

Nambung National Park

Famed for the thousands of limestone pillars that jut out of the shifting yellow sand, this national park looks more like a far away planet than an area of high conservation value that houses a range of native animals and stunning wildflowers.

Above The Pinnacles Desert, set against the night sky.

Photo - Damon Annison

Opposite page

Top left An emu.

Bottom left WA Christmas tree.

Photos - Sallyanne Cousans

Far right The Pinnacles Desert.

Photo - Alice Gillam/Sallyanne Cousans

Photography

A comfortable day trip from Perth, Nambung National Park is one of the state's most visited parks. Its high visitation is not surprising, as the Pinnacles Desert and its remarkable limestone structures really have to be seen to be believed. The thousands of pillars that rise out of the yellow sand vary considerably in size and shape. Some are small, smooth domes while others, up to five metres high, are tall and jagged. The mood of the desert can change markedly depending on the colour of the sky, and more than one ghost story has been told of the area. The Yued Aboriginal people have a mythical explanation for the area which connects them to the land and carries the stories of their past.

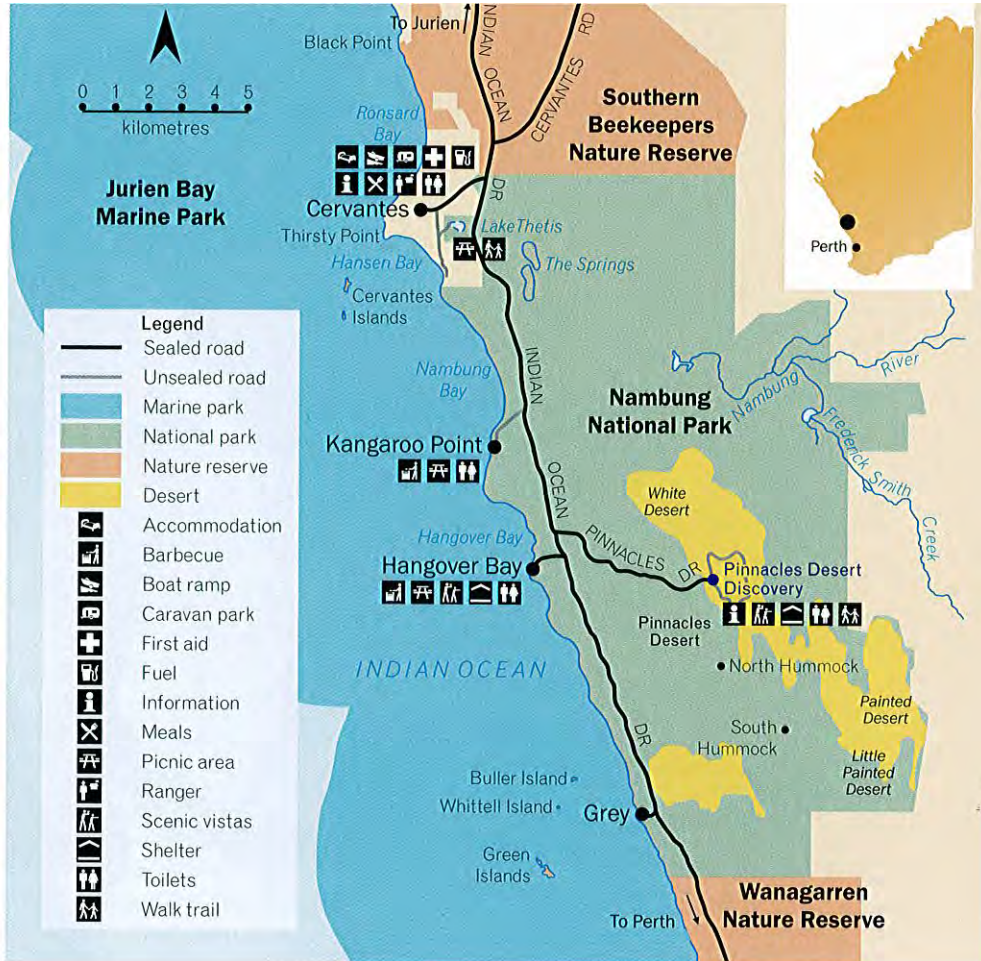
Scientists have also looked for explanations about how the pinnacles were formed but have really only started to unravel the details of this ever-changing landscape. The pinnacles area is a classic karst landscape that was shaped mainly by water dissolving the marine limestone. This process typically leaves a maze of solution pipes, caves and

pillars but, for some of the pinnacles, this was complicated by sediment deposits from a once-vigorous Nambung River. The sediment filled the solution pipes, which hardened and eventually became pinnacles. Other pinnacles appear to have formed around the roots of trees from forests that once grew on top of the limestone base. Many—perhaps the youngest ones—have a hard, stony dome on top; while the jagged, more eroded ones are thought to be older.

Viewing the pinnacles

Once in the park, visitors can view these amazing structures from the Pinnacles Lookout, afoot on the 1.5-kilometre Pinnacles Loop Trail or by following the Pinnacles Desert Drive.

Visitors can also learn about the park and its ancient formations in the Pinnacles Desert Discovery interpretive centre. The centre was designed to blend into the surrounding environment and was even set alight during construction to achieve a 'burnt look' which is so common in the Australian landscape. It was constructed in an environmentally



sensitive way and incorporates passive solar building design. The award-winning state-of-the-art display which includes soundscapes, video, panels and interpretive material dazzles in its ability to tell the story of the park's geological features and biodiversity. The gift shop houses a beautiful range of items for sale.

