

Fire Recovery... a natural progression

# regrowth

A newsletter by Parks Victoria and the Department of Sustainability and Environment on public land fire recovery



October 2010

Over 287,000 hectares of Victoria's public land was burnt in the February 2009 bushfires, including almost 100,000 hectares of national and state parks and reserves managed by Parks Victoria and nearly 170,000 hectares of state forests and reserves managed by the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE). The most severely affected parks were Kinglake National Park, Wilsons Promontory National Park, Bunyip State Park, Cathedral Range State Park and Yarra Ranges National Park. The fires devastated the Ash Forests through the Central Highlands.

## Witness the wonder of regeneration

Flora is flourishing across the fire-affected areas, providing visitors with the perfect opportunity to witness the wonder of regeneration.

Blooms are abundant at **Wilson's Promontory National Park**, which boasts a carpet of Running Postman (*Kennedia prostrata*) and Common Correa (*Correa reflexa*).

Throughout the **Yarra Ranges National Park** there is an array of Wattle species in full bloom and Victoria's flora emblem, the Common Heath (*Epacris impressa*), is now flowering in shades of white, pink and red.



Milkmaid on show at Wilsons Promontory NP



Common Heath in bloom at Yarra Ranges NP

## Inside this issue:

- **Government response to Royal Commission recommendations**
  - **Connecting with communities**
  - **Honouring our history**
  - **Recycling for recovery**
  - **Recent flood damage**
- ... plus an update on fire-affected parks and reserves

## Steavenson Falls has re-opened

On 18 September 2010, Premier John Brumby announced the Stage One Redevelopment of Steavenson Falls and a further \$1.7 million to drive tourists back to the Marysville region.

Stage One marks the completion of the visitor car park, which is now accessible via Falls Road, a short walking track and a new viewing platform at the base of the Falls.

The Falls are now open to the public on weekends only.

Stage Two works are underway and include the installation of another viewing platform, visitor shelter and toilet block, reinstatement of walking tracks and the return of night time floodlighting. Works are expected to be completed and the reserve fully re-opened by November 2011.



Premier John Brumby announces the re-opening of Steavenson Falls

## Government response to Royal Commission recommendations

The State Government has announced a range of commitments to support recommendations made by the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission.

Following extensive community consultation, sixty recommendations are supported in full by the State Government, five are supported in part, one is supported in principle and one is not supported.

A full explanation of State Government's response to the Royal Commission's Final Report can be viewed on the premier's website at: <http://www.premier.vic.gov.au/component/content/article/11686.html>

## Connecting with communities

### Greenfleet and AAMI help bushfire recovery

On 27 August 2010, fifty eager volunteers from Greenfleet and Suncorp (AAMI, GIO, Apia) joined Parks Victoria staff in planting over 1,300 native seedlings to progress the completion of the Watsons Creek Biolink Project.

The Watsons Creek site creates a biological link between the unburnt Warrandyte–Kinglake Nature Conservation Reserve and the adjoining Kinglake National Park. This link will provide a corridor of continuous vegetation to lure the **Brush-Tailed Phascogale** and **Common Dunnart** back into Kinglake National Park and facilitate their recovery.

Greenfleet has sponsored the Watsons Creek Biolink Project, providing equipment and ample supplies of plants, grasses, shrubs and trees. Consequently, Greenfleet has been named as a finalist in the Banksia Awards under the Land and Biodiversity category.

### Wildlife is a winner

Birds, possums and other wildlife have received new homes with the installation of nesting boxes at Wombat State Forest in Bendigo to address the impacts of the 2009 fires on native wildlife habitat.

The Department of Sustainability and Environment and Parks Victoria, in partnership with the North Central Catchment Management Authority and Conservation Volunteers Australia, have installed over 150 nesting boxes to encourage birds and wildlife back to the area.





## Kinglake National Park

*Over 22,110 hectares (96 per cent) of the park was burnt in the Kilmore- Murrindindi fire.*

### Revel in the regeneration

Wildlife is recovering well in the park. Lyrebirds are out gathering food and wallabies are feeding on the fresh new shoots. Trees are showing a green flush of new growth along their trunks and there is vigorous seedling regeneration occurring on the ground. Other species are also regenerating including wattles, bush peas, cassinias, heath, tussock grass and orchids.

Stunning regrowth can be seen along the open walking tracks in the Wombelano Block, at Captains Creek Rd and along Mt Sugarloaf Ridge Track. Sugarloaf lookout provides views not seen previously before the fires.



