

Millstream Chichester National Park



Python Pool



Wickham's grevillea (*Grevillea wickhamii*)

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Most of the 240,000 hectares Millstream Chichester National Park is a landscape of rolling spinifex hills, spectacular escarpments and winding tree-lined watercourses. In contrast, there is the lush oasis of the Millstream wetlands and Fortescue River pools.

The arid-land plants and animals respond dramatically to infrequent rainfall events while the wetlands support a diversity of plant, bird and insect species. Many of these are endemic and rely on the permanent water source at Millstream.

The area has a long and dynamic cultural history. It forms part of the Yindjibarndi homeland and was an active pastoral station for more than 100 years. It is now recognised as a national park with significant natural, recreational and cultural values.

When you visit the park, call into the Millstream Homestead Visitor Centre to obtain information on the park's many features, or stroll along one of the interpretive walk trails.

The park is situated in a remote area and travel on dirt roads is necessary to access the park. Road conditions change frequently especially in summer with rain. In the cooler months, the park is generally accessible by two-wheel-drive vehicles but it is best to contact the park office or the Parks and Wildlife Service Karratha office beforehand.

The way of water

The water that feeds the Millstream oasis springs from an aquifer, or natural underground reserve, contained in the porous dolomite rock. This aquifer is fed by the Fortescue River (Yarnda Nyirranha) catchment, which includes run-off from the Hamersley Range. The aquifer has an estimated area of 2,000km² and is believed to contain 1.7 billion cubic metres of water.

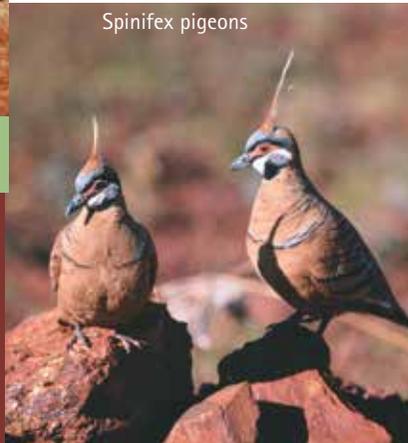
The Millstream area is a priority one catchment and, used in tandem with the Harding Dam, the aquifer supplies water to industry and for domestic use to the people of Wickham, Roebourne, Point Samson, Dampier and Karratha. The water level is constantly monitored and, in times of low water, pumps can be used to keep the Millstream pool topped up and flowing—an essential safeguard for the long-term survival of the wetland and its dependent wildlife.



Sturt's Desert Pea



Visitor guide



Spinifex pigeons



Cliff Lookout



Department of Biodiversity,
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Wildlife

Wildlife is abundant in areas of the park close to water. Rock holes, riparian zones and river pools support a thriving ecosystem. On the plains, many species of animal adapted to aridity can be frequently seen, and the transition zone between moist and dry environments is particularly diverse. Plants flower year round following rain, but most spectacularly in Winter (June to August) when blankets of mulla mulla and Sturt's desert pea cover the landscape. The solid yellow flowers of wattles and sennas provide a dramatic contrast to the hard red earth and chocolate brown rocks.

Plants more typical of the tropical north grow near permanent water pools; here forests of silver cadjeput and Millstream palms can be seen. The Millstream palm, with its fanned, grey-green leaves and smooth bark, is a relict from the deep past when rainforest covered the Pilbara in the paleoclimate. Introduced species such as date palms and cotton palms were once prolific at Millstream. They competed with native vegetation, blocked creek channels and encouraged wildfires. The majority have been removed and the area rehabilitated. Other weeds at Millstream include the Indian water fern, water lily and stinking passion vine.

Twenty-two species of dragonfly and damselfly have been recorded in the Millstream wetlands, and over 500 species of moths. Almost 100 reptile species and nearly 150 bird species call the park home. Resident mammals include the endangered northern quoll, little red antechinus or kaluta and the euro.

Many of the bird species are delightfully coloured and can be seen during the cooler hours of the day, especially near water, and reptiles are prolific. Lizards are seen frequently on rocks and trees; even large species such as the Pilbara olive python and Gould's sand goanna make an appearance.



Ctenophorus sp.

The environment

The Chichester Range rises sharply from the coastal plain and includes rocky peaks, tranquil gorges and hidden rock pools. Snappy gum woodland and pincushion spinifex clumps cover the stony plateau, which gradually slopes down to the bed of the Fortescue River before rising again to the vast bulk of the Hamersley Range.

