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Karara Rangeland Park



Above Ruins at Damperwah State Farm. Photo – Susan Pedersen/DBCA

Recent history

Sandalwood cutters occupied the park's central region circa 1845, before the first pastoral leases were granted in the 1860s.

In 1868 JH and G Monger travelled through Damperwah before Sir John Forrest's 1869 expedition searching for traces of Ludwig Leichhardt's exploration party. The party was last seen in April 1848 at Darling Downs in Queensland; disappearing after heading inland on their way to the west coast. Many efforts have been made to find traces of Leichhardt's party, with no success.

Gold prospectors followed John Forrest's route, first finding gold at Yalgoo in 1892. Two years later more gold was discovered at Rothsay.

Sections of the Rabbit-Proof Fence can be seen in the south-west part of Karara Rangeland Park. Constructed between 1901 and 1907, the fence is actually three fences intended to stop the spread of rabbits from east to west. The first divides Western Australia in two as it extends 1834km north-south between Eighty Mile Beach and Jerdacuttup. The 1165km long second fence was constructed because rabbits were west of the first by the time it was completed. Sections of this fence can be seen in Karara Rangeland Park as it stretches from Bremer Bay to meet the first fence west of Wiluna. The third fence between Kalbarri and Yalgoo is just 257km long.

For 10 years, between 1929 and 1939, the then Department of Agriculture conducted wheat cropping trials at Damperwah State Farm to determine the best wheat varieties and cropping methods for the region.

In 1966 the Koolanooka Hills Mine located just east of the park was the source of the first iron ore exported from Australia.

Things to see and do

Karara Rangeland Park is renowned for wildflowers between July and September. Wildflowers carpet the land after good winter rainfall, but there is also a diversity of flowers during the drier months – you just need to look more closely.

The many sites of historical interest include the ruins of Damperwah State Farm; cemeteries at Rothsay and Fields Find; John Forrest Lookout; and Warriedar's historic buildings.

Camel Soak is a waterhole on a granite outcrop currently used by wildlife and visitors. It was a water source for camels and workers when building the Rabbit-Proof Fence, and was important to Aboriginal people long before then.

Visitors can enjoy lake views from the breakaway at Mongers Lake Camp.

If you have a four-wheel drive, views from Breakaway Loop extend over Burrilgabay Lake. Other four-wheel-drive tracks in the west of the park follow old pastoral station fence lines linking former windmills and trap yards. Some of these yards are still used to manage feral goats.

Below Thundelarra Lignum Swamp after rain. Photo – Sue Hancock/DBCA



Camping and accommodation

Camping fees apply for all overnight stays within Karara Rangeland Park and can be paid online at parkstay.dbca.wa.gov.au, or by contacting the Parks and Wildlife Service office in Geraldton on 9964 0901.

Camping fees do not apply at the shire-managed Camel Soak Campground adjacent to the park.

Groups of up to 20 people can be accommodated in the old Shearers' Quarters at Thundelarra – advance bookings are essential. Contact the Parks and Wildlife Service office in Geraldton on (08) 9964 0901.

Accommodation is available in nearby towns and station stays. See australiasgoldenoutback.com or enquire at local visitor centres for more information.

More information

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Front cover John Forrest Lookout. Photo – Rory Chapple/DBCA

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This document is available in alternative formats on request.



Visitor guide



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Welcome to Karara

Western Australia's nature, culture and history are alive in this immense 560,672ha park.

The rugged yet beautiful Karara Rangeland Park features banded ironstone ridges, permanent water holes, Aboriginal heritage and authentic outback camping opportunities.

The long connection of Aboriginal people to this land began well before the arrival of pastoralists and miners in the mid-1870s. The newcomers introduced animals and plants that in less than 200 years dramatically changed the landscape.

Now the six former pastoral stations comprising Karara Rangeland Park are conservation areas and introduced animals are being removed so native vegetation and wildlife can recover. Through all this, local Aboriginal people continue to maintain strong ties to this land and welcome visitors who respect the park's nature and culture.

