



Cape Arid National Park

French Admiral D'Entrecasteaux named 'Cap Arride' in 1792, and the name was anglicised by Matthew Flinders in 1802. The Cape Arid National Park was subsequently named after this feature.

Above A boulder at Tagon Bay, looking towards Mount Arid.
Photo – David Bettini

Facing page

Top far right Flora on Mount Ragged.
Photo – Jiri Lochman

Above right Stilts.
Photo – Tim Brett

Right Cape Arid National Park.
Photo – Tim Brett

Although, due to its far south coastal position far from any large population centres, Cape Arid is one of the least known national parks in Western Australia, it is nevertheless an exceptionally beautiful and biodiverse area.

Cape Arid National Park is renowned for its sweeping beaches, clear blue seas and rocky headlands. Low granite hills extend inland, and in the northern part of the park the Russell Range rises to its highest point at Tower Peak (around 600 metres). Like the Barrens of the Fitzgerald River National Park, Tower Peak and the Russell Range were islands when sea levels rose about 40 million years ago. Wave-cut platforms can be seen on their lower slopes.

Together with the Nuytsland Nature Reserve and Eucla National Park to the east, Cape Arid National Park forms an almost continuous nature conservation area to the South Australian border.

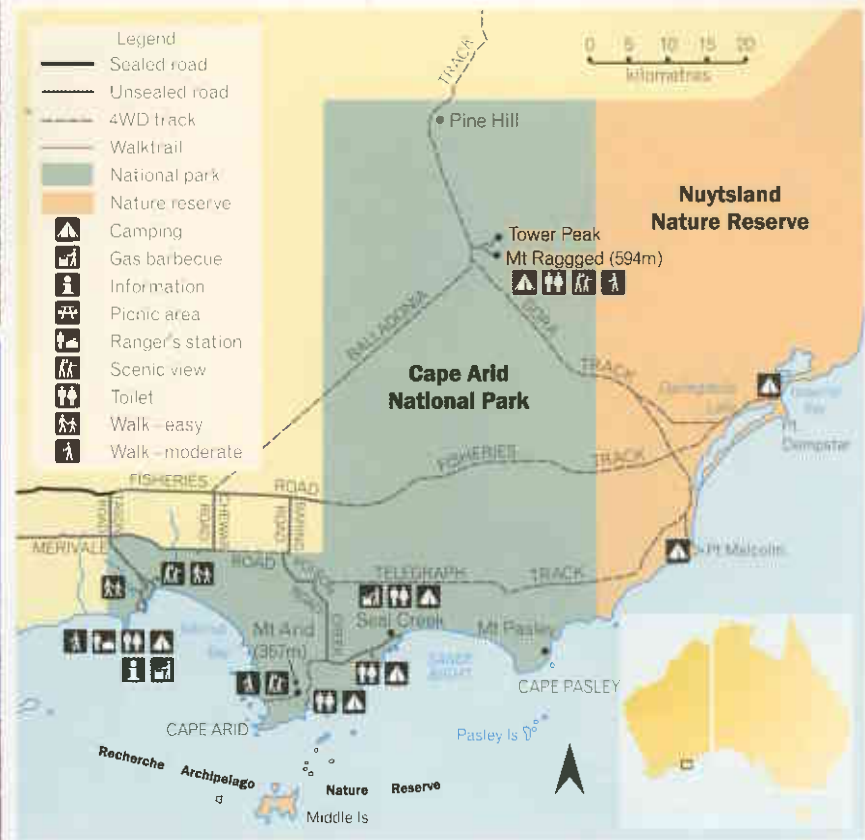
Cape Arid itself consists of granite rock jutting out into the Southern Ocean and very low heath nearby. The

remainder of the park has a huge diversity of flora, with 1100 species of plants recorded so far. The park's coastal heathlands have abundant wildflowers in spring. The park also has extensive woodland in the northern sections.

In 1870, Campbell Taylor arrived to take up land around the Thomas River for grazing. William Ponton and John Sharp settled the area around Pine Hill five years later. A dam and the graves of some travellers can be seen near the waterhole at Pine Hill. Brumbies also frequent this waterhole. In a deep valley east of Mount Arid, the grave of Ponton and the remains of 'Hill Springs', the homestead of the Baesjou family, can be found.

