

Coalseam Conservation Park



Visitor guide



Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions



**PARKS AND
WILDLIFE
SERVICE**

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Front cover Riverbend.

Above Coal seams are evident at sites along the banks of the Irwin River..

Coalseam Conservation Park

Coalseam Conservation Park encompasses 754 hectares and is renowned for spectacular spring wildflower displays. It is an important refuge for the Eucalypt Woodlands of the Western Australian Wheatbelt threatened ecological community.

Geology

Coalseam Conservation Park is one of the few areas where coal can be seen at the Earth's surface. It is also where coal was first mined in Western Australia. The Irwin River has cut through the local rock to display a striking cross-section of sedimentary layers representing millions of years of Earth history. Exposed layers include coal, siltstone and sandstone.

An ancient landmass

Formation of Coalseam Conservation Park's landscapes began when Australia was part of the supercontinent Gondwana when huge glaciers covered the land and crushed underlying rocks to create the sediments forming much of the rock you see in the park today. About 265 million years ago, masses of early non flowering plants growing on these sediments became coal deposits. Visit the park's Riverbend site for views of the exposed layers and more information about the geological history. South of Riverbend, you can see coal lining the creek adjacent to Miners Campground.



Above (inset) Augustus Gregory, Johnson shaft viewing platform along the Miners Walk Trail.

Aboriginal history

The area holds significance and strong traditional value for Yamatji people. A variety of plants and animals found in the park are important for food and medicinal purposes. Those with a keen eye may see artefacts such as stone flakes, scar trees and grinding stones. Please help protect the cultural history of the park by leaving these items as you find them.

European history

In 1839, a financially ailing Swan River Colony began the search for coal to support industrial development. On a survey expedition in 1846, the Gregory brothers Augustus, Frank and Henry discovered Western Australia's first coal in seams along the banks of the Irwin River. This resulted in the area being declared a reserve for mining purposes. The coal however, was of poor quality and deposited in such narrow seams that mining was untenable. One remaining mine shaft can still be seen from a viewing platform across the river from Miners Campground.

The Gregorys' exploration of the area made way for pastoralists and farmers, who developed the farming properties that now surround the park and brought permanent change to the lives of the local Aboriginal people.

The park's rugged terrain, being unsuitable for sheep and wheat, made it a vital refuge for native plants and animals. In time, the area's natural heritage values were recognised and in 1978, the park was vested in the Shire of Mingenew for the "preservation of natural features" before finally becoming a Conservation Park in 1994.



Above Coalseam comes alive in spring with an explosion of wildflowers.

Flora

Coalseam Conservation Park is among the most floristically spectacular areas in the northern Wheatbelt region of Western Australia. On the plateau, a thin sandplain covers the hard, iron-rich laterite capping. These low nutrient, dry, sandy soils support a variety of shrubs including the needle tree (*Hakea preissii*), kurara (*Acacia tetragonophylla*), shrubby riceflower (*Pimelea microcephala*) and hopbush (*Dodonaea inequifolia*).

On the slopes and valley floor are reddish loams formed from silt and sand washed from the slopes and upper reaches of the river. These soils are relatively rich in nutrients and support a scattering of York gums (*Eucalyptus loxophleba*) over wattle-dominated scrub that includes jam (*Acacia acuminata*) and orange wattle (*Acacia saligna*). Look for mistletoes on the wattles. These semi-parasitic plants include the pincushion mistletoe (*Amyema fitzgeraldii*), and produce berries eaten by mistletoe birds (*Dicaeum hirundinaceum*).

The riverbed supports tall river gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) and swamp sheoak (*Casuarina obesa*).

A carpet of everlastings transform the park in spring and showcase WA's high daisy family (*Asteraceae*) diversity. Everlastings are named for their papery petals with each flowerhead made up of hundreds of individual flowers which give the appearance of a single flower. Everlasting flowers close at dusk and open again at dawn. They avoid the harsh summer conditions by growing only in winter. Before dying in late spring, everlastings produce abundant seed that germinates with the following year's winter rain.



Above left Galah. *Photo – Mic Payne*

Above right Mistletoe bird. *Photo – Mike Clarke*

Fauna

You can see a range of birds at Coalseam Conservation Park. Look for both the singing and the spiny-cheeked honeyeaters in areas with flowering trees and shrubs. Wedge-tailed eagles soar overhead and peregrine falcons can be seen along the cliff face at the Irwin Lookout. Galahs nest in tree hollows near Miners Campground and red-capped robins flit around at ground level. Port Lincoln parrots are common in the park as are nankeen kestrels, black-faced woodswallows and cuckoo-shrikes, crested and common bronzewing pigeons.

