



Porongurup National Park

With karri forest, wildflowers, giant granite boulders and a network of walking trails, Porongurup National Park offers a popular natural refuge north of Albany.

Above Devil's Slide, Porongurup National Park.

Photo - Jiri Lochman

Right Rufous tree-creeper.
Photo - Wayne Eddy/Sallyanne Cousins Photography

Far right Karri forest.
Photo - Marie Lochman

Porongurup National Park offers an enchanting world of ancient moss-covered rocks, lush karri forest and towering granite peaks amid a sea of farmland. The 12-kilometre Porongurup Range winds through the park, dazzling displays of wildflowers enliven the undergrowth with colour during spring and peaks climbing up to 670 metres high offer views of the Stirling Range and, on a clear day, the Southern Ocean.

History

Although the Porongurup Range was visible to the early settlers of Albany, it was not until 1828 that Captain Wakefield led a party to climb the hill on the eastern side of the range. His Aboriginal guides Mokare and Nankina told him the area was called Purringorep, which formed the base for its current name.

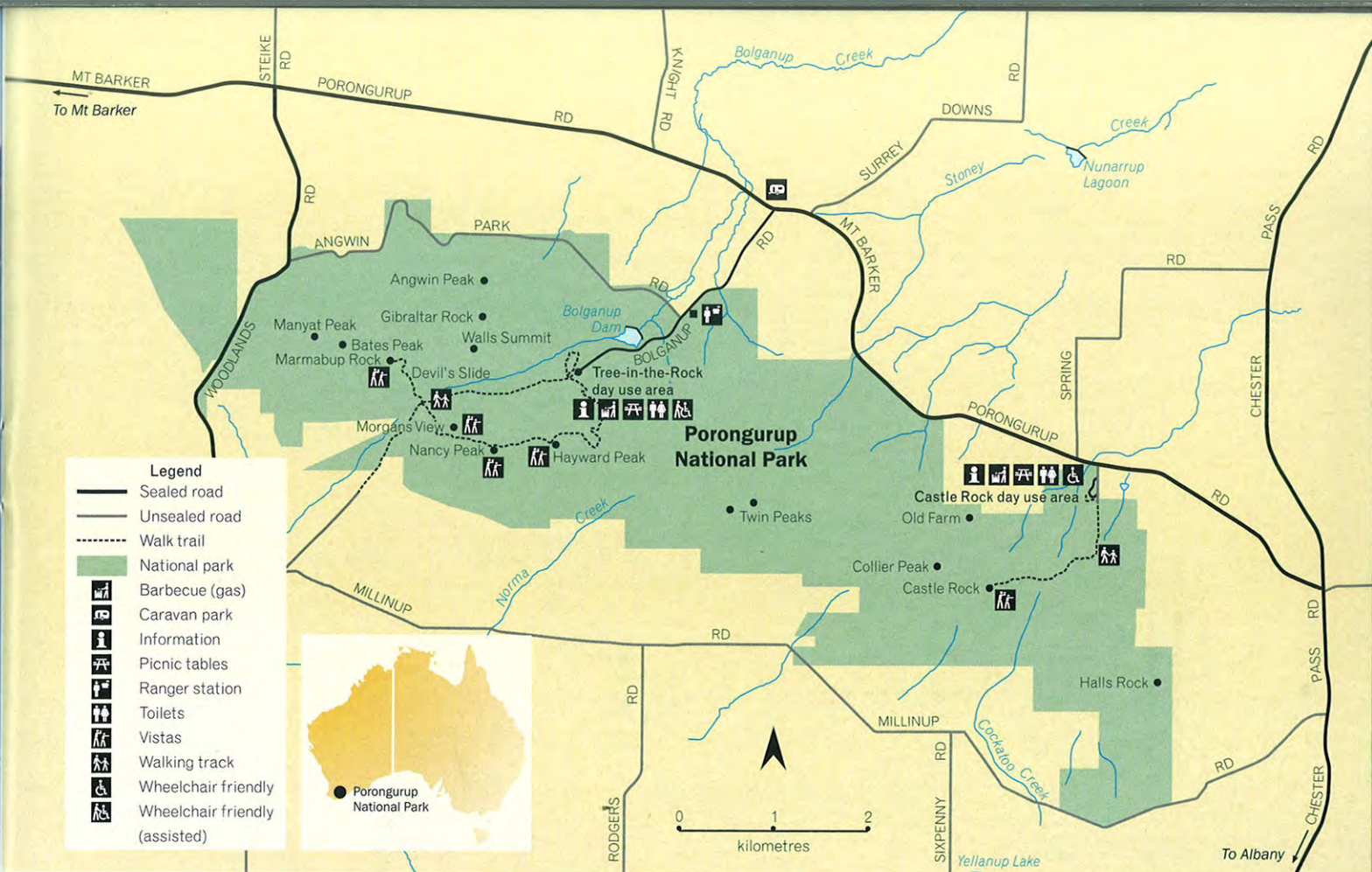
Botanist James Drummond visited in 1843 and 1848, describing the karris as "the finest I have ever seen in any country" and the mosses and lichens as "luxuriant as I have ever seen in

