

Wilderness protection in South Australia

Protecting natural ecosystems and unspoilt landscapes
for future generations to see, experience and learn



Government of South Australia
Department of Environment,
Water and Natural Resources



National Parks
South Australia

Wilderness Protection Areas in South Australia

Kangaroo Island

Cape Bouguer Wilderness Protection Area
Cape Gantheaume Wilderness Protection Area
Cape Torrens Wilderness Protection Area
Ravine des Casoars Wilderness Protection Area
Western River Wilderness Protection Area

Murraylands

Billiatt Wilderness Protection Area
Danggali Wilderness Protection Area

Eyre Peninsula Mallee

Hambidge Wilderness Protection Area
Hincks Wilderness Protection Area

Eyre Peninsula Marine & Coastal

Investigator Group Wilderness Protection Area
Memory Cove Wilderness Protection Area
Nuyts Archipelago Wilderness Protection Area

Far West Dune & Karst

Nullarbor Wilderness Protection Area
Yellabinna Wilderness Protection Area





Introduction

Wilderness areas in South Australia vary from vast arid deserts and rugged ranges, to coastal cliffs and mallee plains. They include spectacular salt lakes, rocky outcrops, shrub lands and sandy beaches.

South Australia is fortunate to have substantial areas of internationally significant wilderness, with over 1,843,454 hectares protected by the *Wilderness Protection Act 1992* - the highest level of protection for land under State legislation.

This brochure explains the significance of wilderness in South Australia – what it is, where it is and why it should be protected.





What is wilderness?

South Australia's wilderness areas are life-giving places of natural and cultural significance.

Our wilderness areas are a crucial part of natural resource management in our State. They protect biodiversity, assist with landscape-scale natural resource management, and provide valuable ecological, evolutionary and climatic reference and research areas for the future. They offer insight into Australia's pre-European condition, hold significant cultural connections for Aboriginal people, and provide opportunities for future generations to experience and enjoy untouched natural landscapes.

The *Wilderness Protection Act 1992* defines wilderness criteria for South Australia. For land to be considered 'wilderness,' it must be relatively free from the effects of modern technology and not seriously affected by exotic animals, plants or organisms.



Identifying areas of wilderness quality

Most of the wilderness remaining in the settled regions of the State has already been protected as Wilderness Protection Areas.

Other significant lands of high wilderness value are located in the State's arid regions. Some of these areas of high quality wilderness are protected within the national parks, conservation parks and regional reserves of South Australia's protected area system. Other areas of high wilderness value are on private land, Aboriginal land and land under pastoral lease.

Under the *Wilderness Protection Act 1992*, the Parks and Wilderness Council has the job of assessing all land in South Australia for wilderness quality, advising the Government on wilderness protection and management, commissioning research, and increasing understanding in the community of the significance of wilderness.



How is wilderness protected?

Wilderness Protection Areas receive the highest level of protection offered in South Australia under the *Wilderness Protection Act 1992*.

Wilderness Protection Areas are managed under the Wilderness Code of Management. The Code is designed to maximise wilderness quality, prescribing principles for protecting habitat and managing visitors, scientific research and fire. It allows public use and enjoyment where compatible with conservation and promotes a 'tread lightly' ethic to visitors. The Code is also a useful resource for 'off reserve' managers and landholders for how they might manage wilderness on their land.

The following pages explore why protecting wilderness is important, and showcase some of South Australia's much-loved Wilderness Protection Areas.

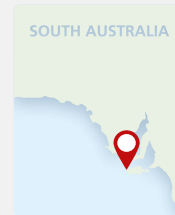


Protecting biodiversity

Wilderness areas provide the best possible circumstances for species to persist. Ecosystems in wilderness areas have a greater capacity to cope with large-scale disturbances, such as bush fires and human forced climate change. The biological implications of climate change are profound and include increased risk of species extinction, more bush fires and spread of pests and weeds. The protection of intact natural ecosystems helps ensure not only species survival but also the maintenance of ecosystem services, such as climate regulation and water resources, on which humans and animals depend.

