

Mount Conner

This is a mesa, or isolated table-top mountain, about 100 km to the east of Uluru and Kata Tjuta with which it shares its origin. It is about 5 km long by 4 km wide, and stands about 244 m above the surrounding **mulga** and **spinifex** plains, it is roughly semi-circular in shape. As with **Uluru** and **Kata Tjuta**, its rocks are more resistant than the surrounding plains that have been lowered by erosion to reveal it. The lower 2/3 of the mesa are comprised of talus slopes, the top 90 m being sheer vertical cliffs. The only breaks in the rim of the mesa are on the southern side, which is straight, not being curved like the remainder of the outline, where some gorges have been eroded through.

The sediments that formed the rocks of Mt Conner were deposited in a shallow sea much earlier than those of Uluru and Kata Tjuta, and unlike them, the strata were not subsequently tilted by ground movements, remaining horizontal. The rocks are of 2 main types, hard conglomerate with outcropping quartzite forming the top part, while the lower rocks are of coarse sandstone that in some places is interbedded with shale. As the sandstones are much softer than the upper, more resistant rocks, they are more prone to erosion, resulting in the formation of depressions and caves that penetrate as much as 30 m into the side of the mountain. There are also places where the cliffs overhang, in some cases by up to 10-15 m. The rocks of these overhangs the undermined cliffs sometimes drop off, the accumulation of the debris of varying sizes comprising the talus around the base.

The top of the mesa has been described as a microcosm of the surrounding plains, of which it was once a part. It is vegetated with spinifex, mulga and small scrub, and, like the surrounding plains, responds to rain with a mass blooming of wild flowers. The summit, though appearing flat and horizontal, actually dips slightly to the south, which would be the reason the drainage has produced the gorges only on the south side, the surface dipping more markedly above the gorges.

Aboriginal stories

In the Dreamtime stories of the local Aborigines it is connected with the feared **Ninya, or Ice Men**, the creators of cold weather. The Ninya are believed to have camped at Artila during the Dreamtime, but now they live about 25 km away to the north beneath a dry lake. The Aborigines believe that when deep cracks form on the soles of their feet they are caused by ice left in the grass by the Ninya. There is evidence on the coarse pebbles of the mesa that at some point in the past, presumably in the **Pleistocene ice age**, the area did indeed undergo some degree of glaciation. Maybe the dreamtime stories in this area are memories of the glacial phase that has been passed on through many generations. History remembered in stories.

Mt Conner, especially the caves, is a refuge to some rock-dwelling marsupials and bats.

Sources & Further reading

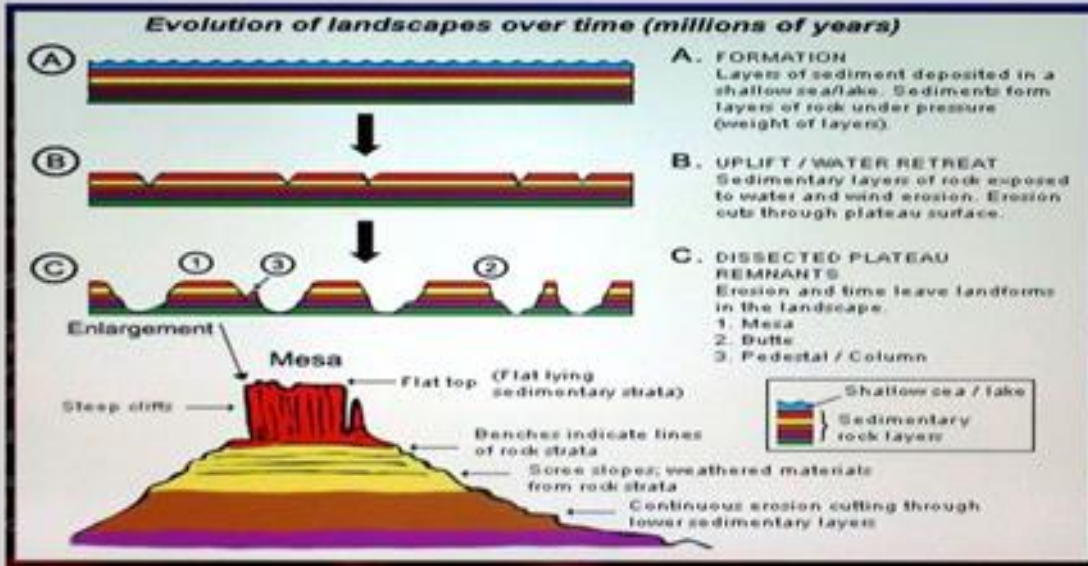
1. Helen Grasswill & Reg Morrison, **Australia, a Timeless Grandeur**, Lansdowne, 1981
2. Penny Van Oosterzee, **The Centre - The Natural history of Australia's Desert Regions**, Reed Australia, 1993
3. Twidale, C.R. & Campbell, E.M., 2005, *Australian Landforms: Understanding a Low, Flat, Arid, and Old Landscape*, Rosenberg Publishing Pty Ltd

