

New parks in Goldfields and North West



Attending the announcement of the Goldfields Woodlands National Park are (standing, from left), CALM's Goldfields Regional Manager Ian Kealley and Executive Director Dr Wally Cox, with Premier Richard Court, a young unknown visitor, and Mark Neville, MLC. Seated on Boondi Rock are traditional owners Cadley Sambo and son Billy-Joe. See story on page 2. Photo by Rob Thomas

WESTERN Australia's conservation reserve network has been extended by more than 840,000 hectares with the creation of a series of new parks and management areas in the Kimberley, Pilbara and Goldfields.

The new reserves, which have been vested in the National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority, are:

- Mitchell River National Park—115,300 ha
- Lawley River National Park—17,570 ha
- Camp Creek Conservation Park—1,270 ha
- Laterite Conservation Park—12,200 ha
- King Leopold Ranges Conservation Park—392,100 ha
- Goldfields Woodlands National Park—64,000 ha
- Goldfields Woodlands associated conservation park and management area—88,000 ha
- Cane River Conservation Park—148,000 ha

Several of the new parks join existing parks or reserves. The Mitchell River National Park abuts the Prince Regent Nature Reserve creating an overall conservation area of 750,000 ha.

The new Goldfields Woodlands National Park and associated conservation park and management area join the Boorabbin National Park (26,000 ha) and an area of more than 140,000 ha that has been earmarked for inclusion in the new park. This will create a contiguous network of conservation reserves covering 311,000 ha.

Cane River Conservation Park adjoins Mt Minnie Station (148,000 ha), which is managed by CALM for conservation values.

Premier Richard Court and Environment Minister Cheryl Edwardes officially announced the parks at a series of functions in July and August.

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CALM Executive Director Dr Wally Cox said the new reserves made a valuable addition to the conservation estate CALM managed on behalf of the people of Western Australia.

"The declaration of the parks is part of CALM's overall aim of ensuring that we have a comprehensive, adequate and representative conservation reserve network

across all the biogeographic regions of the State," he said.

"These new parks not only bring us closer to that aim, they also provide many new challenges for CALM in terms of liaising with local communities and traditional owners to ensure that we manage them for their wide range of values."

Goldfields park opened

A NEW national park of more than 64,000 hectares has been officially opened on the Goldfields, forming the core of a new conservation area.

Opening the Goldfields Woodland National Park (which lies west of Coolgardie), Premier Richard Court said that it was part of a new conservation reserve network that extended over almost 152,500 ha on either side of the Great Eastern Highway between Coolgardie and Southern Cross.

"In addition, a further 150,000 ha will be added to the network to create a series of conservation lands in the region that will ultimately total more than 300,000 hectares," Mr Court said.

CALM's Goldfields Regional Manager Ian Kealley said the conservation area represented a microcosm of the Eastern Goldfields.

"It contains a wide variety of eucalypts including original stands and regrowth areas of salmon gum, gimlet, ribbon-barked gum, mallees, red morrel, redwood, and woodline mallee," Ian said.

"The eucalypts also come in for international attention, as the Goldfields is the only place in the world where so many tall trees grow in such an arid environment.

"Land management people from countries such as China, Africa and

several Mediterranean countries are now using Goldfields eucalypts for re-vegetation projects in their arid zones.

"There's also a range of acacias, banksias, callistemons, hakeas, melaleucas, sandalwood and an undescribed species of grass tree.

"An amazing range of the various ecosystems of the region can be found, including granite outcrops, natural salt lakes and sandplain heaths.

"Fauna surveys (which included the neighbouring Boorabbin National Park) have revealed 17 species of native mammals, four species of frogs, 52 reptile and 51 bird species."

Ian said that the history of the conservation area revealed a unique association with the early development of the Goldfields.

"Timber cut from the woodlands fuelled the pumping stations along the water pipeline between Mundaring and Kalgoorlie, which was completed in 1903," he said.

"In fact, parts of the new national park are former pump station fire-wood reserves.

"Also, the western part of the reserve includes remnants of the historic Kalgoorlie woodlines which were narrow-gauge railway lines used to haul timber into Kalgoorlie and Boulder for the mines and boilers following the discovery of gold.

Mr Court said the declaration of the park was

part of the Government's commitment to conservation of the State's natural environment and creating opportunities for nature-based tourism activities in regional Western Australia.

"The Government is strongly committed to achieving a balance by creating a comprehensive conservation reserve network while at the same time appreciating the various competing land uses in the Goldfields," he said.

