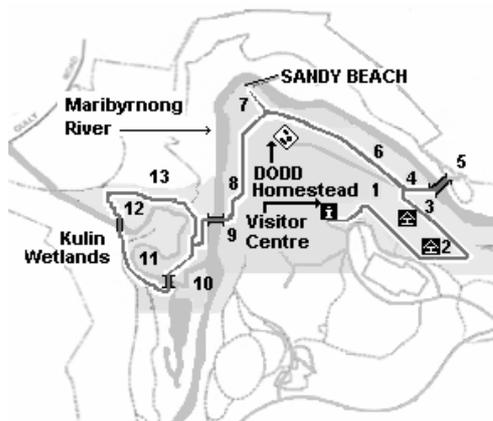


Nature Trail

Brimbank Park

Take the nature trail and be introduced to some of this park's rich diversity. Use sharp eyes and ears to look and listen for animals and plants not always easily seen. Look for animal tracks, scratchings on the ground and tree trunks; animal droppings and abandoned feathers. Listen for birdsongs, ripples in the water and rustling in the bushes.

 The walk begins at the Information Centre and is roughly 3.2km in length with some hills. Numbered pegs along the track will guide you. Some of the markers are off the formal track. Allow 1 1/2 hours to complete the walk, carry a bottle of water and remember a hat and sunscreen.



1. Past land use

Across the grass to your left of the Visitor Centre you can see a low stone wall. This is the remnant of a basalt (cooled lava) rock fence built around 1880 to define the boundaries of the original Brimbank Farm property and to control stock movement. Look closely at the rocks and you will be able to see bubbles formed by gases when the lava was flowing.

Keep an eye out for the Willie Wagtails. Distinctive little black birds with white underneath they can usually be seen hunting for insects in these open areas. They're common in the park, but sadly have declined in some other areas due to overuse of pesticides.

2. Native grasses

Follow the path up the hill towards the second rock picnic shelter.

Pause for a moment at this spot and look across the Maribyrnong River Valley. You will notice several clumps of thick tussock grass. They are native *Poa* (*Poa labillardieri*) and are one of 35 species native to Australia. Turn left past the shelter and follow the path down the hill.

3. Individual characteristics

At the bottom of the hill turn left and follow the path along to the ford. This magnificent River Red Gum is hundreds of years old. These are very slow growing trees and develop individual characteristics formed by the weather, nutrients, pests and other factors. This tree has developed wonderful twisting limbs.



White-Plumed Honeyeaters (left) are common and can be seen plunging into the water to snatch up a drink.

The Welcome Swallow can also be seen hawking up and down the river flat.

4. Step back in time

Walk to the ford where you have an excellent view of the thickly layered sedimentary rock on the far side of the river. The layers of sandstone deposited around 400 million years ago were exposed as the river cut down through the basalt.

Keep an eye out for the lively Superb Blue Wren flitting among the shrubs and tall grasses in search of insects. Their high-pitched twittering can be heard in areas of low cover in the park.



5. Seasonal migration

Walk across to the concrete ford. Here you will see the rock fish ladder that was built to aid in the seasonal movement of migrating and breeding fish down the river. Common Galaxias (*Galaxias maculatus*) and Grayling (*Prototroctes maraena*) can often be seen feeding in the shallows, particularly in the morning and evening.



This is also a good place to see Pacific Black Ducks, which are often paddling quietly on the upstream side of the ford.



For further information

Parks Victoria
Information Centre
Call **13 1963**
or visit the
Parks Victoria website
www.parkweb.vic.gov.au

Brimbank Park
Keilor Park Drive
PO Box 116
Keilor VIC 3036

Caring for the environment

Help us look after your park by remembering these guidelines:

Please take rubbish away with you for recycling and disposal

All plants, animals, archaeological sites and geographic features are protected by law & must not be disturbed or removed

Firearms are prohibited

No fires, including barbecues may be lit on a day of **Total Fire Ban**

Vehicles, including motor bikes may only be used on formed open roads. Drivers must be licensed and vehicles registered and roadworthy

Snakes live here too! If you do see a snake on the path, do not disturb it, observe it carefully and move away quietly

6. A haven of homes

Walk back to the trail and turn right. This is a dry billabong, part of the riverbed that was cut off when the river changed course many years ago. It is only filled now when the river floods and it dries out very quickly.

