

# Karlamilyi National Park

Karlamilyi National Park (formerly known as Rudall River National Park) was gazetted in 1977 and is Western Australia's largest national park, encompassing more than 1.5 million hectares. This remote landscape of rugged beauty features desert dunes, salt lakes and time-blasted escarpments.

## History

Karlamilyi is the Martu Aboriginal word for the Rudall River. The Martu Aboriginal people are the recognised first inhabitants of the land. Their occupation dates back many thousands of years. Their ties remain strong and people continue to live in communities within the park and surrounding areas.

European exploration and history dates back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with expeditions to the area by geologists, explorers and surveyors. Rudall River was given its name by Frank Hann after William Rudall, a surveyor he met in the area while Hann was prospecting and Rudall was searching for men missing from the Calvert Expedition. They both traversed the area between 1896 and 1898.

## Landscape

Karlamilyi straddles the Rudall, Trainor and Mackay IBRA sub-region land units. Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia (IBRA) categorises the Australian continent into regions of like geology, landform, vegetation, fauna and climate. There are 80 regions in Australia and 26 in WA. The landscape, with its haze of spinifex grasslands, is the result of weathering and erosion over an extremely long period of time. Plateau surfaces of sandstone and quartzite erupting from the grasslands have proved more resistant to this weathering and date back more than 200 million years, when they were first carved by glacial erosion. Abraded bedrocks, striated and polished pavements, as well as straight-sided U-shaped valleys are features of this landscape.

## Climate

Karlamilyi, like most other parts of the Pilbara, is hot and dry. Rainfall is unreliable and most heavy falls are associated with cyclonic activity. After heavy rain, creeks and rivers flow strongly and fresh water pools can persist for some time. Daily maximum temperatures as high as 46°C and minimums of 19°C are common during summer. An ideal time to visit is July and

August, when daytime temperatures are considerably cooler. However, be prepared for cold nights. Minimum temperatures of 2-3°C have been recorded.

## Plants and animals

Vegetation in the park is varied with a mixture of trees, shrubs and grasses. Tall stands of coolibah, river gums and the yulbah or bats wing coral tree line the banks of the Rudall River providing a haven for birds.

Hardy acacias and hakeas dominate smaller watercourses, while paperbarks, bloodwoods and quandongs can be found in valleys where there is sufficient ground water. Desert oaks share the sand plains with spinifex and other small plants.

Several noted ornithologists have visited the area, and current bird lists indicate there are more than 140 bird species, including 14 water birds. Most species recorded have been observed in and around water, and include the rainbow bee-eater, Horsfield's bronze cuckoo, the mistletoe bird, white plumed honeyeater and diamond dove.

Other native animals include reptiles such as the gwardar, Stimson's python, skinks and geckoes, as well as mammals including seven species of bat, native mice, kangaroos and rock wallabies. Most are nocturnal, avoiding the heat and coming out to feed at dusk and during the night.

A number of feral animals also occur within the park and include camels roaming individually or in herds of more than 100. A single camel may drink up to 80 litres of water at a time, while a herd maybe empty a small water hole on a single visit. Donkeys are frequently sighted in the western side of the park. Species lists for the park can be obtained from the DEC Karratha office.

## Facilities

There are minimal signs and facilities provided at Karlamilyi. Visitors should not enter the area unless they are confident about navigation and driving in remote locations. A GPS is useful. Travellers are requested to minimise impacts from campsites and tidy up before moving on. As with other national parks, pets and firearms are not permitted.

Please do not bury rubbish; take it out with you when you leave. If left, rubbish can be dug up and eaten by animals, damaging their health and making a mess.

### **Be prepared**

A trip to Karlamilyi needs to be well organised with at least two vehicles and radio or satellite communications. Visitors must be self-sufficient with all supplies and equipment including fuel, water, food, medical supplies etc. Two manual water pump bores are located at the north and south of the park boundary. These can be used to supplement supplies in an emergency, but pumps should not be relied upon. Visitors should familiarise themselves with information on desert travel.

### **Access**

Karlamilyi is a remote wilderness area and vehicle access is by four-wheel drive only, via two routes. Refer to the accompanying map.

The first is from Newman via 'Walgun' and 'Billinooka' and along the Tallawanna Track to the turnoff into the park. This is approximately 300 km in distance. This route covers Aboriginal reserves, so a courtesy call to the Jigalong Information Centre (08) 9175 7020 is advised.

The second route is via Marble Bar and is approximately 420 km along the Ripon Hills Road, then past the Telfer Mine Road to the northern park boundary.

Long and deep wash outs are typical along the main NorthSouth track through the park. Vehicles should negotiate the track at safe speeds. Some stages are also quite sandy, particularly the Rudall River crossing itself.

### **Places of Interest**

**Rudall River** Along the river itself there are numerous water holes that may be of interest particularly after a good wet season.

**Graphite Valley** Follow an old exploration track into the Fingoon Range (Four-Wheel-Drive only). Many of the tracks running off this have been rehabilitated and access is not permitted.

### **Aboriginal Communities**

There are two Aboriginal communities within the park Punmu and Parnngurr. It is requested that visitors enter the communities during day light hours only.

Punmu **ph (08) 9176 9006**

Parnngurr (Cotton Creek) **ph (08) 9176 9009**

### **Maps**

Hema Maps

Australia's Great Desert Tracks NW Sheet, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition

Includes Canning Stock Route, Talawanna Track, Gunbarrel Highway, Great Sandy Desert  
Available from map outlets

Rudall Western Australia

SF51-10, Edition 2, scale 1:250 000 scale (1cm to 2.5 km)

Produced by Geoscience Australia 2003.