Tom Chambers, Ranger at Kinglake, has collected photos every month from points within different vegetation types throughout the park. These photos depict the response of the vegetation since the February 2009 fires and can be viewed on the Parks Victoria website under Kinglake [www.parkweb.vic.gov.au](http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au)

### Update on the Master Plan for Kinglake National Park

Following extensive on-site analysis and community consultation, a draft Master Plan for Kinglake National Park was released for public comment in June 2010. The plan will be finalised in October 2010 using all of the information and comments provided by residents and the general public. If you would like to be kept informed of the progress of the Master Plan, please contact Andrew Shannon at Parks Victoria at [ashannon@parks.vic.gov.au](mailto:ashannon@parks.vic.gov.au) or by calling 13 1963.

## Outline of Recovery Works

The recent floods had very little impact on the rebuilding works. This is accredited to the extensive stabilisation works undertaken to minimise damage to roads and tracks in the event of heavy rain. Consequently, the rebuild of The Gums Camping Area and Island Creek Picnic Area will be completed in October 2010 as scheduled.

### Frank Thomson Reserve

The popular Frank Thomson Reserve re-opened in March 2010 offering views across the fire-affected area to the Melbourne city skyline with a re-established car park and a new gas barbecue installed.

### The Gums Camping Area

Rebuilding works at The Gums will be completed at the end of October 2010. The rebuild has included extra picnic tables, installation of eleven wood barbecues and one gas barbecue, more campsites, new car park with thirty spaces, generous parking bays for long vehicles and vehicles with trailers and a new toilet.



### The Cicada Circuit Walking Track

This new track provides a short walking loop starting at The Gums Camping Area and returning to the camp site after travelling through surrounding bush lands.



### Island Creek Picnic Area

Works will be completed at the end of October 2010. Visitors will have a new picnic area with tables, car park, toilet and walking tracks to explore the area.



*New toilet at Island Creek picnic area*



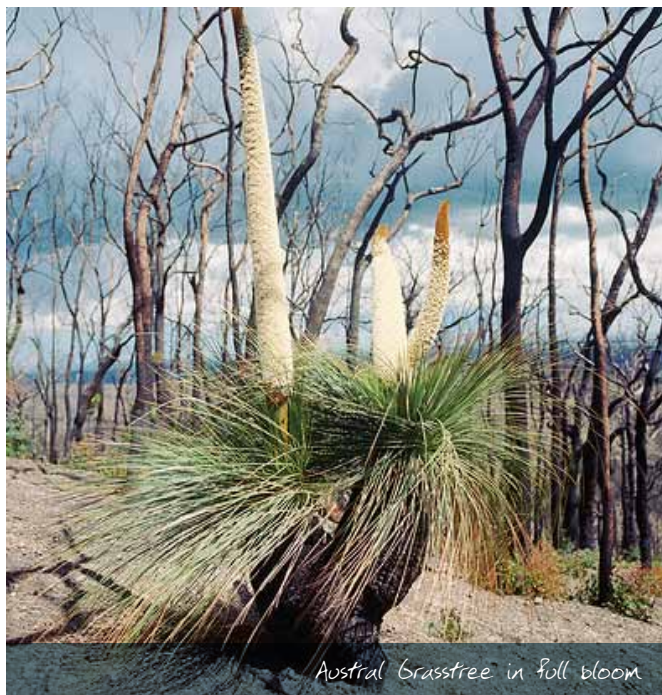
*Island Creek picnic area*

**The following tracks are also open:**

**Everard Block:** Mt Everard Track, Brock Spur Track, Watsons Creek Track, Old Kinglake Road and Cookson Hill Track

**Wombelano Block:** Andrews Hill Track, Stringybark Track, Mountain Creek Track, Dusty Miller Track, Candlebark Track, Burgan Track, Easement Track, Powerline Track, Scentbark Track and Perimeter Track

Wombelano Falls walking track is open to view the falls.



*Austral Grass tree in full bloom*

**Masons Falls Picnic Area**

Kinglake's premier visitor site is being totally rebuilt to a new design developed from the Master Plan, which is due to be finalised in October 2010. The new facilities are being rebuilt to an improved standard and better layout to take the park into its second century.

Detailed plans are currently being prepared to improve accessibility to the site with additional visitor facilities and is expected to re-open in late 2011.



*Masons Falls Sep 2009*



*Masons Falls August 2010*

**Jehosaphat Gully Picnic Area**

Like Masons Falls, Jehosaphat Gully remains closed for restoration works and improvements to accessibility of the picnic area and the walking loop. The Master Plan will guide the detailed redevelopment of this site and its reconstruction. It is anticipated the area will re-open in late 2011.

**Cultural heritage works**

Archaeologists have completed a post-fire assessment for the Steels Creek mining area in Kinglake National Park. The findings have been submitted to Heritage Victoria for inclusion on the Victorian Heritage Register.

