. Few if any improvements.

SAFE WALKING

When walking in the park wear a hat, broad-spectrum sun screen with an SPF of 15+ and sturdy walking shoes, and take plenty of drinking water with you (4 litres per person per day). Dispose of any rubbish back at your campsite at the end of the walk. For your own safety, please remain on existing trails.

MILLSTREAM

At Millstream, on the Fortescue, natural freshwater springs overflowing from the Millstream aquifer have created an oasis in this arid country. The area contains an extraordinary variety of plants and animals, many of which are extremely rare and depend on the pools for their existence. Two walk trails begin at the centre, and are featured below.

Homestead Walk 750 m - 30 min return

Use your imagination and let the interpretive plaques help you picture the homestead grounds as they were in young Doug Gordon's day as a 12 year old in the 1930's. This trail starts and finishes at the visitor centre and is accessible to wheel-chair users.

Murlunmunyjurna Track 6.8 km - 2 h return

This trail links the homestead with Crossing Pool and crosses riverine vegetation, spinifex hills, wattle thickets, groves of Millstream palms and tall paperbark forests. Bridges made from date palm trunks help you negotiate the Fortescue River. Rocks can be loose and slippery, so please take care. Trailside plaques interpret the importance of some of the area's plants to the Yinjibarndi people. Have a vehicle meet you at your destination or return along the track to your starting point.



CHICHESTER RANGE

Mt Herbert and Python Pool are two of the main attractions of the Chichester Range. The landscape is dominated by rolling hills, hummocks of spinifex, white-barked snappy gums on the uplands and pale coolabahs along the usually dry watercourses.

Python Pool Track 100m - 20 min return

From the carpark, follow the trail up a dry creek bed to Python Pool, a permanent freshwater plunge pool located at the base of a cliff in the Chichester Range escarpment.

McKenzie Spring Track 4.5 km - 1 h return

From the Mt Herbert carpark, follow the Camel Trail from Mt Herbert to McKenzie Spring, which was once a watering hole for the camels. Return along the same route.

Mt Herbert Track 600m - 45 min return

From the Mt Herbert carpark follow the Camel Trail to the base of Mt Herbert, then follow the track to the top of the mountain. You will be afforded spectacular views along the way and from the top. Take care as there are loose rocks that can be slippery underfoot.

Chichester Range Camel Trail 8km - 3 h one way

This Heritage Trail crosses the rugged sandstone terrain of the Chichester Range following along part of the old camel road linking Mt Herbert and Python Pool. It is best to begin from Mt Herbert and follow the downhill gradient.

Cameleers Trail 4kms - 1.5 h return

Follow the Camel Trail from Python Pool up the hill to a ridge where the view and a seat provide the chance to ponder the pioneering spirit of the past cameleers. Take care as there are loose rocks and washouts that can be unstable underfoot.