



## Millstream-Chichester National Park

Freshwater pools fringed by swaying palms emerge like an oasis from the red soil of Millstream-Chichester National Park, traditional home of the Yindjibarndi people.

**Above** Chinderwarriner Pool.  
Photo – Michael Pelusey

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**Above right** Sturt pea.

**Right** Kingsley Woodley, one of two trainee rangers at Millstream-Chichester National Park.

Photos – Kerry Faulkner

For the thousands who visit each year, the park's main attraction amid the hot, harsh Pilbara landscape is that it has fresh water, and lots of it. The Millstream delta is a unique wetland, fed by a natural aquifer within the Fortescue River catchment. The Fortescue is a braided waterway that becomes constricted at Millstream and diverts to the north-west through a series of rocky gorges.

### An ancient land, a living culture

Millstream is characterised by picturesque waterholes (the biggest is up to two kilometres long and the deepest is 14 metres) shaded by cadjeputs (*Melaleuca argentea*), river red gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) and palm trees. According to Yindjibarndi law, these pools were created in the Dreamtime by the great water snake Warlu when it travelled underground and broke to the surface of the then-dry river, in pursuit of two young lieve that the Warlu now rests in Deep Reach Pool (Nhanggangunha).

In recognition of the park's importance to the traditional owners,

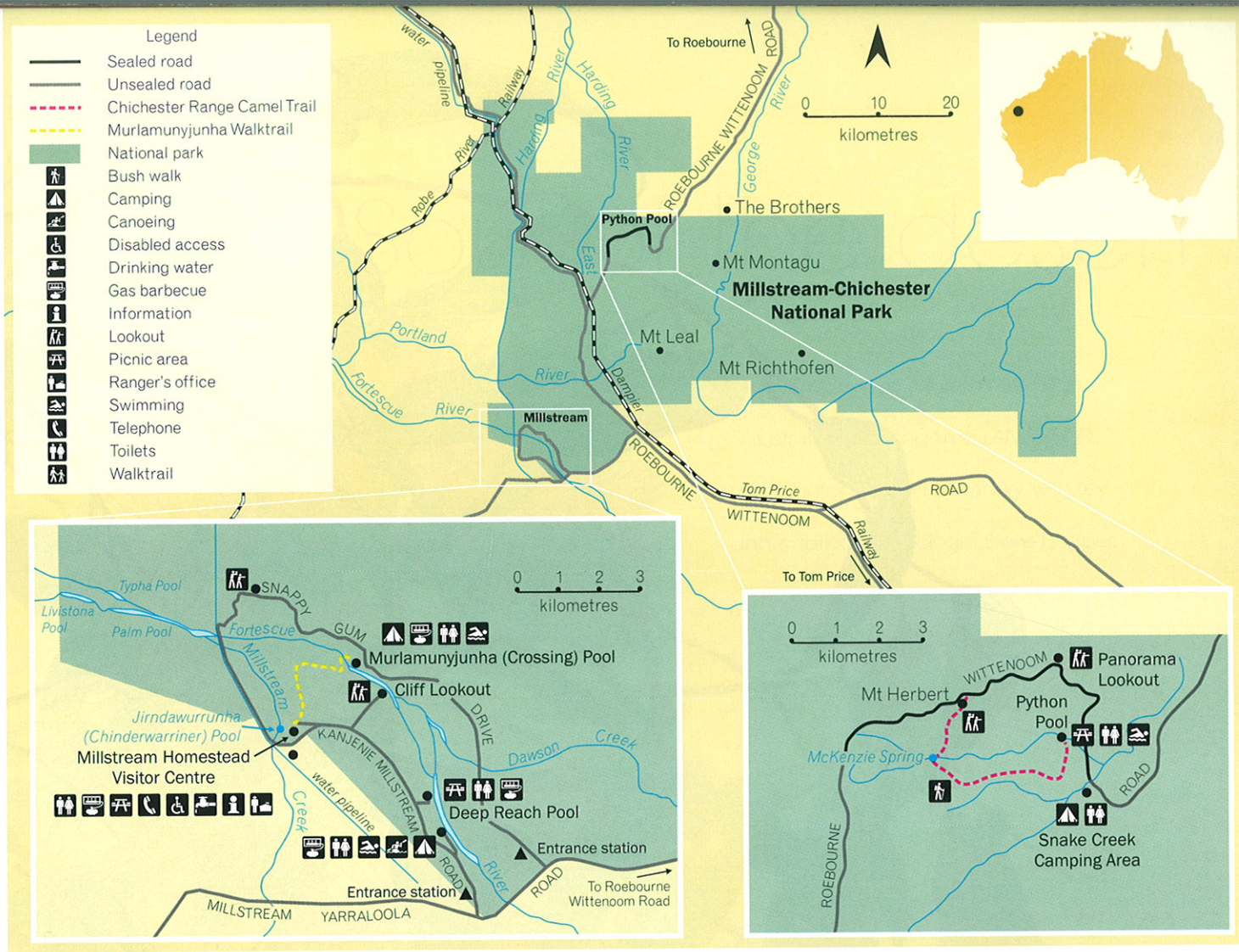
staff from the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) have worked closely with tribal leaders to establish and maintain a park council. The council is made up of 10 Yindjibarndi and two Ngarluma elders who represent their communities at regular 'on country' meetings. CALM also works closely with the Juluwarlu Aboriginal Corporation, a local Indigenous body dedicated to preserving Yindjibarndi culture.

