

Wollemi National Park Guidebook

We want Australians to appreciate the global significance of this place, and the plants and wildlife it supports.

Sunset overlooking the Wollemi National Park. | Image: Leah-Anne Thompson



**Wollemi
National Park**

**Greater Blue Mountains
World Heritage Area**

Wollemi National Park

Wollemi forms the largest and most intact part of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. This World Heritage Site was inscribed to protect the best examples of what makes Australia, Australia. It was established to recognise its exceptional diversity of eucalypts and other quintessential Australian flora like banksias, waratahs, tea-trees, she-oaks and wattles. It is a global centre for the evolution and diversification of these types of plants.

Just a couple of hours' drive from Sydney, the second largest national park in New South Wales is a diverse landscape of mountain rainforests, sandstone pagoda outcrops, swamps, forests growing on rich basalt soil and spectacular cliffs. The astounding geology, flora and fauna here meant it received national park status back in 1979.

The high sandstone plateau comprising the World Heritage Area has largely protected the ecology from climatic changes, enabling species like the Wollemi pine to survive for 60 million years.

In a move that would compound the effects of climate change, the NSW government shockingly earmarked three areas on Wollemi's doorstep for coal exploration. By acting quickly, we pressured the government to rule out three proposed coal release areas.



Cultural values

The Wiradjuri, Dharug, Wanaruah and Darkinjung people have a strong and ongoing cultural association with their traditional lands and waters in this region. There are at least 120 First Nations cultural sites within the park, some of which can be found on easy walks from the Ganguddy-Dunns Swamp campground. Rock art in Wollemi is thought to be between 2,000 and 4,000 years old, with the significant site at Eagle's Reach containing depictions of animals long since extinct in the area. It's thought that there could be more like it.

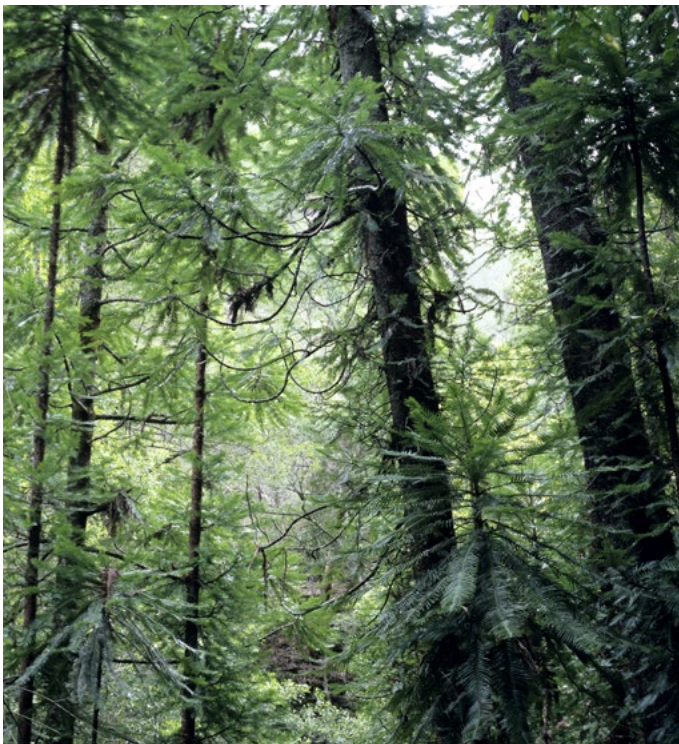
Must do: The Campsite Rock Walk is an easy 500m around the campsite at Ganguddy-Dunns Swamp. It's a great little trail that takes you among some of the big sandstone outcrops, where you can learn about the Wiradjuri people who maintain a deep and ongoing connection with the area, and see ochre hand stencils on some rock surfaces.



Flora and fauna

Wollemi National Park has an incredible diversity of plant and animal life, with a staggering array of eucalypt species, wattles, banksias and waratahs. Come in spring to see angophoras, like the smooth-barked apple gum (*Angophora costata*), show off their red trunks having shed their bark.

Bring your binoculars because the park is also home to one-third of Australia's bird species (265), 50 mammals, 30 frogs and over 60 species of reptile. These include the vulnerable glossy black-cockatoo, spotted-tailed quoll and the critically endangered regent honeyeater.



Wollemi pine | Image: Royal Botanical Garden Sydney

Wollemi pine

Back in 1994 a botanist, David Noble, found something astonishing while exploring the labyrinthine sandstone formations of Wollemi National Park: a pine tree from the time of the dinosaurs when Australia was part of the supercontinent of Gondwana. It was thriving in a patch of rainforest in a canyon deep within the national park; evidence of just how ancient and untouched this wilderness is. So precious is the discovery that the National Parks and Wildlife Service keeps the location secret.

