

# Little Desert National Park



## Visitor Guide

Little Desert is much more than a desert. Camp beside the tranquil Wimmera River fringed with River Red Gums, or hike the rolling dunes of the desert. Wide open spaces and peaceful campgrounds make this park a natural treasure, best seen on foot in autumn, winter and spring. The river end is ideal to visit in summer.



*"If we follow Bunjil's law and look after the country then the country will look after us. ...All the rules we have, come from Bunjil. I must pass on Bunjil's law so it continues". The late Uncle Jack*

## Welcome to Country

Through their rich culture the Wotjobaluk People have been intrinsically connected to Country - including the area now known as Victoria and the State's parks and reserves - for tens of thousand of years.

Parks Victoria recognises this connection and acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Communities of these areas.

The Wotjobaluk People welcome and remind us that these sites are part of Australia's heritage, and ask that visitors respect these sites when visiting them. All cultural sites are protected by law.



## Walking

The park has a number of marked, signposted walks, ranging from 30 minutes to three days duration. These are in the eastern block of the park, and are accessible by 2WD vehicles.



## Self Guided Nature Walks

### 1. Stringybark Walk (30min - 1 hour)

Located on the Harrow - Nhill Road, this short walk show cases the diversity of Little Desert. A brochure at the start of the walk will guide you.

### 2. Sanctuary-Keith Hateley Nature Walk (30min)

Start in the picnic area, 10km south of Kiata. A brochure explains the abundant plant and bird life in this area, including the rarely sighted Malleefowl.

### 3. Pomponderoo Hill Nature Walk (30min)

This walk is on the park's northern boundary, 4km south of Dimboola. It loops around typical desert vegetation. A lookout gives an excellent view of the park, Wimmera River and the surrounding area.

### 6. Yanipy Walk

Explore the plant and animal diversity on a self-guided walk around the Yanipy School Reserve.



## Campground Walks

### 4. Kiata Campground

Several tracks start from the campground. Brochures are available at the start of these walks.

### 5. Horseshoe Bend/Ackle Bend Campgrounds

A short walk that leads to Ackle Bend provides great views of the eastern block, particularly at sunset. Walkers can continue past Ackle Bend and follow the track a further 1km to the river before returning to the campgrounds.



## Camping and accommodation

Basic facilities are provided at park campgrounds south of Kiata, Horseshoe Bend and Ackle Bend, south of Dimboola. A fee applies.

Bush camping away from the park campgrounds is permitted in the central and western blocks. A range of accommodation options are available at Kaniva, Nhill, Winiam, Dimboola, Goroke and Natimuk.

## Location and access

Little Desert National Park is 375km northwest of Melbourne. The western and central blocks may be approached from Kaniva, the central and eastern blocks from Nhill or Kiata, and a good gravel road leads to the Wimmera River section of the eastern block from Dimboola. Similarly, bitumen road access is available from the south via Mitre, Gymbowen, Goroke, Edenhope or Booroopki.

Once you leave the bitumen, most tracks are very sandy and are suitable for four wheel drive vehicles only.

## Be fire ready and stay safe

Many parks and forests are located in high fire risk areas. On days of forecast Code Red Fire Danger this park will be closed for public safety. If you are already in the park you should leave the night before or early in the morning for your own safety.

Closure signs will be erected and rangers will patrol when possible, however you may not receive a personal warning that the park is closed so check the latest conditions by calling 13 1963 or visit [www.parkweb.vic.gov.au](http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au)

For up to date information on fires in Victoria or general fire safety advice call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667.



### Little Desert National Park

|  |                     |  |  |
|--|---------------------|--|--|
|  | Highway             |  | Gate for Seasonal Road Closures (Seasonal Road Closures apply between mid June and 31 October) |
|  | Sealed road         |  | National Park  |
|  | Surface road        |  | Other Parks and Reserves   |
|  | Vehicle track (4WD) |  | State Forest   |
|  | Management track    |  | Water body   |
|  | Walking track       |  |  |

### Recreational Facilities

|  |                       |  |                  |
|--|-----------------------|--|------------------|
|  | Camping               |  | Lookout          |
|  | Caravan park          |  | Park information |
|  | Family walk           |  | Picnic area      |
|  | Fireplace             |  | Picnic shelter   |
|  | Fishing               |  | Toilet           |
|  | Walk reference number |  |                  |

