

Welcome to the Paroo-Darling

where
water
has shaped
the landscape
the wildlife
and the people

Over time
and across
seasons...

The Paroo-Darling National Park
is managed by the NSW NPWS



**NSW
NATIONAL
PARKS AND
WILDLIFE
SERVICE**



Department of
Environment and Conservation (NSW)

You are here

From a distance, the Outback looks like a vast and endless landscape of red dirt and stunted vegetation, where only the toughest of animals and humans struggle to exist under a scorching sun.

A closer look reveals a very different picture. This is an ever-changing landscape, from the red sand hills and grey cracking clay of the floodplains to spectacular sandstone hills and ephemeral creeks and lakes.

At the Paroo-Darling National Park, the Outback comes alive. In this vast landscape, you will experience a diversity of wildlife, wild places, history and living culture, all shaped by water.



"But where," said I,
 "is the blooming stream?"
 And he replied, "we're at it!"
 I stood awhile, as in a dream,
 "Great Scott!" I cried, "is that it?"
 Why, that is some old bridle-track!
 He chuckled, "Well, I never!
 It's plain you've never been Out Back -
 This is the Paroo River!"

Source: Paroo River by Henry Lawson



Have a safe and pleasant trip...

The Paroo-Darling National Park is 250,000 hectares of rugged woodlands, creek beds with tree kangaroos, wallabies, gibber plains and grassy floodplains. Before you head out to the Park, there are some basic outback safety tips and checklist regulations you need to know about.



When travelling in and around Paroo-Darling National Park, there is always the possibility of getting stranded or rained in.

We want you to have a safe and enjoyable visit, so please follow these safety guidelines:

- When conditions of your itinerary require setting out:
 - Carry extra fuel, food, vehicle spares, a first aid kit and plenty of water.
 - Be prepared for very hot conditions if you are travelling in the Outback during summer.
 - Rain can obscure road signs, so be prepared for being 'lost' or 'and always observe road closure signs.
- In the event of a breakdown, remain with your vehicle.



Immerse yourself in the Paroo-Darling

Visit **Pearcy Lake**. This temporary lake can hold water for three years after flooding events and is waterbird paradise in NSW. When the lake fills, you can see up to 50,000 waterbirds from a distance.

Look along the walking track in Paroo-Lake's **reflexion mound springs**. The only known springs found on landbirds in NSW. It's dry and very plain, the **soil pavement** only grows on these mound springs.



Be inspired by the ancient tree kangaroo being the star and the red sand hills and grey cracking clay of the **Darling floodplains**.

Imagine... many thousands of years of floodplains around the Paroo-Darling. Our trees, shrub and fern systems, ancient grinding stones, engravings, artwork, campfires, stone tool workshops and sacred sites are all part of the Park's rich Aboriginal heritage.

You will just begin identifying the former **sheep and cattle stations** that make up the Park. In the northern end of the Park are Paroo, Arden and Mandabally stations.

Former **sheep and cattle stations** in the southern end of the Park include Mt Moorrees Hill, Tully and Coomelia stations.



Picture the **sheep tracks** that once navigated the flooding or so shallow, opening up the country for early settlers and pastoralists. Now tracks shaped by 'land up' near the Coomelia Station Campground where the floodplains are lower.

Experience authentic bush camping or stay for a night in **Coomelia Campground** on the banks of the Darling River. RV sites are available but bring your own firewood and water for all necessary services.

While you are here...

...experience more of our unique outback national parks, including:



Murrumbidgee National Park and Historic Site, where you can see some of the best examples of Murrumbidgee in NSW and hear the Cheering Shrike. The Park was named in the Murrumbidgee catchment.



Mungah National Park, where evidence of over 10,000 years of human occupation has been found. One a 100m long sand and clay structure called the 'Mud on Deck' depicting a scene.



Woolanga National Park, renowned for its landscapes, cultural European history and the Woolanga Woodland.



Sunrises National Park, NSW's most remote national park, where you can see the 400 million year old granite rock containing thousands of prehistoric fossils. The Outback is most at its best at sunrise.





