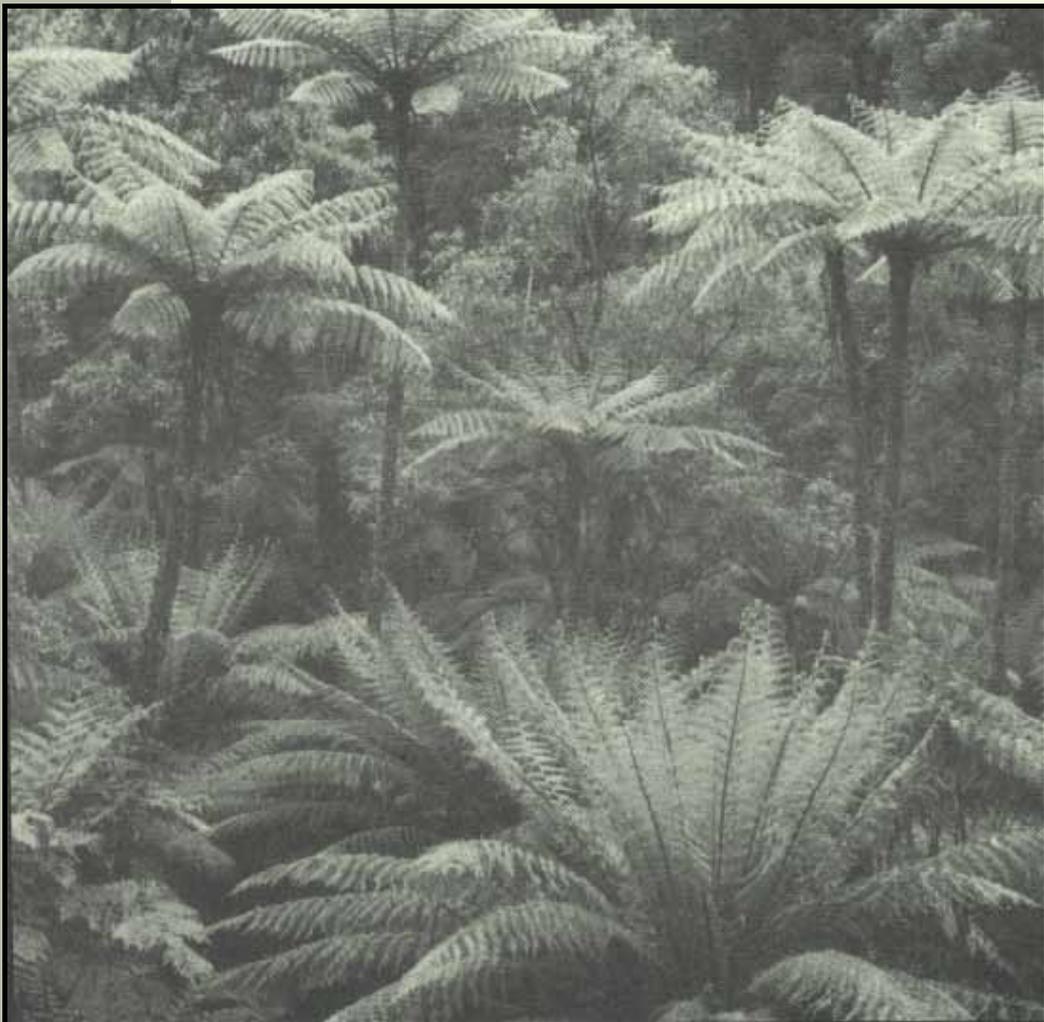


National Parks Service

T*arra-Bulga National Park*

Management Plan

June 1996



NATURAL RESOURCES
AND ENVIRONMENT

This Management Plan for Tarra-Bulga National Park is approved for implementation. Its purpose is to direct all aspects of management in the Park until the Plan is reviewed. A Draft Management Plan was published for public comment in August 1990.

Copies of this Plan can be purchased from:

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TARRA-BULGA NATIONAL PARK

MANAGEMENT PLAN

National Parks Service

**DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
AND ENVIRONMENT**

VICTORIA

JUNE 1996

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FOREWORD

For nearly a century, the fern gullies, Myrtle Beech rainforest and giant Mountain Ash of the former Tarra Valley and Bulga national parks have been attracting visitors.

In 1986 these small but significant remnants of the cool temperate rainforest and magnificent forests once widespread through the Strzelecki Ranges were incorporated into Tarra-Bulga National Park. They were finally linked in 1991 following a land exchange between Victoria and APM Forests (now AMCOR).

Further work is planned to re-establish native forest on heavily modified sites of the enlarged Park and to control extensive infestations of introduced species.

This Plan will ensure that Tarra-Bulga National Park provides a range of recreational and educational opportunities without degradation of its very important conservation values.

I look forward to the community's support for the future management and protection of this valuable part of Victoria's parks system.

Hon Marie Tehan MP
MINISTER FOR CONSERVATION
and LAND MANAGEMENT

APPROVED MANAGEMENT PLAN

This Approved Management Plan has been prepared under section 17 of the *National Parks Act 1975* (Vic.) and is approved for implementation.

The Plan provides the basis for future management of Tarra-Bulga National Park. It was finalised following consideration of the seven submissions received on the Proposed Plan.

Mark Stone
Director, National Parks Service

Garry Squires
Interim Regional Manager, Gippsland

SUMMARY

Tarra-Bulga National Park is an important component of the Victoria's parks system, and is the largest park in the Strzelecki Ranges. It is renowned for its luxuriant fern gullies, associated Myrtle Beech rainforest and towering Mountain Ash, which create much of the Park's scenic appeal.

Sensitive management will ensure that future generations can enjoy the Park without compromising its high conservation values.

The recent increase in the Park's size gives scope for a wider range of opportunities for long-term habitat development; and the planned expansion of recreational facilities within the Park ensures that it will play a more significant role in nature-based tourism, particularly for day visits, in the Latrobe Valley and South Gippsland area. This will be achieved through sensitive developments and first-class interpretation of the Park's values.

The major management directions for the Park are summarised below.

- The remnant old-growth forest, especially Mountain Ash, fern gully and Myrtle Beech communities, will be protected.
- Areas will be reafforested and rehabilitated in accordance with a revegetation plan.
- Fire management will emphasise the protection and expansion of fern gullies, cool temperate rainforest and mature wet sclerophyll forest.
- A pest plant control program will be prepared and implemented in conjunction with the above revegetation plan.
- The range of recreational opportunities will be broadened with additional facilities and improved interpretation.
- The Visitor Centre will enhance people's experience of the Park.
- The community will be encouraged to participate in park management and education.
- The Park will be promoted as a regional tourist attraction.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and planning area

Tarra-Bulga National Park (1522 ha) is in the eastern part of the Strzelecki Ranges in South Gippsland, about 240 km east of Melbourne and 24 km north of Yarram. The Latrobe Valley is about 33 km north of the Park.

Most of the Park is bounded by reserved forest, land leased or owned by AMCOR, and other private property. Several used and unused road reserves are excluded from the Park.

The Management Plan covers the Park, including the proposed Macks Creek Reference Area (55 ha) (figure 1) and part of the Tarra River representative river (LCC 1991).

1.2 Regional context

Tarra-Bulga National Park lies between the township of Yarram (population 2100) and the Latrobe Valley, where over 90 000 people live in several centres. The small settlement of Balook is situated centrally to the Park on the Grand Ridge Road.

The Park is well situated as a sizeable natural area for passive recreation activities for the people of the Latrobe Valley and the local region. Other popular destinations in the region include:

- Wilsons Promontory National Park - one of the most spectacular and popular national parks in Victoria, receiving over 400 000 visits annually;
- Corner Inlet and Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Parks - attracting mainly day visitors undertaking water-based activities;
- Morwell National Park, which protects other remnant forests within the Strzelecki Ranges and provides passive recreation opportunities for visitors.

The Grand Ridge Road is a popular touring route along the backbone of the Strzeleckis, with Tarra-Bulga National Park a key feature.

1.3 Significance of the Park

Tarra-Bulga National Park is a valuable part of Victoria's parks system, which aims to protect viable representative samples of the State's natural environments occurring on public land. Parks provide opportunities for visitors to enjoy and appreciate natural and cultural values, and make an important contribution to tourism.

The Park is listed in IUCN Category II (National Parks) of the United Nations' List of National Parks and Equivalent Reserves. Category II areas are managed primarily for ecosystem conservation and recreation.

Because the original Tarra Valley and Bulga National Parks were excluded from selection for farming, the Park now contains important remnant vegetation characteristic of the Strzeleckis before European settlement. The undisturbed Mountain Ash forests, fern gully communities and associated Myrtle Beech stands within the Park are of considerable biogeographical significance (Gullan et al. 1984).

Along with several other parks in the Otway Ranges and the Central Highlands, Tarra-Bulga National Park contains small representative samples of Victoria's rare cool temperate rainforest dominated by Myrtle Beech. The association of Mountain Ash and Myrtle Beech communities is an important botanical link with Tasmania, where climatic conditions are generally more favourable for rainforest development.

The Park is of at least regional significance for fauna. The relatively undisturbed streams in particular are important for the conservation of native fish.

Evidence of forestry activities and agriculture from earlier this century remains in sections of the Park and the surrounding areas, a reminder of the history of the eastern Strzelecki Ranges following European settlement.

The Park's natural values and outstanding landscape qualities, its long history of recreational use and its relative ease of access from major population centres make it

attractive for recreational activities such as scenic viewing, picnicking and day-walking.

At present, the former Bulga and Tarra Valley national parks are on the Register of the National Estate, in recognition of their outstanding values and importance as parts of our heritage.

