

LIBRARY

Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions

This PDF has been created for digital preservation. It may be used for research but is not suitable for other purposes. It may be superseded by a more current version or just be out-of-date and have no relevance to current situations.

THE MITCHELL PLATEAU

Mitchell Plateau in the far north Kimberley is the remains of an elevated laterite-capped plain, bordered by sandstone, in which the Mitchell River has carved spectacular gorges.

The area is one of the most biologically important in the Kimberley. The landscape around the plateau varies from mangroves and swamps, to woodlands and lush rainforest patches, accounting for the rich diversity of the wildlife.

The Mitchell Plateau fan palm, *Livistona eastonii*, thrives on the lateritic soils of the plateau. The rugged sandstone areas are home to some rare residents such as the monjon (a small rock wallaby), the scaly-tailed possum, the cave-dwelling tree frog, the rough-scaled python and the black grasswren.

The Mitchell Plateau area was inhabited by the Woonambal people. Since moving to Kalumburu in the 1950s, local Aboriginal people have continued to visit the area and, in the last few years, have established a community there. It was not until 1921 that Europeans explored the plateau. William Easton led a State government expedition into the north Kimberley, naming the Mitchell River after Sir James Mitchell, Premier of Western Australia at the time.

In 1965, a mining camp was established on the plateau by AMAX Bauxite, following the discovery of potentially commercial deposits of bauxite. In 1979, the mining rights were acquired by the Mitchell Plateau Bauxite Company.

Four areas around the Mitchell Plateau have been proposed as conservation reserves and are now managed by CALM. The conservation and recreation values of the mining tenement are also being managed by CALM, with assistance from the Department of Resources Development and the Mitchell Plateau Bauxite Company. The Shire of Wyndham-East Kimberley and the North Kimberley Land Conservation District Committee are also involved with management issues in the area.

CARING FOR THE MITCHELL PLATEAU

- ❖ Please stay on roads, tracks and trails, and camp only at designated camping areas.
- ❖ Help to keep this remote environment clean; please take your rubbish with you.
- ❖ Use fuel stoves wherever possible. Dead wood is an important ecological resource in the Kimberley. Collect firewood only from the designated firewood collection zones. Please keep campfires small and use wood sparingly.
- ❖ Where no toilets are provided, all human waste and toilet paper are to be buried. Dig a hole at least 15 cm deep and at least 100 metres from watercourses and camping areas.
- ❖ Wash well away from creeks and waterholes to avoid polluting the water. Avoid contaminating waterways with soap or sunscreen.
- ❖ Aboriginal sites are of special significance to Aboriginal people and important to the cultural heritage of all Australians. They are also protected by law. Help to conserve rock art sites; do not touch paintings or engravings and do not remove artefacts.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



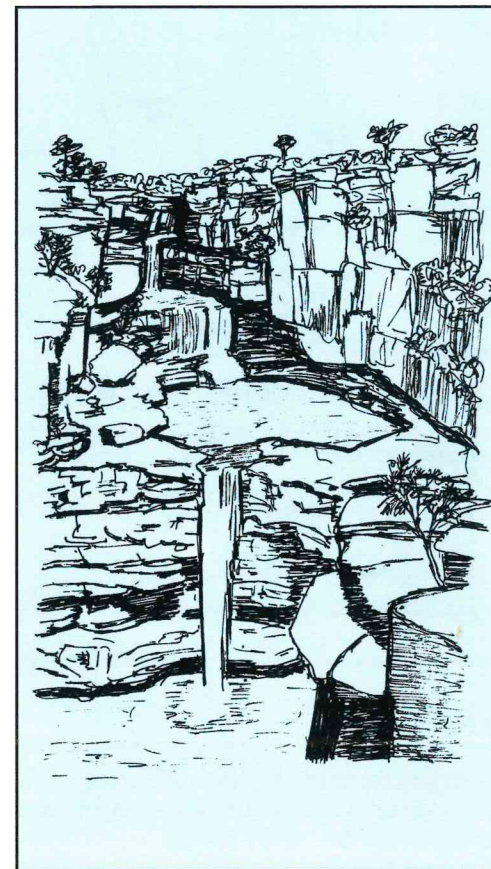
Department of Conservation and Land Management

East Kimberley District Office
Corner of Konkerberry Drive and Messmate Way
Kununurra
PO Box 942
Kununurra 6743

