

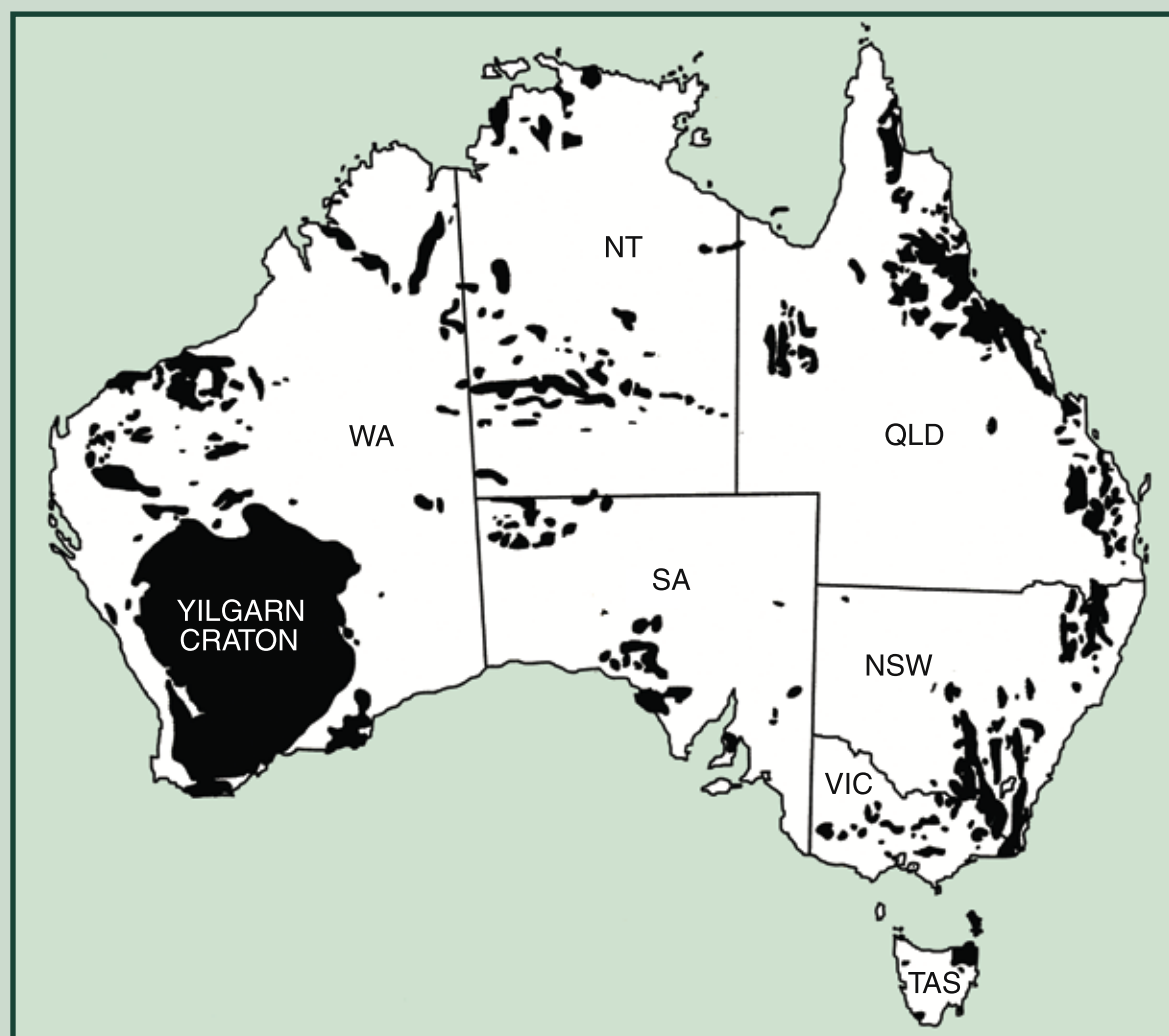
Island peaks

Victoria Rock is one of numerous rock outcrops that add interest and diversity to the gently rolling landscapes of south-western Australia. It is part of the Yilgarn Craton, the largest granitic area in Australia.

This geological formation, which consists mostly of granite and lesser amounts of gneiss and volcanic rock, is amongst the oldest in the world dating back about 2700 million years.

Although much of the granitic bedrock is covered with a veneer of sandy soils, there are many hundreds of granite outcrops that rise abruptly from the plains like islands from the sea.

Some of these feature spectacular wave, cave or boulder formations that contribute to the aesthetic appeal of the region's natural landscapes.



Distribution of granitoid rocks in Australia
(adapted from *Rock of Ages* by Ian Bayly)



Cave Hill was named for the large cave on its western side.

In 2008 there were officially 131 'Peaks', 694 'Rocks', 995 'Mounts' and approximately 1,600 'Hills' in Western Australia. Most of these are granite hills, usually no more than 70 metres high. Many were named during the state's early history of European settlement when they provided reference points that aided exploration and life-saving seasonal sources of water.

