



# Coalseam Conservation Park

Renowned for its spectacular spring wildflowers, Coalseam Conservation Park lures visitors from across the state.

**Above** Coalseam Conservation Park.  
Photo – Dennis Sarson/Lochman  
Transparencies

**Above right from top** A red-capped robin, and everlastings carpet the ground.  
Photos – Sallyanne Cousans

**Far right** Climbing fringed lily (*Thysanotus manglesianus*).  
Photo – Jiri Lochman

Coalseam Conservation Park is treasured for its annual wildflower display, when pink, white and yellow everlasting daisies burst into brilliant bloom. After good winter rains, whole landscapes become carpeted in the vibrant colours of these delicate, papery flowers. The park is also rich in history and geology, and is a popular camping place during late winter and spring.

## History

Indigenous history in the area is evident in artefacts such as stone flakes, scar trees and grinding stones. Coalseam earned its modern-day place on the map in 1846 after brothers Augustus, Francis and Henry Gregory set out from Perth to find suitable grazing and agricultural lands. They came across the Irwin River on their journey and noted two exposed seams of coal—the first significant discovery of coal in Western Australia. As a result, the government of the day declared a 4,000-hectare coal reserve in the area. Despite the excitement over the find, the coal deposit here never became

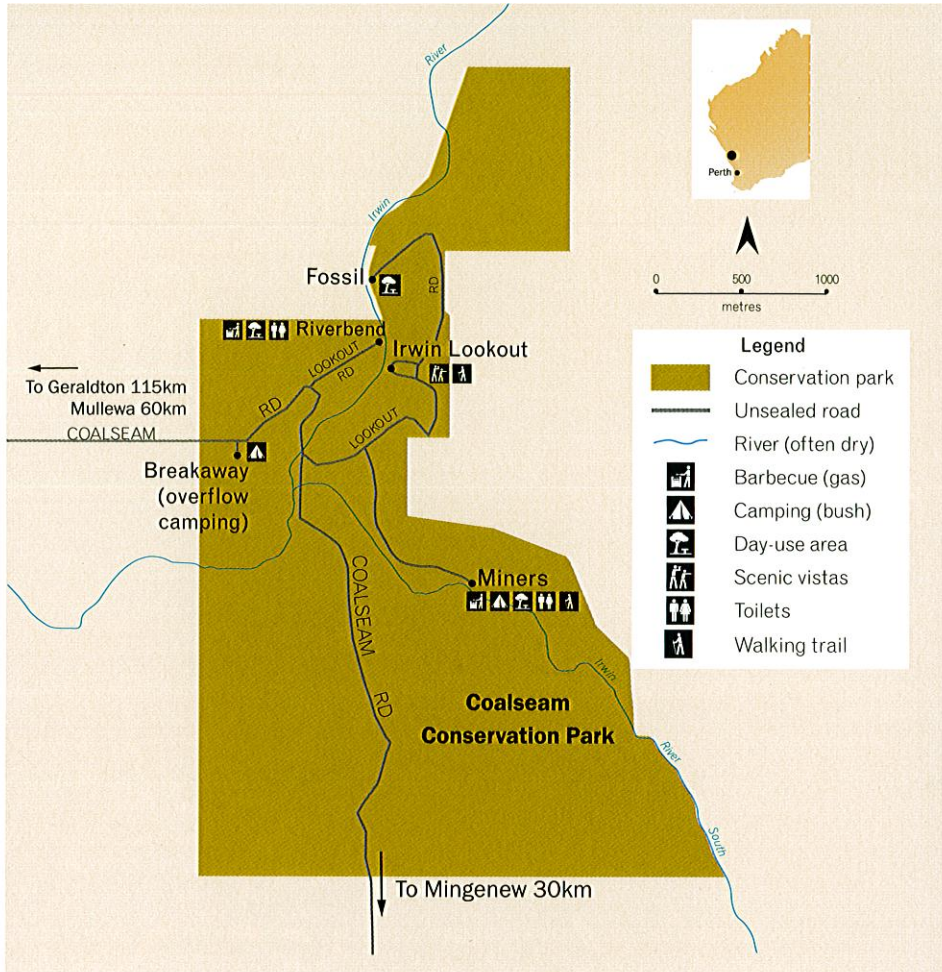
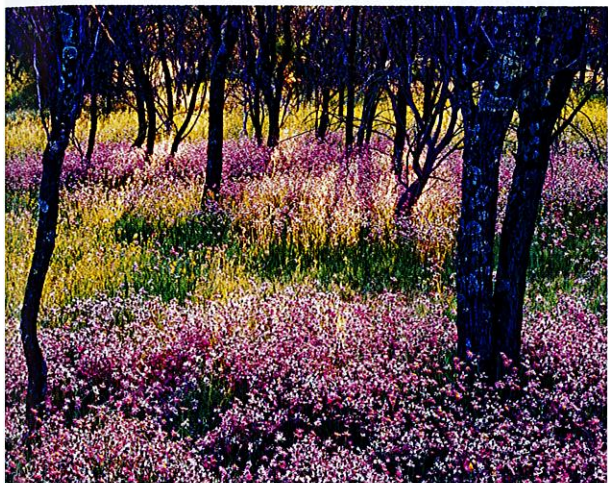
a profitable venture due to the coal's poor quality and the distance to Perth. However, the protection afforded to the area, combined with its hilly landscape, meant Coalseam was spared from the clearing which surrounded it. As a result, Coalseam Conservation Park remains an island of native vegetation amid a sea of cleared agricultural lands in the northern Wheatbelt.