Telephone (08) 9168 0200
Fax (08) 9168 2179

Printed June 1998

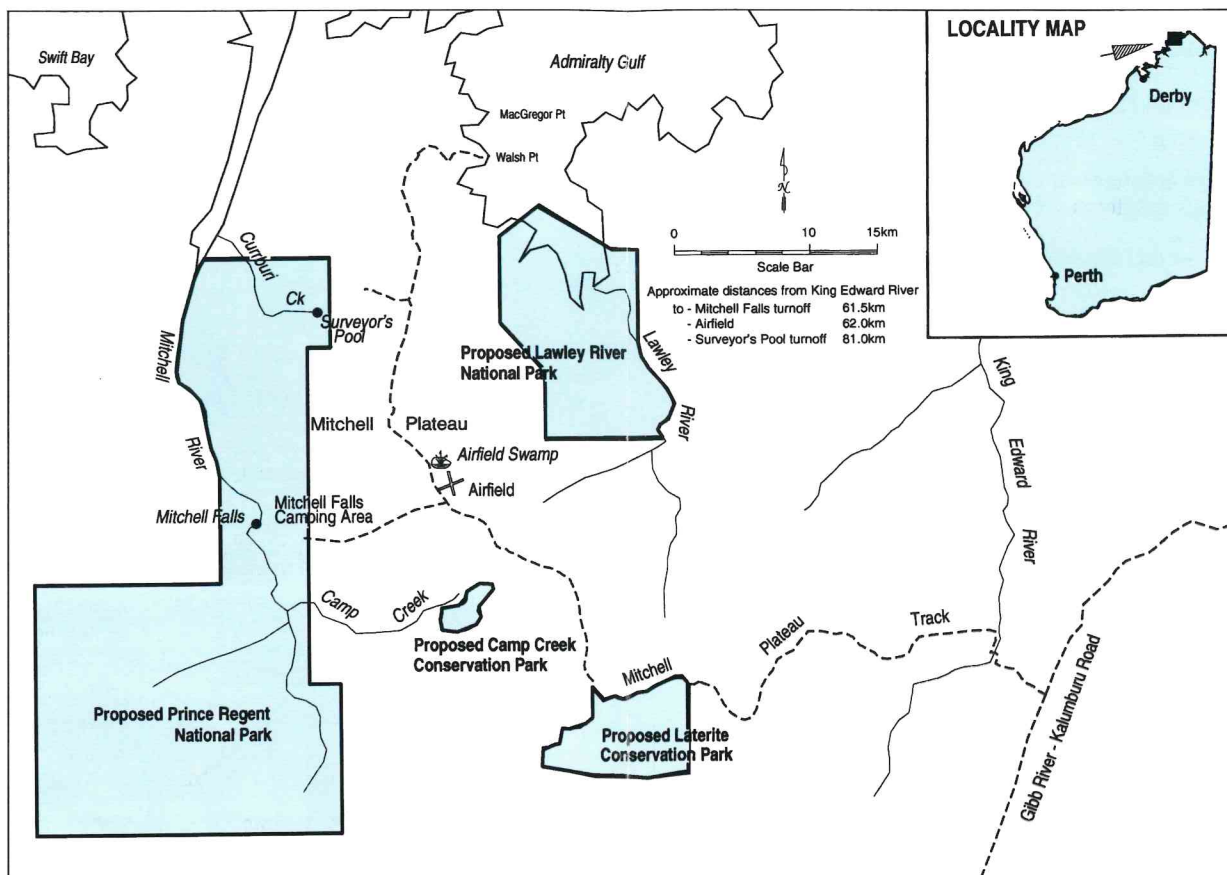
MITCHELL PLATEAU



A GUIDE FOR VISITORS



DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
AND LAND MANAGEMENT



ACCESS

Visitors to the Mitchell Plateau should be totally self-sufficient as this is a remote area with few facilities.

The Mitchell Plateau is accessed via the 4-wheel-drive-only Mitchell Plateau track from Kalumburu Road, 172 kms north of the Gibb River Road junction. The track is maintained on an irregular basis only, and may have wash-outs and corrugations. Drive with extreme care.

In the Kimberley, travelling on tracks and roads other than major highways during the wet season (November to April) is both hazardous and dangerous. This is particularly the case in this remote area. Check road conditions with Main Roads Western Australia (telephone 1800 013 314) or the Shire of Wyndham-East Kimberley (telephone (08) 9168 1677).

Tracks north of the Mitchell Plateau airfield are rough, while tracks north of Surveyor's Pool are very rough and may be impassable.

Throughout the dry season (May to October), fuel, food and mechanical repairs are available from Drysdale River Station (telephone (08) 9161 4326). Fuel and food are also available from Kalumburu.

Air charter companies fly to Mitchell Plateau airstrip. During the dry season, helicopter flights and ground tours are available. Contact local tourist bureaus and travel agents for details and bookings.

Please respect the privacy of Aboriginal communities on the Plateau. There are no services available to the general public on the plateau.

CAMPING

There is a camping area with toilets at the end of the Mitchell Falls Track. A ranger is based at the camping area from May to October.

It is advisable to boil or treat water taken from creeks before drinking.

Do not leave food or rubbish unattended where animals can scavenge.

BUSHWALKING

Walk with at least two other people, wear protective clothing, sunscreen and sturdy walking shoes, and carry plenty of water.

Mitchell Falls Walk

The 6-km return walk to Mitchell Falls from the camping area is moderate to difficult as it traverses rocky terrain. Take care near the many cliffs. The track to Mitchell Falls continues past Little Mertens Falls (approximately 500 metres from the camping area) and Big Mertens Falls (approximately 2.5 km from the camping area).

Surveyor's Pool Walk

It is an easy to moderate 8-km return walk to Surveyor's Pool from the Surveyor's Pool Carpark.