



## 100,000 hectares added to Willandra Lakes World Heritage

The NPWS has received a funding boost of \$1.42 million from both the State and Federal governments which will see the addition of more than 100,000 ha to Mungo NP - part of the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area in south-western NSW.

The latest funding has allowed National Parks to purchase land from 17 landholders inside the World Heritage Area and include this area within Mungo NP. The park now accounts for more than 90% of the World Heritage Area.

Mungo NP was added to the World Heritage list in 1981 in recognition of its Aboriginal heritage and the evidence of past climates preserved in its landscapes. The park covers most of an ancient dry lake bed.

During the ice ages, Lake Mungo was one of a chain of freshwater lakes strung along Willandra Creek, then the main channel of the Lachlan River flowing into the Murrumbidgee River. These dry lake beds preserve the longest continual record of Aboriginal life in Australia, dating from 40,000 years ago through to the present day. When the lake beds dried 15,000 years ago, Aboriginal people continued to live near soaks along the old river channel.

This important addition to the park will ensure the significant natural values of the area are protected, and the NPWS will be working closely with local landholders to ensure the area is managed effectively.

Accommodation is available in the park at the shearers' quarters; bookings can be made through the NPWS Lower Darling District Office on 03 5023 1278.

**Angela Burke**  
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## Upemba dying

Upemba National Park in Congo was gazetted over 60 years ago and is more than 1 million ha in the Katanga province. Initially it was an 'integral' national park: that is, it was considered so precious that tourism was not allowed in order to keep human disturbance to a minimum. Several scientific expeditions were launched up until 1960.

The park is truly one of the gems of Africa (yet is extremely little known), with the most important wetland area of Africa as well as the Okavongo, highlands, escarpments, savannas and forests that used to teem with wildlife. The park is famous for elephants, buffaloes, zebras and elands. Other residents include oribi, warthog, roan antelopes and duikers.

It was generally believed it suffered enormously from the wars of Congo, but in fact it remained non-visited and news did not filter out for many years. Nevertheless it turns out that a group of keen game rangers has preserved the park's integrity against all odds and with no support; the land is still wild even if the wildlife has been hit badly. With support for the game rangers the wildlife would build up again.

A group of keen conservationists is now launching an operation in the field to reconstruct the park's infrastructure. This is a real effort in the field to set up the guard posts and other infrastructure of the park to enable the wildlife to recover and the park to flourish again.

A Belgian entomologist Michel Hasson, who visited the area, has formed an association to save Upemba National Park. He reports: "The station is linked to the world through a phone powered by solar energy. There is electricity

from a small hydroelectric plant. The only vehicle for guarding 1 million ha of African wilderness is one single bicycle. The Lusinga headquarters shows clear signs of neglect due to the lack of support from politicians in the capital.

The situation is very serious indeed and the very survival of the park hangs in the balance. The poor farmers outside the park do not understand why the wildlife is protected and why they cannot farm the land. There were even rumours that some land owners outside the park wanted to ransack the Lusinga station to chase away the rangers and grab the land. The park staff however is highly committed but gets no support from the central government; and conservation bodies have not visited the park for many years.

Without the game warden and his dedicated guards, the Upemba national park would not exist at all. The Congo authorities are short-listing their priorities: they have decided that high-profile activities elsewhere will receive their attention. The Upemba is not short-listed for the little bit of help from the national government and conservation agencies. It faces imminent death from benign neglect and lack of love and attention."

Please help! Without your help the park will die. Any donation of money will make a marked difference. The right people are in place to ensure that all money will go to saving Congo wildlife. Send your donation to: Michel Hasson, Nouvelles Approches 15, Place du Roi Vainqueur (Bte 10), 1040 Bruxelles, Belgium.

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