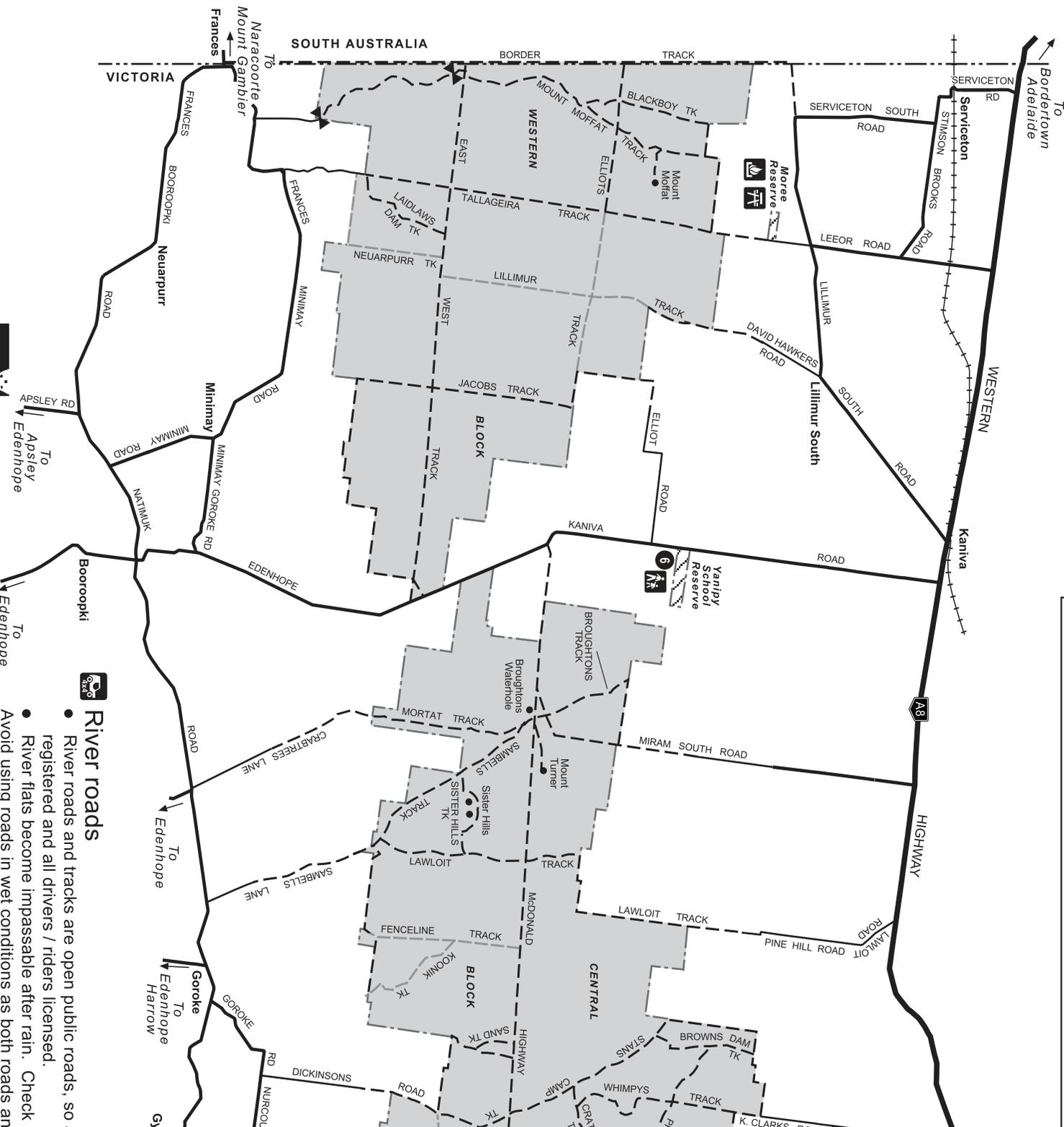


## Walkers Beware

- Carry drinking water with you
- A hat and sunscreen are essential in summer
- Keep to the defined tracks - It is easy to become disoriented in the desert
- Let someone responsible know where you plan to go, and tell them when you return

## Risk awareness

- Avoid camping under large old River Red Gums. They can drop branches without warning.
- Swimmer beware: deep holes and snags are common in the Wimmera River.
- River cliffs are highly erodable; slumping may occur at any time.
- Rope swings are not recommended. Their use may cause injury.



## River roads

- River roads and tracks are open public roads, so a registered and all drivers / riders licensed.
- River flats become impassable after rain. Check r
- Avoid using roads in wet conditions as both roads and





For further information  
Parks Victoria  
Information Centre  
Call **13 1963**  
or visit the  
Parks Victoria website  
[www.parkweb.vic.gov.au](http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au)

**Horsham**  
Visitor Information Centre  
O'Callaghans Parade  
Horsham 3400  
Tel: (03) 5382 3778

Reference: *Defending the Little Desert – the rise of ecological consciousness in Australia*. Libby Robin

### Caring for the environment

All native plants and animals, archaeological sites, historic and cultural remains and geological features are protected by law and must not be disturbed, damaged or removed.