the moist rich valleys of the south of Ireland".

Natural attractions

The granite rock that forms the Porongurup Range is more than 1,100 million years old. This ancient landscape was exposed by the relentless forces of nature as it weathered away softer rocks surrounding the ridge to reveal the range's outlines. In the process, the range became an ecological island. Its climate and soils differ greatly from the surrounding lowlands, and protect a suite of plants and animals not seen in the nearby surrounds.

Perhaps the most well known of these species is the mighty karri (*Eucalyptus diversicolor*) that cloaks the range in green growth. Fossil pollen found throughout the south-west shows that, in an earlier wetter era, karri forest grew far beyond its present extent. As the climate became drier, the karri forest retreated to its present stronghold between Manjimup and Walpole. However, where the soil was right and the rainfall higher, small



outlying populations survived. The Porongurup Range is one such island of karri growth.

Many of the plants and animals typical of the main belt of karri forest have also survived here. You may see creatures such as the western grey kangaroo (*Macropus fuliginosus*), brush wallaby (*M. irma*) and birds such as the rufous tree-creeper and the brilliant scarlet and yellow robins.

About 750 plant species occur in the park and are particularly beautiful in spring when wildflowers burst into bloom. Wattle and hovea shrubs are particularly stunning, especially when they occur together *en masse*, while about 55 species of orchid also occur in the park.

Exploring the park

To gain an appreciation for the whole park, set out on the 23-kilometre scenic drive along Bolganup, Angwin Park, Woodlands, Millinup, Chester Pass and Mount Barker–Porongurup roads. The roads are mostly sealed (Angwin Park Road and Millinup Road are unsealed) with some steep sections, and the drive offers beautiful views over the range. For a shorter version, take the five-kilometre stretch of Angwin Park Road between Bolganup Road and Woodlands Road for views over the granite outcrops and Stirling Range to the north.

To get up close to the natural environment, set out on one of the five walk trails. Two of the trails, the 600-metre loop Bolganup Trail and the 5.5-kilometre return Hayward Peak and Nancy Peak Walk, start at the Tree-in-the-Rock picnic area. This area is nestled amid an enchanting cathedral of karri trees. These forest giants shade out the sky above and add a mystical, fairytale feel to the setting.

The four-kilometre one-way Wansbrough Walk intersects the Nancy Peak Walk, as does the five-kilometre return Devil's Slide Trail.

At the eastern end of the range is Castle Rock. A three-kilometre return walk takes you past a 'balancing' rock which sits seemingly precariously atop a granite outcrop. You can climb some metal stairs to stand on the 'battlements' of Castle Rock and take in views of the surrounding countryside.



park facts

Where is it? 40 kilometres north of Albany via Chester Pass Road, the Mount Barker–Porongurup Road and Bolganup Road.

Total area: 2,511 hectares.

What to do: Bushwalking, picnicking, rock climbing, abseiling.

Facilities: Barbecues, toilets and picnic tables.

Park fees: Entry fees apply.

Nearest DEC office: A resident ranger, based at the main entrance on Bolganup Road, looks after the park. DEC's South Coast Regional Office is at 120 Albany Highway, Albany, phone (08) 9842 4500. Please check with the local office regarding trail closures.

- 46 Captivating Kalbarri
Take a journey to this remarkable place, which features river and ocean views as well as stunning gorges.
- 54 The ant, the butterfly, the leafhopper and the bulldozer
An amazing story of three species cohabiting in the Wheatbelt.
- 59 Conserving roadside vegetation
Roadside plant communities play an important role in conserving native flora and providing wildlife corridors.

Regulars

- 3 Contributors and Editor's letter
- 15 Bookmarks
The Nature of Ice
Kalbarri
Find that Flower
- 30 Feature park
Porongurup National Park
- 39 Endangered
Meelup granite community
- 62 Urban Antics
Real muppets

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