## Natural attractions

Some of the park's geological history can be seen in the exposed bands of coal seams, siltstones, claystone and sandstones in eroded sections of the banks of the Irwin River. Different coloured stripes in the cliff face reveal different layers from 200 million years of geological history.

Evidence of an earlier epoch rich in marine life can also be seen in fossils embedded in the banks of the river. The cliff face upstream from the Riverbend day-use area has beautifully preserved specimens of small marine creatures—evidence of a Permian sea which once covered the area.





However, if there is one thing the park is renowned for, it is wildflowers. Its position between the northern sandplain country and arid lands of the Murchison, as well as a range of different habitat types, results in a big range of flowering annuals and perennials.

On the sandplain you will find a diverse kwongan heath community, while the floodplain supports a wattle-dominated scrub and, during spring, everlasting daisies transform the wattle understorey with colour. They include pompom heads (*Cephalopterum drummondii*), as well as pink lawrencellas (*Lawrencella rosea*) and rhodanthes (*Rhodanthe* sp.). Other pretty annuals include parakeelya (*Calandrinia* sp.) and fringed lily (*Thysanotus* sp.).

While the wildflowers are strikingly obvious, the mostly nocturnal mammals are seldom seen. However, echidnas, euros and red kangaroos are common. Bird life includes singing and spiny checked honeyeaters, wedge-tailed eagles and peregrine falcons. Galahs nest in tree hollows near Miners campground and red-capped robins flit around the shrubs.

### Exploring the park

The park features two short walk trails and three day-use areas which are suitable for picnics. The 700-metre-return Miners walk trail starts from the Miners picnic area and traverses the usually dry bed of the Irwin River to a viewing platform over the disused Johnson coal shaft. Signs explain the history of the shaft, which was sunk in 1917.

Riverbend day-use area has picnic tables, barbecues, toilets and an information shelter with signs interpreting the area's geology, flora and fauna. Nearby, a section of the Irwin River has carved a striking cliff face into the Victoria Plateau. A cross-section of the underlying rock layers is exposed, offering an insight into the park's interesting geology. The layers of rock span five evolutionary periods and provide valuable visual evidence of how the local landscape was formed.

### Camping

The park's main camp site is Miners campground where there are non-powered sites for tents and caravans. Picnic tables, gas barbecues and toilets are also provided. When the campground is full, overflow camping

is permitted at the Breakaway site. All other sites are open for day-use only.

Camping is restricted to a maximum of three consecutive nights during the peak season from late July to October. Volunteer campground hosts are located at Miners campground during this time.

**park facts**

- Where is it?** 30 kilometres north of Mingenew and 115 kilometres east of Geraldton.
- Total area:** 754 hectares.
- What to do:** Wildflower viewing, hiking, camping, picnicking.
- Facilities:** Campground, walk trails, gas barbecues, toilets.
- Nearest Parks and Wildlife office:** Midwest Regional Office, 201 Foreshore Drive, Geraldton, phone (08) 9921 5955.



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