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Department of Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions

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## Care for the park and follow the seven Leave No Trace principles.

**Plan ahead and prepare** There is no fuel at Millstream and the public telephone is card only. Roads may be closed after heavy rain. Check travel conditions with the Department of Environment and Conservation's Karratha office on (08) 9182 2000 or the Shire of Ashburton on (08) 9189 1029.

**Travel and camp on durable surfaces** Follow the signs in the park. Stay on the roads and trails marked on the park map. Camp only in designated campgrounds. Spinifex is fragile; it is easily damaged by indiscriminate driving, parking and walking, and can take many years to re-grow.

**Dispose of waste properly** Please take your litter with you. The toilets at Millstream use composting or biolytic systems, which can be destroyed by chemicals in blackwater from portable toilets. As such, do not empty portable toilets into park toilets. Use sullage points provided in the towns and Main Roads roadside stops.

**Leave what you find** Leave the natural environment as you find it. Several weeds threaten the park; please brush seeds from clothing and equipment before moving on.

**Minimise campfire impacts** Ground fires and solid fuel fires are not permitted. Dead wood is part of an arid ecosystem, providing food and homes for wildlife.

**Respect wildlife** 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. Please do not feed or approach them. Please do not use soap in streams and pools as it kills wildlife.

**Be considerate of yourself, your hosts and other visitors** Many areas in the park are culturally significant to Aboriginal people. Please do not interfere with cultural sites. Do not swim in the waters around the homestead or use any water craft in Deep Reach Pool.

Left Mulla mulla.



Above Snappy gums.

## More information

National park rangers are always glad to help make your visit more enjoyable and informative. They regularly visit camping and day-use areas.

### Millstream Chichester National Park

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### Pilbara Regional Office

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Photos - DEC and Tourism Western Australia  
Front cover Crossing Pool.



# Millstream Chichester National Park



## Information and walk trail guide



Department of Environment and Conservation



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**Above** Jirndawurrunha Pool.

## Millstream Chichester National Park

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 Yindjibarndi 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 Millstream precinct is also a priority one water catchment area.

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

## 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 (Yarnda Nyirranha) 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.

The Millstream area is a priority one catchment and, used in tandem with the Harding Dam, the aquifer supplies water to industry and for domestic use to the people of Wickham, Roebourne, Point Samson, Dampier and Karratha. The water level is constantly monitored and, in times of low water, pumps can be used to keep the Millstream pool topped up and flowing—an essential safeguard for the long-term survival of the wetland and its dependent wildlife.



**Top** Pilbara emerald dragonfly.  
**Above** Spinifex pigeons.  
**Right** Millstream palms.



## 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 desert pea cover the landscape. The solid 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, with its fanned, grey-green leaves and smooth bark. Introduced species such as date palms and cotton palms were once prolific at Millstream. They competed with native vegetation, blocked creek channels and encouraged wildfires. Many have been removed and the areas replanted with native vegetation. Other weeds at Millstream include the Indian water fern, the water lily and galleons curse.

Twenty-two species of dragonfly and damselfly have been recorded in the Millstream wetlands. Resident mammals include both the red and 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 (Yarnda Nyirranha) 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 paper-bark forest.

Wildfires caused by lightning strikes occur, and some controlled burning for biodiversity and asset protection. 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 degrees Celsius and cyclones and local thunderstorms can flood roads and watercourses. The cool season, between May and August, experiences little rain, with daytime temperatures around 26 degrees Celsius. Nights at this time of year can be cool, so don't forget to bring warm clothes.

**Below** Sturt desert pea.





Above Millstream Homestead.

## Things to see and do

### Millstream Homestead Visitor Centre

Start your visit by calling in to the visitor centre (normally unattended), which features rooms dedicated to the Yindjibarndi people, the early settlers and the natural environment. Other displays inform you of the park's attractions and management issues. For inquiries that cannot be addressed by the information provided you can contact the ranger's office by using the intercom telephone at the front counter. The ranger's office is not always attended.

### Telephones

The public telephone at the visitor centre can only be used with a phone card. Please purchase cards before visiting the park.

### Camping

Bush-style camping areas with pit toilets are provided at Crossing Pool, Miliyanha, Snake Creek and Stargazers (seasonal) campgrounds. You may use generators at Miliyanha and Snake Creek from 7am to 9pm but Crossing Pool and Stargazers are generator-free. Crossing Pool is not suitable for large caravans or group camping.