Where you are standing is sometimes covered by floodwaters!

The River Red Gums in this area are some of the oldest in the park. The hollows in the trees are home to many different animals, including this possum, birds, bats and insects. In summer when the gums are in flower, you will hear the loud squeaking and chattering of lorikeets feeding on the pollen.

Crush the leaves that are lying on the ground and breathe in the freshness of Eucalyptus oil.



7. Erosion in the park

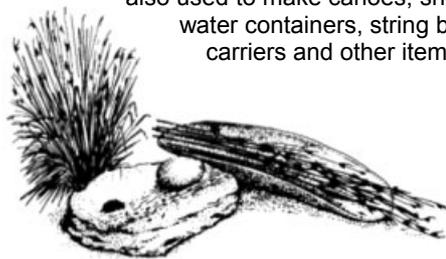
As you make your way to the next stop, you will see the original Dodd's Homestead on the hill to your left. These buildings were constructed around 1880.

Take a short detour down to the river at Sandy Beach. This is an example of how rivers erode their banks. The beach itself is what is known as a "slip off slope", formed as the river rounds the bend and literally slips off the bank and forms a steep undercut on the opposite side. Compare the gentle slope.

8. A rich human history

Turn right from Sandy Beach and follow the river to the "Scar Tree" which is a remnant of Aboriginal occupation. People of the Kulin Nation lived here thousands of years before Europeans and made many implements from natural materials like the bark of this tree.

The bark near its base was probably removed using a stone axe and then used to make a coolamon – a type of carrying dish. Bark was also used to make canoes, shelters, water containers, string baby carriers and other items.



Grinding stones and coolamon

The Scar Tree is particularly important to Aboriginal people and is a part of the heritage of all Australians. It is protected by state and federal laws. Please respect this site.

9. Stop and look...

Follow the river until you come to the bluestone ford. As you cross over keep an eye open for Wood Ducks (*Chenonetta jubata*). Then turn left.

10. Kulin Wetlands

Pause as you cross the footbridge over Taylor's Creek to enter Kulin Wetlands. Early in the evening you might see a native Water Rat hunting for its evening meal. Covered in dense, soft waterproof fur, this otter-like mammal is mostly nocturnal.

It propels itself through the water with webbed hind feet in search of fish, crustaceans, frogs and whatever else it can find.

Look up, the powerlines above you carry power from the top of the park to the western suburbs.

11. Sit and rest for awhile...

Close your eyes and listen to the wind rustling through the reeds along Taylors Creek and Kulin Wetlands.

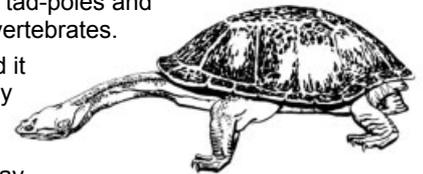
Listen for the frogs calls. There are eight species of frogs recorded in the park ranging from the Eastern Banjo Frog with its distinctive 'pobble bonk' call to the endangered Growling Grass Frog with its equally unique 'growling call.'

12. Reeds of many uses

Stroll downhill to the shallow ford crossing over Taylor's Creek. As well as Common Reed, growing here, is the much broader-leaved Cumbungi or Bulrush. The roots of this plant were used by the Aborigines to make a type of flour and the leaves were used for matting and basket making.

If you are lucky, you might see a Long-necked Tortoise waiting patiently in the shallows with its nostrils barely above the water. It feeds on small fish, frogs, tad-poles and aquatic invertebrates.

If disturbed it slips quietly beneath the water and can stay submerged for many minutes.



13. Peaceful outlook

You are standing on a flat flood plain with a good view of the meandering creek through the delicate fringe of Silver Wattle. The wattle provides food for the Ringtail Possum as well as safe places to build their spherical nests (dreys).

In the tall grass nearby, you might be lucky enough to hear the pitched high-buzzing call of a tiny bird known as the Golden-headed Cisticola.

In the breeding season, the male with its beautiful golden head, can be seen perched high on a grass stem as it calls to attract a mate and declare its territory. It builds a small dome nest among the stems by stitching the leaves together using cobwebs.

Retrace your steps across the bluestone ford and back to the Visitor Information Centre for a well-earned cuppa or a cool drink.

We hope you have enjoyed your walk.