Along the river lies the Millstream oasis with its string of deep spring-fed pools fringed by sedges, palm groves and silver cadjeput forest – some of the largest of its type in the Pilbara.

Wildfires caused by lightning strikes can occur frequently during summer, and controlled burning for biodiversity and asset protection is undertaken annually. Burnt areas recover quickly after rain and provide a variety of resources and habitats for local wildlife.

Climate

The Pilbara is located within the arid tropics. During summer, between October and April, temperatures rise above 40°C and cyclones and local thunderstorms can flood roads and watercourses. The cool season, between May and August, experiences little rain, with daytime temperatures around 26°C. Nights at this time of year can be cool, so warm clothes may be necessary.



Dingo



Jirndawurrunha pool

Care for the park and follow the seven Leave No Trace principles.



1. Plan ahead and prepare

There is no fuel at Millstream and the public telephone is card only. Roads may be closed after heavy rain. Check travel conditions with the Parks and Wildlife Service Karratha office on (08) 9182 2000 or the Shire of Ashburton on (08) 9189 1029. The ranger's office can be contacted on (08) 9184 5144.

2. Travel and camp on durable surfaces

Follow the signs in the park. Stay on the roads and trails marked on the park map. Camp only in designated campgrounds. Spinifex is fragile; it is easily damaged by indiscriminate driving, parking and walking, and can take many years to re-grow.

3. Dispose of waste properly

Please take your litter with you. The toilets at Millstream use composting or biolytic systems, which can be destroyed by chemicals in blackwater from portable toilets. As such, do not empty portable toilets into park toilets. Use sillage points provided in the towns and Main Roads roadside stops.

4. Leave what you find

Leave the natural environment as you find it. Several weeds threaten the park; please brush seeds from clothing and equipment before moving on.

5. Minimise campfire impacts

Ground fires and solid fuel fires are not permitted. Dead wood is part of an arid ecosystem, providing food and homes for wildlife.

6. Respect wildlife

Do not disturb animals, plants or rocks. Pets and firearms are not permitted. Please do not feed or approach kangaroos or other wildlife. Please do not use soap in streams and pools as it kills wildlife.

7. Be considerate of yourself, your hosts and other visitors

Many areas in the park are culturally significant to Aboriginal people. Please do not interfere with cultural sites. Do not swim in the waters around the homestead and behave respectfully at Deep Reach Pool.



Deep Reach. Photo–Neil Brougham

Safe walking tips

When walking in the park wear a hat, broad spectrum sun screen and sturdy walking shoes. Temperatures can be extreme, exceeding 50°C from November to April. It is recommend you walk in the cooler months or first thing in the morning. Carry 2-3 litres of drinking water per person. Avoid dehydration by drinking small amounts regularly. For your own safety, please remain on existing trails.



Things to know

Millstream Homestead Visitor Centre

Start your visit by calling in to the Millstream Homestead Visitor Centre, which features information about the Yindjibarndi people, the early settlers and the natural environment. Other displays inform of the park's attractions and management challenges. This is a self-guided centre. Campground hosts are stationed in the campground during cooler months and can answer further questions or direct you to the ranger.

Swimming

In the Millstream precinct, swimming is provided at Deep Reach picnic area. A 200m walk from the car park brings you to a large pool. Steps should be used to enter the water. Toilets are located at the car park and barbecues near the water's edge. The water is very deep and can be cold in winter, so care should be taken especially with children.

Deep Reach is sacred to the Yindjibarndi people - please respect this unique environment.

Swimming is not permitted at Jirndawurrnha Pool or surrounding streams because of their cultural significance to the traditional Aboriginal custodians.

In the northern part of the park, visitors can swim at Python Pool. It is a short 100m walk to the pool, toilets are located at the car park. The water is usually fine for swimming but algae growth can be common following periods of low rainfall.

Fees

Park entrance fees and camping fees apply. Please pay at the self-registration park entry stations. Alternatively you can purchase a park pass from the Parks and Wildlife Service office in Karratha, or one of the Pilbara visitor centres. Please display entry permits on the dashboard of your vehicle.