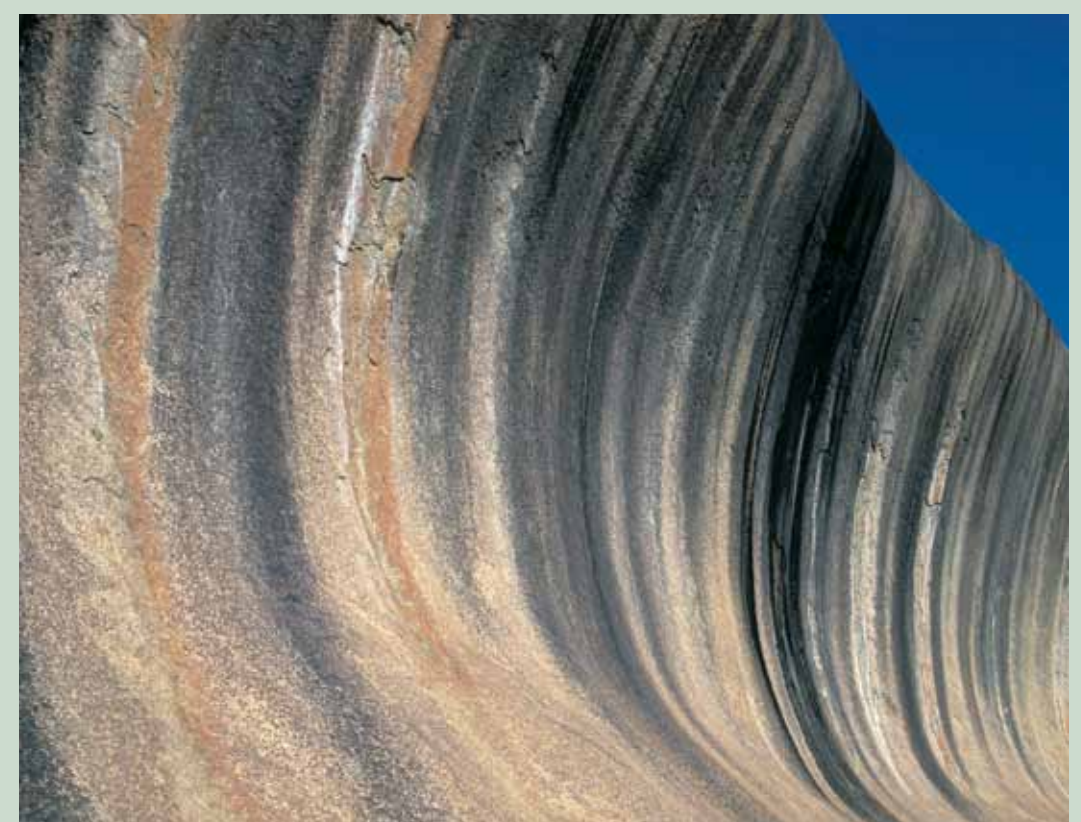
Their names celebrate notable people of that era, distinctive natural features or Aboriginal place names. Today these peaks continue to capture the imagination of visitors and provide vantage points from which to enjoy nature on a grand scale.



Peak Charles was named in 1849 by explorer John Septimus Roe after the then Governor Charles Fitzgerald. © Chris Garnett



Frenchman Peak near Esperance, named during French exploration of the south coast, is also known by its Aboriginal name Mandooboornrup.



Wave Rock near Hyden is a 'flared slope'. The vertical streaks are created by algal growth.

Courtesy WA Tourism

Water for Wildlife

In the arid Goldfields Region water and food resources become scarce over summer and so some birds leave the Region to take advantage of favourable conditions elsewhere. The emu, black honeyeater and masked woodswallow are all desert nomads that make regular seasonal migrations to the southwest in spring-summer and then return to the Goldfields in autumn-winter.

Whilst birds like honeyeaters and woodswallows can gain all the liquid they need from fluids in the nectar or insect prey they consume, the emu relies on rainfall that collects in puddles, clay pans and gnammas (rock pools). If a year is particularly dry many emus may die and it is only those individuals that live around permanent water sources, eating available seeds, which survive to breed and build up the population again.



Zebra finch



Black honeyeater

Other birds that drink water and therefore rely on the pools that form on rock outcrops are finches, pigeons and parrots, including cockatoos and galahs. These birds tend to be very regular in the timing of their drinking. Some drink only in the early morning and some only at dusk. During winter and spring enjoy the peaceful surrounds at Victoria Rock and watch for birdlife attracted to water in the rock pools.