Other animals are not so easily observed as mammals are mostly nocturnal and many reptiles are cryptic. With patience and a sharp eye, you may spot an echidna, euro or red kangaroo. Reptiles such as the blue tongue and bobtail skink, Gould's sand goanna, fence skink and western netted dragon may be seen as well as mulga and gwardar snakes.

Look carefully and quietly to discover some of the animals within the park. Please do not disturb them or damage their habitat.



Coalseam wildflower guide



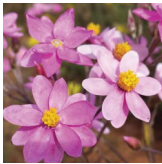
Everlastings



Pompom head

Cephalipterum drummondii

Forms carpets of pom-pom-like yellow (and occasionally white) flowers.



Schoenia

Schoenia cassiniana

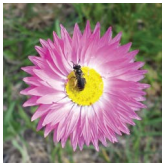
A common pink wildflower in the region.



Sticky everlasting

Lawrencella davenportii

This common pink to white annual has its leaves clustered at the base of the stem.



Pink everlasting

Rhodanthe chlorocephala (subsp. *rosea*)

Look for native bees and other insects that seek shelter in the flowers as they close up for the night.



Orange immortelle

Waitzia acuminata

A distinctive late season yellow/orange annual flower.

Herbs



Fringed lily

Thysanotus manglesianus

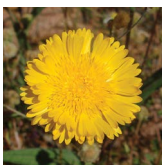
This twining plant produces delicate purple flowers during spring.



Blue heronsbill

Erodium cygnorum

The small blue or purple flowers of this plant are thinly scattered throughout the park.



Bright podolepis

Podolepis aristata (subsp. *aristata*)

The tuber of this plant was baked in hot ashes and eaten by Aboriginal people.



Myriocephalus guerinae

Bright yellow annual, usually less than 40cm tall.



Parakeelya

Calandrinia polyandra

This springtime annual stores moisture in its leaves making it a tasty morsel for wildlife.

Weeds



Paterson's curse

Echium plantagineum

Common in disturbed areas in the park. Control measures are in place to manage this weed.



Cape weed

Arctotheca calendula

Widespread and common, this weed originally came from Southern Africa.

Fees

Camping fees are paid online at parkstay.dbca.wa.gov.au. Bookings are essential. There are no park entry (day use) fees.

Access

Coalseam Conservation Park is 115km east of Geraldton, 30km north-east of Mingenew and 60km south of Mullewa. Well-formed gravel roads are accessible year round for all vehicles although the Irwin River may flood and be impassable after heavy rain. Check road conditions with the Shire of Mingenew after significant rainfall. Please take notice of water depths before crossing the Irwin River and drive within your capability. Due to steep slopes and narrow roads, caravans are not recommended at Irwin Lookout or the Fossil site. Please leave your caravan at Miners or Breakaway.



Camping



The main campground is at Miners which has unpowered sites suitable for caravans. Note the ground is hard and driving tent pegs is difficult.

Camping is permitted for a maximum of three consecutive nights during the peak season (July to September) allowing everyone the opportunity to enjoy the park's wildflowers. Volunteer campground hosts are located at Miners campground at this time.

There is also camping available at Breakaway. You must have a chemical cassette toilet to camp at Breakaway as no toilets are provided. Dump points for chemical cassette toilets are located at Mingenew and Mullewa.

Online bookings

It is essential to book your campsite for Miners and Breakaway campgrounds online prior to arrival. Booking is year round and can be done up to six months in advance.

Visit parkstay.dbca.wa.gov.au

Check-in at 11am on the day of arrival and **check-out at 10am** on the day of departure.

Generator use is permitted between 9am to 11am and between 4pm to 6pm.



Above The Irwin River has carved out spectacular cliffs, visible from Riverbend.

Things to do



Johnson Shaft Viewing Platform Class 3, 700m return

Take the Miners Walk Trail from the Miners picnic area across the creek line to view the disused Johnson coal shaft. Look out for the black coal bands in the creek banks.



Plateau Loop Trail Class 3, 3.2km loop

This walk through York gum woodland has sweeping valley views from the plateau ridge.



Riverbend

Close to the usually dry Irwin River, this recreation area has information about the area's geology, flora and fauna. Riverbend gets its name from a section where the river has carved a striking cliff face into the Victoria Plateau. The layers of rock visible in the cliff face reveal how the local landscape was formed.



