

Cape Nelson State Park

Sea Cliff Nature Walk



Visitor Guide

Visit and explore the Capes spectacular coastal cliffs. Observe diverse bird life and unique plants while strolling on picturesque walks. The Great South West Walk (GSWW) and the nearby Cape Nelson Lightstation are spectacular features of this park's bountiful attractions that await your discovery.

'We are happy and proud to share this special place with you and as that you take the time to look, listen and feel the Country.'

Gunditjmara, the local Aboriginal Traditional Owners, welcome you.



Discover a rich natural history

A truly fascinating place steeped in a rich human history that spans thousands of years. The park is archaeologically, ecologically and geologically rich and diverse.

Facilities and accommodation

Two scenic bushwalks (see overleaf). A visitor area, fireplaces, tables, toilets and picnic area, self-guided walk and lighthouse are available. No camping except for GSWW registered hikers. Enquire at Portland's Maritime Discovery Centre for camping and other local information.



Picnics

Located on the Norman Wade Scenic Drive, the Cape Nelson Picnic Area is a tranquil setting among Soap Mallee close to several walks. Self contained picnics can make the most of a host of other areas on the Cape.



Norman Wade Scenic Drive and Cycle

The drive/cycle route is an alternative route that takes in several sea-cliff lookouts.

A number of sealed and gravel vehicle tracks are open and available to mountain bikes (cycles) and vehicles to share. Riders and drivers should all be alert and watchful for each other.



Cape Nelson Lightstation

Visitors are welcome at this heritage listed Lightstation. Open daily with free access to the grounds. Lighthouse tours are available by arrangement. Enquire about staying in the luxuriously restored Keeper's cottage or just relax in the café. Book ahead on (03) 5523 2188.



Exploring by foot

1. **Sea Cliff Nature Walk (3km)**
(see over page for walk notes)
2. **Lighthouse loop (6km)**
3. **Great South West Walk**



2. Lighthouse Loop Walk

Twice the distance of Sea Cliff Nature Walk this is still a relatively easy walk with a little more preparation. Water, shoes, hat and sunscreen are essential. The full loop walk will take you through coastal heathland, Soap Mallee and several coastal outlook platforms.



3. Great South West Walk

Experience some of Australia's most beautiful scenery and wildlife on this great 250km loop walk. It also passes Point Danger where Victoria's only land-locked Gannets breeding colony is located.



'Step-on' and 'step-off'

Cape Nelson Loop Section of this great walk has locations that intersect the roads and tracks around Cape Nelson. A separate brochure covering the entire 250km walk is available.

www.greatsouthwestwalk.com

Visit the website to find out more or enquire at Portland's Visitor Information Centre in the Maritime Discover Centre.

Be fire ready and stay safe

Many parks and forests are located in high fire risk areas. On days of forecast Code Red Fire Danger this park may be closed for public safety. If you are already in the park you should leave the night before or early in the morning for your own safety.

Closure signs will be erected and rangers will patrol when possible, however you may not receive a personal warning that the park is closed so check the latest conditions by calling 13 1963 or visit www.parks.vic.gov.au

For up to date information on fires in Victoria or general fire safety advice call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667.





Sea Cliff Nature Walk

Easy: 1.5 – 2hrs, 3km loop

A good introduction to the nature of Cape Nelson. Walkers should watch carefully for small spring flowering native orchids.

- Sturdy footwear is advisable
- Please stay on the track
- Sections of the track are stony and often uneven
- Keep away from cliff edges as some may be unstable



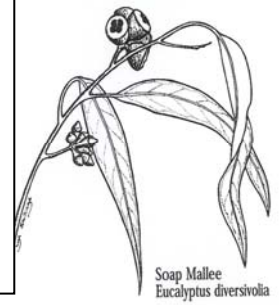
Swamp Wallaby



Southern Brown Bandicoot

Superb Fairy-Wren

Rufous Bristlebird



Soap Mallee
Eucalyptus diversivola



Echidna

1. Scratching about looking for food

Echidnas live on the Cape and are often active in spring and summer as they search for food. Along the track you will notice diggings and scratching in the soil. They dig and scratch with powerful claws and their holes often have 'finger-like' pointy-holes, a tell-tale sign that their snout has poked about looking for succulent ant-larvae.

Echidnas and platypus are monotremes - both unique to Australia/New Guinea. They have bird, reptile and mammal features; single opening rear end for all functions; they lay bird/reptile type eggs, are covered in fur and feed their young on milk. And they have beaks!

The spikes on the echidna are actually a type of hair (fur). They have two types of hair on their body; short for warmth and long 'spine-like' hair for tough protection.

2. Australia's floral emblem

Look about you, can you see the gum-leaf-like leaves? They are examples of Australia's floral emblem, the Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*). Common to Australia and Africa, acacia or wattle seed is amazing as it can lie dormant in the soil for many years, waiting to germinate under the right conditions.