Significant features of the Park are described below.

Natural values

- Numerous rocky outcrops of State geological significance containing a diverse and abundant fossil flora.
- The largest representative undisturbed sample of tall open forest and riparian vegetation in the Strzelecki Ranges, including Mountain Ash and fern gully/rainforest communities.
- Pockets of mature cool temperate rainforest dominated by Myrtle Beech.
- The presence of four threatened plant species.
- Abundant non-vascular flora.
- A diversity of undisturbed faunal habitats, supporting a number of significant species.
- Some of the least disturbed streams and catchments in the Strzelecki Ranges, supporting a number of rare and restricted fish species.
- Spectacular views of towering old-growth forest, luxuriant fern gullies and waterfalls, and panoramic views of the Strzelecki Ranges and Wilsons Promontory.

Cultural values

- Several sites of European historical interest, including reminders of early timber cutting and agricultural activities, and some interesting early structures.

Tourism and recreational values

- A major opportunity to experience easily accessible, undisturbed old-growth forest, rainforest and fern gullies which survived the original clearing of the Strzelecki Ranges.
- Picnic facilities and short walks catering for vehicle-based visitors.
- A Visitor Centre providing a focal point for effective Park interpretation and environmental education.
- Significant potential to increase recreational opportunities within the Park, further developing Tarra-Bulga as a major local and regional tourist attraction.

1.4 Creation of the Park

Bulga National Park was first reserved in 1904, and Tarra Valley National Park in 1909. Various additions were subsequently made.

Tarra-Bulga National Park was proclaimed on 17 June 1986 under Schedule two of the *National Park Act 1975* (Vic.) as a result of the *National Parks (Amendment) Act 1986* (Vic.). It was created based on Land Conservation Council (LCC) recommendations for the South Gippsland Area, District 2 (LCC 1982). As a result of a land exchange between APM Forests (now AMCOR) and the Crown, the Tarra Valley and Bulga sections of the Park were finally linked in 1991.

1.5 Legislation, LCC recommendations and guidelines

Tarra-Bulga National Park is reserved and managed under the provisions of the National Parks Act. The Act requires the Director to preserve and protect the natural environment of the Park, and its natural and other features, and to provide for the use of the Park by the public for enjoyment, recreation and education, and for research.

The LCC (1982) recommended that the former Tarra Valley and Bulga National Parks should be amalgamated and expanded. By so doing visitor pressure would be reduced at the original sites of development, a broader range

of recreational opportunities would be provided and additional vegetation communities representative of the Strzelecki Ranges would be preserved. The LCC specifically recommended that the government commence negotiations with landholders in the area with a view to consolidating the Park boundaries, and noted that recreation developments within the portions of the Park falling within the Tarra River water supply catchment should conform with the land use determination for the catchment.

The Macks Creek Reference Area will be proclaimed under the *Reference Areas Act 1978* (Vic.) and managed in accordance with Ministerial directives and the relevant NRE guideline. Within reference areas, which establish a reference for comparative study purposes, natural processes will be allowed to continue undisturbed. This plan proposes a boundary variation to the area recommended by the LCC (1982) (section 3.2).

The LCC's Final Recommendations for the Rivers and Streams Special Investigation (LCC 1991) recommended that the Tarra River should be designated as a representative river, the primary aim of which is to maintain an example of a South Gippsland Ranges, riverine plains river-catchment type.

The Park is managed in accordance with Department of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) guidelines for the management of Parks (NPS 1995) and with other Departmental guidelines and procedures. Other plans which will operate in conjunction with this Management Plan include:

- Rainforest Education Strategy (CNR 1993a);
- Yarram Region Fire Protection Plan (CNR 1993b).

1.6 Park management aims

Section 4 (Objects) and section 17 of the National Parks Act provide the main basis for management of the Park. The following management aims are derived from those sections and as such broadly govern all aspects of park management.

Resource conservation

- Preserve and protect the natural environment.
- Allow natural environmental processes to continue with a minimum of disturbance, and maintain biodiversity.
- Conserve and protect features of archaeological, historical and cultural significance.

Park protection

- Protect water catchments and streams.
- Protect human life, the Park and adjacent lands from injury by fire.
- Eradicate, or otherwise control, introduced plants, animals and diseases.

The Park visit

- Provide opportunities for appropriate recreation and tourism.
- Promote and encourage an appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of the Park's natural and cultural values and its recreational opportunities.
- Encourage appropriate park use and behaviour, and foster a conservation ethic in visitors.
- Take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of visitors.

Other

- Provide for and encourage scientific research, surveys and monitoring that will contribute to a better understanding and management of the Park.
- Co-operate with local, State and interstate government authorities, the community and other interested organisations to assist in the management of the Park.

2 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

2.1 Park vision

A future visitor to Tarra-Bulga National Park finds a Park protecting a core sample of the undisturbed wet forests, cool temperate rainforest and fern gullies which once characterised the Strzelecki Ranges. Other formerly cleared areas of the Park are successfully regenerating, enhancing the Park's conservation role in the Strzelecki Ranges.

A wide range of day visitors enjoys the magnificent natural values of the Park, using a range of walking tracks and first-class interpretation facilities and services. The Park is an important destination for nature-based tourists, including visitors from South Gippsland and the Latrobe Valley seeking passive recreation.

Careful management by NRE, with assistance from an active Friends group and other volunteers, ensures that the Park is well known as an attractive destination, and that conservation values are maintained for the enjoyment of future generations.

2.2 Management directions

Major management directions for the Park are outlined below:

Resource conservation

- Remnant old-growth forest, especially Mountain Ash, fern gully and Myrtle Beech communities, will be protected.
- Special protection will be given to other significant natural and cultural features.
- A revegetation plan to reafforest and rehabilitate sections of the Park, helping integrate the former Tarra Valley and Bulga Parks into one continuous forest, will be prepared and implemented.
- A full fauna survey of the Park will be encouraged.
- Co-operation with relevant Shires and Government instrumentalities will ensure that the landscape quality of roads and

public utilities within the Park is preserved.

- Opportunities will be taken to rationalise irregular boundaries to improve the management of the Park and its natural values.

Park protection

- Fire will be managed to protect and encourage expansion of fern gullies, cool temperate rainforest and mature wet sclerophyll forest. Major fuel reduction burning will not be conducted in the Park.
- A pest plant control program will be prepared and implemented in conjunction with the revegetation plan referred to above.
- Facilities will be sited, and roads within the Park maintained, to minimise risks of soil erosion.

The Park visit

- High quality facilities will be provided for day visitors.
- The range of recreational opportunities, including access for those with limited mobility, will be broadened.
- Interpretation of the Park will be improved. Displays within the Visitor Centre will enhance visitors' experience of the Park. Environmental education programs will be encouraged.
- Community participation in park management and education will be encouraged.
- The Park will be promoted as a regional tourist attraction.

2.3 Zoning

A Park management zoning scheme has been developed to:

- provide a geographic framework in which to manage the Park;

- indicate which management aims have priority in different parts of the Park;
- indicate the types and levels of use appropriate throughout the Park;
- assist in minimising existing and potential conflicts between uses and activities, or between those and the protection of Park values;
- provide a basis for assessing the suitability of future activities and development proposals.

Three principle management zones apply to the Park: Conservation and Recreation, Recreation Development, and Reference Area. In addition, Special Protection Areas are used to indicate additional requirements to those of the underlying primary management zones.

Table 1 specifies management zone and overlay characteristics; locations are shown on figure 2. Table 3 summarises the activities that are permitted within these zones and overlays.

TABLE 1 PARK MANAGEMENT ZONES AND OVERLAYS

	ZONE			OVERLAY
	CONSERVATION AND RECREATION	RECREATION DEVELOPMENT	REFERENCE AREA	SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA
AREA/ LOCATION	1461 ha; 96% of Park. The majority of the Park.	6 ha, 0.4% of Park. Visitor Centre, carpark and immediate surrounds at Balook.	55 ha, 3.6% of Park. Macks Creek Reference Area.	102 ha, 6.7% of Park.
VALUES	Important natural values and scope for recreation opportunities without significant impacts on the natural environment.	Site with significant facility development.	Relatively undisturbed land types and associated vegetation.	1. Extension of Macks Creek Reference Area. 2. Most extensive stand of Myrtle Beech rainforest in the Park.
GENERAL MANAGEMENT AIM	Protect less sensitive natural environments and provide for sustainable dispersed recreation activities and small-scale recreation facilities without significant impact on natural processes.	Provide primarily for high use visitor nodes with a concentration of recreation and/or interpretation facilities.	Protect viable samples of one or more land types that are relatively undisturbed for comparative study with similar land types elsewhere, by keeping all human interference to the minimum essential and ensuring as far as practicable that the only long-term change results from natural processes.	Protect specific natural or cultural values in specific areas and sites where a special management focus is required.

3 RESOURCE CONSERVATION

3.1 Geological and landform features

The Park is situated in the Strzelecki Ranges, which are part of the South Gippsland Highlands. Elevation ranges from 280 m to 700 m and the topography is characterised by narrow steep slopes forming enclosed valleys. Rocky outcrops occur along the watercourses, forming rapids and waterfalls.

The base rocks are fine-grained Cretaceous sandstones with interbedded softer sands and siltstone. They contain a diverse and abundant fossil flora with impressions of *Taeniopteris* and *Sphenopteris* (fossil ferns) and liverworts, which are common in the rocky outcrops. These outcrops are rare and of State geological significance (Rosengren, McRae-Williams & Kramers 1981). Small areas of Tertiary basalts and conglomerates also occur.

Generally, the Park's geological and geomorphological features are not subject to damage from visitor use.