"We want to encourage a conservation ethic that recognises the rights of future generations, and the responsibilities of the present generation to manage natural resources so they remain a part of all our futures."

The area also has much to offer for recreation and tourism, with the potential to develop a number of recreation and camping sites within the park and along the Great Eastern Highway, and provide a tourist route to incorporate the different biological and historical features.

These include distinctive rock catchments along the historical Goldfields railway and pipeline next to the Great Eastern Highway, the heritage trail from York to the Goldfields and a section of the historic Holland Track that brought the ever-hopeful prospectors to the Goldfields from the port of Albany in the early goldrush days.

Five new parks in the North West announced

SOME of the most spectacular landforms in the Kimberley are to be found in two new national parks and three new conservation parks.

The new parks also include remnant rainforest and one of the most complete and diverse ranges of native animal species found in Australia.

Announcing the opening of the parks at a ceremony on the Mitchell Plateau, Premier Richard Court said the creation of the parks would enable the areas to be managed to conserve these values, as well as the region's distinctive Aboriginal heritage and culture.

"The Government has been in consultation with Aboriginal people to develop co-operative management arrangements for the parks and to provide opportunities for Aboriginal enterprise and employment," said the Premier.

Four of the new reserves are in the Mitchell Plateau area, while the fifth encompasses almost 400,000 ha of the former Mt Hart pastoral lease which includes an extensive tract of the King Leopold Range. Altogether, the parks cover nearly 540,000 hectares.

"The Mitchell River National Park takes in the stunningly beautiful Mitchell Falls, which have



The announcement of the opening of the King Leopold Range Conservation Park was held at the Mt Hart Homestead, a tourism complex run by Taffy Abbotts in partnership with CALM. The Complex includes new accommodation quarters, as well as an 'al fresco' facility. Attending the opening were CALM Broome maintenance worker Lyndon Quaipe (standing, left), Director of Parks and Visitor Services Jim Sharp, Broome District administration officer Jill Green and parks maintenance worker Henry Corpus, CALM Kimberley Regional Manager Chris Done, Ken Fitzgerald (who donated the Mt Hart 'al fresco facility'), and Mt Hart Complex Manager Taffy Abbotts. In front are Premier Richard Court, CALM Executive Director Dr Wally Cox, Environment Minister Cheryl Edwardes and CALM East Kimberley District Manager Allen Grosse. Photo by Nigel Higgs

become an icon for travellers to the Kimberley," the Premier said.

CALM's Kimberley Regional Manager Chris Done said that the area was habitat for at least 42 native mammals, among the largest number of any comparable area in Australia. Surveys have recorded 19 frog species and 77

different native reptiles.

"It also has abundant birdlife with more than 160 species recorded and is the world's richest area for mangrove birds," Chris said.

The plateau is also dotted with small patches of rainforest that contain plant species quite different to those found in the surrounding savannah.

Although the plateau is mainly dominated by an open eucalypt forest, some areas contain dense stands of livistona palms, while ancient cycads are common in other areas.

CALM's Director of Parks and Visitor Services Jim Sharp said the Mitchell River National Park abutted the northern boundary of the

635,000 ha Prince Regent Nature Reserve, which effectively created a continuous conservation reserve of three-quarters of a million hectares.

"The King Leopold Ranges Conservation Park takes in areas such as Bell Gorge and the Lennard River Gorge, which already attract many visitors," Jim said.

The layers of rocks that make up the Kimberley basin are more than five kilometres thick, their origins dating back 1,900 million years to Precambrian times.

About 560 million years ago, these layers were pushed up over older volcanic rocks, creating a range more than 300 km long.

Erosion over millions of years has created the rugged terrain with steep valley walls and folded and faulted rock formations.

The King Leopold Ranges and Mitchell Plateau are in some of the most remote and inaccessible country in Australia. Early biological survey work has indicated that these may be the only mainland areas of the State from which there have been no species extinctions since white settlement.

The reservation of these areas will not only help conserve these extremely important natural ecosystems, they will also help develop a sustainable nature-based tourism industry in WA's north.

Mr Court said the Mitchell Plateau region was highly valued by scientists as a living laboratory and was a mecca for biologists and tourists seeking insights into tropical biodiversity in the Kimberley. Species new to science had been discovered and it was thought that more awaited discovery.

The creation of the Kimberley national and conservation parks are the latest in the Coalition's commitment to open up 15 new national parks and three conservation reserves throughout the State.

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