Please take all rubbish home with you for disposal or recycling

Firearms, generators and chainsaws are prohibited  
Please keep to designated roads and tracks

### Fire

This park is in the **Wimmera Total Fire Ban District**

It is your responsibility to know if it is a day of **Total Fire Ban**.

If in doubt call the **Victorian Bushfire Information Line: 1800 240 667**

### Park closures

Be prepared to leave early as **extreme weather may cause the closure of some park areas** for public safety.

Light fires only in fireplaces provided. Gas or fuel stoves are preferred

No fires (including barbecues, gas or fuel stoves in tents) may be lit on a day of **Total Fire Ban**

### Mobile Phones

You may not be in network range in some areas of the park. To be connected to Police, Ambulance or CFA, key in **112 then press the YES key**

### Healthy Parks Healthy People

Visiting a park can improve your health, mind, body and soul. So, with over four million hectares of parkland available to Victorians, why not escape to a park today!



## Caring for Country

For thousands of years, the rich waters of the Wimmera River and woodlands of the Wimmera and Mallee plains sustained the people of the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagalk tribes.

The Wimmera River was important for the survival of these people, as they relied on it to provide them with food, water, tools and shelter. As Traditional Owners these tribes were the custodians of the land and they effectively practiced what equates in many ways to the concept of sustainable land management.

Caring for Country is the fabric of Indigenous social, spiritual, economic and physical wellbeing and is the basis of their cultural lore.

As descendants of the original inhabitants of the Wimmera region, many of these people can trace their ancestry back to the area prior to European settlement. The arrival of the first European squatters saw the traditional lifestyle of Victoria's Indigenous people severely affected. Introduced disease and conflict reduced their population drastically, changing Australia's history forever.

These descendants can also be traced back to the people who lived on the Ebenezer Mission, north of Dimboola, established in the 1860s. Despite the impact of European settlement, the members of the claim group remain an identifiable community that has maintained some of its traditional law and custom in part of the claim area.

## Growth of a national park

The Kiata Lowan Sanctuary was created in 1955; 217 hectares being set-aside for the preservation of the Malleefowl (or Lowan). This was increased to 945 hectares in 1968 and declared as the Little Desert National Park.

At the same time, the Government announced that 80,000 hectares of the desert would be sub-divided and cleared for agriculture. The economic viability of the scheme was seriously questioned. It was argued that in the long term, the land would be more valuable in its natural state. The plan was abandoned, and in December 1969 the park was increased to 35,300 hectares.

In 1986 the Land Conservation Council, established by the government to advise on the use of public land, recommended an increase in size of the Little Desert National Park. The addition of the central and western block to the existing eastern block increased the park to its present size of 132,000 hectares.

Declaration took place in May 1988. The park now extends from the Wimmera River in the east to the South Australian border.



This park is one of the last strongholds of the endangered Malleefowl. Under threat from predation by foxes and loss of habitat its future depends on your understanding and support.

## Co-operative management of the park

In 2005, the Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation entered into the first Indigenous land use agreement (ILUA) in Victoria with the Victorian and Australian Governments.

Among other things, a co-operative agreement ensures that the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagalk peoples will be able to continue to Care for Country by being involved in the management of the area's where their native title rights have been recognised.



## Rich with plants and wildlife

Differing soil types give rise to a varied and diverse range of vegetation, alive with wildlife and spring wildflowers. It makes a significant contribution to Australia's biodiversity. More than 670 species of native plants can be found in the Little Desert. Birdwatchers will find much of interest, over 220 bird species have been recorded in the park. Brush-tailed Possums, kangaroos, bats and many different kinds of reptiles can also be seen. Stumpy-tailed Lizards and Bearded Dragons may often be observed basking in the sun.



**Yellow-winged Honeyeater on Silver Banksia**

*"To be with someone who has not seen virgin scrub makes you realise its value. It makes you think of the future" - Avelyn Coutts, Kaniva.*



## Long distance - the Desert Discovery Walk

A separate brochure is available for this walk. Overnight walkers are asked to register their details in advance at the Park Office. There are two overnight camps along the way, accessible only by walkers.

This walk is a great opportunity to experience some of the park's diversity on foot. It is especially colourful in spring.



## Exploring the Region

Be sure to visit your nearest Visitor Information Centre to find out more about local parks, tour and guide opportunities for the area.

November 2010

Printed on Australian-made 100% recycled paper