Common bronzewing



Galah

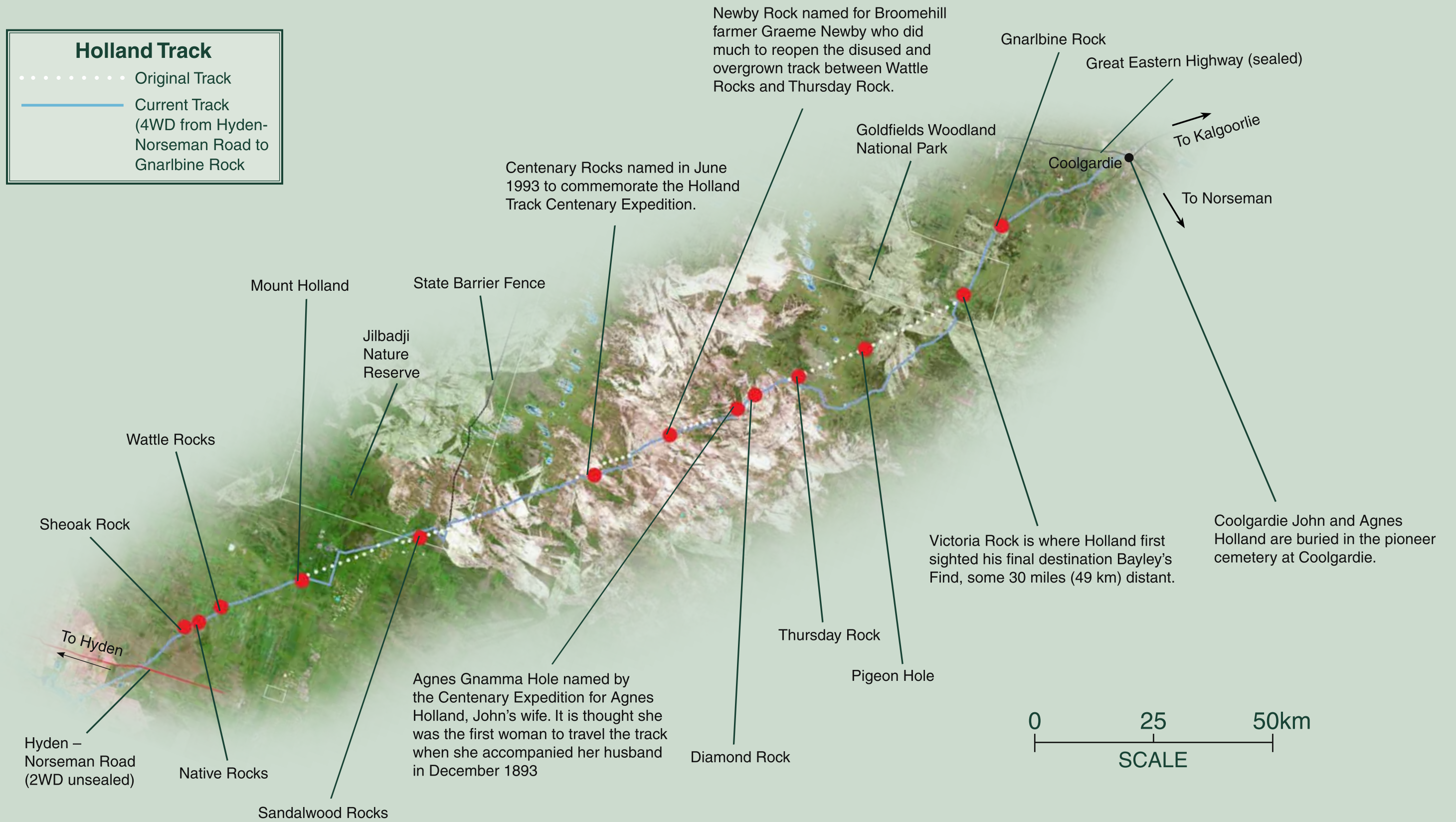


Masked woodswallow



Emu

Blazing the Holland Track



GOLD! On September 18th, 1892 Bayley and Ford discovered gold at Fly Flat near what was to become Coolgardie. Knowing that shiploads of prospectors from the Eastern colonies would soon be landing in Albany, bushman John Holland proposed to cut a direct track from Albany to Coolgardie. Several other men with the same idea set out that summer but either 'did a perish' or were forced to turn back due to lack of water. John wisely decided to bide his time and wait for rain and cooler weather.

They named landmarks as they went, including Mount Holland, Krakouer Rocks, Lake Carmody and Victoria Rock. On June 18th, they reached Fly Flat, having covered nearly 330 miles (538 km) in 2 months and 4 days, a truly remarkable achievement in those days. An estimated 18,000 people travelled this route over the next three years until the railway extension from Perth to Coolgardie put an end to regular goldfields traffic on the Holland Track. Today, the northern part of this historically significant track provides travellers with a glimpse into the Region's pioneering past.



John Holland (aged 72)



Holland's dray on a farm at Broomehill in 1963.



John Carmody 1976 (aged 24)



David Krakouer and family

On 14th, April 1893 John Holland, joined by John Carmody and brothers Rudolph and David Krakouer, left Broomehill with 5 ponies and a light dray that carried water and provisions. Using only a small compass they aimed for Gnarlbine Rock, the goldfields main water supply. Holland would go ahead each day and scout for water in soaks and gnammas (rain-filled rock pools associated with granite outcrops) and for horse feed, while the others cut the track.



Rudolph Krakouer and family