Aim

- Minimise impacts from scientific studies and visitors on significant geological and geomorphic features.

Management strategy

- *Allow scientific studies of the fossil deposits, provided that impacts on the Park are minimised.*

3.2 Vegetation

Fourteen plant communities have been identified within the Park (Ashwell 1988), grouped into five major formations:

- fern gully/rainforest (closed forest);
- wet sclerophyll forest (tall open forest);
- damp sclerophyll forest (open forest and low open forest);
- moderately modified communities (previously logged areas);

- heavily modified communities (former cleared farmland).

The most significant plant communities are:

- fern gully/cool temperate rainforest (closed forest) dominated by Myrtle Beech and characterised by a rich variety of ferns - these communities are confined to a relatively small area of the Park, being restricted to the gullies and lower slopes on all but the most exposed aspects;
- wet sclerophyll forest (tall open forest), variously dominated by Mountain Ash, Blackwood and Messmate - these communities are the most extensive in the Park, and occur throughout its altitudinal range.

Two hundred and four species of vascular plants have been identified in the Park (Ashwell 1988; Beaglehole 1972), of which four are significant: Slender Tree-fern, Skirted Tree-fern, Sticky Wattle and Fairy Lanterns. Slender Tree-fern is listed under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (Vic.).

Large collections of non-vascular plants, totalling 289 species and including bryophytes (mosses, liverworts and hornworts), fungi, lichens, algae and slime moulds, have also been made. These plants are particularly abundant in wet sclerophyll and closed forests dominated by Myrtle Beech (Frood & Calder 1987).

European settlement and agriculture have left little natural vegetation in the Strzelecki Ranges, and have greatly modified what remains by altering fire regimes, partial clearing and introducing exotic species. The Park contains some of the most important natural remnants in the Strzeleckis. Areas of the Park affected by failed cultivation and previous logging show varying degrees of vegetation disturbance.

The revegetation of the corridor linking the Tarra Valley and Bulga sections of the Park (APM Forests land exchange area) will substantially enhance the conservation value of the Park including its value as wildlife habitat.

The exclusion of fire from the Park (section 4.1) will favour the expansion of Cool Temperate Rainforest. However, over the long-term, there is a probability that fire will at some stage allow the regeneration of Mountain Ash in the Park.

The Macks Creek Reference Area was recommended by the LCC (1982) but has not yet been proclaimed. A subsequent vegetation survey (Ashwell 1988) found that open forest of Mountain Ash over 40 m and closed forest of Myrtle Beech and Southern Sassafras were not as extensive in this area as previously thought. The addition of Special Protection Area 1 to the reference area would give a better representation of these vegetation types.

Aims

- Conserve native plant communities in their natural condition, as far as practicable, and maintain biodiversity.
- Protect mature forest and rainforest, especially Mountain Ash, fern gully and Myrtle Beech communities.
- Reafforest and rehabilitate areas disturbed by previous land use.

Management strategies

- *Locate new tracks outside sensitive plant communities, in particular the fern gully communities and the base of Macks Creek Falls.*
- *Prohibit walking off existing formed tracks in fern gully communities.*
- *Manage Flora and Fauna Guarantee listed plants according to approved action statements.*
- *Monitor the distribution and development of cool temperate rainforest.*
- *Prepare a revegetation plan incorporating recommendations from Ashwell (1988).*
- *Rehabilitate the corridor (APM Forests land exchange area) and land on the east side of Macks Creek, and re-establish*

indigenous vegetation using stock of local origin.

- *Encourage research into fire and other management requirements for the Park's flora and fauna communities, especially the damp sclerophyll forest and scrub.*
- *Develop guidelines for the removal of vegetation where essential to Park or utility management, to minimise loss of habitat.*
- *Investigate the use of fire to control the invasion of the Park's plant communities by the native shrub Burgan.*
- *Incorporate Special Protection Area 1 into the Macks Creek Reference Area.*

3.3 Fauna

Following the extensive clearing of the Strzelecki Ranges earlier this century, the former Tarra Valley and Bulga National Parks became a refuge for a number of rare and uncommon fauna of South Gippsland and Victoria. The expanded Park has been identified as a site of regional zoological significance (Mansergh & Norris 1982). Several significant species occur (appendix 1).

Twenty-nine native mammal species have been recorded. Notable species include the Platypus and Greater Glider. There are also several unconfirmed reports of other species, significant among them being a species of Potoroo and the Yellow-bellied Glider, Common Bent-wing Bat and Broad-toothed Rat (Mansergh & Norris 1982; Walker 1979).

Of the 107 bird species recorded from the Park, the Barking Owl, Powerful Owl, Sooty Owl and Grey Goshawk are rare statewide (CNR 1995). The Black-faced Monarch and Collared Sparrowhawk are rare in Central Gippsland (Norris, Gilmore & Menkhorst 1979). Other notable records are Large-billed Scrubwren, Pink Robin, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo and Australian King-Parrot.

Fourteen species of reptiles (12 lizards and 2 snakes) and 10 species of amphibians have been recorded for the Park. A species of

particular significance is Spencer's Skink, which is restricted mainly to tall open forest.

The Park also protects important freshwater native fish habitat. Fifteen native fish and one introduced fish species have been recorded, of which three are of particular significance: Australian Grayling, Spotted Galaxias and Striped Gudgeon.

An extensive invertebrate species list for the Park has been compiled, but needs verification before publication.

There has been no comprehensive fauna survey of the expanded Park. Further information is required on the distribution, ecology and management requirements of the Park's significant species.

The revegetation of cleared areas of the Park will enhance the value of the Park for native fauna (section 3.2).

The major problems for fauna management within the Park are competition and predation by introduced animals, alienation of habitat through invasion of introduced plant species, and increased visitor pressure.

Aims

- Protect native fauna (particularly significant species) and their habitats, and maintain biodiversity.
- Maintain an appropriate range of natural habitats.
- Increase knowledge of the Park's fauna.

Management strategies

- *Manage Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act listed fauna (appendix 1) according to approved action statements.*
- *Encourage a fauna survey of the Park including mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish and invertebrates.*
- *Encourage research on the distribution and ecological requirements of significant species, particularly those listed in appendix 1.*

- *Minimise the impact on habitats caused by management activities, particularly track construction and fire protection works.*
- *Identify significant habitat trees near proposed development sites and protect them from detrimental visitor and management activities.*

3.4 Landscape

The landscape of the Park falls within the broad landscape character type known as the Southern Uplands (Leonard & Hammond 1984). This type is distinctive of the Strzelecki Ranges and is characterised by deep dissection and steep slopes forming enclosed valleys.

The landscape has been described and recorded by the National Trust (1982), and by Sanford (1987) in a landscape features analysis of the Park.

Much of the Park is highly scenic, with lush fern gullies and rainforest contrasting in colour and texture with the towering Mountain Ash forests on the surrounding slopes. These distinct vegetation types are an important visual element and can be viewed from both the Park's main access roads, the Grand Ridge Road and the Tarra Valley Road.

In addition, other roads through the Park also offer panoramic views to the north and south. To the north, there are extensive views across the Latrobe Valley to the Great Dividing Range. To the south, the visitor can view the coastal plains and across to Corner Inlet and Wilsons Promontory from Blackwarry Fire Tower (adjacent to but outside the Park).

Scenic values are a principal factor attracting visitors to the Park (Bone 1987). Identified landscape values should not be altered or compromised by Park developments, or roadworks undertaken by other authorities. The visual quality of rehabilitated areas will improve as the forest matures.

See also section 5.2.5 (Scenic viewing).

Aims

- Protect and enhance the outstanding forest landscape quality and character of the Park and surrounding areas.
- Minimise negative visual impacts on the natural landscape, especially from major viewing points.

Management strategies

- *Maintain the critical visual elements as defined in the Landscape Features Analysis (Sanford 1987).*
- *Ensure that all works are carried out in accordance with visual management principles, and siting and design guidelines.*
- *Liaise with the relevant authorities to develop guidelines to ensure that the scenic quality along the public roads through the Park is maintained.*
- *Prepare site plans, in consultation with VicRoads and the Wellington and Latrobe Shires, for the development and maintenance of important viewing points both within and outside the Park.*
- *Prepare landscape assessments and appropriate action statements for the management of boundaries between the Park and neighbouring land.*

3.5 Cultural heritage

Aboriginal heritage

It is known that two clans of the Kurnai Aboriginal tribe co-existed within the general South Gippsland area: the Brayakaulung, who lived north of the Strzelecki watershed, and the Brataualung to the south.

There is little documentation of Aboriginal occupation of the Park. At present, Aboriginal Affairs Victoria has no Aboriginal sites recorded within the boundaries of the Park, and there has been no survey. However, a large number of Aboriginal sites have been recorded in the region, particularly in the vicinity of Traralgon and Monkey Creek and in the

Gormandale/Hiamdale area. Because the former Tarra Valley and Bulga National Parks represent some of the least disturbed areas in the Strzeleckis, they should be surveyed.

European heritage

The Park's European history includes elements of exploration, settlement, clearing, logging, reforestation and reservation. Settlement of the Strzeleckis began in the 1860s, leading to the extensive clearing and burning of forest in an attempt to establish and maintain cultivation in the rugged terrain. By the 1890s the township of Balook was established and there were several nearby timber mills logging any remaining timber. However, by the 1930s most of the forests had been cleared, and many farms had been abandoned.

The Park contains several sites of historic interest, reminders of early European settlement, agriculture and forestry in the region. However, many have been obscured or obliterated by exposure and regrowth, making their importance difficult to assess.

There are some opportunities to interpret these and other cultural heritage values (section 5.3).