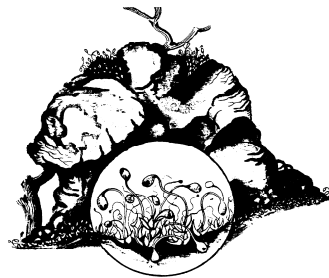
Fire greatly assists by providing the heat needed to break the hard outer layer of the seed. Ants harvest vast quantities of seed for food, carting it back into their underground chambers and Bronzewing pigeons enjoy them also.

3. Hiding under skirts

Of special interest in this area is the presence of grass trees (*Xanthorrhoea australis*) These amazing slow-growing plants are not actually grass. They can live for more than 100 years and send up a single large flower-spike, usually following fire, disturbance or drought. It can reach up to three metres. Small mammals such as the endangered Southern Brown Bandicoot will use the unburnt skirts (dead fronds) for protection from predators and weather.

4. An old survivor - Moonah

The old, gnarled tree behind the post at this stop is a Moonah (*Melaleuca lanceolata*). Due to this sheltered position it is much taller than the wind-blasted specimens that you will see later along the exposed ocean cliff tops. Moonah shows a remarkable ability to adapt to Cape Nelson's variety of conditions. Moonah stands were once widespread along the coasts of South West Victoria. Their wood was highly prized for lime burning kilns and stands of old trees remain as natural treasures and are far fewer in number.



5. A mini-(or micro) forest

Look closely for patches of emerald-green moss. Moss is a miniature plant that grows in clumps or mini-forests. They can change colour and texture rapidly from a gold-colour to a soft lush-green, depending on the availability of water. They are adapted to store water in their mat of

spongy leaves/stems. They often become the seed beds for germinating seeds and are one of the plants that assist an area's transition from rock to soil.

6. Adapting to survive - droopy but healthy

You may not have noticed a new plant appearing along this track. The Drooping Velvet Bush (*Lasiopetalum schulzenii*) is extremely rare and Cape Nelson is one of the few areas where it still occurs locally.

Although it may appear to be drooping from lack of water this is in fact a trick. This plant is able to droop its leaves in order to prevent excessive water-loss through evaporation. A survival mechanism for living in this area.

7. Powerful unforgiving coastal winds

On the seaward side of the track is a small wedge of private open farmland. The bare and rocky areas on the rise are called dune limestone. This is the surrounding soils under-laying rock. It has been exposed as a result of the plant cover being removed and the wind sweeping the sand cover away. Also take note of the old windrows as you follow the trail. These are all that remains after land clearing in 1968.

8. Less soil, smaller plants

Spreading Flax Lilies (*Dianella revoluta*) and other native grasses cover this open rocky area. Their springtime displays of delicate blue flowers mature to form blue/purple berries; a favourite food for birds and animals living here.

9. Stunted runts – 'Bonsai' on the coast

There would be few places that humans can stand and be taller than gum trees (eucalypt species), but this is one of them! This entire area is subject to the pounding of strong salt-laden winds which cut back and suppress growth. The canopy itself is still thick – protecting under-laying plants and animals. Some plants appear to be bonsai (miniature) as they are unable to grow tall due to pruning by the strong harsh salty-winds.

10. Looking towards Bridgewater Bay and Cape Bridgewater

You are looking out at the enormous Southern Ocean - stretching south to the shores of Antarctica almost 3000km away. The ocean is home to some well known locals; tuna fish, whales, dolphins, sea eagles and the Australasian Gannet. On most days you can see Gannets skimming above the ocean waters and then diving suddenly to plunge in search of fish. They roost and breed in great numbers at nearby Lawrence Rocks.

11. What's under your feet?

In the headland further along two distinct layers of rock can be seen. Also noticeable at Cape Nelson Lightstation, the cliff-base is dark coloured basalt (bluestone), a result of lava flow from an ancient volcanic eruption. On top is the lighter coloured limestone, deposited more recently.

12. A haven for small birds

Stop, look and listen quietly. Scrub wrens, Rufous bristlebirds, wrens, finches and King quail are just some of the birds you may see or hear in this ideal habitat.



Scrub Wren © MT

13. Soap Mallee

This area is dominated by a canopy of thick Soap Mallee (*Eucalyptus diversifolia*) which is restricted to Cape Nelson in Victoria (it is more common in South Australia). Like other mallee eucalypts, Soap Mallee has no single trunk but a large woody rootstock from which several stems grow. After a fire, new growth sprouts from the rootstock protected beneath the soil.

