

Reflections... Millstream National Park...

I feel privileged to be able
to be in this 'country' ~
Nature's landscaper
has done such a spectacular job
that man could never
hope to emulate its magnificence
no matter how hard he tried
or how much he spent!
But... back to the beginning of this trek..
Leaving Karratha behind
I headed east,
away from the coast
to Millstream National Park..
90 kms of bitumen
The ranges and gullies,
the twisting and turning road
was absolutely spectacular
and I kept thinking...
*How lucky am I to be doing this
when nature is at its finest????*
Gorgeous 'gardens' lined the road
and yellow acacias, red Sturt Desert Pea,
and the pinky purple of 'Mulla Mulla'
contrasted with the buttons of spinifex
and the deep red of the ground,
rocks and ranges...
We climbed up and around
long, sweeping bends
after leaving the coastal plains
of Karratha.
The road followed the Pilbara Railway
which goes to Tom Price and
crosses another line

to ?????
As we passed close to the railway line
TWO, two km long trains
laden with iron ore
were heading toward the coast.
The strong, gusty wind
we've had for a few days
has blown itself out and is
replaced later by a gentle easterly....
and just as well
'cos I'm heading east!!!
The bitumen ended
and we faced 60 kms of unmade road!
The first few kms of the rough stuff
were jarring,
Would I continue???
I badly wanted to go
so out came the compressor
and I deflated all 8 tyres!
WHAT A DIFFERENCE! ~
'Matilda' especially loved it
and just as well
'cos I took "the scenic route"
forgetting,
as I concentrated on the road,
that I should take
the second turning into
the park, not the first!
"It's a lovely drive..."
I was told by another traveller
when I asked where the Visitor Centre was.
It was a fantastic drive,
around some tight bends
(so the sign said).

What the sign didn't say
was that the tight bends
were around corners
and that there were
very steep rises
to negotiate
(I had to *quickly* shift
to low 4WD on one of them!)
But not to worry
as she liked
having her wheels washed
as we forded the Fortesque River
though not the muddied waters
of Millstream Creek too!!!
Several tight bends later
we reached the Milyana Campground
where we found a not so tight site
under the afternoon shade of big eucalypts.
We propped and rested!
Waking after 'the sleep of the dead',
The first live kangaroo (Euro)
I've seen for such a long time,
stopped and looked at me
as I set out to explore
the Millstream Homestead
and Jirndawurrunha Pool.
I am heartened to see,
and chat to,
a group of aboriginal men
working with the Ranger...
One tells me that he'll go fishing
for some catfish this afternoon.
I am spellbound as I glimpse the pool
which is very special to the aborigines.



As I walk along the path
to the pool,
the size of the northern paperbarks (cajuput)
is astounding.
The 'old men' of the lush forest
stand 50 metres tall
and their trunks have a diameter
of a metre or more.
They have long, thin pendulous branches
moving gently with the breeze,
way up high.
The sound of water
rushing past is beguiling
and as I reach the pool
I feel a distinct soothing of my shoulder
for in the midst of this dry, harsh, rocky land
sits the serenity of
this cool, green oasis,
its waters crystal clear
and warm.
I hope to sit and meditate
but the seat has been
badly damaged by the deluge
not long ago
as has the bridge
that used to make the 'loop' walk
back to the homestead.
The Millstream Palms
are only found hereabouts
are numerous
and, thankfully, outnumber the
date palms
planted by early white settlers
which crowd out and



kill the native vegetation
of the under storey.
Going around the other end
of the original loop
to the pool
I am able to sit
on the concrete foundation
of the bridge
now washed away.
I watch small fish
glinting silver in the sunlight
that darts into the translucent water.
The fish swim,
noses into the strong current
and seem to be gathering
something from the rocks
or are they just hanging on
with their mouths?
My peaceful reverie
is broken by other travellers
and a ranger on a 4 wheeler
who, as I discover as I turn to
leave,
is there to check the tall, cylindrical
machine
that monitors water level and
quality.