Irwin Lookout Class 2, 560m loop

Enjoy dramatic views of the Irwin River valley from high cliffs above the river. You may find yourself level with soaring wedge-tailed eagles and peregrine falcons.



Fossil

Enjoy a picnic on the bank of the Irwin River.



Above Blue tongue lizards are a common reptile in the park.
Photo – Mic Payne

Caring for the park

- **Campfires are not permitted.** Dead wood is habitat for wildlife, not fuel for fires. Use the barbeques provided at Riverbend or use your own gas stove.
- **Dogs and domestic pets are not permitted.** Pets can harm native fauna and disrupt visitor's enjoyment of parks and reserves. The sight, sound and smell of pets (even when on leads) can cause native animals great stress.
- **Be kind** – it is an offence to disturb or remove cultural artefacts, animals, plants, fossils or rocks. Leave them as you find them for others to see. No firearms are permitted in the park.
- **Be clean** – take your rubbish out of the park when you leave.

Stay safe

- **Always carry ample drinking water** – one litre per person, per hour - when walking. To avoid dehydration, drink small amounts regularly.
- **Stay on track** – follow the signs and stay on marked trails at all times.

More information

Parks and Wildlife Service - Midwest Region Office

1st Floor, The Foreshore Centre
201 Foreshore Drive, Geraldton WA 6530
Ph. (08) 9964 0901
dbca.wa.gov.au



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could save
your life



emergencyplus.com.au

Download the free Emergency+ app before your visit. Use the app in an emergency to call for assistance. If there is no mobile phone coverage you **WILL NOT** be able to call **000** but the app will provide you with your GPS location.

Check for alerts and updates directly related to parks and major trails at alerts.dbca.wa.gov.au and for all emergency information in Western Australia at emergency.wa.gov.au.

Find more park visitor information, book campsites and share your experiences at exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au.

@waparkswildlife

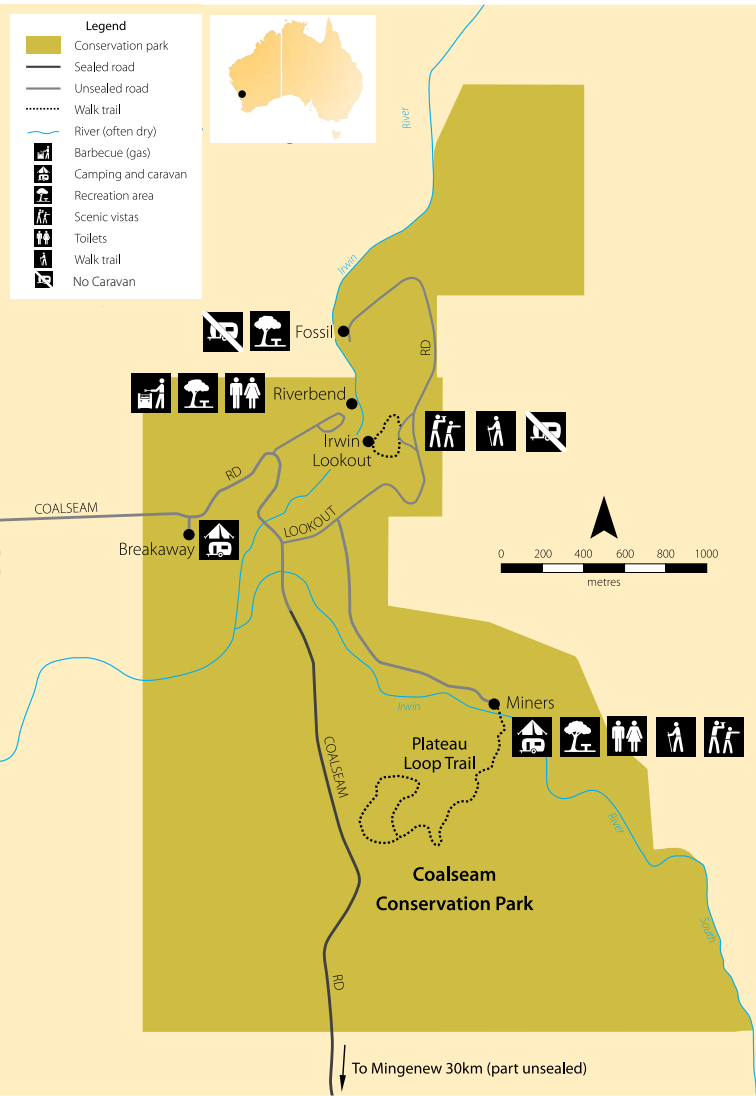


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Publication available in alternative format on request.

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