14. When the soil changes, the plants often do too

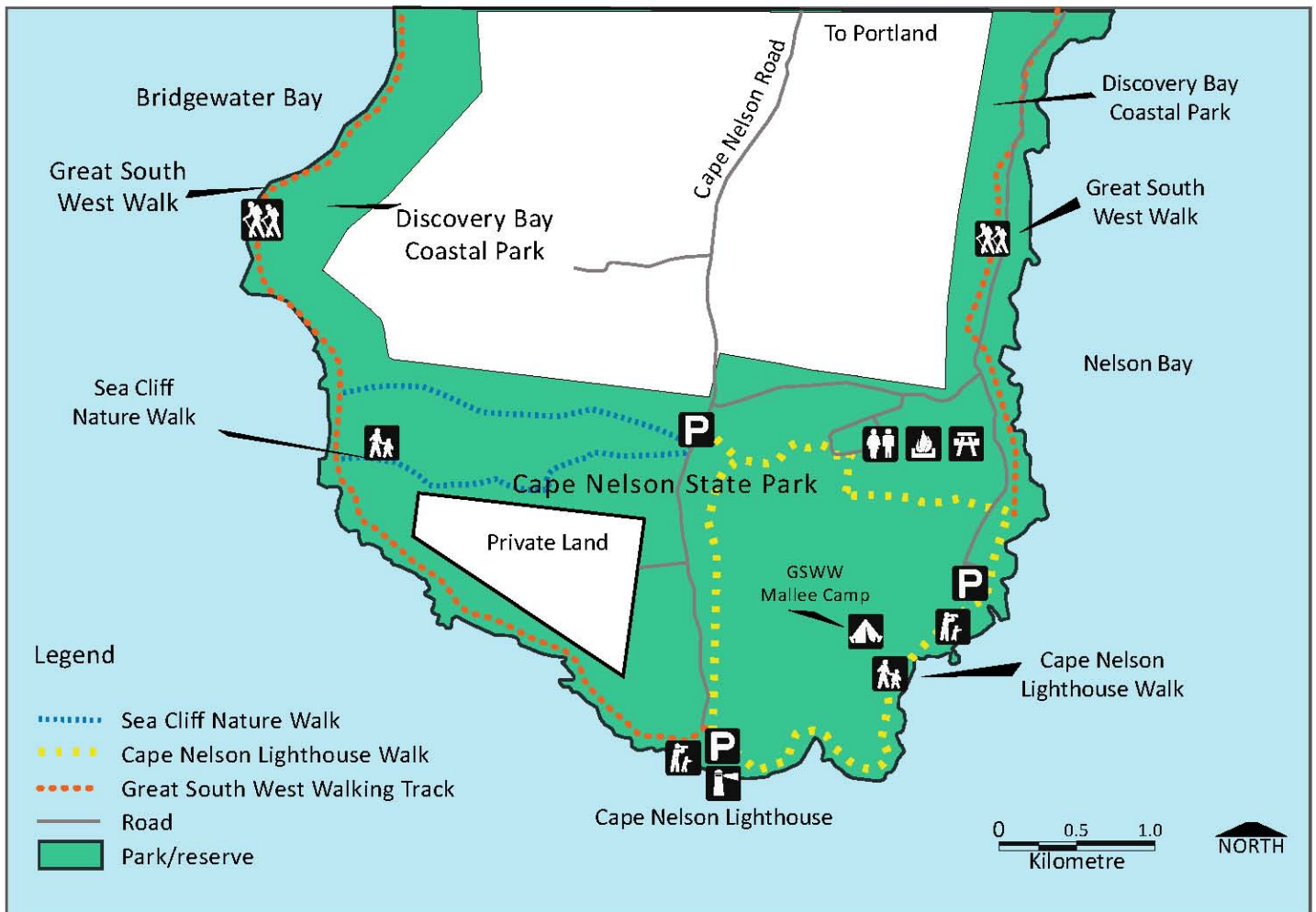
You will see the plants have changed to mostly tea-tree species providing home and shelter for many small birds and masses of insects (which in turn are food for birds and animals). Heath tea-tree (*Leptospermum myrsinoides*) and Prickly tea-tree (*Leptospermum continentale*) both produce masses of white spring and summer wildflowers.

Covered in yellow and orange spring wildflowers, the Bush Pea (*Pultenaea mollis*) is also found here. It is often called 'egg and bacon' due to its flower colours.

There are a host of other walking tracks to enjoy in the parks and reserves surrounding Portland. Take a walk with a friend. It's great for your mind, body and soul.