Camping fees

Fees are payable at the self-registration stations in the campgrounds or via the campground hosts. Holders of the following cards are entitled to the specified concession: Senior's Card, Disability Support, Carer Payment, Department of Veterans' Affairs, Age Pension, Disability Support (blind), Carer Allowance and Companion Card.

Water

Fresh water is available at the visitor centre. The water is untreated and boiling or chemical treatment is recommended. Remember to carry plenty of water with you at all times.

Telephones

The public telephone at the visitor centre can only be used with a phone card. Please purchase cards before visiting the park. There is no mobile reception in the park.

Picnicking

Gas barbecues are available in the picnic areas at Millstream Homestead and Deep Reach Pool.

Camping

Miliyanha campground

Miliyanha has 27 camp sites and is open year round. The campground has a camp kitchen, toilets, tables, sail shades and generators are permitted from 7am until 9pm. The campground has some shade in the morning and afternoon. Sites are suitable for tents up to large caravans.

Stargazers campground

Stargazers is a seasonal campground open during the cooler months. There are 15 sites and it is an open campground with lower trees. Tables, a sail shade, toilets and a gas barbecue are provided. Generators are not permitted. Sites are suitable for tents up to caravans with a few sites suitable for larger caravans.

Both Miliyanha and Stargazers can be accessed by two-wheel-drive vehicles in good weather but four-wheel drive is recommended.

George River

George River is a remote bush camping area with no facilities provided. Access is by well-equipped four-wheel drives only and campers must be fully self-sufficient, including carrying plenty of water and spares for vehicles. Allow 3 hours to travel from Millstream Homestead to the gorge as the 10km track is rough and rocky. Use caution when driving as water levels are highly variable in the river pools and may pose a safety risk. Accessing George River is not recommended in the hotter months of October to March, or after heavy rainfall events. As per the rest of the park, no pets or fires are permitted.

Millstream trails

Millstream Chichester National Park offers a variety of walk and cycle trails that are classified according to the Australian standards for walk trails. Please choose trails carefully. Select those that suit your level of ability and fitness. Your safety is our concern, but your responsibility.

Wetland Walk

750m – 30 minute loop – Class 2

This trail follows a compacted gravel path through the Millstream wetlands, and is suitable for all fitness levels. A series of interpretive panels tell the story of the Millstream wetlands. Swimming is not permitted in the pool or channels.

Warrungunha Trail

8km – 2.5 hours return – Class 3

This trail links the Millstream Homestead with Cliff Lookout (Warrungunha) and traverses a number of environments – melaleuca woodland, hummock grassland and riverine woodland. Interpretation panels provide information on these environments. The trail is on compacted gravel for 2.5km before joining the Red Roo dual-use walk/cycle trail for the final 1.5km to Cliff Lookout. This section of trail is stony and uneven with some gentle inclines, and is Class 3.

Red Roo Trail (dual use walk/cycle trail)

7.5km one way

45 min cycle – Class – More Difficult

3 hour walk – Class 3



This track begins at the Millstream Homestead carpark and ends at Deep Reach Pool carpark. The surface is slightly undulating with a couple of inclines, on flat to stony ground. Cyclists must dismount at Cliff Lookout and walk 300m, as this section is pedestrian use only. The track is wide but care should be taken when riding. Pedestrians have right of way.

Stargazers Link Trail to Deep Reach

5km return – Class 2

A 500m track links Stargazers campground to the Red Roo Trail. A further 2km along the Red Roo Trail is Deep Reach.

Cliff Top Walk

600m return, allow 20 mins – Class 2

A 300m cliff top walk links three vantage points, from which you can view the Fortescue River and the distant Hamersley Ranges. This trail can be accessed by vehicles from Millstream Road.

Chichester Range trails

Mount Herbert and Python Pool are two of the main attractions in the Chichester Range. The landscape is dominated by rolling hills, hummocks of spinifex, white-barked snappy gums on the uplands and pale coolabahs along creeklines. Animal and plant diversity is high near permanent pools.

Python Pool

100m – 20 minutes return – Class 3



From the car park, follow the trail along a dry creek bed to Python Pool, a permanent freshwater plunge pool located at the base of a cliff in the Chichester Range escarpment. The trail is uneven and stony.

Mount Herbert Summit

600m – 25 minutes return – Class 3



From the Mount Herbert car park follow the Chichester Range Camel Trail to the base of Mount Herbert, then follow the track to the top of the mountain for a panoramic view. There are short steep sections and some steps. The ground is uneven with loose rocks.

