

# Parks of the Darling Range

What's in a name?

by Samille Mitchell

The national and regional parks of the Darling Range just east of Perth have been given new names that reflect their Aboriginal heritage.

Spend a day wandering through the tree-cloaked valleys and rises of the Darling Range east of Perth and you may find yourself struck by a feeling of timelessness. Perhaps it's the ancient granite rock outcrops dating back 2,500 million years that gives it the feel. Or maybe it's simply the eternal cycle of nature, of living and dying, decay and renewal.

Or maybe, just maybe, it's an ethereal presence from the Aboriginal people who have long roamed this

land, their spirits mingling with the early morning mists that hang in the valleys, their whispers rustling through the treetops.

For, while colonists have lived amid this nature-rich area since soon after the settling of the Swan River Colony in 1829, it is Aboriginal people who are its traditional custodians. In recognition of this long and intimate relationship with the area, three regional parks and three national parks have been renamed with Aboriginal titles to reflect the

significance of their Aboriginal past.

The parks, plus one other which retained the same name, are collectively known as the 'Parks of the Darling Range'. They span 57 kilometres from Wooroloo to Karrakup, encompassing a total area of 23,948 hectares.

Initially, the parks were given interim names that reflected their geographic location. However, since March 2005 the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) has undertaken extensive consultation to decide on new Aboriginal names for the parks. This involved liaising with the Darling Range Community Advisory Committee, the local government authorities of Swan, Mundaring, Kalamunda, Gosnells and Serpentine-Jarrahdale, Aboriginal groups and individuals and Aboriginal language specialists.

After consultation with the Aboriginal elders of the combined Swan River and Swan Coastal Plain Native Title Claimants and other traditional owners, a variety of names were selected to reflect Aboriginal cultural links to the area.

The park names were endorsed by the Conservation Commission of Western Australia and the then Minister for the Environment, and were formally accepted by the State Government's Geographic Names Committee on 30 May this year.

As a result, the national parks of Mundaring, Canning and Pickering Brook have become Beelu, Midgegoroo and Korung respectively. In addition, Chidlow Regional Park has become Wooroloo Regional Park, Kalamunda Regional Park has become Mundy Regional Park and Kelmscott-Martin Regional Park has become Banyowla Regional Park. Wungong Regional Park has retained the same name.

But what exactly do these names mean, and what can you experience within the protected areas?

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**Main** Misty forest near Helena Valley, Beelu National Park.

*Photo - Michael Pelusey*

**Left** Beelu National Park.

*Photo - Andy Ballard*



**Above** A sign near the Kattamorda Heritage Trail, Beelu National Park.  
*Photo - Andy Ballard*

**Above right** Bibbulmun Track in Beelu National Park.  
*Photo - Michael Pelusey*

### Beelu National Park

Beelu National Park (pronounced beel-u) is cradled in the valleys of the Darling Scarp, adjacent to Mundaring Weir Road. It was previously known as Mundaring National Park but was renamed to recognise the Beelu, or river people, who once lived here. These people lived in an area generally bounded by the Helena, Swan and Canning rivers and had winter camps in the Mundaring and Kalamunda hills. The name Beelu (or Beeloo) is related to the Nyoongar name for river or stream.

Today Beelu National Park features recreation sites ranging from the manicured and well-maintained to areas of relative wilderness. The most modified area is Fred Jacoby Park, the ideal place for a family day out and picnic. Fred Jacoby Park features rolling grassland, exotic trees, picnic facilities and free barbecues. It is also home to one of the biggest living English oak trees in Western Australia. A boardwalk enables visitors to walk under the canopy of this 140-year-old heritage-listed giant, while protecting the tree roots from compaction.

You can set out from here on a section of the Kattamorda Heritage Trail, a 27-kilometre journey from Mundaring to Bickley Reservoir. The three-kilometre stretch from Fred



Jacoby Park to the Number 1 Pump Station along the Goldfields pipeline is particularly popular.

While in the area, be sure to stop at one of the scenic points along Mundaring Weir Road, including South Ledge, North Ledge, Farrell Grove, The Dell, Gungin Gully, Pimelia Mycumbene and Grevillea Mycumbene. The 400-metre-return walk from South Ledge to the Golden View is particularly scenic. The walk through the bush meets a viewing platform overlooking the nearby Mundaring Weir and Lake CY O'Connor, and affords sweeping views of the surrounding Helena River Valley. It comes complete with interpretive signage explaining much about the history of the area.

The more adventurous can set out on mountain bike or hiking trails from The Dell, while North Ledge and Farrell Grove offer tranquil picnic areas immersed in the bush. The Bibbulmun Track and Munda Biddi Mountain Bike Trail also snake through the area.

### Midgegoroo National Park

Midgegoroo National Park (pronounced midj-ee-gor-oo), which replaces Canning National Park, was named after Midgegoroo, a Nyoongar elder of the Beeliear people at the time of colonial settlement in 1829. Midgegoroo played a key role in Aboriginal resistance to white settlement in the Perth area—a role which eventually led to his execution by white settlers in 1833. Midgegoroo's family had customary land-usage rights

over a large area of what is now southern metropolitan Perth. They were able to move freely about an even larger area, presumably due to kinship ties with neighbouring groups.

The most popular area within the 2,492-hectare Midgegoroo National Park is Canning Dam, which is managed by the Water Corporation.