Read David Noble's incredible tale of discovery in his own words in [issue 14 of Wilderness Journal](#), which covers Wollemi, its rare and wonderful flora and fauna, and the threats it faces from coal mining.

Regent honeyeater

The regent honeyeater (*Anthochaera phrygia*) has striking gold plumage and an exquisite call, but with only 150 to 300 left in the wild, it is sadly one of the rarest animals on the planet. Wollemi represents critical remaining habitat for the bird, which has had nearly 90% of its habitat destroyed. Taronga Zoo has a captive breeding program running in an attempt to keep this important pollinator from going extinct.



Regent honeyeater | Image: Mark Gillow

Try and spot these animals:

☐ Gang-gang cockatoo



Image: Trevor Scouten

Spot these iconic birds traveling in pairs, the male with a blood-orange red head and crest on a pastel grey body, the female a grey crest. Unfortunately, they are now a rarer sight than they once were having been listed as endangered by the government following the 2019-20 bushfires.

☐ Brush-tailed rock wallaby



Image: Donald Hobern

This wallaby is a rare site in the Blue Mountains, the animal being hunted towards near extinction in the 1800s, but it still lives in small colonies on escarpments in northern Wollemi. Not too far away, Jenolan Caves is another stronghold for the species. If you do spot a wallaby, it's likely a red-necked or swamp wallaby, common in the park.

☐ Broad-headed snake

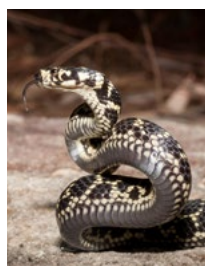


Image: Ken Griffiths

Endemic to the Sydney Basin, your best chance of seeing this beautiful snake is in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. Listed as endangered in NSW, keep an eye out for its yellow-banded length on rocky escarpments as it warms up in the sun. Keep a respectful distance as this snake, which can grow to up to 90cm in length, packs a venomous bite.

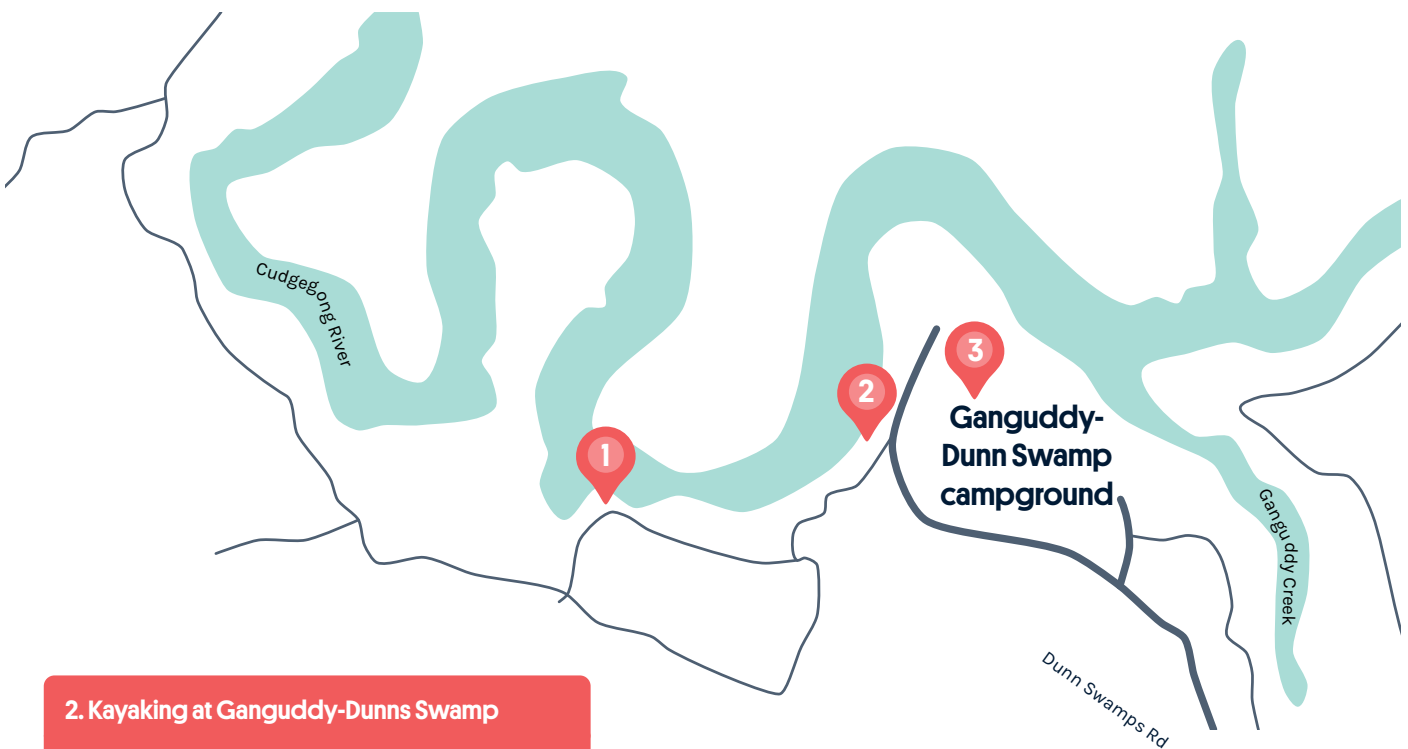
When you're there next...