Aims

- Protect archaeological sites and historic sites of significance.
- Provide access to, and interpret, selected historic sites.

Management strategies

- *Further investigate pre-European Aboriginal activity within the Park and the surrounding region.*
- *Liaise with Aboriginal Affairs Victoria regarding a survey of the Park.*
- *Assess the significance of historic sites within the Park and determine appropriate management strategies.*
- *Document and interpret the history of the Park through displays in the Visitor Centre.*

4 PARK PROTECTION

4.1 Fire management

The National Parks Act requires the Director of National Parks to ensure that appropriate and sufficient measures are taken to protect parks from injury by fire. Current fire protection measures for Tarra-Bulga National Park are in accordance with the Yarram Region Fire Protection Plan (CNR 1993b). This Plan includes provisions for the maintenance of the Park's system of maintenance tracks, liaison with private landholders for the common purpose of fire management within the Park and on adjacent land, and information on areas of ecological and cultural significance, including the Macks Creek Reference Area. The Park's fire protection strategy will be reviewed as new information becomes available, ensuring that Park values are considered in the preparation of fire pre-suppression strategies.

Most of the vegetation within the Park is sensitive to fire, especially the fern gully/rainforest and the wet sclerophyll forest communities. Although the former extent of these communities was probably reduced by fires in 1898 and 1944, it is likely that the Park's well-developed gully vegetation has been given some degree of natural protection from fire by the Park's topography. Long-unburnt gully vegetation, particularly if showing development towards rainforest (as at Tarra-Bulga), has a high priority for conservation in Victoria.

The overall nature of the fuel in the Park, increased public awareness of fire, and the requirement for adequate fire breaks and the availability of fire-fighting equipment associated with adjoining forestry operations, all reduce the serious risk of fire within the Park. No major fuel modification is proposed for the Park; fuel reduction burning on surrounding public land further reduces the need for this activity within Park boundaries.

Fire management within the Park will emphasise the protection of fern gullies, the cool temperate rainforest remnants and the mature tall wet sclerophyll forests. This will

favour the expansion and development of cool temperate rainforest (section 3.2).

Aims

- Protect human life, property and Park values from injury by fire.
- Minimise the adverse affects of fires and fire suppression methods.
- Maintain fire regimes appropriate to the conservation of native flora and fauna.
- Integrate management requirements with fire protection strategies and control measures.

Management strategies

- *Integrate the requirements of this Plan with the Yarram Region Fire Protection Plan.*
- *Do not conduct fuel reduction burning in the Park except for the purposes of Park protection and in accordance with the Yarram Region Fire Protection Plan.*
- *Include the role of fire and fire safety issues in appropriate interpretive programs and displays.*
- *Maintain all existing water sources to ensure adequate storage capacity and access by fire-fighting vehicles.*
- *Arrange for dry grass on public land in the township of Balook to be slashed each year before it becomes a fire hazard.*
- *Rehabilitate fire control lines and other disturbances resulting from fire control activities.*
- *Maintain accurate fire occurrence maps and records to monitor fire and its effects on sensitive vegetation communities.*
- *Review fire management practices regularly to ensure that they are consistent with the long-term Park objectives.*

4.2 Pest plants and animals, and diseases

Thirty-five introduced plant species have been identified in the Park (Ashwell 1988; Beaglehole 1972), of which a number are declared noxious weeds in Victoria. Many are introduced agricultural species resulting from clearing and pasture establishment. They are generally restricted to modified communities and at present do not pose an active management problem for indigenous communities.

The pest species causing the greatest concern are Blackberry, which has formed extensive thickets in low lying areas along the lower reaches of the Tarra River and in isolated patches along Macks Creek and Sweet Pittosporum, which is native in eastern Victoria but not in the Strzelecki Ranges, and which has great potential for invasion. Ragwort is extensive in the modified communities, and English Ivy is a potentially serious pest in the wet sclerophyll forest communities.

A number of garden species at abandoned house sites in the Tarra and Macks Creek Valleys have the potential to spread into indigenous communities.

A small softwood plantation (of Radiata Pine) adjacent to the Westall school camp at Balook was removed in 1995.

The absence of burning within the Park may lead to a proliferation of fire-sensitive weed species. This needs to be carefully monitored.

Of the seven introduced mammal species in the Park, foxes and cats have the greatest potential to affect native fauna. Other introduced animals that affect the Park to a limited extent include starlings, blackbirds, goats, domestic dogs, cattle and possibly deer.

Aims

- Control, and where possible eradicate, non-indigenous plants and animals.
- Minimise the potential for introduction and spread of any pest plants and diseases.
- Minimise the impact of control programs on native flora and fauna.

- Restore native vegetation to areas infested with introduced plants.

Management strategies

- *Prepare and implement a pest plant control program in conjunction with the revegetation plan (section 3.2), incorporating the actions in appendix 2.*
- *Implement a rehabilitation and weed control program for the area on the east side of Macks Creek.*
- *Remove horticultural species with the potential to spread.*
- *Remove any new seedlings of Radiata Pine from the old plantation site, in consultation with Westall Secondary College.*
- *Investigate the historic significance of non-native species at old homestead sites and determine appropriate management strategies.*
- *Prepare and implement a control program for goats, foxes and feral cats, based on population sizes, distribution and impacts.*
- *Consult adjacent landholders regarding pest animal control, including domestic pets.*
- *Monitor pest plant and animal populations in the Park.*
- *Establish and monitor operational trials on revegetation and associated control techniques for pest plants and animals.*

4.3 Catchment and soil conservation

Preventing soil erosion and protecting water quality and aquatic ecosystems within the Park are high management priorities. The Park's streams are of major conservation value as they remain among the few that are relatively undisturbed in the Strzeleckis and support a number of significant fish species (section 3.3). The Tarra River is recognised as a 'representative river' by the LCC (1991).

Approximately one-third of the Park lies within the Tarra River Catchment, which supplies water for the towns of Yarram, Alberton and Port Albert. Maintenance of water quality is essential for the protection of domestic water supply.

The Park has two predominant types of soil: gradational soils containing highly structured brown or yellowish-grey loams and occurring mainly on steep slopes and crests, and shallower grey loams and fine sandy loams overlying clay subsoils, occurring in the drier areas. Although both soil types are generally erosion-resistant, they are capable of absorbing a great deal of water, presenting the risk of landslip in wet weather. This has implications for the siting of roads, tracks and other developments. The soils of the Macks Creek area have a higher erosion risk than those of Tarra Valley.

The main source of water pollution within the Park is erosion from roads and tracks, especially those on clayey soils which become extremely greasy and in parts impassable in wet weather. Any increase in the use of these tracks would produce a moderate to high erosion potential.

Aims

- Protect catchment values and maintain the quality of water for domestic water supply.
- Prevent and control soil erosion caused by visitor and management activities.

- Revegetate disturbed areas at risk of erosion with indigenous species.

Management strategies

- *Ensure that management activities and visitor use do not impact on water quality, particularly of the Tarra River.*
- *Use catchment prescriptions outlined in the NRE Code of Forest Practices as minimum management requirements for activities within the Park.*
- *Avoid concentration of stormwater by providing sufficient drainage points on all tracks and roads.*
- *Ensure that all new facilities are located on stable landforms, and are at least 20 m from streams (except for necessary crossings).*
- *Ensure that the minimum area of bare soil required is exposed during reforestation operations, and that the ground surface is maintained in a rough uncompacted state to maximise water infiltration.*
- *Investigate and monitor the septic system at the Tarra Valley toilet block to assess the effectiveness of treatment.*
- *Identify sections of streams that require re-establishment of riparian vegetation and weed control.*

5 THE PARK VISIT

5.1 The Park visitor

Since the amalgamation of the former Tarra Valley and Bulga National Parks, increased numbers of visitors have been recorded. The total number of visitor for the Park in 1995 was estimated to be 80 000, with peak periods in the months of December and January, and during the Easter holidays. This trend is expected to continue.

Tarra-Bulga National Park and its predecessors have been popular destinations for day trippers for more than 90 years. Visitors to Tarra-Bulga have sustained local accommodation and service outlets in the Strzeleckis for many years, and the Park is an important resource for the local and, increasingly, the regional tourism industry.

The scenic drives, short walks and picnic facilities available primarily attract family groups on half-day trips from the Gippsland region. Other visitors to the Park include school groups and elderly citizens groups, travelling by coach.

A Tourism Development Plan developed by the Latrobe Regional Commission (LRC 1986) identified the lack of services and tourist facilities in the Strzeleckis as a significant limitation on tourism within the region generally (Horvath & Horvath 1987).

Although well promoted locally, the Park is less known outside the Gippsland area. Sensitive promotion of the Park's natural values and cultural values is vital to the fulfilment of its tourism potential.

Providing for the visitor

The Park will continue to cater for day visitors. In the past, the range of recreational opportunities and facilities within the former Parks was limited, leading to visitor pressure on the traditional recreational sites such as the suspension bridge and the Bulga and Tarra Valley picnic areas. However, the enlarged Park provides the opportunity to develop additional picnic areas and a broader range of

walking tracks, away from the more traditional recreation sites.

The expansion of recreational opportunities and the development of the Visitor Centre as a focal point (section 5.2.3) can be expected to make the Park more attractive to a wider section of the community, leading to increased numbers of visitors, particularly from the South Gippsland region and the Latrobe Valley.

The increased opportunities will also help in raising the profile of the Strzeleckis at a State and national level.

Aims

- Provide for visitors in accordance with the above overview of future management for visitors.
- Provide opportunities and quality services and facilities for the use and enjoyment of the Park by a range of visitors.
- Develop an understanding of visitor profiles, attitudes, expectations and needs.
- Develop the Park as a regional and State tourist destination.