You can also set out on one of several mountain bike trails through the park and adjacent areas of State forest. The popular Munda Biddi Mountain

Bike Trail runs through the park on its long journey from Mundaring to the south of the State.

Just to the north of the national park, off Brookton Highway, is the Carinyah Mountain Bike Loop Trail—a 15.7-kilometre ride starting from a terminus located 4.4 kilometres east along Brookton Highway from the Canning Road intersection.

### Korong National Park

Korong National Park (pronounced ko-rung) is the new name for the 6,344-hectare Pickering Brook National Park. The new name recognises Korung, a Nyoongar elder and warrior around the time of colonial settlement.

Located around the town sites of Karragullen and Pickering Brook, the park is popular for bush walking. The Munda Biddi Mountain Bike Trail and the Kattamorda Heritage Trail run through parts of this park. There are no picnic facilities located within the park but several walk trails run through parts of it, including the Mason and Bird Heritage Trail and the New Victoria Dam Walk.

### Wooroloo Regional Park

Formerly known as Chidlow Regional Park, Wooroloo Regional Park (pronounced woo-roh-loo) is named after an Aboriginal word first recorded in 1841 when a town site to be named Worrooloo was surveyed. Other spellings of Worroilow and Warriloo are also recorded, but by the 1890s the Wooroloo spelling was commonly used.

It is believed that the name was derived from the Aboriginal word 'worroilow', which referred to certain pools along the Wooroloo Brook. One of the Aboriginal elders consulted during the park naming process says Wooroloo is a Nyoongar word for 'come back again' or 'you will return'.

**Above left** Midgegoroo National Park.  
Photo - Brett Dennis/Lochman  
Transparencies

**Left** New Victoria Dam Walk, Korung National Park.  
Photo - Ann Storrie



**Above** Zig Zag Track, Mundy Regional Park  
Photo - Andy Ballard

**Right** Bibbulmun Track, Mundy Regional Park.  
Photo - Michael Pelusey

A railway stopping place named Wooroloo was established in 1897 and a government town site of this name was declared in 1913.

You can explore the park on the Helena Pipehead Walk—a one-and-a-half hour loop walk from Helena Valley Road. You can use this walk to join Rocky Pool, Schipp Road and Strathams Quarry walks.

The 3,244-hectare regional park adjoins Lake Leschenaultia, a popular recreation site managed by the Shire of Mundaring with picnic, barbecue and camping facilities, shelter, toilets, café, beaches and grassy lawns. Hiking and mountain bike trails surround the lake and canoe hire is available.

### Mundy Regional Park

Mundy Regional Park (pronounced mun-dee) is the new name for Kalamunda Regional Park and commemorates Mundy (or Munday), a leader of the Beelu people at the time of European settlement. During the early days of settlement, Mundy



was one of the most important and successful negotiators for Perth's Whadjuk community.

This name is also recognised in Munday Swamp, a wetland located against the north-eastern perimeter fence of Perth Airport, south-west of King Road and west of the Forrestfield and Kewdale railway yards. The Beelu people hunted tortoises in the Munday Swamp area, carrying them to the

higher ground in the east for cooking and eating.

The 538-hectare regional park features several walking trails. There's the two-hour West Terrace Loop Walk, which starts in West Terrace, Kalamunda. There's also the Whistlepipe Gully Walk, which takes about an hour and features pretty rock pools and a gentle stream. You can also set out on the two-hour Lewis Road



**Left** Wungong Brook.

**Below** Wungong Regional Park.  
Photos – DEC



recognised by the naming of Ellis Brook in the Martin area. Ellis died from injuries sustained in the Pinjarra massacre of 1834 between a group of 60 to 80 Aboriginal men, women and children and a detachment of 25 soldiers and policemen.

The park has no visitor facilities.

### **Wungong Regional Park**

Wungong Regional Park (pronounced wong-gong) retains its Aboriginal name, which is also the name of the Wungong town site, proclaimed on 12 March 1909 and named after the nearby Wungong Brook. The course of the brook was first traced by Alfred Hillman in January 1835. The southern portion of the park covers the existing Wungong Valley. Wungong is a Nyoongar word believed to mean ‘embracing’ and refers to the way the land is located between the two branches of the Wungong Brook.

The 4,106-hectare park is home to Churchman’s Bushland, which is popular for rock climbing. The bushland is also home to the seven-kilometre Kangaroo Walk (or ‘Yongar’ Walk according to Nyoongar language), the six-kilometre Emu Walk (or ‘Weich’ Walk) and the 2.7-kilometre Botanical Walk, all of which feature signs pointing out vegetation types along the way. It’s fascinating to learn about these plants, many of which were important to the Aboriginal people who lived here.

Walk, which starts near Whistlepipe Gully, or the two to two-and-a-half hour Palm Terrace Walk, which starts on Palm Terrace, Kalamunda.

### **Banyowla Regional Park**

The new name for the 2,607-hectare Kelmscott–Martin Regional Park, Banyowla (pronounced ban-yow-la), recognises Banyowla, a Nyoongar elder at the time of European settlement. Banyowla headed a group

whose territory was marked by a line from Mangle’s Bay on the coast to the Darling Range. Banyowla’s district was said to extend south of the Beeliar district and included the banks of the Murray River.

Banyowla’s people in Pinjarra were closely related and shared cultural links with the Beelu people, moving between areas to celebrate festivals.

The history of Banyowla’s people is linked with the name of Ellis, a soldier

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