Check out these three incredible places to get a sense of this vast wilderness area, including amazing walks and the magical lights in the Glow Worm Tunnel.

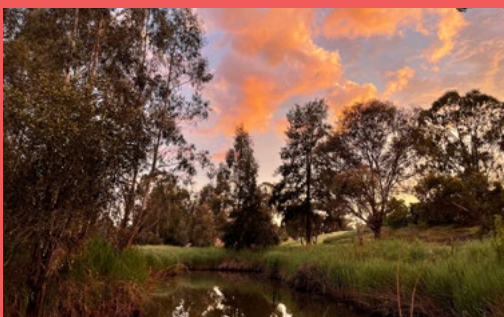
1. Pagoda Lookout walking track

An easy 1.8km return from the Ganguddy-Dunns Swamp Campground takes you up through forest and along rock escarpments to reach the incredible pagoda-like rock formations found in Wollemi National Park. Reach the top and the Pagoda Lookout for photographs of the Wollemi landscape, with its forests, valleys and escarpments stretching to the horizon.



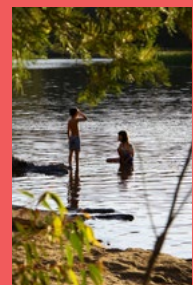
2. Kayaking at Ganguddy-Dunns Swamp

Back in the 1920s the Cudgegong River was dammed to form a weir, creating what is now perfect conditions for wetland birds. You can arrange to do a kayaking tour, or to hire a kayak from a vendor, in September to April at Ganguddy-Dunns Swamp Campground and take a trip out across the calm waters of the river, past sandstone escarpments and towering rock formations. Pull up your kayak on a bank for lunch and keep an eye out for platypus creating telltale ripples.



3. Ganguddy-Dunns Swamp campground

One of the best spots to camp in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage area is the Ganguddy-Dunns Swamp campground. The campground is set amid stunning rock pagoda formations and the picturesque Cudgegong River—perfect for camping, fishing, or even swimming in the river. Along the campgrounds, you might be able to see species such as wallabies, greater gliders at night, and if you're lucky, a platypus as well!



With your help, we gave coal the boot from Wollemi

The best time to stop a dirty fossil fuel project is before it even starts. We proved that recently at sites near Ningaloo and Gutharraguda (Shark Bay)—and now we've proved it again in Wollemi.

By acting quickly, we were able to knock three coal lease areas on the head before they even got to the stage of coal exploration. On 4 May 2022, the NSW government officially ruled out releasing a third area earmarked for coal exploration on Wollemi's border after receiving more than 26,000 emails from Wilderness Society supporters. And it's the most spectacular and precious of all.

This area, Ganguddy-Kelgoola, is home to two state forests that are currently being assessed for addition to the National Heritage List, as a step towards inscribing them in the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. The forest is home to nationally listed threatened species including the critically endangered regent honeyeater, endangered glossy black cockatoo and the endangered spotted-tailed quoll.

Coal exploration would have put this spectacular natural area of deep gorges, river valleys and eucalyptus forest—which continues to hold significance to Wiradjuri, Dharug, Wanaruah and Darkinjung people—at risk.

Thanks to your support, Ganguddy-Kelgoola is now safe.

We need to keep up pressure on the NSW government to protect them forever.

A photograph of a waterfall in a dense, lush forest. The water is cascading down a mossy rock face, creating a white, frothy spray at the bottom. The surrounding vegetation is vibrant green, with ferns and other foliage visible. The scene is captured in a way that emphasizes the natural beauty and tranquility of the environment.

Have you been to the Wollemi National Park?

**Share your experience with us by tagging
@wilderness_australia or #NatureWeLove on
Instagram.**