### Picnicking

Gas barbecues are available in the day-use areas at the homestead, Deep Reach Pool and Crossing Pool.

### Fees

Park entrance fees and camping fees are charged.

Please pay entrance fees at the self-registration park entry station. Alternatively you can purchase a park pass from the Department of Environment and Conservation office in Karratha, one of the Pilbara visitor centres or park staff. Please display it on the dashboard of your vehicle.

### Camping fees

These are payable at the self-registration stations in the campgrounds. They may also be collected by park staff.

Holders of the following cards are entitled to the specified concession: Senior's Card, Disability Support, Carer Payment, Department of Veterans' Affairs, Age Pension, Disability Support (blind), Carer Allowance and Companion Card.

### Water

Fresh water is available at the visitor centre. The water is untreated and boiling or chemical treatment is recommended. Remember to carry plenty of water with you at all times.

### Swimming

Enjoy a swim in the cool, permanent waterholes of Deep Reach and Crossing Pool but take care, especially with children as the water is deep and can be very cold in winter. Banks are steep and slippery so use platforms and ladders for access to and from the water. Swimming is not permitted at Jirndawurrunha Pool or surrounding streams because of their cultural significance to the traditional Aboriginal custodians.

Below Jewelled gecko.



Millstream Chichester National Park offers a variety of walk trails that are classified according to their degree of difficulty and the level of fitness required. Please choose your trails carefully. Select those that suit your level of ability and fitness. Your safety is our concern, but your responsibility.

## Millstream trails

At Millstream, on the Fortescue River (Yarnda Nyirranha), 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 visitor centre, and are featured below.

### Homestead Trail



750m – 30 minutes return

Come on a tour of the grounds as they used to be when the area was a station during the 1930s. The story is portrayed through the eyes of a 12-year-old boy, Doug Gordon, whose family was associated with Millstream for many decades. Doug's poster of the station hangs above the fireplace in the homestead. Due to flood damage, this trail is no longer a loop trail, but is split in two, providing access to either side of Jirndawurrunha Pool. Both trails begin at the homestead visitor centre. One is at the front of the centre; the other at the back near the old kitchen. Please take the two and enjoy the trail signage and sites.

### Murlamunyunha Trail



6.1km – 1.5 hours return

The Murlamunyunha Trail links the Millstream Homestead and the area around Crossing Pool and the Fortescue River. Plaques along the trail describe the use of native plants by local Aboriginal people who maintain strong ties with the land.

### Murlamunyunha Trail (seasonal)



700m – 30 minutes return

The final 700 metres to and from Crossing Pool campsite is for experienced bushwalkers. It traverses the Fortescue River erosion zone and includes natural obstacles, stepping stones and variable surfaces. This section is often closed from 1 November to the end of April each year due to occasional flooding by summer storms. Take care as wet rocks are slippery.

## Chichester Range trails

Mount Herbert and Python Pool are two of the main attractions in 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 watercourse.

### Python Pool



100m – 20 minutes return

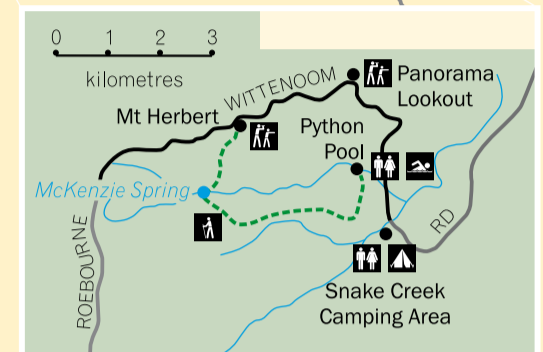
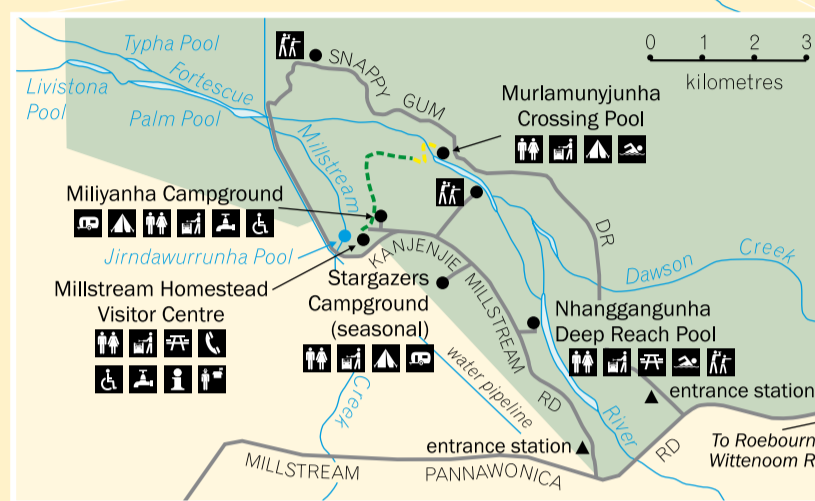
From the car park, follow the trail up a usually dry creek bed to Python Pool, a permanent freshwater plunge pool located at the base of a cliff in the Chichester Range escarpment. Take care as the ground is uneven and scattered with loose rocks that can become slippery when wet.