Chichester Range Camel Trail

8km – 3 hours one way, 16km – 6 hours return – Class 4



This trail crosses the rugged basalt and sandstone terrain of the Chichester Range. It includes steep gradients, natural obstacles and consists of variable surfaces including loose rocks. A good level of fitness is required. If you are walking both ways, it is recommended to begin at Python Pool. If you are only walking one way, start at Mount Herbert and have a vehicle meet you at Python Pool.

McKenzie Spring

4.5km – 2.5 hour return – Class 3



From the Mount Herbert car park, follow the Chichester Range Camel Trail from Mount Herbert to McKenzie Spring. This was once a watering hole for camel and bullock teams and is a pleasant surprise for walkers, contrasting markedly with the surrounding arid hills. The spring is not suitable for swimming. The trail includes short steep sections and the ground can be uneven with loose surfaces. Return along the same route. A moderate level of fitness is required.

Cameleers Lookout Trail

2.4km – 1.5 hours return – Class 4



Follow the trail towards Python Pool, turn left at the sign and head up the hill along this steep trail. This hill has caused camel and bullock teams some grief over the years. There are natural obstacles including washouts in some spots, and the surface is loose and rocky. Take time to appreciate the work that went into its early construction. Retaining walls and stone culverts hint at the effort involved in maintaining a route like this.

Through the past

Yindjibarndi people

The Millstream Chichester area is a very significant Indigenous cultural site in northern Western Australia. Cultural and mythological importance stems from thousands of years of occupation, with Millstream being the home of the mythological serpent or warlu, whose presence is still strongly felt at Nhanggangunha (Deep Reach Pool). All the pools are significant in this regard and warrant a high level of respect because of their spiritual and mythological importance.

The broad area of land straddling the Fortescue River (Yarnda Nyirranha) from the Hamersley Range through to the Chichester escarpment is the homeland of the Yindjibarndi people. Ngarluma people's lands run from the Chichester escarpment northward to the sea.

Aside from its highly important spiritual significance, Millstream was an important camp site for inter-tribal meetings. The Fortescue River provided food and water, particularly during drier months. Along the river, Indigenous people had a varied diet of red meat, fish, reptiles, grubs, eggs, honey fruits and root vegetables. Extensive areas were burnt to create natural paddocks and attract kangaroos. The dry climate meant that knowledge of the locations of waterholes was important. The Indigenous people (Ngarlangarli) were skilled in land management and were nomadic within their traditional boundaries.

Yindjibarndi and Ngarluma people continue to come to the park to spend time on country and to carry out customary activities. They are also represented on the Jirndawurrunha Park Council which, in association with Parks and Wildlife Service at the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) manages the strategic direction of the park.

Millstream pastoral station

Millstream was named in 1861 by the explorer FT Gregory, who reported its favourable grazing prospects. The pastoral lease, first taken up in 1865, changed hands several times before it was taken over by Les Gordon in 1925. In its heyday the station covered more than 400,000 hectares and ran 55,000 sheep. The present homestead, built in 1919, housed the Gordon family until 1964. It was a tavern between 1975 and 1986, when the lease was purchased by the Department of Conservation and Land Management, now the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. The homestead is now a visitor centre.

The national park

Previously two separate national parks, Millstream and Chichester were joined as one park in 1982. Yindjibarndi people have the opportunity to continue their long association with the area, through training and employment as rangers and contract workers.



Snappy gums

More information

National park rangers are glad to help make your visit more enjoyable and informative. They regularly visit camping and day-use areas so please have a chat with them.

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Jirndawurrunha
Park Council

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Front cover A view to Cliff Lookout.

Photos – DBCA/Parks and Wildlife Service

Information current at June 2018.

This document is available in alternative formats on request.

Please contact DBCA's publications section on (08) 9389 4000.

Legend

	Sealed road		Gas barbecue
	Unsealed road		Information
	Railway		Picnic area
	Chichester Range Camel Trail		Ranger station
	Walk and cycle trails		Swimming
	Walking trail		Telephone (card only)
	National park		Toilets
	Bushwalking trail		Vistas
	Camping (bush)		Universal access
	Caravan park		4WD drive
	Drinking water		