More than meets the eye

The pinnacles are not the only things of interest in Nambung National Park. The park features beautiful beaches, coastal dune systems, shady groves of tuart trees (*Eucalyptus gomphocephala*) and magnificent seasonal wildflowers. It is also an access point for Jurien Bay Marine Park—a temperate marine environment that provides breeding and rest areas for seabirds and Australian sea lions (*Neophoca cinerea*).

Lake Thetis, in the park's north, is a small saline lake that features marine stromatolites. These ancient formations look like lumpy rocks but are, in fact, made by cyanobacteria—similar to those that lived 3,500 million years ago. Fossil remains of cyanobacteria are the oldest record of life on Earth.

Kangaroo Point is popular for shore fishing and boating and also has a barbecue, toilet and picnic sites.

Hangover Bay, a popular recreation site known for its beautiful beach, is undergoing a redevelopment program that will provide new barbecues, shaded picnic areas, toilets, increased parking and interpretive information. The works are due for completion in mid-2012 until which time the site is closed to facilitate construction works.

Wild draw

Wildlife is abundant in and around the park, including 103 bird species. Small birds of prey, such as kestrels, perch on the pinnacles while galahs nest in the hollows. The area is frequently visited by the threatened Carnaby's cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus latirostris*) and emus (*Dromaius novaehollandiae*) are often seen wandering around.

As many as 30 species of reptile occur in the area, including the bobtail (*Tiliqua rugosa*), Gould's monitor (*Varanus gouldii*) and the carpet python (*Morelia spilota imbricata*).

The area is also home to the ash-grey mouse (*Pseudomys alboareus*), western brush wallaby (*Macropus irma*), honey possum (*Tarsipes rostratus*), echidna (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*) and western grey kangaroo (*M. fuliginosus*). The quenda (*Isoodon obesulus*), tammar wallaby (*M. eugenii*) and woylie (*Bettongia*

penicillata) have been reintroduced to the area through the Department of Environment and Conservation's *Western Shield* program.

In spring, the park erupts into colour from its wildflower displays. Then, come summer, the beautiful Western Australian Christmas tree (*Nuytsia floribunda*) punctuates the landscape with its brilliant orange flowers.

park facts

Where is it? 195 kilometres north of Perth.

Total area: 19,236 hectares.

What to do: Pinnacles exploration, photography, wildflower viewing, picnicking, swimming, fishing, snorkelling.

Facilities: Barbecues, information panels, tables and toilets. There are no camping areas in the national park but a full range of accommodation and other services are available in Cervantes. The Pinnacles Desert Discovery interpretive centre is open every day of the year from 9.30am to 4.30pm, except Christmas Day.

Park fees: \$11 per vehicle (up to eight legally seated people).

Nearest DEC office: Cervantes Ranger Station, Bradley Loop, Cervantes, phone (08) 9652 7043.



- 44 Looking after country
The landscape-scale Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy is being implemented thanks to a number of important partnerships.
- 52 Life on the edge: intertidal reefs of the Marmion and Shoalwater Islands marine parks
A study is being carried out into algae and invertebrate communities on intertidal reefs in two important Perth marine parks.
- 58 What's in a name?
Aboriginal names feature commonly in the names of south-west plants and animals but that's not the case for south-west birds.

Regulars

- 3 Contributors and Editor's letter
- 15 Bookmarks
The Michael Morcombe eGuide to Australian birds
Australasian nature photography
Deepsea Whale Rescue
- 24 Feature park
Nambung National Park
- 51 Endangered
Rare banksia and eucalypt woodlands of the Swan Coastal Plain
- 62 Urban Antics
Life's a beach

Publishing credits

Executive editor Madeleine Clews.

Editors Rhianna King, Joanna Moore.

Scientific/technical advice Alan Kendrick, Lachie McCaw, Keith Morris, Shaun Wilson, Kevin Thiele.

Design and production Natalie Jolakoski, Gooitzen van der Meer, Sonja Schott, Tiffany Taylor, Lynne Whittle.

Illustration Gooitzen van der Meer.

Cartography Promaco Geodraft.

Marketing Cathy Birch.

Phone (08) 9334 0296 or fax (08) 9334 0432.

Subscription enquiries Phone (08) 9219 8000.

Prepress and printing GEON, Western Australia.

© Government of Western Australia
March 2012

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

ISSN 0815-4465

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

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

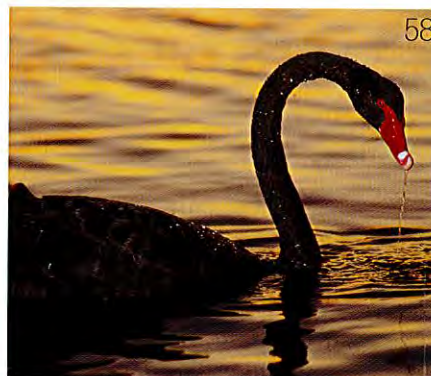
Visit DEC online at www.dec.wa.gov.au to search the **LANDSCOPE** catalogue.



Department of Environment and Conservation



44



58



32



12