Ravine des Casoars Wilderness Protection Area

The Ravine des Casoars Wilderness Protection Area, proclaimed in 1993, covers an area of 41,360 hectares located at the north-western end of Kangaroo Island. It protects pristine, extensive woodlands and forests, and contains several complete natural drainage systems, from watershed to their discharge at sea. This land has never been cleared, and contains ancient evidence of Aboriginal occupation.







Contributing to landscape-scale natural resource management

Wilderness areas are a vital part of the mosaic of land and water resources. Their protection, coupled with projects which better conserve the land between protected areas, is integral to whole-of-landscape management and is consistent with Goal 3 of the State Natural Resources Management Plan 'Improved condition and resilience of the environment'. Furthermore, the cost of protection of intact wilderness areas is very much lower than the cost of rehabilitation of modified landscapes.

Partnerships between members of the community, conservation groups, landholders, Natural Resource Management Boards and State and local Governments are critical to achieving tangible, long-term biodiversity conservation, helping to protect these precious natural landscapes for the future.

Nullarbor Wilderness Protection Area

Known as the treeless plain (Null – no; arbor – tree), this seemingly barren landscape is the largest limestone karst environment in the world, and hides many secrets including dolines, sinkholes, underground streams, caves, and blowholes. Nullarbor Wilderness Protection Area contains around 390 species of plants and 160 species of animals, including rare species such as the Slender-billed Thornbill, Australian Bustard and the Nullarbor Daisy. The coastal boundary protects the longest stretch of uninterrupted cliffs in Australia, the Bunda Cliffs. During the winter months, visitors to the Nullarbor can stand atop the Bunda Cliffs and spot Southern Right Whales in the waters below. The Nullarbor Wilderness Protection Area contributes to the largest continuous protected area in South Australia, enabling a coordinated management approach across this valuable landscape.

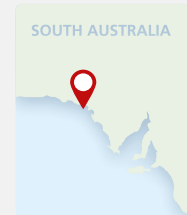


Furthering scientific understanding of our natural world

Wilderness areas provide us with a genetic 'library' which can contribute to improvements in medicine and agriculture. They are of significant value for research into ecological and physical processes, evolutionary development, and long term climatic trends. Wilderness areas provide a scientific benchmark with which modified environments can be compared, and from which appropriate management and rehabilitation strategies for modified environments can be derived.

Nuyts Archipelago Wilderness Protection Area

Nuyts Archipelago Wilderness Protection Area is located off the west coast of South Australia, around 10 to 75 kilometres south-west of Ceduna township. It comprises Purdie Islands, Lound Island, Goat Island, Lacy Islands, Evans Island, Lilliput Island, Franklin Islands, Blefuscu Island, Egg Island, Freeling Island, Smooth Island, Dog Island, West Island, St Francis Island, Masillon Island, Fenelon Island and Hart Island. The islands' remoteness from the mainland provides an important and secure refuge for vulnerable wildlife and small mammals free from introduced predators. To protect these critical island habitats from disturbance, all are protected to the low water mark, ensuring that no unauthorised access can occur.



Nuyts Archipelago Wilderness Protection Area provides important island habitat for species such as the Australian sea-lion, mutton bird, carpet python, and the Nuyts Archipelago subspecies of the southern brown bandicoot. Nuyts Archipelago Wilderness Protection Area is also helping to ensure the long term survival of the vulnerable Stick-Nest Rat and Brush-Tailed Bettong, through the implementation of successful re-introduction programs.





Maintaining cultural ties

Wilderness areas provide Aboriginal people with the opportunity to maintain traditional cultural practices and linkages with the land. The untouched areas of natural landscape enable traditional owners to hunt and gather bush foods and animals, maintain connections with cultural sites, and conduct burials to return those that have passed to their Country. Through co-management partnerships with the South Australian Government, Aboriginal traditional owners are also able to meaningfully participate in management of their lands, from setting management direction, to conducting on-park management activities such as weed and pest control.