Beautiful Firetail Finch



For further information
Parks Victoria
Information Centre
Call **13 1963**
or visit the
Parks Victoria website
www.parks.vic.gov.au

Cape Nelson Lightstation
Tours, café and
accommodation
Tel: (03) 5523 2188

Nelson
Visitor Information Centre
Tel: (08) 8738 4051

Mt Gambier
Visitor Information Centre
Jubilee Hwy East
Toll free: 1800 087 187

Port Fairy
Visitor Information Centre
22 Bank Street
Tel: (03) 5568 2682

Portland
Maritime Discovery Centre
Lee Breakwater Road
Tel: (03) 5523 2671

**Caring for the
environment**
Please take all rubbish
home with you for disposal
or recycling.

FIRE

No fires/flames, (including
gas or fuel stoves/lanterns
in tents) may be lit on
days of **Total Fire Ban**

Cape Nelson State Park is
in the **South West Total
Fire Ban Districts**

**It is your responsibility
to know if it is a day of
Total Fire Ban**

If in doubt call the
**Victorian Bushfire
Information Line:
1800 240 667**

Park closures

Be prepared to leave early
as **extreme weather may
cause the closure of some
park areas** for public safety

Mobile Phones

You may not be in network
range in some areas of
the park. To be connected
to Police, Ambulance or
CFA, key in **112** then
press the YES key

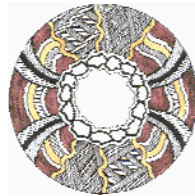
Healthy Parks Healthy People

Visiting a park can improve
your health, mind, body and
soul. So, with over four million
hectares of parkland available
to Victorians, why not escape
to a park today!



A proud and rich cultural lifestyle

The cultural landscape that surrounds you is part of the Gunditjmarra Traditional Owners Country.



*'Ngatanwarr wartee pa kakay
teen Gunditjmarra mirring'*

Welcome brothers and sisters
to Gunditjmarra Country.

The Creation Ancestors gave us a kinship system linking people to all things and the cultural responsibility to look after them all. We have always understood the biodiversity of Country and our traditional ancestral knowledge is a vital part of managing this rich environment.

Naturally wild – naturally the Cape

There are three main vegetation types within the Park; Soap Mallee, Heath and Wet Heath. The Soap Mallee (*Eucalyptus diversifolia*) community is the only Victorian location of this species.

Apart from the rare Soap Mallee, Cape Nelson contains several other rare or vulnerable plant species, including Drooping Velvet Bush, Coast Ground-berry, Mountain daisy, and Bog sedge.

The fast moving Rufous Bristlebird also thrives in the coastal habitat of the park which is vital to its survival. Often seen darting across walking tracks and roads it is often mistaken for the introduced European Blackbird.

Although not easily seen, Black wallabies, bandicoots and beautiful Firetail finches also live in this park.



Healthy Parks - Healthy Partners

We hope that you have enjoyed your walk. There are other walking tracks on Cape Nelson and many others in Portland's surrounding parks. The outdoors is a great place to recharge your well being. Take a walk to enjoy a healthy mental break, get some physical exercise and re-connect with nature.

Portland Maritime Discovery Centre

For information on these and other attractions, accommodation and suggestions be sure to call into the local Accredited Visitor Information Centre near you.

Exploring the region

Separate parknotes are available for these areas. Visit www.parkweb.vic.gov.au

Cobboboonee Forest Park offers a diverse range of recreation activities. Further information can be obtained from the DSE website at www.dse.vic.gov.au

Cobboboonee National Park is a new park of lowland forests, heathlands and wetlands offering a wide range of activities including walking, touring, camping and horseriding.

Discovery Bay Coastal Park

Showcases Victoria's wild coastal dunes. Visitors here will discover the stunning, vast sweeping ocean beaches of Discovery Bay.

Lower Glenelg National Park

One of Victoria's finest natural settings. The park includes the beautiful Glenelg River and estuary, Princess Margaret Rose Cave, stunning heathland, open woodland and riverside camping. Bookings required.

Mt Eccles National Park (Budj Bim)

A truly fascinating place, Mt Eccles (Budj Bim) is one of several places in this rich cultural landscape formed by powerful creation forces.

A host of walking tracks, peaceful campground and Crater Lake with spectacular lava formations make this a favourite place for visitors to return.

Mt Richmond National Park

Home to spectacular spring wildflowers and abundant with wildlife in an unspoilt bushland, this is the perfect place to have a picnic, take a walk and enjoy magnificent views.

Budj Bim National Heritage Landscape (NHL)

One of the first three landscapes in Victoria to be listed on the National Heritage List (NHL) in July 2004, the Budj Bim NHL contains two separate areas; Mt Eccles - Lake Condah Area (see map) and Tyrendarra Area (southwest of Budj Bim).

Budj Bim (Mt Eccles) is the source of the Tyrendarra lava flow which extends over 50km to the southwest. It is central to the history of the Gunditjmarra people who manage the Indigenous heritage values of the Budj Bim NHL, through the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation.

For further information about **Budj Bim Orientation Centre at Tyrendarra**, or Indigenous culture of this area generally, call

Budj Bim Tours (03) 5527 1427 or visit www.budjibim.com

Location and access

Travel from Portland on the Cape Nelson Road for 11km. It is 377km south-west from Melbourne, and 562km south-east of Adelaide.

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