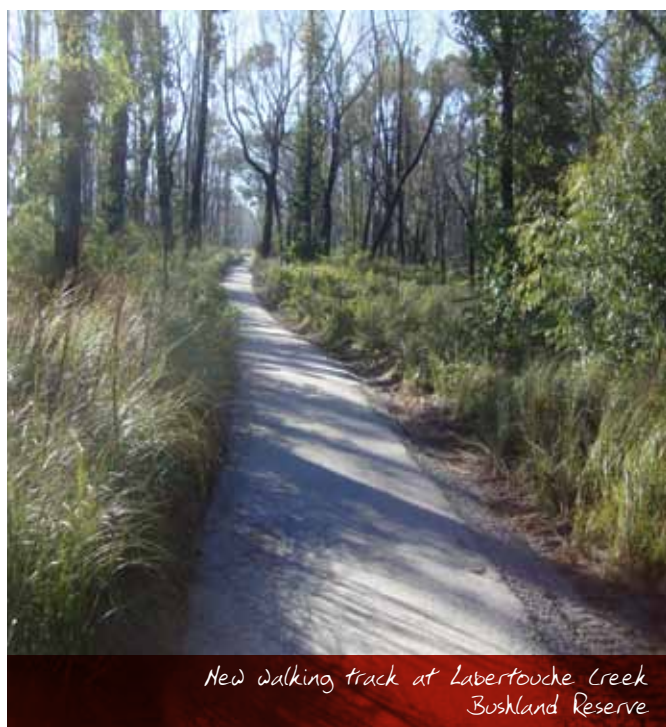
In addition, a Cultural Heritage Management Plan has been developed for Masons Falls Picnic Ground. The plan involves a detailed survey of the proposed building site to protect any archaeological material that might be affected by the building works. The works are being carried out in consultation with the Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council.

## Bunyip State Park

*The fire started before Black Saturday on 4 February 2009. A total of 7,640 hectares (46 per cent) of the park was burnt over the next four weeks before the fire was contained.*

Parks Victoria staff have worked closely with Baw Baw Shire Council and the Community Recovery Council to successfully obtain funding from The Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority (VBRRA) for the upgrade of a number of walking tracks in the Labertouche Creek Bushland Reserve. Two kilometres of track within the reserve were severely affected by the Black Saturday fire and local residents and the Friends of Labertouche have been actively engaged in the management and maintenance of the walking track and reserve. It is a popular recreational area for the Labertouche community and provides vital habitat for the rare Warragul Burrowing Crayfish (*Engaeus sternalis*), listed as a threatened taxon and endemic to Victoria.

New signs have been installed along the walking track to educate and inform visitors to the region about the reserve.



*New walking track at Labertouche Creek Bushland Reserve*

### Cultural heritage works

Representatives from the Wurundjeri, Gunai Kurnai, Bunurong and Boonwurrung Traditional Owner groups have worked in consultation with archaeologists to develop a Cultural Heritage Management Plan for asset replacement works at Lawson Falls Picnic Ground in Bunyip State Park.

The plan sets out recommendations for an induction program for contractors, as well as recommendations on how to carry out salvage works while collecting surface material associated with the registered Aboriginal sites.

## Cathedral Range State Park

*Over 3,200 (92 per cent) hectares of the park was burnt in the Kilmore-Murrindindi fire.*

### Flood damage in the park

The heavy flow of flood waters on 4 and 5 September 2010 caused damage and erosion along Little River Road including Little River Bridge, Little River walking track and the Friends Nature Trail. Consequently, Tweed Spur Road and Little River Walking Track remain closed for assessment and repair works to the bridge.



*Flood damage at Cathedral Range SP*

Fortunately, other sites in the park were not affected. Little Cathedral and Mount Cathedral tracks have re-opened due to the efforts of Central Highlands District staff and the Boroondara Bushwalking Club.



*New stone steps at Sugarloaf Saddle lead to The Boulders climbing site*

Tree risk works have also been completed at Sugarloaf Saddle Visitor Area and work is progressing well to rebuild an undercover area, barbeques and picnic tables. New stone steps have been completed at the site, allowing access to The Boulders climbing site in the park. The new stone steps have been made using local stone and blend in well with the environment.

### Cultural heritage works

A Cultural Heritage Management Plan has been completed for asset replacement works at Sugarloaf Saddle Visitor Area. A representative from Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, the Registered Aboriginal Party over the area, has evaluated the plan and provided an induction for contractors on the cultural values of the site.

## Sprucing up the forest for spring

A range of work on tourist facilities and other forest infrastructure has been moving along through the winter months in preparation for increased visitor numbers in spring.

The newly built and fully operational workshop at **Lake Mountain Alpine Resort** allows for full vehicle and equipment repairs and maintenance plus office and storage space. The workshop offers a fully self-contained flat for the resort's ski patrol and will be used by snow makers in future years.