Later in the day
I drive out to a lookout..
From along the cliff top
the broad expanse of the,
now muddy, river flowing



through the landscape
of more Millstream Palms
and towering cajuputs and eucalypts.
I drive on to Nhanggangunha (Deep Reach
Pool)
to check it out
and find what looks like the river
flowing muddily past
platforms for entering the water
and picnic tables...
I take my hot feet
down to the water
but am glad the rest of me
is staying dry
as the water is tepid
and alive with the detritus
of decaying plants...!
I marvel at the 'harmonics'
of Ulysses' deflated tyres
over the corrugations
as we head back to camp.
White, puffy clouds
appeared in the sky
the next day
and I wonder if we are to get
a change in the weather???
Another kanga,
this time with her joey,
hops through my site early
so I am blessed for today
especially when a kingfisher
alights on a nearby branch
and stays for a photo!
I think there I have seen star finches



and other little birds who love to sit briefly in the nearby dead trees morning and evening. I find more flowering plants, some a bit familiar now (but haven't seen the prickles before!) but most I haven't noticed/seen before. Today's varieties....



Taken through the window before I cleaned it!!!!!!!!!!



Not to mention today's lizards – all the same but different shaking their hot front paws as they ran across the path, viz, skitter, skitter, skitter.... shake, shake, shake the front paws skitter, skitter, skitter under the spinifex! Or, the grasshopper with his camouflage....



The day dawned bright and sunny but a low mist enveloped the tall trees as I set out on the Murlamunjah Trail ~ 6.8 kms there and back to Crossing Pool. The trail took me amongst the giant Cajeput trees their bases surrounded by reeds at first which thinned out to grass and finally, after leaving the tree-line spinifex and low growing yellow flowered acacias, surrounded by pebbled ground.

It was early and the kangas were still about... I laughed as they poked their heads above the spinifex curious to see who was making all the noise before bounding off around the rocky knoll! Spiderwebs shone with early morning dew, some wrapping whole branches others suspended cradle like from twig to twig. The next tree-line appeared



in the distance and the path began to wind around and over riverbeds, dry at the moment but showing evidence of huge amounts of running water which had wrapped some trees in debris, pushed others downstream and ground the rocks into coarse, stony sand. Millstream Palms reappeared in great numbers, their seeds on the ground hard orbs with a tiny insect hole to aid germination. In the midst of the numerous palms, eucalypts and acacias as well as ti-trees – the first I've seen for a while. The ti-tree wood is fashioned into boomerangs still. The path began to wind around small, rocky outcrops and the sound of running water became louder... A stream, split in half by another rocky outcrop ran swiftly under two metal 'bridges', the water clear and cool the bottom a muddy colour. Climbing out of the riverbed, huge root masses, ripped from the ground by now distant raging torrents,



washing the roots bare of dirt
and which now looked
dry and lifeless
as they hung in the air.
However, many still had life
in their trunks, branches and leaves.
The river here,
called 'Crossing Pool'



is broad and quiet edged by reeds
and I work out
that it is the water
I saw from the cliff top
the other day.

I chat with Helen,
the campground hostess,
who is raking the ground
clear of any debris
after cleaning the toilets.

The sun was climbing higher
all the time

so I turned to retrace my steps
before finding a cleanish, shady rock
by the tumbling waters
to have a rest and a drink.

BLISS !!!!!

I like retracing my steps
as I see things not visible before
but, alas, some others
have disappeared
with the warming sun.

Oh! I thought you might
be interested in
the 'nitty-gritties'



of campground life
her in the west!

For the princely sum
of \$5 per night (no typo!)
the toilets are the deluxe
long-drop variety,
cleaned daily by camp hosts,
with tiled floors (looooxery!).
The camp kitchen
is styled after the original
homestead kitchen
and has a gas cooktop
as well as a huge gas bbq.
The sites are large
and, mine anyway,
shaded from afternoon sun
by the tall trees.

A cool breeze blows each day
and disappears at night
so temperatures have been
about 25 each day going
down as low as 10 overnight.

'Matilda's' solar panels
reap enough sunlight
to charge my toothbrush each day
and the generator is only used
every second day
so I can download photos and write,
the computer's battery having died!



I was thrilled
while breakfasting this morning
as the star finches
came to eat theirs nearby too!
How special
as they have, so far,
eluded my attempts
to get photos
by being too quick
in their flitting hither
and thither!
They actually hung around
for a while
before disappearing
to their noon resting place.

