

Kennedy Range National Park

With its soaring cliffs, golden hues and remote location, the Kennedy Range National Park exudes a feeling of wilderness. Improved road access from Carnarvon means this still untamed park is set to increase in popularity.

Above Kennedy Range.
Photo – David Bettini

Opposite page

Far right above Wedge-tailed eagle.
Far right Weathered patterns on cliff face.
Photos – Jiri Lochman

The Kennedy Range National Park boasts 141,660 hectares of Gascoyne wilderness. The towering walls of the range form the centerpiece of the park—a golden mesa stretching some 80 kilometres in a north-south direction. It is the enchanting beauty of this mesa, its craggy crevices and sheer cliff face, that lures visitors. But despite the growing popularity, the park retains a feeling of being untouched. Spend a night here camped under the stars, watch a solitary wedge-tailed eagle soar above or delight in the showing of seasonal wildflowers, and you are bound to sense the beauty of untamed wilderness.

Natural attributes

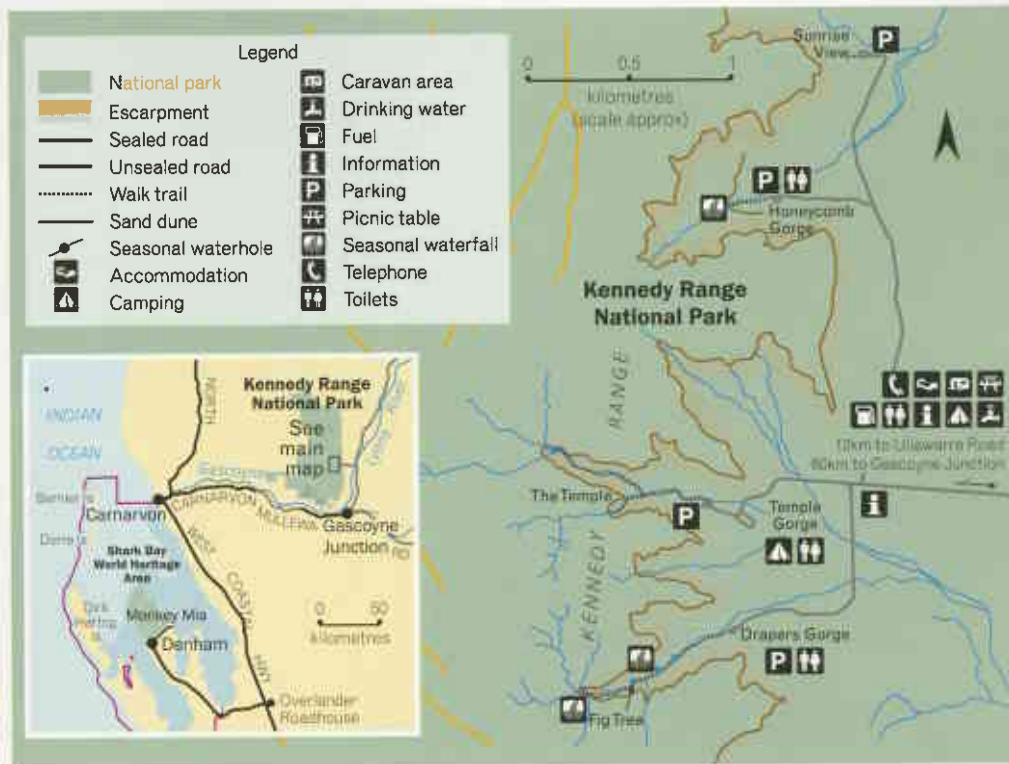
The Kennedy Range National Park features an ancient landscape, sculpted by the hands of time to form a giant mesa. This mesa rose from an ancient seabed as the surrounding landscape eroded over the millennia. The erosion has left a series of spectacular cliff faces, rising up to



100 metres above the surrounding Lyons River plain.

The ancient nature of the rocks is evident in the many fossils visible today. Visitors may be lucky enough to see marine fossils in the range's sandstone strata and fossilised plant specimens too. Some of these plant specimens represent the earliest known occurrence of banksias in Australia.

Today the park supports more than 400 native plant species, of which at least 80 are annual wildflowers. After good winter rains, the park bursts



into spectacular blooms of arid flora species like mulla mulla (*Ptilopus*), poverty bushes (*Eremophila*) and fan flowers (*Scaevola* and *Goodenia*), which are particularly beautiful set against the rugged backdrop of the range. The top of the range features a series of red sand dunes, vegetated with spinifex, wattle, mallee and other small shrubs.

Visitors to the park may also spot some of its wildlife. The park is home to 33 reptile species, 103 bird species and 20 species of native mammal, including nine bats.

Feral goats are prolific and are the subject of Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) control programs. A *Saving our Species* project in February 2007 resulted in the removal of more than 1800 goats from the park (see also 'Saving our Species, Saving our State' on page 10).

Enjoying the Kennedy's beauty

Visitors to the Kennedy Range can access the eastern, and arguably most spectacular, side of the range. Journey about 45 kilometres north of Gascoyne Junction on a gravel road and turn west into the national park. There is a basic campground at Temple Gorge, with walk trails, sealed vault toilet and basic

information. Visitors can also access day use sites at Drapers Gorge, Honeycomb Gorge and Sunrise View.

During the winter months, visitors may also encounter campground hosts—volunteers who camp in the national park, and assist DEC with management and welcoming visitors.

Kennedy Range future

While the Kennedy Range National Park is growing in popularity, its visitor numbers are light compared with more easily accessible areas. However, with work on the sealing of Mullewa Road between Carnarvon and Gascoyne Junction nearing completion, visitation is expected to increase. DEC is currently finalising a management plan to guide development in the future. The plan outlines longer-term proposals to develop visitor facilities on the western side of the range. While less dramatic than the eastern battlement, the western gorges feature shady river gums and springs and opportunities for camping and exploration.

Opportunities to better experience the top of the range and further explore its beauty are also identified in the plan, offering visitors still more ways to experience the park's rugged beauty.



park facts

Where is it? 170km east of Carnarvon and 60km north of Gascoyne Junction.

Total area 141,660 hectares. Another 177,377 hectares was purchased in 2000–2001 to add to the park. This land is currently classed unallocated Crown land, rather than national park, while it awaits reclassification.

Naming The range was named in honour of a Governor of Western Australia, Arthur Edward Kennedy, after explorer Francis Thomas led an expedition to the Gascoyne in 1858.

What to do Hiking, wildlife watching, wildflower viewing, photography and camping.

Must see sights Temple Gorge, Drapers Gorge, Honeycomb Gorge and Sunrise View.

Facilities Camping area, sealed vault toilets.

Nearest DEC office Carnarvon, 211 Robinson St, Carnarvon. Phone (08) 9941 3754.

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Publishing credits

Executive editor Kaye Verboon.
Editors Rhianna King, Samille Mitchell, Carolyn Thomson-Dans.
Scientific/technical advice Kevin Kenneally, Paul Jones, Keith Morris.
Design and production Natalie Jolakoski, Tiffany Taylor, Gooitzen van der Meer.
Illustration Gooitzen van der Meer.
Cartography Promaco Geodraft.
Marketing Cathy Birch
 Phone (08) 9334 0296 Fax (08) 9334 0432.
Subscription inquiries
 Phone (08) 9334 0481 or (08) 9334 0437.
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