Above Views of Wheelhamby Lake. Photo – Nick Detchon/DBCA

Biodiversity

Most of Karara Rangeland Park lies within the Southwest Australia International Biodiversity Hotspot and encompasses a variety of distinct landscapes, species and habitats. Vegetation in the park is largely intact with 883 native plant species identified. Native fauna records include 19 mammals, 122 birds, 53 reptiles, six amphibians and 104 invertebrates, and it is likely there are more species not yet recorded. Kangaroos, red-tailed black cockatoos and mulga parrots are all commonly sighted in the area.

A healthy ecosystem depends on the interactions between many species, which is the focus for biodiversity conservation efforts.

Below Spring wildflowers. Photo – Nick Detchon/DBCA



Karara landscapes

Karara Rangeland Park hosts a diversity of landscapes and habitats.

Granite outcrops are home to many unique species and some outcrops have weathered into isolated hills and ridges known as breakaways.

Basalt hills formed during the Archaen Eon – 3,800 to 2,500 million years ago – also host unique species.

Banded iron formations are layered rocks, rich in iron oxide. Scientists believe the iron oxide resulted when the photosynthetic activity of early lifeforms saturated the oceans with oxygen about 2,500 million years ago.

Wetlands, drainage lines and lakes include Mongers Lake, which stretches some 200km around the park and can be either a vast shallow lake or white gypsum claypan depending on recent rainfall.

Thundelarra Lignum Swamp is possibly the largest lignum swamp in Australia's south-west spanning more than 13,500ha. While often dry, it is listed as a Wetland of National Importance due to its significance for waterbirds following rain.

