

## NEW VISITOR CENTRE AT MILLSTREAM

The old homestead at Millstream-Chichester National Park, which was once the focal point of a sheep and cattle station, has had a face-lift and will reopen as a visitor centre.

The homestead has been reroofed and repainted and will introduce visitors to the natural and cultural value of Millstream, which is about two hours' drive from Karratha in the Pilbara.

Millstream was an important place for Aborigines for many centuries.

The first pastoral lease on Millstream was granted in 1866 for sheep grazing. Wool was transported by camel train to the port at Cossack until the turn of the century.

The present homestead was built in 1914 after a cyclone destroyed the original building in 1908.



*The newly refurbished Millstream Homestead.*

*Photo - Richard Hammond*

The State Government bought the station in 1982, and in 1986 the homestead lease was purchased by the Department of Conservation and Land Management.

Among the displays in the new centre is a room devoted to the Yijibbarndi Aborigines, the traditional custodians of the Millstream area.

The room displays local artefacts. There is a recording of a traditional song about the Millstream wetlands by Yijibbarndi elder Yilbie Warrie and a reproduced rock engraving of Nyngara the Rock Man, a magic man who once terrorised the people. Also included is a full-size replica paperbark hut, built by Ranger

Bruce Woodley and friends.

The Settlers' Room houses a reconstructed station hands' hut, and a recording of Doug Gordon - whose family were associated with Millstream Station from 1914 to 1964 - telling his story.

Other displays inform visitors of the park's attractions and some of the experiences to be had, and help them to interpret the geology of the region, the arid lands, and the remarkable wetlands oasis at Millstream.

Much of the artwork for Millstream Homestead Visitor Centre was prepared by Sally Watson, whose work can also be seen at Milyering Visitor Centre in Cape Range National Park.

## EXOTIC PALMS INVADE



Exotic date palms have taken over parts of the wetland habitats in the Millstream-Chichester National Park.

The palms were introduced late last century by pastoralists and Afghan camel drivers as both ornamental trees and a food crop. They are fast-growing and prolific seeders, and have spread from where they were originally planted

into the delta streams and the bed of the Fortescue River.

Accumulations of dead fronds have provided fuel for intense wildfires in the wetlands, and while the date palms recover quickly, native trees such as the large cajeputs and river gums have been killed by repeated intense fire.

Another impact of the palms has been to deny light



*Far left - exotic palms have taken over at Millstream, choking out the native vegetation and creating a fire hazard.*

*Date palms regenerating after a fire.*

*Photos - Peter Kendrick*

to the understorey plants and constrict stream channels with invading root mats: the end result is a thick, pure date palm stand on bare, saline soil.

The Department of Conservation and Land Management is trying to protect the wetlands by reducing the exotic palms to manageable levels and re-establishing native species.

A grove of several hundred mature palms will be retained around the Homestead area to provide a contrast to the natural wetlands nearby, and to remind visitors of the historical significance of the palms to the pastoral history of the Pilbara, but in the remainder of the area the wetland vegetation will be protected and regulated.



# LANDSCOPE

VOLUME SEVEN NO. 1 SPRING EDITION 1991



A wave of colour is spreading from Shark Bay to Jurien and inland to Meekatharra. Our story on page 10 takes you into Wildflower Country.



The WA Museum is 100 years old. It houses a staggering four million specimens of insects, marine animals, fish, birds, reptiles and frogs. Page 22.



Seven species of microscopic dieback-disease fungi are attacking WA's unique wildflowers. See page 28.



The rugged Pilbara landscape has some hidden delights. On page 16, go up hill to Hamersley Range, then down Dales and other spectacular gorges.



How does WA's conservation heritage look to the people who look after it? Turn to page 26 for some great photographs from a recent competition run for CALM staff.

## FEATURES

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## COVER

Out now! Wildflowers are blooming in the vast tracts of country north of Perth, especially in the northern sandplains and Murchison, which is experiencing a bumper wildflower season following heavy winter rains. Philippa Nikulinsky's illustration shows some of the wildflowers for which WA is justly famous: the splendid everlasting, buttercup, red leschenaultia, Sturt's desert pea, catspaw, wattle, native wisteria, black kangaroo paw, flame pea, and scaevola - all covered in the newly released book Wildflower Country. See page 10.



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