Management strategies

- *Provide facilities and services which highlight, but are in keeping with, the Park's distinctive character (sections 5.2 and 5.3, tables 2 and 4).*
- *Apply the findings of the NPS market research and customer satisfaction monitoring programs.*
- *Establish a program to determine levels of recreational activity consistent with protecting recreational experiences and park values.*
- *Permit recreational activities in accordance with table 3.*
- *Monitor the use of each visitor site on a regular basis and use this information to guide priorities for facility design and construction.*

- *Encourage all visitors to adopt minimal impact techniques and to adhere to Codes of Conduct appropriate to their activity.*
- *Encourage the tourist industry to publicise the Park in an accurate and appropriate manner (in step with the gradual development of visitor facilities).*

5.2 Visitor recreation activities and facilities

5.2.1 Vehicle access

There is a range of access roads and tracks through and within the Park for vehicles and walkers (figure 3).

Good vehicle access is available to the Visitor Centre and all major picnic sites within the Park via the Grand Ridge, Tarra Valley, Yarram-Balook and Traralgon-Balook Roads. These are classified as main roads and are maintained by the Wellington Shire, except for the Traralgon-Balook Road, which is maintained by the Latrobe Shire.

These four roads are unsealed but are generally in good condition, suitable for two-wheel drive vehicles and, in most places, for tourist coaches. The very scenic Tarra Valley Road is narrow and winding. It is a declared tourist road. With the expansion of visitor facilities, traffic on this and other roads is likely to increase, and some upgrading may be required.

A number of road reserves within the boundaries of the Park are excluded from the Park and are not covered by the Park Regulations. These include the four main roads listed above, as well as several unused road reserves.

There are also a number of vehicle tracks which are now used only for fire and other management purposes, being suitable only for four wheel drive vehicles. These are: Wild Cherry (Cooks) Track and the old Balook-Yarram (Macks Creek) Road. Sections of Diaper Track are in the Park.

There is some confusion with road and track names in and near the Park. A number of forestry tracks remain unnamed.

Occasionally trail-bike riders use the Park and surrounding areas. Riders currently use the Diaper and Wild Cherry Tracks, which may lead to conflict between walkers, horse riders and trail-bike riders.

Aims

- Provide and maintain an appropriate network of roads and tracks for visitor use, adjacent landowners and management purposes.
- Minimise the impact of vehicle use on the Park and recreational opportunities in semi-remote settings.

Management strategies

- *Liaise with the Wellington and Latrobe Shires in the preparation of a Road Development Plan (for vehicular access) for the Park road network and roads leading to the Park.*
- *Prepare and implement a signs plan, in conjunction with Vic Roads and the relevant Shires, including signs for all roads within the Park, all access roads, and directions to visitor facilities.*
- *Close Wild Cherry (Cooks) Track to public motor vehicles and horses, and the old Balook-Yarram (Macks Creek) road alignments to public motor vehicles. Maintain for management vehicles, bicycles, walkers and horses only.*
- *Allow trail bike riding on public roads and tracks only, and not on management vehicle tracks.*
- *Allow the owner access to the adjacent Crown Allotment 11 of C, Parish of Bulga through the Park. Formalise an access agreement with the Director.*

TABLE 2 EXISTING AND PROPOSED RECREATION FACILITIES

SITE	TOILETS	PICNIC TABLES	SHELTER	FIRE PLACES/BBQ	WATER SUPPLY	INTERP. INFO	WALK TRACK	CAR PARK	BUS PARK	MANAGEMENT ACTIONS AND COMMENTS
Visitor Centre (A)	E	E	-	E	E	E	E	E	E	
<i>Picnic facilities</i>										
Tarra Valley Picnic Area	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	Site severely compacted through overuse. Shelter requires maintenance. Picnic tables and toilets need relocating.
Bulga Picnic Area	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	Shelter and water tank require maintenance; toilets need maintenance and repainting. Former Ranger's office to be removed.
Wallaby Ridge Picnic Area	-	E	-	E	-	P	P	E	-	Information shelter proposed at picnic site.
Blackwarry Fire Tower (adjacent to Park)	-	E	-	E	-	-	P	E	-	Proposed walking track mostly in Park.
End of Lyrebird Ridge Track (B)	-	P	-	-	-	P	E	-	-	Wheelchair accessible.
Moorefields Dairy (C)	-	P	-	P	-	P	P	P	-	Parking for about 5 cars proposed.
Wills Homestead site (D)	-	P	-	-	-	P	P			
Grand Ridge Road east of Bulga Picnic Area (E)	-	P	P	-	-	-	P	P	P	Parking proposed for about 10 cars and 1 bus.
<i>Other facilities</i>										
Bulga suspension bridge	-	-	-	-	-	P	E	-	-	Requires regular maintenance; inspection and works required. Information shelter proposed above bridge.
'Rainforest gully'	-	-	-	-	-	P	P	-	-	Develop near Visitor Centre.

E Existing
P Proposed

(A)-(E) Map location - see figure 3.

5.2.2 Day visits

At present, the major day visitor facilities are the Visitor Centre at Balook, and the Tarra Valley and Bulga picnic areas. Picnicking is one of the main visitor activities. It appears that the Tarra Valley Picnic Area is receiving more use and experiencing more visitor impact than Bulga. The Tarra Valley Picnic Area has become severely compacted through overuse, which has led to increased run-off into the river and some bank erosion.

During the cooler months the existing picnic facilities are adequate, but during peak periods they become overcrowded. Planning for additional picnic area needs to take into consideration both the sensitivity of sites and the need to provide visitors with picnic spots in attractive natural surroundings.

Aims

- Establish and manage day visitor facilities which enhance visitor enjoyment of the Park and are consistent with protecting Park values.
- Relieve pressure on the traditional picnic areas by redesigning the areas and encouraging visitors to use other sites.

Management strategies

- *Provide facilities in accordance with table 2 and figure 3.*
- *Exclude recreation activity from Special Protection Area 1, which is to be added to the Macks Creek Reference Area.*
- *Allow fires only in fireplaces provided.*
- *Prepare and implement site plans to redevelop the Tarra Valley car park and picnic area to improve the flow of traffic and to place picnic tables and toilets in more appropriate locations.*

5.2.3 Visitor Centre

The Visitor Centre, opened in 1990, was constructed under the Commonwealth and State Governments' National Rainforest Conservation Program. The Centre provides a

focus for the Park, interpreting its natural values through displays and activities. The building contains a theatrette, projection room, display area, sales area and administrative facilities. Adjacent parking areas and public toilets have also been built.

The surrounding area has been landscaped and will be planted with local plant species. There is substantial scope for revegetation work around the Centre.

Aims

- Provide a focal point for the Park and divert pressure from more sensitive and traditional recreational sites.
- Provide a headquarters for Park management.
- Involve community groups in the operation of the Visitor Centre.

Management strategies

- *Develop a 'rainforest gully' in the vicinity of the visitor centre displaying local rainforest species on a site accessible to elderly visitors and those with limited mobility.*
- *Develop display themes in accordance with 5.3.*
- *Develop the Visitor Centre as a regional tourist information outlet.*
- *Investigate the development of suitable material for use with the audio-visual equipment within the theatrette.*
- *Encourage the involvement of the Friends group in providing information services in the Visitor Centre.*

5.2.4 Bushwalking

There are three short loop tracks at the major picnic areas in the original Tarra Valley and Bulga National Parks. Although they were constructed to a high standard, visitor pressure was beginning to take its toll on these tracks at the time of amalgamation of the Parks. All

TABLE 3 SUMMARY OF RECREATION ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY	MANAGEMENT ZONES/OVERLAY			
	1	2	3	4
Walking	<i>YC (3.2)</i>	<i>YC (3.2)</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>YC (5.2.2)</i>
Pleasure driving	<i>YC (5.2.1)</i>	<i>YC (5.2.1)</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>
Picnicking	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>
Bird watching	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>YC (5.2.2)</i>
Nature study/appreciation	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>YC (5.2.2)</i>
Orienteering/rogaining	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>
Fishing	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>
Bike riding	<i>YC (5.2.7)</i>	<i>YC (5.2.7)</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>
Horse riding	<i>YC (5.2.7)</i>	<i>YC (5.2.7)</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>
Camping	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>
Lighting of fires	<i>YC (5.2.2)</i>	<i>YC (5.2.2)</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>
Hunting	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>
Dogs	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>
Firewood collection	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>

1	Conservation and Recreation	<i>Yes</i>	Appropriate.
2	Recreation Development	<i>No</i>	Not appropriate.
3	Reference Area	<i>YC</i>	Conditional - refer to relevant section for details.
4	Special Protection Areas		

three tracks are of an easy standard, and pass through similar vegetation. The expanded Park and the anticipated increase in the number of visitors has provided the opportunity to develop further walking tracks which offer more diverse walking experiences.

Under the National Rainforest Conservation Program, two new walking tracks were constructed in 1989 and 1990, one from the Visitor Centre to Bulga Picnic Area and the other (Lyrebird Ridge Track), which is suitable for elderly visitors and those with limited mobility, in the vicinity of the Visitor Centre. Several other walking tracks are proposed for the Park (table 4, figure 3), including one which will link Tarra Valley and the Visitor Centre.

Aims

- Provide a network of tracks that offers walkers a range of experiences and challenge levels.
- Minimise the impact of track construction on the Park's natural and cultural values, and on water quality.