Available from map outlets.

**Bush Books, Retail for \$6.50 plus postage from the dept of Environment and Conservation. [www.dec.wa.gov.au](http://www.dec.wa.gov.au)**

Geology and Landforms of the Pilbara

Common Plants of the Pilbara

Mammals of North-Western Australia

Hazardous Animals of North-Western Australia

Snakes of Western Australia

Australian Birds of Prey

### **Please Note**

Entry permits are required for entry onto or through those Aboriginal Lands Trust reserves that are subject to Part III of the *Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act 1972*. For a map indicating which reserves come under Part III, and to apply for a permit, please access the following site.  
<http://www.dia.wa.gov.au/en/Entry-Permits/>

### **WARNING**

**Karlamilyi National Park is remote. There are few signs and facilities. Please do not visit unless you are confident about navigation and driving in remote locations.**

**Department of Environment and Conservation**

**PO Box 835, Karratha, WA 6714**

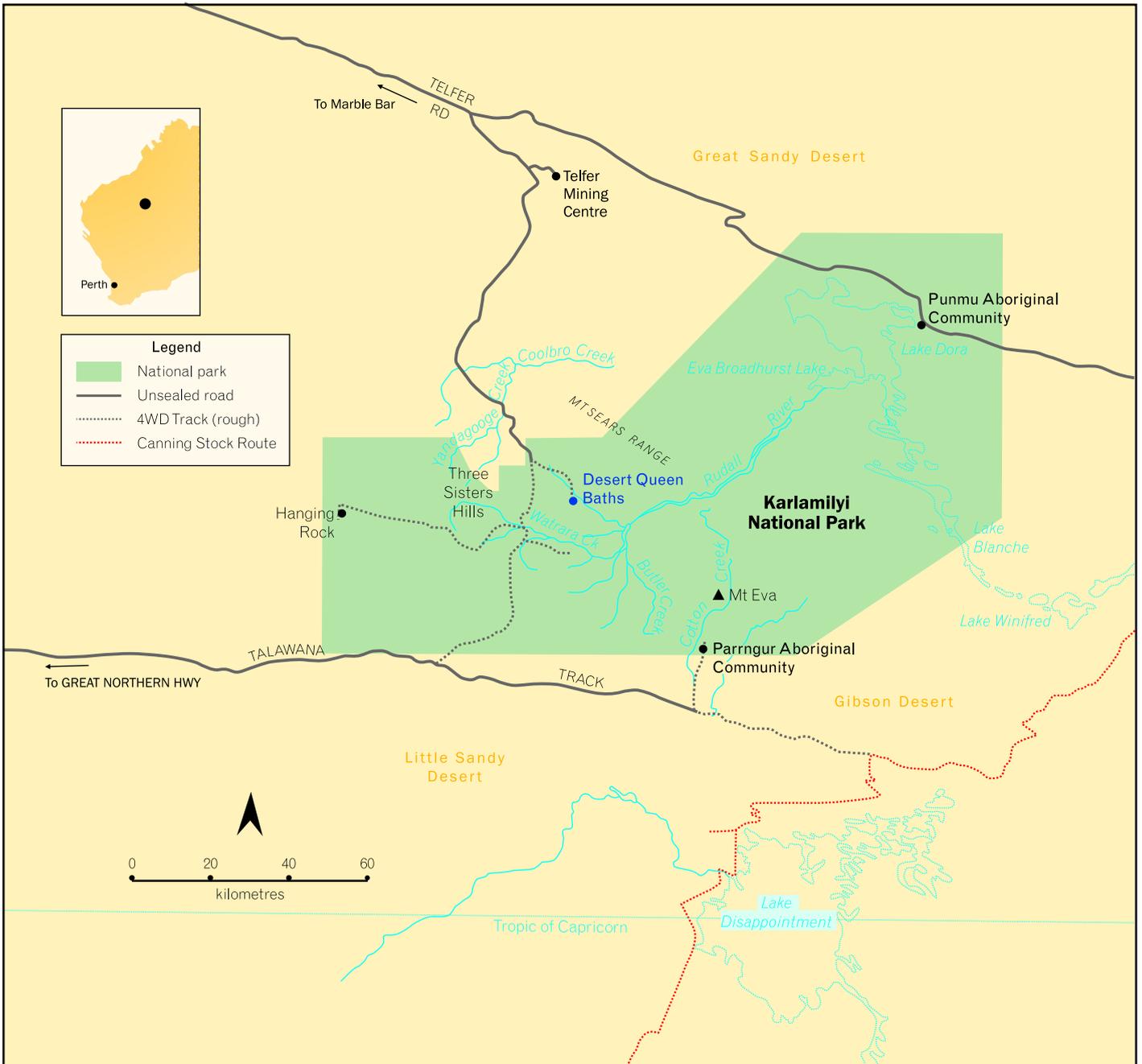
**Ph (08) 9182 2000**

**Fax (08) 9144 1118**

**[www.dec.wa.gov.au](http://www.dec.wa.gov.au)**

Information revised April 2011

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*The Dept. of Environment and Conservation does not guarantee that this map is without flaw of any kind and disclaims all liability for any errors, loss or other consequence which may arise from relying on any information depicted.*