Yellabinna Wilderness Protection Area

The Yellabinna Wilderness Protection Area is located approximately 100 kilometres north of Ceduna. Comprising approximately 500,700 hectares, it protects one of the largest and most intact natural areas in South Australia. Yellabinna Wilderness Protection Area is particularly important for the conservation of significant natural vegetation communities, as well as culturally significant sites such as Mount Finke. A number of Aboriginal groups across the area have come together to manage their traditional lands, and are known collectively as the Far West Coast People. The Far West Coast People have a central role in setting directions for the management of parks on their traditional lands, which include Yellabinna Wilderness Protection Area and Nullarbor Wilderness Protection Area, through co-management partnerships with the South Australian Government.

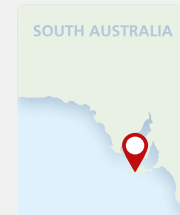


A window into the past, a doorway to future opportunities

Wilderness areas provide close approximations of South Australia's landscape in the age before agriculture, industry and urbanisation. As the pressures of urban living increase, the special recreational opportunities in wilderness areas are becoming increasingly more significant. Wilderness areas are also an important resource for regional tourism, providing opportunities for unique nature-based experiences.

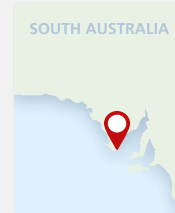
Cape Bouguer Wilderness Protection Area

Cape Bouguer Wilderness Protection Area, created in 1993, covers an area of 5,300 hectares on the southern coast of Kangaroo Island. The area is significant for its expanse of intact native vegetation, and for its biological diversity. The coastal landscape is scenically outstanding with its unspoilt sweeping bays, making Cape Bouguer Wilderness Protection Area the ideal site to host a large portion of one of Australia's best walks – the Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail. Opened in 2016, the Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail is a multi-day walk that traverses 60 kilometres of South Australia's most remarkable coastline and provides visitors with access to remote and previously unseen areas of pristine wilderness as walkers traverse the Cape Bouguer Wilderness Protection Area. The trail is set to become a world class attraction, enhancing the international profile of Kangaroo Island and bringing significant flow-on benefits to the State's economy.



Memory Cove Wilderness Protection Area

Memory Cove Wilderness Protection Area, created in 2004, is located on the Eyre Peninsula, approximately 25 kilometres south of Port Lincoln. The 8,940 hectare area extends to low water mark and includes Little Island, Lewis Island, Hopkins Island, Smith Island and Williams Island.



Over 210 species of native flora have been recorded within Memory Cove Wilderness Protection Area, including seven species of conservation significance. The area has significant European history and Aboriginal cultural heritage. In 1802, Matthew Flinders sailed the coast in the Investigator. During this expedition seven of his crew and the ship's Master, John Thistle, drowned when their cutter capsized during a search for fresh water. The nearby islands were named after the eight lost men, and Memory Cove was named to commemorate this tragedy. Prior to European settlement, two groups of Aboriginal people, the Barngarla and the Nauo groups occupied the area, and the lands and waters are still of profound cultural significance today. Fish traps made from stone arrangements, stone working sites and middens are still present today, and local Aboriginal people often make use of the wide variety of fish, inland mammals, reptiles and plants.

Memory Cove Wilderness Protection area provides opportunities for a unique nature-based tourism experience, with the provision for recreational fishing, and camping. Yachts and boats can often be seen anchored in the sheltered waters at Memory Cove and Williams Island.



www.parks.sa.gov.au

For further information please contact

Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources phone information line (08) 8204 1910, or see SA White Pages for your local Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resource office.

Recognition of Aboriginal Culture

Aboriginal Australians have rights to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions.

Please contact the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources to understand these rights in relation to this document.



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