Below Karara Rangeland Park waterhole.
Photo – Rory Chapple/DBCA



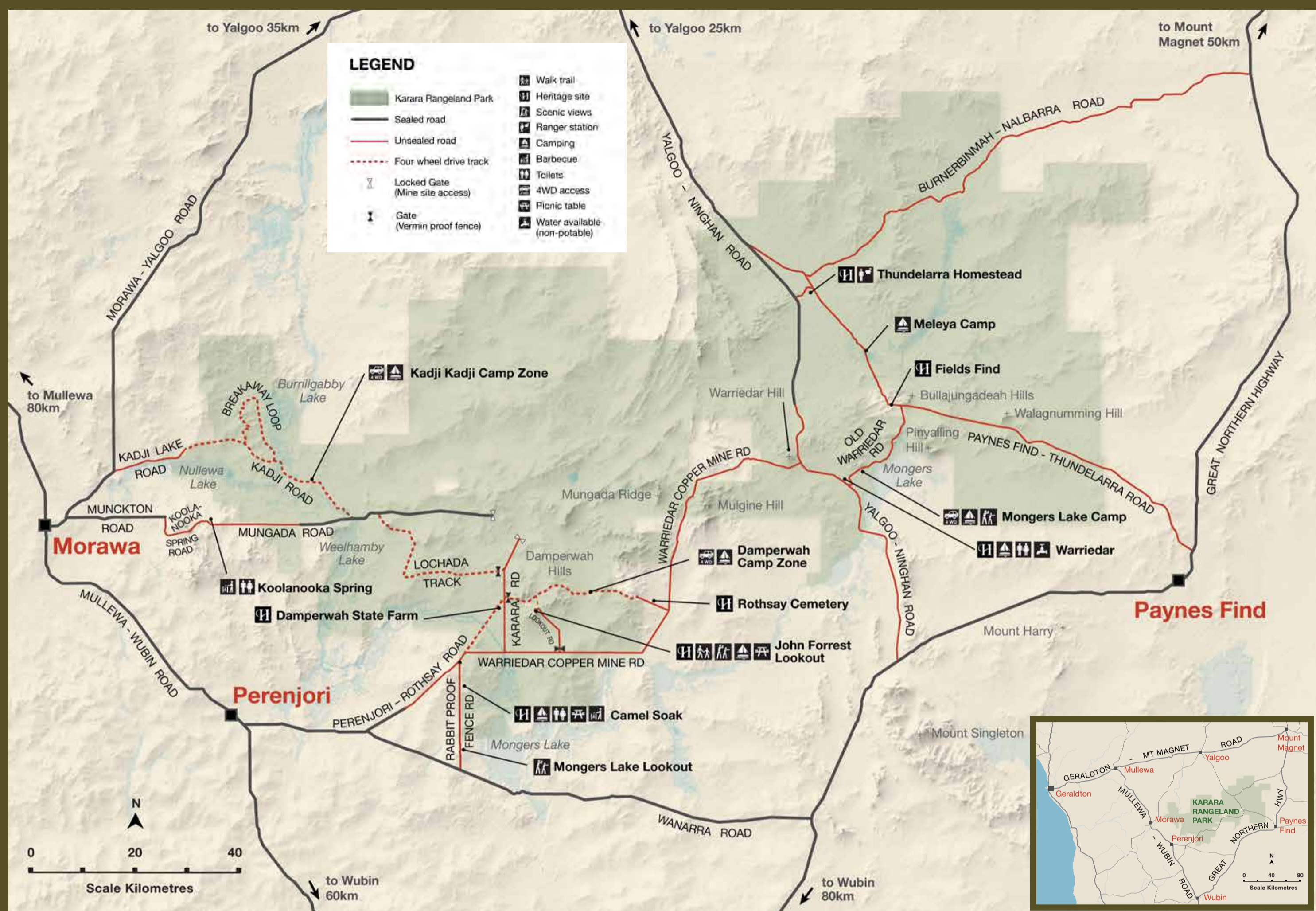
Aboriginal connections

Karara Rangeland Park is important to several Aboriginal groups. Significant Aboriginal sites in the park include artwork, rock holes, quartz and ochre quarries, artefact scatters, rock shelters, lizard traps, stone arrangements and grinding bases.

Stories and songs have also been passed down through the generations and the extensive Mongers Lake Waterway is a registered Aboriginal heritage site for its creation by the Bimurra creator being.

Below Emu at Thundelarra Lignum Swamp. Photo – Sue Hancock/DBCA





Campfires

Although campfires are permitted in Karara Rangeland Park, many negative impacts can be avoided by using fuel stoves instead of campfires.

Collecting firewood removes essential habitats used by a host of native flora and fauna, including endangered species. Insects, reptiles and other small animals lose their homes when wood is removed. Animals are displaced, nutrient recycling is disrupted and the balance of ecosystems disturbed.

If you have a campfire, please look after your campsite and all of its inhabitants – bring your own firewood, keep fires small and use fireplaces where provided.

You need to be self-sufficient in this remote area.

- There is no drinking water in the park. Make sure you have enough water for your visit.
- Mobile phone coverage is limited or non-existent.
- It gets hot and heat can kill.
- Protect yourself from the sun and avoid dehydration.
- Watch out for open mineshafts and pits.
- Leave your pets at home. The park is baited year round with 1080 poison to control feral animals. While native animals are naturally resistant to 1080 poison, the baits will kill your pets.
- Consider the risk of falling branches when camping under trees.



Please remember

- Take your rubbish with you.
- Do not disturb cultural sites.



Right Logs are homes for wildlife including endangered species. Bring your own firewood, keep your fires small and use fire rings where provided. Photo – Graham Weber

Access

Unsealed roads in the park vary in condition. Potholes and unexpected bends can take drivers by surprise and cause crashes.

- Some roads are narrow. Be prepared to pull over for oncoming traffic and watch out for road trains.
- Wildlife may leap in front of your vehicle any time, but especially between dusk and dawn.
- Rain makes roads slippery and boggy. Avoid unsealed roads and four-wheel-drive tracks in wet conditions.
- Four-wheel-drive tracks are not suitable for caravans unless you have an off-road caravan.
- Some parts of the park including some camping areas are accessible only with four-wheel-drive vehicles.
- Fuel is not available in the park.
- Please drive only on existing tracks, follow signs and drive to suit road conditions.
- Observe road closures.



Above Watch out for open mineshafts and pits. Photo – Sue Hancock/DBCA