Management strategies

- *Maintain existing walking tracks (table 4) to their present standard.*
- *Construct new walking tracks (table 4), using careful design to achieve the aims set out above.*

TABLE 4 EXISTING AND PROPOSED WALKING TRACKS

NUMBER	PRIORITY	STANDARD AND LENGTH	LOCATION
Existing			
1		A 1.1 km	Tarra Valley Track
2		A 600 m	Bulga Fern Gully Track
3		A 1.6 km	Bulga Scenic Track
4		A 800 m	Visitor Centre to Bulga Picnic Area
5		A 1.3 km	Lyrebird Ridge Track (accessible to wheelchairs)
Proposed			
6	High	B 5 km	Tarra Valley to Visitor Centre
7	Low	B 700 m	Wallaby Ridge Picnic Area to proposed picnic area east of Bulga
8	Medium	A 800 m	Bulga Picnic Area to Wills Homestead site
9	Medium	C 2.2 km	Wallaby Ridge Picnic Area to Wild Cherry (Cooks) Track
10	Low	C 2.6 km	Wild Cherry Track to Blackwarry Fire Tower (most of which is in Park)

1-10 map location - see figure 3

Standard (NPS 1995):

- A Physically well-defined, benched, well-drained, good surface.
- B Well-defined, benched and drained; narrower and rougher than Class A. May have steep sections.
- C Defined through use; may be cleared, benched and drained in sections.

5.2.5 Scenic viewing

A recreation survey (Bone 1987) identified scenic viewing as the major recreational pursuit in the Park, often in combination with picnicking and casual walking.

All the main access routes to the Park are highly scenic, and the Tarra Valley Road is a declared tourist road in its own right.

There are no formal lookouts in the Park but excellent views can be obtained from several vantage points nearby, such as along the Grand Ridge Road and at Blackwarry Fire Tower.

The high scenic values of the fern gullies, rainforest and Mountain Ash can be experienced along walking tracks in the Park, as can Tarra Falls (section 5.2.4).

Aims

- Protect the scenic values of the Park (section 3.4).

- Provide opportunities for scenic viewing as appropriate.

Management strategies

- *Include the location of scenic views in the vicinity of the Park in Park information as appropriate.*
- *Where appropriate, integrate views as features along the proposed walking tracks or within picnic facilities.*

5.2.6 Bush camping

Camping is not presently permitted in the Park; campers stay in private camping parks in Tarra Valley or at Yarram. These campers are the main participants in the Park's holiday program (section 5.3).

Due to the Park's small size and the proximity of private campgrounds, it is not considered necessary to provide camping areas in the Park. Good bush camping opportunities are also available in other parts of the region.

Aim

- Determine visitor expectations with respect to the provision of camping within the Park.

Management strategy

- *Further consider bush camping opportunities within the Park if demand warrants.*

5.2.7 Other activities

Occasionally bicycle and horse riders use the Park and surrounding areas. The Park is a destination for cyclists on day tours from the Latrobe Valley. At present no special developments are proposed for cyclists.

Horse riders visiting the Park generally use Diaper Track. This track lies mostly outside the Park, but forms a small part of the proposed walking track network.

Aim

- Permit a low level of horse and bicycle riding in the Park.

Management strategies

- *Permit horse riders to use Diaper Track and Old Balook-Yarram Road only. Do not provide unloading or overnight camping facilities for horses and riders.*
- *Monitor horse riding levels and impacts.*
- *Allow bicycle riding on vehicle tracks but not on walkers-only tracks.*

5.3 Visitor information, interpretation and education

The Park offers a largely untapped range of interpretive and educational opportunities. These have been significantly enhanced through the injection of resources from the National Rainforest Conservation Program, the expansion of the Park and the formation of the Friends of Tarra-Bulga.

In the past, interpretative facilities and programs in the Park have been limited to guided nature and spotlight walks, film nights in the Tarra Valley caravan parks and historical

photo displays, usually conducted during peak visitor periods.

The opening of the Visitor Centre, construction of information shelters and development of on-site interpretation in a number of locations have opened up a wide range of interpretive possibilities. On-site interpretation has been provided on the Lyrebird Ridge Track, and along the Tarra Valley Track.

At present the only school that regularly uses the Park is Westall Secondary College, a Melbourne school that owns a camp in Balook. Other local schools and private childrens' camps have expressed a wish to include visits to the Park in their curricula and activities.

Aims

- Enhance interpretation opportunities which promote interest in, and inform visitors about, the area's natural and cultural environment.
- Provide targeted educational programs on the natural and cultural values of the Park.

Management strategies

- *Develop an interpretation plan for the Park based on its natural and European cultural values, and forest management in the Strzeleckis.*
- *Prepare, update as appropriate, and ensure the availability of, interpretive publications for the Park.*
- *Provide three new information shelters:*
 - *on the track above the Bulga suspension bridge;*
 - *at the Wallaby Ridge Picnic Area;*
 - *along the walking track from Tarra Valley to the Visitor Centre.*
- *Provide new on-site interpretation:*
 - *along the Bulga Fern Gully Track;*
 - *at the Wills Homestead Picnic Area;*
 - *at Moorefields Dairy;*
 - *on the track from the Visitor Centre to Bulga Picnic Area.*

- *Provide adequate visitor orientation information and safety messages at key visitor nodes.*
- *Provide enhanced interpretation programs to the public during the Christmas and Easter holiday periods.*
- *Establish and implement monitoring and maintenance schedules for all interpretive facilities.*
- *Undertake regular evaluation of information and interpretation programs related to the Park.*
- *Encourage school and community groups to use the Park for environmental studies.*
- *Provide opportunities for educational activities to be carried out in the more disturbed areas.*

5.4 Commercial tourism operations

The Park, with its Visitor Centre, variety of high standard walking tracks and interpretation, offers excellent opportunities for nature-based tourism in the Strzeleckis.

The Park is used by several commercial tour operators who offer a range of activities and experiences for tour groups and visitors to the Park. Current activities include four-wheel drive tours, coach tours, bushwalking and horse riding.

Well-organised tour groups can play an important role in introducing visitors to the Park and interpreting its values.

Aim

- Encourage tourism services by commercial operators, consistent with Park management objectives.

Management strategies

- *Work with commercial operators to provide services, facilities and information for visitors and to protect Park values.*
- *Assist commercial tour operators in developing itineraries, knowledge about the Park and its values, and sustainable practices.*
- *Liaise closely with commercial tour permit holders.*

5.5 Public safety

Potential hazards within the Park include falling limbs from trees, and wildfire during the drier times of the year.

The Victoria Police is responsible for search and rescue operations. Within the Park these operations would usually also involve NRE, the State Emergency Service and other agencies.

Aims

- Promote public safety in using the Park.
- Make Park staff available to assist in emergency situations and co-operate with emergency service organisations.

Management strategies

- *Encourage visitors to seek information on activities they intend to undertake in the Park, particularly the less accessible parts.*
- *Implement risk mitigation programs as required. Undertake regular inspection of facilities to ensure they are maintained in a safe condition.*

6 COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT

6.1 Friends and volunteers

A Friends group for Tarra-Bulga National Park was formed in late 1994. This group, together with the Balook and Associated Districts Residents Association, the Latrobe Valley Field Naturalists Club, the Army Reserve, the Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers, schools and other interested groups or individuals have all made valuable contributions to Park management projects.

Aims

- Encourage the support and assistance of the Friends group.
- Assist volunteer groups to undertake appropriate management tasks in the Park.

Management strategies

- *Develop a long-term volunteer strategy for the Park that uses the skills and interests of volunteer groups in carrying out appropriate actions from this Plan.*
- *Encourage and assist volunteer groups and maintain regular communication between the Department and the Friends group.*

6.2 Community awareness and Park neighbours

Most of the Park is surrounded by private AMCOR holdings and State forest. Other Park neighbours primarily own small holdings and are generally involved in the agricultural industry. The township of Balook is located centrally to the Park, and a number of permanent residents live in close proximity to the Park.

Aims

- Increase public awareness of management activities including pest plant and animal control, revegetation of degraded sections of the Park, and the conservation of threatened species.
- Encourage conservation and sound land management practices on private land adjoining the Park.

Management strategies

- *Maintain liaison with local community groups and landholders, and as appropriate involve them in relevant aspects of planning and management of the Park.*
- *Apply, and encourage the application of, the Good Neighbour Policy to management issues on or near the boundary of the Park.*

7 OTHER ISSUES

7.1 Authorised uses

A number of government and commercial agencies maintain facilities within the Park. They include Telstra underground cables, Eastern Energy power lines and a Rural Water Corporation (RWC) stream gauging station on Middle Creek.

Telstra underground cables are located beneath unused road reserves to the west of the Bulga Picnic Area. An Eastern Energy 22kV overhead transmission line runs along an easement near the northern boundary of the APM Forests land exchange corridor. These utilities present few maintenance problems, and access is readily available to both sites.

Eastern Energy maintains a 60-metre wide cleared easement along its transmission line, and this has a significant visual impact. However, the easement passes through an area undergoing reforestation, which will decrease the visual impact of the transmission line. Consent under the National Parks Act is required for maintenance works on the powerline and easement.

Southern Rural Water (SRW) has a stream gauging station on Middle Creek. Access is by a track through private property. Use of this station by SRW staff is minimal and causes little conflict with the natural values of the area.

Aims

- Ensure appropriate use and licensing of existing public utilities and occupancies.
- Allow maintenance of existing public utilities in the Park, minimising disturbance and inconvenience to Park visitors.