### McKenzie Spring



4.5km – 1 hour return

From the Mount Herbert car park, follow the Chichester Range Camel Trail from Mount Herbert to McKenzie Spring. This was once a watering hole for camel and bullock teams. The trail includes short steep sections and the ground can be uneven with loose surfaces. Return along the same route.



### Mount Herbert Summit



600m – 25 minutes return

From the Mount Herbert car park follow the Chichester Range Camel Trail to the base of Mount Herbert, then follow the track to the top of the mountain. There are short steep sections and some steps. The ground is uneven with loose rocks.

### Chichester Range Camel Trail



8km – 3 hours one way, 16km – 6 hours return

This trail crosses the rugged basalt and sandstone terrain of the Chichester Range. It includes steep gradients, natural obstacles and consists of variable surfaces including loose rocks. A good level of fitness is required. If you are walking both ways, begin at Python Pool. If you are only walking one way, start at Mount Herbert and have a vehicle meet you at Python Pool.

## Safe walking tips

When walking in the park wear a hat, broad spectrum sun screen and sturdy walking shoes. Carry adequate water. To avoid dehydration each person needs to drink one litre of water for every hour of walking. For your own safety, please remain on existing trails.

### Cameleers Trail



4km – 1.5 hours return

Follow the trail towards Python Pool, turn left at the sign and head up the hill along this steep trail. This hill has caused camel and bullock teams some grief over the years. There are natural obstacles including washouts in some spots, and the surface is loose and rocky in others. Take the time to appreciate the work that went into its early construction. Retaining walls and stone culverts hint at the effort involved in maintaining a route like this.

## Through the past

### Yindjibarndi people

The Millstream Chichester area is one of the most, if not the most, significant Indigenous cultural sites in northern Western Australia. Cultural and mythological importance stems from thousands of years of occupation, with Millstream being the home of the mythological serpent or warlu, whose presence is still strongly felt at Deep Reach Pool. All the pools are significant in this regards and warrant a high level of respect because of their spiritual and mythological importance.

The broad area of land straddling the Fortescue River (Yarnda Nyirranha) from the Hamersley Range through to the Chichester escarpment is the homeland of the Yindjibarndi people. Ngarluma people's lands run from the Chichester escarpment northward to the sea.

Aside from its highly important spiritual significance, Millstream was an important camp site for inter-tribal meetings. The Fortescue River (Yarnda Nyirranha) provided food and water, particularly during drier months. Along the river, Indigenous people had a varied diet of red meat, fish, reptiles, grubs, eggs, honey fruits and root vegetables. Extensive areas were burnt to create natural paddocks and attract kangaroos. The dry climate meant that knowledge of the locations of waterholes was important. The Indigenous people (Ngardangarli) were skilled in land management and were nomadic within their traditional boundaries.

Yindjibarndi and Ngarluma people continue to come to the park to spend time on country and to carry out customary activities. They are also represented on the Millstream Park Council which, in association with the Department of Environment and Conservation, manages the strategic direction of the park.

### Millstream pastoral station

Millstream was named in 1861 by the explorer FT Gregory, who reported its favorable 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, now the Department of Environment and Conservation. The homestead is now a visitor centre.

### The national park

Previously two separate national parks, Millstream and Chichester were joined as one park in 1982. Yindjibarndi people have the opportunity to continue their long association with the area, through training and employment as rangers and contract workers.