

Little Desert National Park

Fire Recovery Update



November 2025

Background

In January 2025, a lightning storm sparked multiple fires across the Wimmera. Dry vegetation and extreme weather conditions fanned a large bushfire across Little Desert National Park, burning 95,000 hectares, or approximately 70% of the park. This intense and fast-moving bushfire caused significant environmental, cultural and destroyed many visitor sites. The remote western block was mostly untouched by fire. In early February, this area was reopened for visitors looking for a remote driving experience.

Recovery, works and timelines

Delivered on Wotjobaluk Country, Parks Victoria and Barengi Gadjin Land Council are working through the next stages of recovery at Little Desert National Park.

With support from Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), park rangers have been assessing visitor site impacts and tree risk. Planning is complete, and rebuilding of park infrastructure is underway with some areas open.



Table replacement- Broughtons Waterhole Campground

What has reopened?

Horseshoe and Ackle Bend Campgrounds

Day visitor and picnic areas, as well as the nature trail that links the two visitor sites, re-opened in September.

Kiata Sanctuary Picnic Ground

Located 19 km southeast of Nhill, a gravel road leads to a visitor area to enjoy wildflowers and birdlife. Kiata Campground remains closed.

Walking tracks: Sanctuary–Keith Hateley Nature Walk and Pomondroo Hill Walking Tracks.

Western Block (West of Kaniva-Edenhope Road to the South Australian border). This remote area is open for four-wheel driving and dispersed camping.

What will reopen this summer?

Park staff continue to work on reopening roads, walking tracks and visitor sites. Although Broughton Waterhole was not damaged, the access road sustained significant damage. While road stabilisation and repair works are underway, staff have replaced park furniture and have completed landscape works to reopen.

Walking tracks and popular roads are nearing completion, but several kms of directional signage require replacement before safely reopening. Sites and roads in the Central area reopening this summer include:

- Broughtons Waterhole picnic area and campground
- Stringybark Walk
- McDonald Highway.

What remains closed for a little longer?

Much of the Eastern area of the park was significantly impacted by the fires and will remain closed while recovery works continue. This includes Kiata Campground, Discovery walk including Mallee walkers camp and Yellow Gums walker campgrounds.

Environmental and volunteer programs

In autumn, an aerial shooting program targeted deer, goats and foxes in the park. The program is part of an ongoing joint effort by Parks Victoria and DEECA to mitigate the impacts of invasive animals within the natural environment. Recently, Wimmera CMA also supported a successful whole-of-park fox control program

In early September, the park hosted twenty volunteer track rangers. The volunteers spent a weekend supporting ranger staff with mulching, track work, pruning and painting to reopen the Horseshoe and Ackle Bend Campgrounds in time for the spring school holidays.

The annual Mallee Fowl monitoring was completed by volunteers in October and November. This important program is part of the National Mallee Fowl Program that monitors mounds to understand population trends.

Stay safe and help recovery

To help this special place recover and for visitor safety, please do not enter the park.

- Fire impacted areas are fragile and unsafe, with unstable rocks, soils and trees.
- Trees will continue to move and impact roads and walking tracks, especially after rain.
- Sand dunes are home to many animals in the Little Desert and are very fragile after fire. Visitors walking on these can cause them to collapse.
- Closed roads and walking tracks are unsafe, due to unstable ground, missing bridges, debris and hidden holes from burnt underground roots.



Image: *Pyrorchis nigricans* 'Red beaked orchids'

Life after fire

Bushfires have occurred in this landscape for thousands of years. Throughout time, these diverse cycles of fire have slowly influenced the life cycles and adaptations of many plants and animals. In the months and years following a bushfire, there are many fascinating displays of recovery. Look out for epicormic shoots on eucalyptus trees. These temporary shoots line the tree until a new canopy of leaves can be restored in the near future. The effects of this fire have created a fragile, regenerating landscape.

Many plants and animals are recovering. Minimising visitor impacts now means a healthier future for them all.



Image: Mallee Fowl

Animals and fire

Like plants, animals have developed ways to survive the impact of fire and recover afterwards. After fire, as plants begin to regenerate, food sources for animals also improve and re-colonisation begins. There may be mass breeding that occurs due to new vegetation growth. Post fire, higher populations of animals may share patches of unburnt vegetation for food, shelter and re-colonisation. Over time, these populations will plateau.

Further information

To keep up to date with what is open and closed in Little Desert National Park, visit parks.vic.gov.au

For more information on parks and reserves in Victoria, call 13 1963 or visit parks.vic.gov.au.