



Kalbarri National Park

Kalbarri National Park, between Geraldton and Shark Bay, offers spectacular deep gorges and majestic cliffs that look out over the Indian Ocean.

Above Island Rock.

Facing page

Top right Wedgetail eagle (*Aquila audax*).

Photos – Jiri Lochman

Above right Porcupine banksia (*Banksia lindleyana*).

Photo – Andrew Davoll|Lochman
Transparencies

The spectacular scenery of Kalbarri National Park is the result of many millions of years of geological formation. Beneath the landscape are deep, horizontal bands of multi-coloured sands, which were deposited in layers some 400 million years ago. Over time, the Murchison River cut magnificent red-and-white-banded gorges through the park, as it carved its way for 80 kilometres to the Indian Ocean.

The thinly bedded, banded rocks seen through most of the river gorge and at the foot of Red Bluff were deposited on tidal flats. Rippled surfaces can be seen in many places, such as around Nature's Window. The ripples were formed by waves moving over the tidal flats. Some beds (such as on the way down the Z-Bend and in overhangs at The Loop) look as if they have been riddled by plant roots, and often have a 'can of worms' appearance. These are actually burrows left by worms sheltering in the sand. Tracks and trails on flat surfaces show where animals crawled across the damp

sedimentary surface (see 'Footprints on the Sands of Time', *LANDSCOPE*, Winter 1993).

The sedimentary rock formation found in the gorge and on the coast is called the Tumblagooda sandstone. Along the coast, wind and wave erosion has exposed the layers of the coastal cliffs that rise more than 100 metres above the ocean. From Red Bluff, extensive views south overlook colourful coastal limestone and sandstone ledges. There are scenic sites at Mushroom Rock, Rainbow Valley, Pot Alley and Eagle Gorge, to name but a few.

Wildflower wonderland

Kalbarri is also famous for its wildflowers, most of which bloom from late July through spring and into early summer. The species-rich heathlands provide a spectacular floral display. There are vivid gold and orange banksias, green and red kangaroo paws, grevilleas in white, yellow and red, featherflowers in a variety of colours and shades, smokebushes, starflowers and many more.



Park facts

Where is it? 550 km north of Perth

Total area 183,004 hectares

What to do Wildflower watching, walking, wildlife observation including whale watching, photography, rafting and canoeing, abseiling, rock climbing, fishing, snorkelling, picnicking

Walks For those eager for adventure, the eight-kilometre Loop Trail from Nature's Window provides an unforgettable gorge experience. Z-Bend is a moderately easy 500-metre walk to a rock lookout that overhangs the Murchison River. Visitors should take extreme care in this gorge risk area.

Must see sites Coastal Cliff lookouts, Hawk's Head, Z-Bend and Nature's Window.

Naming The park is named after the nearby town of Kalbarri. The name of Kalbarri was chosen from a list of Aboriginal words compiled by Daisy Bates in 1913. It is a man's name from a Murchison tribe, and also the name of an edible seed. (Information courtesy of Department of Land Information.)

Nearest CALM office The Kalbarri National Park office is located two kilometres from Kalbarri along the Kalbarri-Ajana Road.

The Mid-West Regional Office is located on the 1st Floor of The Foreshore Centre, 201 Foreshore Drive, Geraldton. Phone (08) 9937 1140.

Twenty-one plant species are found only here, mainly in the coastal cliff tops and gorge country. One of the best known is the Kalbarri catspaw (*Anigozanthos kalbarriensis*), a small yellow or red plant that is usually seen on recently burnt country from August to September. It is confined to the Kalbarri area. There are also several orchids that can only be seen in and near the park, including the Kalbarri spider orchid (*Caladenia wamosa*) and the Murchison hammer orchid (*Drakaea concolor*).

Kalbarri animals

Kalbarri is also a rich environment for reptiles, birds and other animals. Most of the native mammals are nocturnal, but western grey kangaroos and emus can be seen during the day. Emus are Australia's largest native bird

and the second largest flightless bird in the world. Ospreys soar from the sea cliffs and wedgetail eagles patrol the gorges. The bizarre and ferocious-looking thorny devil, which is only about nine centimetres long and eats ants, thrives in the park and is commonly seen sunning itself along the sandy roadway into the Loop and Z-Bend. Sightings of the rare malleefowl have become more frequent since the start of fox baiting in the park in 1996. CALM's Western Shield wildlife recovery program has also seen the reintroduction of woylies and chuditch to the park. Planning is under way for the translocation of other native species including tamar wallabies and black-footed rock-wallabies, which, although once abundant, have not been sighted in the park for many years.

- 56 Keeping our forests in check
Scientists look for changes and trends in our forests.

Regulars

- 3 Contributors and Editor's letter
- 9 Bookmarks
Introduced mammals of the world.
The world's first shell collection guide from 1821.
Fire in ecosystems of south-west Western Australia: impacts and management.
- 18 Feature park
Kalbarri National Park
- 55 Endangered
The hairy (Margaret River) marron.
- 62 Urban antics
Who dunnit?

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