Life along the Paroo-Darling moves to an ancient rhythm of flooding and drought...

River life

Whether creeks and rivers run quickly, slowly or dry out completely for a time, important processes are at work.

As water flows, it carries sediment and shapes river channels. High flows and floods spill out across the floodplains, linking rivers and wetlands and providing water for plants.

Floods flush out wetlands, prevent algal blooms and improve water quality.

But for life along the river, drying out can be just as important...



For all the wetlands, the Paroo-Darling system can't provide water to all the wetlands.

Secret life of the river...

In open areas, aquatic invertebrates flourish and mosquitoes help keep the river system healthy.

Beats and mosquitoes break down organic matter, feed on algae and fungi, and take up nutrients. They are also an important food source for fish, waterbirds, frogs, turtles and other animals.



Many of these invertebrates can tolerate changing flow patterns and even complete drying out. Most hatch and/or lay eggs when the river runs again in the wetlands. In the Paroo-Darling, many insects and crustaceans are finely tuned to the cycle of wet and dry. Many would die out without these conditions in their lives.

Fish tales



The Paroo River has one of the strongest native fish communities in the region — and probably the numbers of fish.

When floods come, fish move out into the floodplains to breed.

Native fish learn to know when to get back out to the main channels before their average mouth dries up. Even fish that can't become stranded on the floodplains and die.

But it's not all good news for native fish. Major downstream agricultural applications in the Paroo and Darling rivers.

Low water and lower flows mean many native fish can't get out to wetland 'nurseries' to breed.

Clay and other waste fish waste is a considerable river loading point. The high flows and flooding 'trigger' breeding in native fish.

Wild water, wild life...

Every creature living along the Paroo-Darling is connected to a need for water.

When floods come, wildlife springs into action. Floods mean food is abundant and breeding grounds are full. During drought, animals like kangaroos, wallabies, and the like become a bit more scarce.

Red and grey kangaroos and wallabies tend to be in the floodplains for most of the day. At dusk, they come to feed on the grasses growing along the river.

A short-necked wallaby is a native to the Paroo-Darling. A species of yellow-bellied wallaby is also found in the floodplains.

Flocks of red-tailed black cockatoos return from feeding on the floodplains, drinking and nesting among the trees and grasses.



For all the water, many animals are still struggling to survive. The Paroo-Darling system can't provide water to all the wetlands.



Fish waterbirds, like waterbirds, gulls, grebes, ducks, terns, and other waterbirds, are also in the floodplains.

A grey kangaroo is a native to the Paroo-Darling. A species of yellow-bellied wallaby is also found in the floodplains.

A kangaroo is a native to the Paroo-Darling. A species of yellow-bellied wallaby is also found in the floodplains.



Over a hundred species of waterbirds, and birds of prey live here.

More than 50 species of mammals, including bats, and hundreds of amphibian and reptile species have been recorded here.



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River people

The NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service, Aboriginal people, Park neighbours and local communities are working together to co-operatively manage the Paroo-Darling.

The **Paakintj** were moved off their country, first to pastoral camps and later to nearby towns like Wilcannia. But their connection to the river runs deep.

The Paakintj still stay close to the river today, maintaining important links to their people and country through stories and traditions.

The Paakintj have gathered and passed on their knowledge of fishing and an understanding of river life for many generations.

They know the value of even the tiniest river creatures. They can tell you how the river is running or whether the yabbies are about to 'go off' (start breeding). They know what kinds of fish have been caught in the river this week.

They care deeply for their country and especially about the health of the river.



Yabby
Yabby (Decapoda) is a crustacean. It is a freshwater crayfish. Yabbies are found in the Paroo-Darling river system. They are a common food source for many animals, including humans.



Like Aboriginal people, **pastoralists** and the **local community** understand the value of the river.

Access to water is critical and most outback towns are built along rivers or on the floodplains.

Flooding here is inevitable but unpredictable. And although floods cause temporary inconvenience, floods are the driving force of life in the Outback.

Sheep and cattle grazing is still the major industry here, so the abundant grazing following flooding is cause for celebration.