Management strategies

- *Liaise with Eastern Energy to establish clearing practices for the powerline easement that minimise its impact on the landscape.*
- *Pursue with Eastern Energy any opportunities to relocate powerlines to outside the Park.*

- *When works to Telstra cables are required on the Grand Ridge Road and Blackwarry Scenic Road, seek the co-operation of the relevant Telstra office to minimise the impact on the visual environment.*
- *Ensure existing public utilities are covered by section 27 consents under the National Parks Act, and authorise access as necessary.*

7.2 Boundaries and adjacent uses

The Park has a relatively lengthy and irregular boundary which in many places cannot be identified by roads or geographical features.

The south-western portion of the Park consists of a narrow strip encompassing the Tarra River and Tarra Valley Road, 150-350 metres wide, extending from the Tarra Valley car park to the junction of the Tarra River and Middle Creek (figure 1).

Inclusion of part of the hillside west from the Tarra River to the ridge which defines the Middle Creek and Tarra River catchments would assist in consolidating this part of the Park. The area involved is 108 ha; this covers the total area viewed from the Tarra Valley Road in this vicinity and contains a number of important landscape features. Many visitors incorrectly assume that the viewshed of the road is already within the Park.

The area is now State forest, recommended for hardwood production by the LCC (1982). Like most land in the eastern Strzeleckis, this area was cleared for agriculture early this century. The vegetation now present is 'moderately modified' with native sub-canopy and understorey species forming a mosaic of low open forests and scrubs. The area does not contain significant timber resources.

A buffer of natural vegetation is also proposed within the State forest on the eastern side of the road, to further protect the scenic values of the Tarra Valley Road.

There are several unused road reserves currently excluded from the Park which could be considered for inclusion.

Private lands may contain critical areas which would aid in rainforest preservation or restoration, and assist boundary rationalisation.

CA 15A, Parish of Bulga (0.6 ha), opposite the Bulga Guest House, is separated from the main area of the Park by the Grand Ridge Road and is virtually all cleared pasture.

Aims

- Rationalise the Park boundary to create more easily identifiable and manageable land units.
- Enhance the conservation value of the Park by purchase of private land and re-designation of public land as the opportunity arises.

Management strategies

- *Liaise with the Forests Service about establishing a landscape buffer in the State forest on the eastern side of the Tarra River.*
- *Investigate the possibility of adding the following areas to the Park:*
 - *the viewshed on the western side of the Tarra River;*
 - *a landscape buffer on the east side of the Tarra Valley Road;*
 - *unused road reserves.*
- *Consider excising CA15A, Parish of Bulga from the Park.*
- *As the opportunity arises and in accord with statewide priorities, seek to purchase adjacent land which protects or contributes to the protection of rainforest, for incorporation into the Park.*

8 IMPLEMENTATION

A three-year rolling implementation program will be prepared for the Park to ensure efficient implementation of this Plan. Priority management directions are identified in table 5 as an initial step in this process.

TABLE 5 PRIORITY MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

MANAGEMENT STRATEGY	SECTION IN PLAN
Resource conservation	
Prepare and implement a revegetation plan.	3.2
Rehabilitate degraded areas.	3.2, 3.3
Liaise with Government authorities about public utilities within Park.	7.1
Rationalise irregular boundaries.	7.2
Park protection	
Implement the Yarram Region Fire Protection Plan for the Park.	4.1
Prepare and implement a pest plant control program.	4.2
Implement a control program for feral goats, foxes and cats.	4.2
The Park visit	
Promote the Park as regional/State tourist destination.	5.1
Develop and maintain visitor facilities.	5.2.2, 5.2.3, 5.2.4, 5.3, 5.4
Develop the walking track network.	5.2.2, 5.2.4
Enhance the Visitor Centre.	5.2.3
Provide Park information and interpretation.	5.1, 5.3
Monitoring and research	
Encourage survey and research on Park fauna.	3.3
Assess visitor use and requirements at visitor sites throughout the Park.	5.1, 5.2

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APPENDIX I SIGNIFICANT FAUNA

STATUS	SPECIES	COMMENTS AND ECOLOGICAL REQUIREMENTS
MAMMALS		
Regional significance		
-	Platypus (<i>Ornithorhynchus anatinus</i>)	Requires steep-sided rivers with deep pools in which to feed. Feeds on small and large invertebrates and breeds in remote and quiet areas. (Mansergh & Norris 1982).
-	Greater Glider (<i>Petauroides volans</i>)	Inhabits open eucalypt forests, preferring extensive areas. Nests in mature trees with hollows, feeds on eucalypt leaves.
(Unconfirmed reports)		
R	Broad-toothed Rat (<i>Mastacomys fuscus</i>)	Requires dense undergrowth in wet sclerophyll forests. One specimen found in western corner of Bulga (Walker 1979). Herbaceous species. May be rare because of unsuitable habitat or predation by foxes and cats.
*R/C	Common Bent-wing Bat (<i>Miniopterus schreibersii</i>)	Sighted once on the southern boundary of the Park (Walker 1979). Requires caves or mine shafts, but will occasionally use buildings. Found in forested areas; feeds on insects above the canopy.
-	Potoroo (<i>Potorous</i> sp.)	Last sighted in 1928 (Galbraith 1928). Walker (1979) found diggings and scats, indicating possible presence. (Mansergh & Norris 1982).
-	Yellow-bellied Glider (<i>Petaurus australis</i>)	Unconfirmed records, but species is considered to be extinct in South Gippsland Hills. (Mansergh & Norris 1982)
BIRDS		
State significance		
*R	Sooty Owl (<i>Tyto tenebricosa</i>)	Needs large areas of continuous forest; inhabits rainforests and Mountain Ash forests. Sedentary and territorial, usually nests and roosts in large hollow eucalypts, rarely in the tops of tree-ferns. Feeds on nocturnal animals.
R	Grey Goshawk (<i>Accipiter novaehollandiae</i>)	Rare in Central Gippsland (Mansergh & Norris 1982), but common in coastal rainforest; otherwise rare and spasmodic in Victoria. Nest is a stick structure lined with eucalypt leaves used by the birds year after year. Feeds mainly on small birds and some large insects.
*R	Powerful Owl (<i>Ninox strenua</i>)	Thought to inhabit Tarra Valley at the time of Walker's survey. Sedentary with large permanent territories; probably mates for life. Nests in large tree holes, hunting at night. Roosts during the day in dense foliage, often along streams between forest ridges. Feeds mainly on possums and gliders (Mansergh & Norris 1982).

STATUS	SPECIES	COMMENTS AND ECOLOGICAL REQUIREMENTS
BIRDS		
State significance (cont.)		
R	Barking Owl (<i>Ninox connivens</i>)	Wide but dispersed distribution in Victoria (Mansergh & Norris 1982). Resident in the southern corner of Tarra Valley in 1977. Feeds on mammals, birds and insects; nests in hollow trees.
Regional significance		
-	Collared Sparrowhawk (<i>Accipiter cirrhocephalus</i>)	Rare in Central Gippsland (Mansergh & Norris 1982), but recorded in 1979 by Norris, Gilmore and Menkhorst in wattle regrowth. During Walker's 1977–79 survey one bird was observed hunting beneath the canopy along the Tarra River. Feeds on small birds. Nest is similar to Grey Goshawks.
-	Black-faced Monarch (<i>Monarcha melanopsis</i>)	Rare in Gippsland west of the Snowy River (Mansergh & Norris 1982; Norris, Ahern, Belcher, Mansergh, Temby & Welsh 1983). Requires extensive forest with tall dense mid-storey shrubs such as Silver Wattle and tree-ferns. Insectivorous. Nests in low trees or tall shrubs. Tarra Valley has the wet gullies in tall open forest needed by this species.
-	Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo (<i>Calyptorhynchus funereus</i>)	Summer migrant to the Park. Nests in tree hollows and feeds in trees and shrubs, particularly in Silver Wattle.
-	Large-billed Scrubwren (<i>Sericornis magnirostris</i>)	Inhabits gully environments, feeding from branches of tall shrubs and vines (Mansergh & Norris 1982).
-	Australian King-Parrot (<i>Alisterus scapularis</i>)	Inhabits eucalypt and rainforest gullies. Common in the Strzeleckis last century, but now rarely seen. Feeds in canopies of trees and shrubs, nesting in deep hollows in tall senescent eucalypts.
(Unconfirmed report)		
-	Peregrine Falcon (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>)	Forested habitat, nests in tree hollows or in stick nests on cliffs. Hunts over open areas.
Local significance		
-	Pink Robin (<i>Petroica rodinogaster</i>)	Breeds and nests in rainforest gullies, using rainforest material to construct nest. Walker (1979) recorded it nesting in 1978.

