

Walyunga National Park

Walyunga National Park is just a short drive from Perth, provides a picturesque bushland setting and is immensely important to local Indigenous people.

Above The Swan River flows through Walyunga National Park.
Photo – David Bettini

Facing page

Top Sacred kingfisher.

*Photo – Hans and Judy Beste/Lochman
Transparencies*

Far right Bushwalkers on the Syds Rapids walktrail.

*Photo – Jay Sarson/Lochman
Transparencies*

Less than an hour's drive north-east of Perth, just behind the Darling Scarp, awaits the bushland of Walyunga National Park. The nearly 1800-hectare park covers both sides of a steep valley through which the Swan River flows, just after its formation from the convergence of the Avon and Brockman rivers.

The river flows down the valley—as calm pools during summer and torrential rapids during winter—making a deep dissection that creates picturesque landforms throughout Walyunga National Park. Grey granite and darker dolerite can be seen along these valley sides, while red laterite tops the hills.

The natural values of the park are particularly obvious in spring, when delightful and abundant wildflowers blossom from the mosaic of granite outcrops, woodlands and heaths. At least 12 orchid species can be found within the park and extensive heath communities are particularly well developed along the scarp edge.

A significant cultural site

Walyunga National Park contains the largest known Aboriginal heritage site within 80 kilometres of Perth. This former campsite and tool-making area by the side of Walyunga Pool is an important historical site and retains significant Indigenous cultural heritage value, particularly important because most other such sites near the city have been destroyed by urban and industrial development.

It is estimated that the area has been occupied intermittently for more than 6000 years; used as a common ground by several Aboriginal groups for meetings, settling disputes, initiations and ceremonies, and as a trail through the Darling Scarp. Here, plant food was abundant, tool-making supplies were accessible and the nearby water brought game such as grey kangaroos (marlerup) and goannas (karrda). Despite European settlement along the Swan River from 1829, it is estimated that Aboriginal use of the campsite and workshop area continued until the late 1800s.



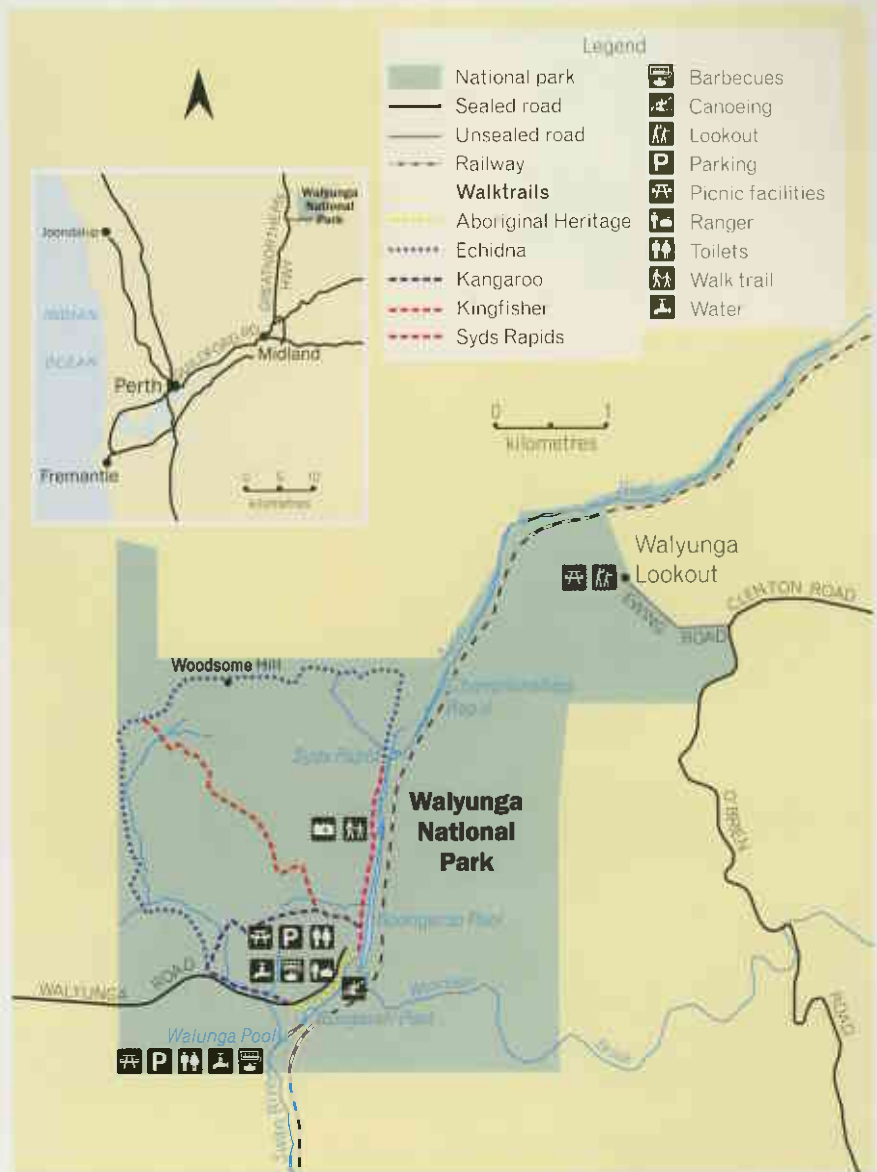
Today, the site remains as a large sandy area, over which hundreds of partially made stone tools and scraps from the tool-making process are scattered. These artefacts include axes (kodjer), knives (tabba) and spear-heads (gidgie borigle). While visitors are permitted to visit the site, it is very important that these cultural artefacts are not removed or disturbed.