Birds and other life

Birds found in the area include the purple-gaped honeyeater, western spinebill, red-eared firetail, mulga parrot and pied butcherbird. Sixteen of the 18 species of honeyeater found in WA south of Dongara are known from the park, a good indication of the



richness of species. One endangered bird, the western ground parrot, lives in the park, and several threatened species, including the vulnerable Australasian bittern, the endangered Carnaby's black-cockatoo and the vulnerable Cape Barren goose, visit the park on occasion. Recherche Cape Barren geese breed only in the Recherche Archipelago, and occasionally visit nearby parts of the mainland. This subspecies is naturally rare, and total numbers are estimated to be only about 650 birds.

In 1998, a number of threatened chuditch were reintroduced to Cape Arid National Park as part of the Department of Conservation and Land Management's *Western Shield* project. Aerial fox baiting is carried out at Cape Arid, and other parks and coastal reserves around Esperance, to keep down the numbers of these introduced predators and give native wildlife a chance of recovering.

Whales are regularly spotted off the coast, especially during late winter and spring. An excellent location to see whales from winter to mid-spring is the Thomas River area, where they come close to the granite headlands. Seals sometimes visit the beaches. Western

brush wallabies live in the park. In 1930, a 'living fossil' was discovered in Cape Arid National Park. The world's most primitive species of ant, more primitive than known fossil ants, was found alive and thriving near Mount Ragged.

Attractions

There are three main areas of attraction to visitors. In the Thomas River area, where the park headquarters are situated, there are excellent camping facilities, including several walks. This area is accessible by conventional vehicle and has good unsealed roads.

The Seal Creek–Poison Creek area is popular for camping and fishing, and is accessible to conventional vehicles from Fisheries Road via Baring Road.

The Mount Ragged area requires a four-wheel-drive vehicle. It has a quiet camping area and a footpath to the summit of Tower Peak. Many species of orchid and several ferns grow on and near Mount Ragged, together with several plants which are more typical of coastal locations, such as showy banksia (*Banksia speciosa*) and a small population of sticky tailflower (*Anthoecis viscosa*).

A management plan for the Esperance District Coastal Reserves, which includes Cape Arid National

Park, is currently being prepared and, as part of this process, part of the park is likely to be considered as a possible wilderness area.

park facts

Where is it? One hour and 30 minutes drive (120 km) east of Esperance.

Total area 279,832 hectares.

Naming 'Cap Arride' was named by French Admiral D'Entrecasteaux in 1792.

What to do Bushwalking, camping, birdwatching, whale watching, picnicking, photography, four-wheel-driving, fishing.

Facilities Barbecues, tables, toilets, campsites, walktrails.

Must see sites The beaches of the Thomas River area including the long, sweeping beach of Yokinup Bay.

Nearest CALM office Esperance district office, 92 Dempster Street, Esperance, phone (08) 9083 2100. A resident ranger is based within Cape Arid National Park, phone (08) 9075 0055.

- 50 The Geraldton to Shark Bay sandplain—a strikingly beautiful biodiversity hotspot
Initiatives are underway to restore the Geraldton to Shark Bay sandplain area to its former state and protect it from threats.
- 56 Julimar—turning full circle
After a chequered past, Julimar Conservation Park is once again home to an abundance of animals, including threatened chuditch.

Regulars

- 3 Contributors and Editor's letter
- 9 Bookmarks
An enthusiasm for orchids
The Turquoise Coast
Ernest Hodgkin's Swanland
- 18 Endangered
Cape Range remipede community
- 30 Feature park
Cape Arid National Park
- 62 Urban antics
Moving poles

Publishing credits

Executive editor Caris Bailey.
Editors Carolyn Thomson-Dans, Rhianna King.
Scientific/technical advice Tony Start, Paul Jones, Chris Simpson, Keith Morris.
Design and production Tiffany Taylor, Maria Duthie, Natalie Jolakoski, Gooitzen van der Meer.
Illustration Gooitzen van der Meer.
Cartography Promaco Geodraft.
Marketing Estelle de San Miguel
Phone (08) 9334 0296 Fax (08) 9334 0432.
Subscription enquiries
Phone (08) 9334 0481 or (08) 9334 0437.
Prepress and Printing Advance Press, Western Australia.

© ISSN 0815-4465

All material copyright. No part of the contents of the publication may be reproduced without the consent of the publishers.

Please do not send unsolicited material, but feel free to contact the editors.

Visit NatureBase at www.naturebase.net

Published by the Department of Conservation and Land Management, 17 Dick Perry Avenue, Kensington, Western Australia.