Trail bike riders, tourists and locals in the Broadford area will be pleased with the recently completed visitor facilities at **Mount Disappointment**. The new visitor area means trail bike riders can safely park and unload their bikes while not disturbing neighbouring residents. New facilities include a toilet, shelter, an information board with maps showing reduced noise areas and plenty of parking for cars and trailers. The area was developed by the Department of Sustainability and Environment in consultation with the Mount Disappointment Community Reference Group.

Stage One of the bushfire recovery project at **Murrindindi Scenic Reserve** is almost complete. Recent developments have included the construction of a permanent toilet block, several pit toilets, a suspension bridge, picnic tables and campsites. The Blackwood and Cassinia camping areas will be available for camping when the reserve re-opens for Melbourne Cup weekend.

Designs for two major steel bridges along the **Grand Ridge Rail Trail**, near Darlimurla, have been revealed. The 66-metre-long bridges will provide better access for bicycles and the mobility impaired because they will be built level with the existing path at two points along the thirteen kilometre trail, which runs from Mirboo North to Boolarra. Tenders for bridge construction have been advertised and work is likely to commence at the end of this year.



*New visitor facilities at Mount Disappointment*

## Surprises of the vegetation variety

Once thought to be found only in New Zealand, the **Southern Pedinophyllum** (*Pedinophyllum monoicum*) was unexpectedly discovered living in Victoria's Yarra Ranges National Park in 1997, and now this rare species of **Liverwort** has survived the 2009 fires.

The Department of Sustainability and Environment is monitoring 120 rainforest sites in the areas affected by the 2009 fires by comparing their condition before and after the fires. This particular Liverwort escaped the fires because it is a species that occurs in the most humid, coldest interior of rainforest patches where, in this case, fire did not penetrate.

Another fire-sensitive species being closely monitored is the **Black Cypress-pine** (*Callitris endlicheri*) and its woodland communities in the Flagstaff Range near Beechworth. The pine dies when exposed to high-intensity fire, so a monitoring project is being undertaken by the Department of Sustainability and Environment, Arthur Rylah Institute and Charles Sturt University. The project will determine the impact of animals browsing on seedlings and any threats to the species from fire and on-ground recovery works.



*A rare type of Liverwort is found after the fires  
Photo: Bill Malcolm*

## Catchment Management Authorities play their part

Since the 2009 bushfires, farmers and community groups living in areas damaged by the fires have shifted their focus from urgent repair to the prevention of future environmental problems.

Their efforts have been supported by an allocation of \$907,000 funded by the Commonwealth Government's Caring for Our Country program.

The North East Catchment Management Authority has assisted more than one hundred landholders and Landcare groups to obtain funding to build community skills, protect biodiversity and encourage sustainable farm practices on both private and public land.



*Volunteers working on fire recovery in the Mudgegong area*

## Wilsons Promontory National Park

*Over half of Victoria's beloved Wilsons Promontory National Park was burnt in a fire started by lightning in remote country north of Sealers Cove the day after Black Saturday.*

### Revel in the regeneration

Flora is flourishing in the fire-affected areas of Wilsons Promontory National Park with a plethora of flowers in bloom. Many species like the Long Purple-flag, Snowy Daisy-bush and many of the pea species have flowered.

Orchids are also at their peak with the Eastern Spider Orchid (*Caladenia orientalis*), Common Bird-orchid (*Chiloglottis valida*) and Great Sun Orchid (*Thelymitra aristata*) in their full glory.



*Renning Postman at Wilsons Promontory NP*



*Eastern Spider Orchid at Wilsons Promontory NP*

Recovery works continue at Wilsons Promontory National Park, eighteen months after a wildfire burnt approximately fifty per cent of the park.

The majority of visitor facilities have been repaired and replaced. At Tongue Point approximately 450 metres of low boardwalk is now under construction through heath land to minimise the impact of pedestrian traffic and enhance revegetation of this sensitive area. The boardwalk is planned for completion in November 2010.

### Cultural and Indigenous heritage works

Parks Victoria worked closely with Indigenous community members and archaeologists to develop an extensive program of Indigenous and cultural heritage assessment field work resulting in the identification and recording of 37 new Aboriginal sites and eighteen new European settlement sites in the park.

Post-fire cultural assessments at Picnic Point and Johnny Souey Cove camp site were aided by the removal of vegetation by the 2009 fire to accurately identify the extent of previously known Indigenous sites. To enhance the protection of these sites, Parks Victoria staff members have worked with archaeologists and Traditional Owners to identify an appropriate alternative walking track alignment between Whiskey and Picnic Bays and an alternative camp site location near Johnny Souey Cove.

The new track alignment at Picnic Point will provide a magnificent view of Whiskey and Picnic Bays, extending out to the Glennie Island Group, from a new viewing platform.



*View from Picnic Point in Wilsons Promontory NP*

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If you would like to subscribe to this newsletter contact Olga Ghiri on 13 1963 or email [oghiri@parks.vic.gov.au](mailto:oghiri@parks.vic.gov.au)

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