

Department for Environment and Heritage
Minimum Impact Code
for wilderness use in
South Australia



wilderness is a rare and precious
natural resource



Government
of South Australia



wilderness is a rare and precious natural resource

Wilderness protection areas are now protected by law under the *Wilderness Protection Act 1992*.

Protecting our wilderness areas:

- helps maintain a natural diversity of plants and animals
- lets species continue to flourish and evolve undisturbed
- provides special recreational opportunities, and
- ensures valuable ecological, evolutionary and climatic reference and research areas for the future.

Planning and getting there

Equipment and permits

You need the right equipment to have minimal impact on a wilderness protection area.

Apart from normal bushwalking gear, walkers staying overnight will need:

- a fuel stove
- a hand trowel or spade to bury toilet paper
- a container for collecting water
- strong rubbish bags
- up-to-date maps and access information
- relevant permits or licences.

Desert travellers should also ensure they have adequate water, food, fuel, and vehicle spare parts. The Department for Environment and Heritage *Desert Parks Pass Handbook* gives helpful advice on trip preparation and travel.

Commercial tours and scientific expeditions require a licence to take groups into wilderness protection areas. Group leaders must adhere to the conditions of the licence and the *Minimum Impact Code*.



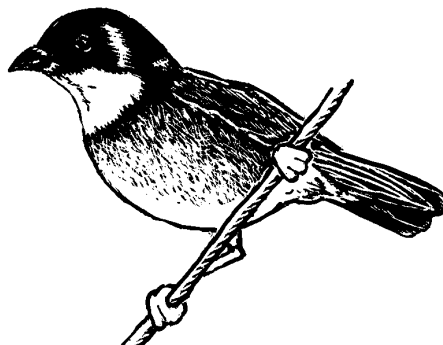
Timing and numbers

Be constantly aware that your presence will have an effect on the wilderness and on other visitors.

- Go with a small number of people. Large groups have more impact, affect the wilderness experience of others and are more socially unwieldy.
- Avoid peak times and the more popular areas. You will miss the multitudes and spread the impact, giving the environment a chance to recover.
- Plan travelling times to make use of recognised camp sites. This saves creating a new site.

Things to leave behind

- Pets should be cared for at home.
- Firearms, fishing gear, nets and any other trapping devices are prohibited without a permit.



Protecting the wilderness protection area

Flora, fauna and natural features

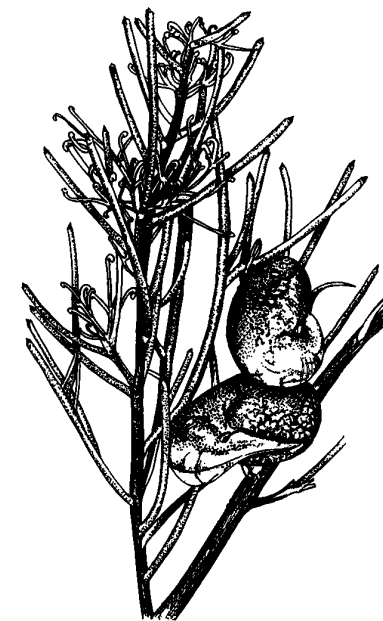
All plants, animals and natural features in wilderness protection areas are protected.

- Wildlife and habitats should not be disturbed. Observe and enjoy them quietly. Take particular care near breeding birds and other wildlife colonies.
- Don't pick flowers or take or disturb other specimens, including rocks and fossils. Take care not to spoil the environment and other people's enjoyment of it.

Cultural heritage

Sites and objects of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultural significance are protected by law.

- Do not remove objects or disturb or deface anything. Access to some sites may require permission from Aboriginal custodians.
- Recognised places are likely to have defined access. Stay on the tracks and trails. Do not create new ones.





No trace camping

Modern camping equipment helps you leave a camp site looking as if you had never been there.

- Look for low impact camp sites. Sandy or hard surfaces are better than vegetated areas. Reduce your impact by spending only one or two nights in one place. Aim to leave the area as if no-one had been there.
- Avoid making vehicle tracks around camp sites. Parking under trees compacts the soil and reduces the ability of water to penetrate.
- If it looks like rain, pitch your tent on ground that will drain naturally. Don't dig channels around your tent.
- Water supplies are vital for most animals and birds. Make your camp site away from water sources and allow animals undisturbed access.
- A significant part of the wilderness experience is the enjoyment of the sounds of the bush. Do yourself and other visitors a favour by keeping noise to a minimum.



Camp fires

Trees are precious. Trees and vegetation litter provide homes for many animals, birds and insects.

Collection of dead wood and the cutting of live timber for firewood has had a serious impact on woodland and individual trees in some popular outback areas.

- Areas which are ecologically fragile or depleted of timber may be designated *Fuel Stove Only Areas*. Check on camp fire restrictions before leaving and always carry the appropriate equipment and fuel. Fuel stoves are faster and cleaner than camp fires and do not cause visual scarring and debris.
- Where camp fires are permitted, only one small camp fire should be made. Wood should be obtained from designated sites or supply depots.
- Camp fire remains should be as unobtrusive as possible. Constructing camp fires in a hole or from piled stones creates a visual scar. A fire that has burnt to ashes is less obtrusive than one put out with water or dirt. Remove any non-combustible material from the ashes and take it with you.
- Be absolutely sure that the fire is out. A fire is not really out until the soil is cool.
- Do not light a fire if in doubt about the safety of lighting it. Always carry a fuel stove just in case.
- Observe all fire bans.

Rubbish - carry it in, carry it out

- Plan to reduce rubbish. Avoid packing too many bottles, cans and wrappings.
- Don't bury rubbish. It disturbs the soil and is likely to be dug up by animals and scattered by birds and wind.
- If fires are permitted, you may burn combustible material (eg. paper and cardboard, but not plastic), but carry out the rest.
- If you come across other people's rubbish, you'll do the wilderness a big favour by carrying that out too.

Washing and hygiene

- Washing should be done in container collected water.
- Wash 50 metres away from rivers, creeks, springs, lakes and other waters. Detergents, toothpaste and soap (even biodegradable types) pollute and harm fish and other water life.
- Only swim where permitted.
- Bury all faecal waste and paper. Choose a spot at least 100 metres from camp sites and watercourses. If fires are permitted, use extreme care, and burn and then bury paper.
- Carry out sanitary items and 'disposable' nappies. They don't burn well because of plastic liners.

Thank you for helping to protect our precious wilderness by following this code. Without a conscious effort, we run the risk of 'loving our wilderness protection areas to death.'



Tracks and trails

Vehicles are generally not allowed in wilderness protection areas. In South Australia, some vehicle access may exist where necessary for effective management. Where this access is made available to drivers or walkers, the privilege should not be abused.

- Stay on tracks and trails to confine impacts to a planned route.
- Don't create new tracks or trails by cutting corners or skirting around obstacles such as fallen trees or dead animals. Creating new tracks increases environmental impacts, creates visual scars and causes confusion. Where possible, remove the obstacle.
- Avoid vehicle travel on tracks when wet as this can extensively damage the track surface, and spread Phytophthora.
- Leave gates open or closed as found. Do not force or go around locked gates.

Where there is no walking trail:

- Avoid sensitive vegetation as it is easily destroyed by trampling.
- Follow an animal track.
- Spread out walking parties. A plant has more chance of survival if only one walker steps on it.

For further information:

The Act and Regulations and the Minimum Impact Code is provided in the publication *Wilderness Protection Areas & Zones: South Australian Code of Management*.

Please contact:

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