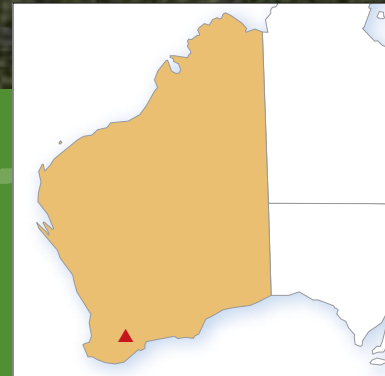


Stirling Range



Date of inscription: 15 December 2006

Stirling Range National Park, Western Australia

‘The irregular shaped mountains still in sight being seven leagues inland, and these entirely distinct, are beginning to shew themselves. Except these we see nothing inland...’

Matthew Flinders recorded the first European sighting of the inland mountain range he named Mount Rugged, in January 1802 during his exploration of the southern coast of Australia in the *Investigator*. Known as Koi Kyeunu-ruff by the Mineng and Goreng people, the Stirling Range was named by John Septimus Roe on 4 November 1835 after Captain James Stirling, the first Governor of Western Australia.

Today the range dominates the landscape as an island for native flora and fauna among a patchwork of highly productive farmland. The park receives thousands of visitors each year, drawn by the beautiful carpets of spring wildflowers and the challenge of climbing the distinctive peak, Bluff Knoll.

Formed over millions of years of weathering and erosion, the Stirling Range of south-west Western Australia is regarded as an area of great biogeographic and evolutionary interest and displays one of the richest floras in the world.

The range stretches for 65 kilometres from east to west and the tallest peak Bluff Knoll stands at 1059 metres above sea level.

At 2500–2900 million years old the bedrock of the Stirling Range is composed of metamorphosed sandstones and shales, believed to have originated from an ancient sea. This historic bedrock is the remains of part of the original continental landmass when Australia was part of the super-continent Pangaea and provides important evidence of the formation of the stunning Stirling Range.

The Mineng and Goreng people are believed to have originally lived in and around the mountains. Many Creation stories reflect the mystery and danger of the jagged peaks of the Stirling Range. Of particular focus is the imposing peak Bluff Knoll. The Nyoongar people of the area referred to Bluff Knoll as Bular Mial (many eyes) or Bala Mial (his eyes), as they believed the rocks on the bluff were shaped like the eyes of an ancestral master spirit that are visible on the mountain.

The south-west of Western Australia is internationally recognised as a biodiversity hotspot, and represents one of only 34 sites in the world that is exceptionally rich in species. Despite the low soil fertility the Stirling Range National Park provides an important refuge for an outstanding diversity of Australia’s native plants and animals. The area supports 1500 plant species, which is more than in the entire British Isles. At least 87 of these plant species are found nowhere else in the world.

The park hosts five major vegetation communities namely thicket and mallee-heath on the higher ground; with woodlands, wetlands and salt lake communities on the lower slopes and plains. During spring the park is a breathtaking garden of wildflowers.

The beautiful and diverse vegetation of the Stirling Range National Park provides valuable shelter for many bird species including parrots, honeyeaters and thornbills. The range is also a haven for many native Australian mammals including the western pygmy-possum and the western grey kangaroo.

The deeply incised south-facing gullies provide a thriving sanctuary for a diverse range of ancient species including land snails, trapdoor spiders and giant earthworms. These species date back millions of years to the time when Australia was part of the Gondwanaland super-continent and they provide valuable information about Australia’s natural history.

The combination of mountains, wildflowers, bird and animal life, and its proximity to regional centres makes the Stirling Range a popular destination for a variety of visitors. Listed as one of Australia’s 25 best hikes, Bluff Knoll provides an admirable and rewarding challenge for bushwalkers, rock climbers and abseilers of all levels.

The imposing jagged peaks of the Stirling Range combined with serene 360 degree views and the breathtaking beauty of the Stirling Range National Park ensures a truly memorable experience for all visitors.