http://austhrutime.com/mt_connor.htm

MESA FORMATION



Mesas are formed in flat-lying sedimentary strata. They have flat tops, steep eroded sides and usually lower slopes covered formed by weathered material. These slopes are termed "scree slopes". Mesas can occur in groups but more often they stand in the landscape in isolation. Mount Conner (also known as "Attila") is a well known Australian mesa near Curtin Springs, a stopover on the way to Uluru. Mesas are generally remnant parts of larger sedimentary plateaux. The diagrams and photographs will help in the explanation of their formation.

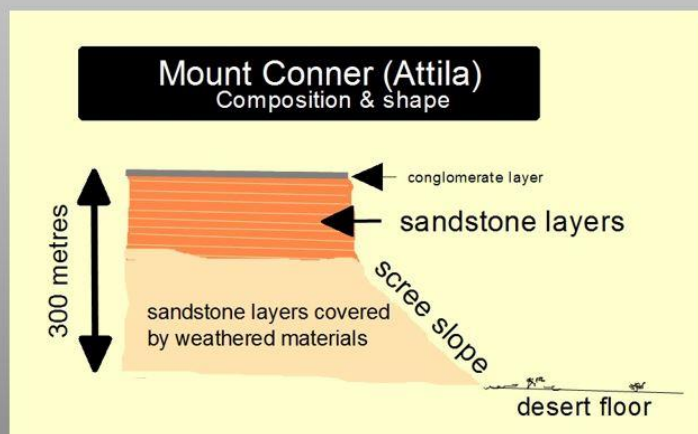


BACK TO MOUNT CONNER (ATTILA) FOR SOME FACTS

If you have studied the formation of Uluru (Part 1) of Australian Landforms) then you are aware of the very large inland lake (Lake Amadeus) which covered the area. This lake collected silts, sands, pebbles from the surrounding high mountains and deposited them in the lake. The pressure of accumulating layers hardened the deposits into sedimentary rock layers. Mount Conner (Attila) contains a mixture of these sedimentary layers. It has sandstones similar to Uluru. It has pebble conglomerates similar to those found in the Olgas. At the base area beneath the scree slope there are layers of coarse grey-brown sandstones. The steep sides are dominantly sandstones. The arid plain surrounding Mount Conner was formed by alluvial deposits (water transported material)



As in the Monument Valley and Karla Karla examples, water has played a major erosional influence on the formation and isolation of Mount Conner. What you see now is a consequence of formation but it is also a consequence of erosion and removal. Mount Conner is a left over remnant and it is still evolving and changing. It will eventually disappear in a few million years.



Information

Mount Conner a 700 million-year-old sand and rock tabletop mesa, lies in a straight line with Uluru and the domes of Kata Tjuta. It is part of the same large rock formation that forms all three of these features.

This striking table topped mesa was discovered by surveyor and explorer William Gosse during his unsuccessful attempt to cross from [Alice Springs](#) to [Perth](#) in 1873. He named the mount after Mr. M. L. Connor, a South Australian member of parliament. The Aboriginal names are Atula or Artilla and are associated with some of the most fearsome of the ancestral beings of aboriginal lore, the ninya or ice men. The Giles Mulga Park Road passes within 7 km of the Mount which is only a third of what the distance is from the Hwy. The view afforded of Mt Conner is much closer than that from the viewing area on the Lassiter Highway.



<http://www.nttravel.com.au/images/providers/accommodation/voyages/ayers-rock-resort/conner.jpg>