The establishment of the Paroo-Darling National Park in October 2002 opened a new chapter for land management in the region.

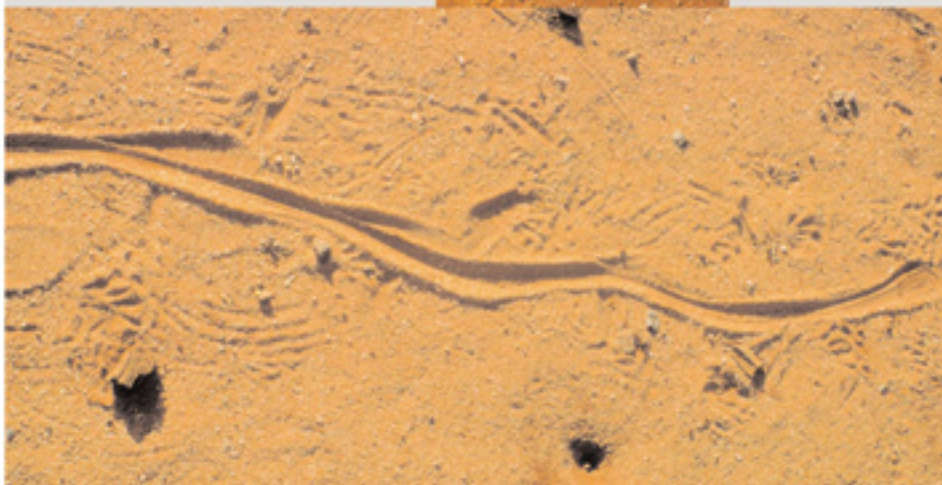
The **National Parks & Wildlife Service** manages the Park, which incorporates the former Peery National Park.

The Park is made up of former sheep and cattle stations Peery, Mandaly, Arrowbar, Mt Murchison, Wilga, Coonabra and Tipily.

The NPWS manages the natural and cultural heritage of the Park in collaboration with Aboriginal people, Park neighbours and local communities.



Red flower
This is a red flower. It is a common sight in the Paroo-Darling region. The flower is a member of the Proteaceae family. It is known for its vibrant red color and its ability to attract pollinators.



River places

The Paroo-Darling is an ever-changing landscape, shaped by water. A mosaic of rivers, wetlands and floodplains gives rise to an amazing variety of vegetation.

Black-box and coolbah trees grow around the edges of the floodplains. They are positioned well for natural flooding – but they won't tolerate having their feet wet for long...



Native grasses and shrubs grow on the grey cracking clays and red sandy rises of the floodplains. These include Mitchell and spear grasses, old man saltbush, bluebush, lignum and canebrass.

Woodland remnants survive on soil types ranging from clay to sandy soils. Leopardwood, gidgee, timble box, bendish red gum, cypress pine, belah, coolbah and black-box trees form a canopy.

Beneath them, emu-bush, Daine's wattle, river cooba, western boobialla and wilga shrubs provide the perfect habitat for small woodland birds. Woodland patches are ideal nesting places for waterbirds during floods.

River red gum woodlands line the river banks, major channels and billabongs. Plants that rely on flooding grow here, including yapunyah, black-box, river cooba, lignum and canebrass.



Rocky cliffs of sandstone and quartzite tower 120 metres above the western shoreline of Peery Lake. Mulga, beefwood, silver cypress and a variety of emu bushes grow here.





During the dry, rivers and creeks cut here can dry up to a string of waterholes and sometimes even disappear.

Then floods come again, spilling over the banks of the river and across the wide floodplain.

Floods and drought can make life hard for us, but native plants and animals are tuned-in to the cycle of wet and dry.

In dry times,

habitats are disconnected. Seeds, insect eggs and frogs wait quietly in the drying mud for the next flood. Animals feed close to the river and most of the waterbirds fly away.

Look carefully. How many creatures can you find?

Like streets in your neighbourhood floods connect the places animals and plants live.

Floods bring an explosion of life to the Outback. Animals, fish and insects breed. Plants grow quickly and make seeds.

Can you count the different kinds of animals now?