The council has been instrumental in appointing two Yindjibarndi men with long family associations with Millstream as trainee rangers.

### Pastoral history

A rambling homestead (circa 1920) is testimony to the area's pastoral history (the station ran 55,000 sheep in its prime) and today is the Homestead Visitor Centre, an interpretive facility and focal point for its many visitors.

In its early days, the area was traversed by Afghan cameleers carrying goods between the ports and inland stations. Some of their tracks are part of the park's system of walktrails, such as



the Chichester Range Camel Trail. Its views across the coastal plain, pierced with spectacular flat-topped peaks, provide some of the park's most stunning vistas.

### Plants and animals

A walk along the Murlamunyunha Trail, which meanders from the homestead to Crossing Pool, is testament to the diversity of the park's flora. The track weaves its way from spinifex grassland with occasional snappy gum (*Eucalyptus leucophloia*) and bloodwood (*Corymbia hamersleyana*) trees to tall river red gum and cadjeput woodlands that occur nearer the water. The Millstream palm (*Livistona alfredii*), a beautiful species of palm with fan-like leaves, is endemic to this area and dots the trail. Between June and August, the park's wildflowers are at their peak, with species like the Sturt pea (*Clianthus formosus*) adding a splash of vibrant colour.

Euros and red kangaroos graze the lawns of the homestead in abundance and there is a huge diversity of avifauna

ranging from the spectacularly decorated star and zebra finches to the regal black swan. Grey-crowned babbler often frolic in the sprinklers that service the homestead lawn and the mournful cry of the bush stone-curlew is heard most nights. Millstream is home to the magnificent threatened Pilbara olive python (*Morelia olivacea barroni*), which can grow up to 4.5 metres long. On a slightly smaller scale, the park is also home to more than 30 species of dragonflies and damselflies, some of which can be seen flitting from lily pad to lily pad at Jirndawurrunha (Chinderwarriner) Pool.

Jirndawurrunha Pool is also the main front of CALM's battle against introduced weed species such as the Indian waterfern and the date palm, one of the most damaging pest plant species (see 'Feral Palms', *LANDSCOPE*, Autumn 2005). CALM's eradication of this species began in the early 1990s and continues today with Department of Justice staff and inmates at the Millstream work camp assisting with the program.



### park facts

**Where is it?** Three hours drive (190 km) south-east of Karratha.

**Total area** Nearly 200,000 hectares.

**Naming** The park was formed by the amalgamation of the Millstream (named after the Millstream pastoral lease) and the Chichester Range national parks.

**What to do** Swim in the delta's waterholes; take the Homestead Walk around Jirndawurrunha Pool, one of the park's most photographed sites, or one of seven other walktrails; or explore the two drive trails.

**Must see sites** Jirndawurrunha Pool, sunset from Cliff Lookout, sheer cliff surrounds of Python Pool and the stunning views atop Mount Herbert.

**Nearest CALM office** Pilbara Regional Office, corner Mardie and Lambert Road, Karratha Industrial Estate (08) 9143 1488.