Walktrails

Visitors to Walyunga National Park can find out about Aboriginal culture by walking the 1200-metre return Aboriginal Heritage Trail along the bank of the river, linking Walyunga and Boogarup pools. This journey through traditional Aboriginal Dreaming explains how the original inhabitants used the river, landscape, plants and animals.

The four-kilometre Kangaroo Trail crosses granite outcrops that overlook the landscape and provide homes for the small animals, such as lizards and geckos. Flooded gums and wandoos shade the 5.2-kilometre return Syds Rapids walk that meanders along the grassy floodplain of the Swan River.

The two longer walktrails in the park are the 8.5-kilometre Kingfisher Trail, which leads walkers past dryandras, melaleucas, hakeas and banksias, and the more strenuous 10.6-kilometre Echidna Trail. But the effort is certainly worth it—this track across the marri, powderbark and jarrah wooded ridges provides spectacular panoramic views across the park, and particularly the Swan and Avon valleys.



Native animals

As the Echidna Trail's name suggests, echidnas are found in Walyunga National Park, particularly among wooded areas and rocky outcrops. Grey kangaroos still abound on the forested slopes, as do euros and brush wallabies. In 2004, officers from the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) released tammars, woylies and rock-wallabies as part of a reintroduction program in the park (see 'Reviving the Avon Valley', *LANDSCOPE*, Spring 2004).

As well as a scenic delight, the river provides a home to long-necked tortoises and waterbirds, including sacred kingfishers, little black and little pied cormorants and black, grey teal and wood ducks, and the park is a haven for bush birds.

park facts

Where is it? 40 km north-east of Perth. Access is via Great Northern Highway and Walyunga Road.

Total area Almost 1800 hectares.

Naming 'Walyunga' is an Aboriginal name but its meaning is uncertain, possibly 'northern Nyoongar' or 'northern group'.

What to do Bushwalking, canoeing, picnicking, wildlife observation and photography.

Must see sights The wildflowers in spring. The Avon Descent each August.

Facilities Picnic areas, barbecues, toilets, water.

Best seasons Spring and winter.

Park hours 8 am to 5 pm.

Information On-site ranger (08) 9571 1371.

Nearest CALM office Mundaring District Office, Weir Road, Mundaring (08) 9295 1117.

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