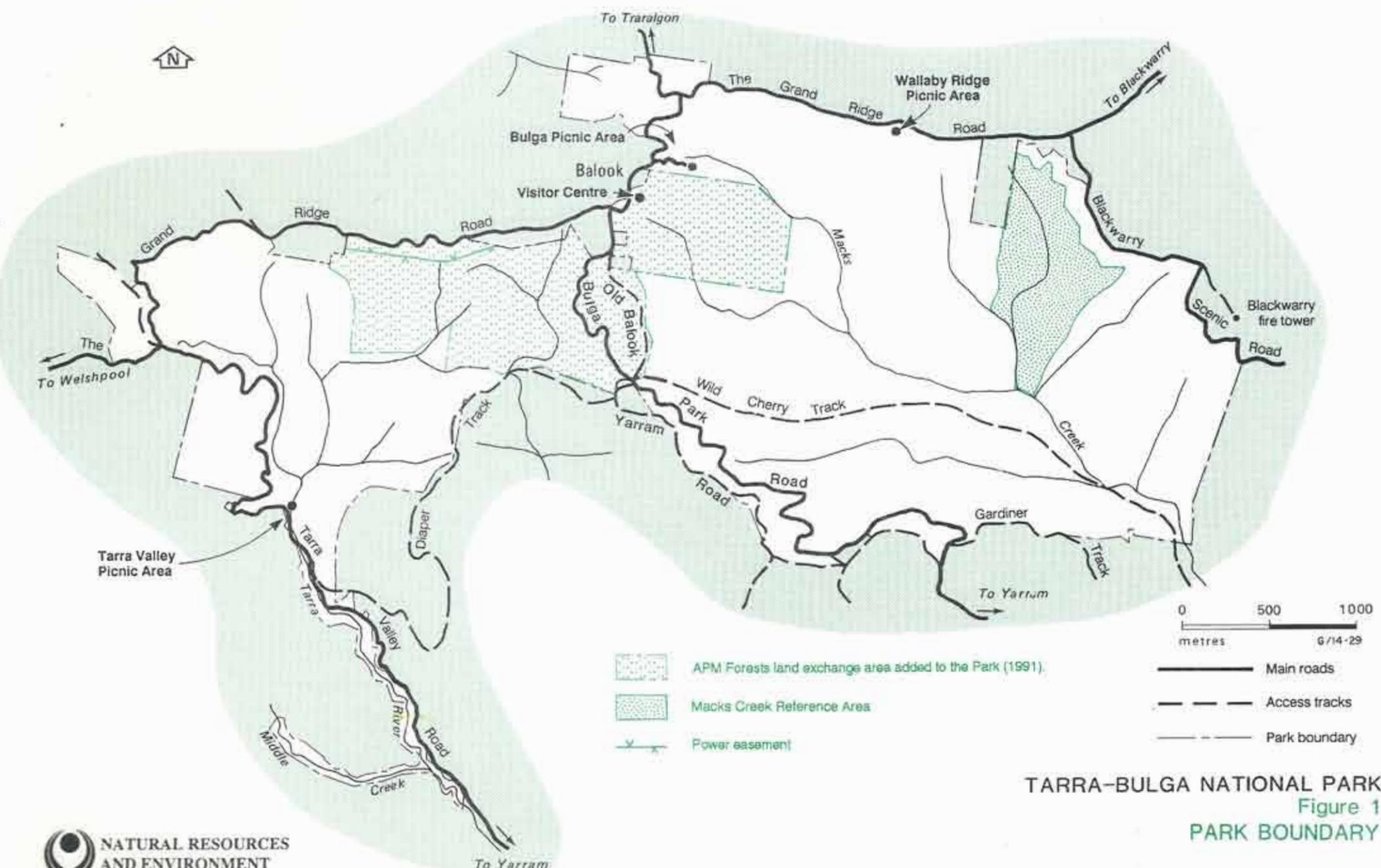
STATUS	SPECIES	COMMENTS AND ECOLOGICAL REQUIREMENTS
REPTILES		
Regional significance		
-	Spencer's Skink (<i>Pseudomoia spenceri</i>)	Uncommon but widespread throughout the eastern highlands and South Gippsland hills (Mansergh & Norris 1982). Basks on large dead trees, living in cracks.
(Unconfirmed report)		
-	Coventry's Skink (<i>Leiopisma coventryi</i>)	Inhabits forest litter, foraging beneath logs and forest debris for insects.
FRESHWATER FISH		
State significance		
*Vul, (V)	Australian Grayling (<i>Prototroctes maraena</i>)	Prefers cool, clear waters with a gravel substrate and alternating pools and riffles.
R	Spotted Galaxias (<i>Galaxias truttaceus</i>)	Sensitive to siltation and competition from introduced trout. Properly designed road culverts allow the free passage of fish through shallow water to swamps and minor streams.
R	Striped Gudgeon (<i>Gobiomorphus australis</i>)	The only record from the area is from the Tarra River, outside Park. Found near submerged rocks, logs and vegetation.

STATUS (CNR 1995) :

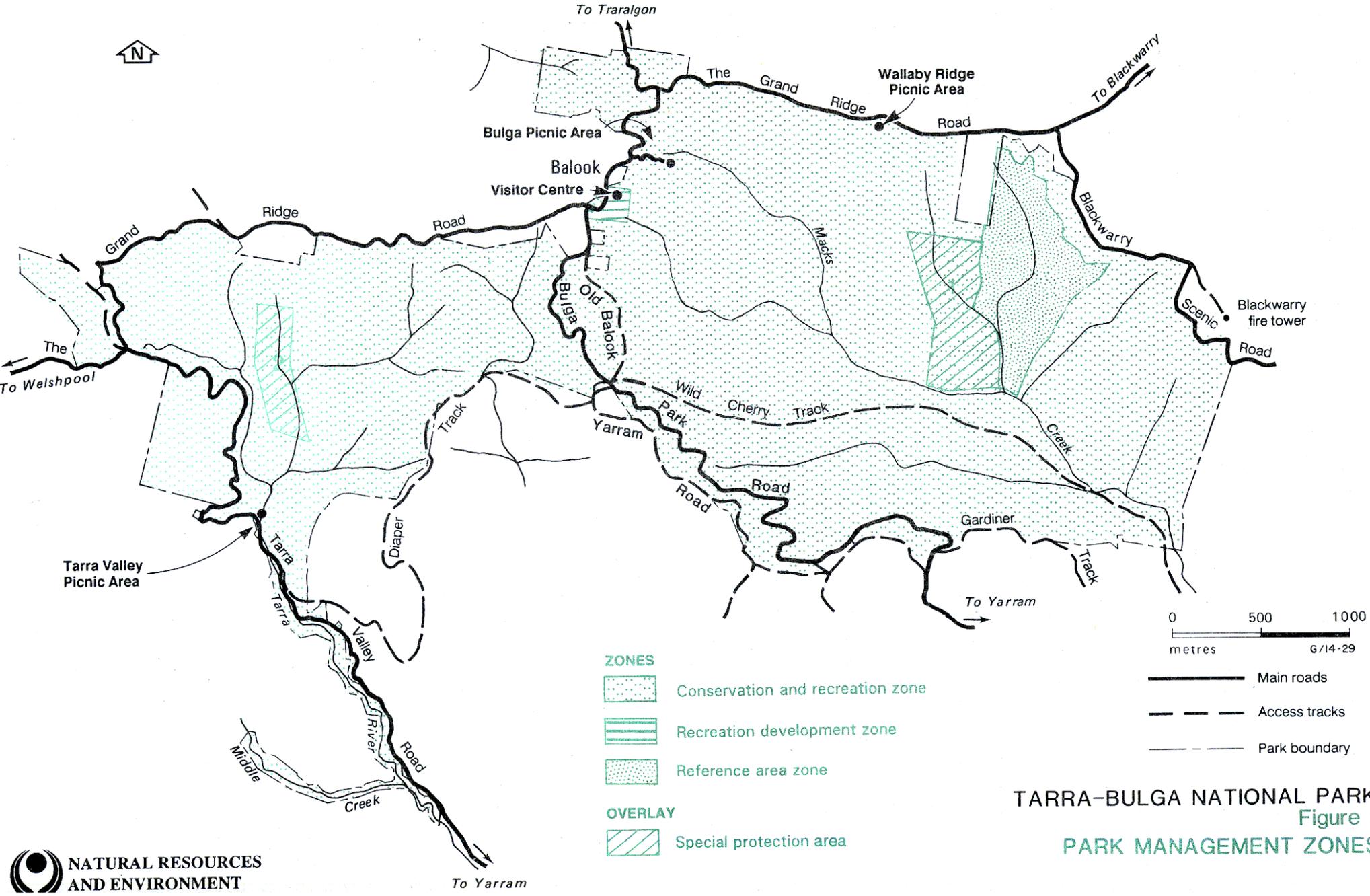
- R Rare in Victoria
- R/C Restricted Colonial Breeding or Roosting sites in Victoria
- Vul Vulnerable in Victoria
- (V) Classified as Vulnerable under the *Endangered Species Protection Act 1992* (Cwlth)
- * Listed on Schedule Two of the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act

APPENDIX 2 WEED CONTROL REQUIREMENTS

SPECIES	OCCURRENCE	CONTROL
Ragwort (<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>)	Extensive along roads and tracks.	Spray with herbicide; hand pull where appropriate.
Cut-leaf Bramble (<i>Rubus laciniatus</i>)	Common but not abundant in open areas.	Spray with herbicide. Do not use 'Brushoff' where adjacent to tree ferns or bracken.
Blackberry (<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> sp. agg.)	Common and abundant, particularly in heavily modified communities.	Spray with herbicide. Do not use 'Brushoff' where adjacent to tree ferns or bracken.
Spear Thistle (<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>)	Heavy infestations on roads and tracks, and in open areas on streams.	Spray with herbicide where unlikely to damage stream ecology. Hand pull along stream banks.
English Ivy (<i>Hedera helix</i>)	Restricted occurrence in Tarra Valley.	Hand pull.
Sycamore Maple (<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>)	Small stand in Tarra Valley, having potential to spread.	Use 'drill and fill' method, (Buchanan 1989).
Tutsan (<i>Hypericum androsaemum</i>)	Abundant localised growth in lower Tarra Valley.	Hand pull or apply herbicide.
Fuchsia (<i>Fuchsia</i> spp.)	Abundant localised riparian growth, lower Tarra Valley.	Apply herbicide where there is not a threat to stream ecology. Cut and paint stems where adjacent to streams.
Sweet Pittosporum (<i>Pittosporum undulatum</i>)	Scattered, occurring as mature trees in open forest communities. Not currently abundant but has capacity to become so.	Use 'drill and fill' method. Use fire where practicable.
Willow (<i>Salix</i> spp.)	Upper reaches of Macks Creek.	Use 'drill and fill' method.



TARRA-BULGA NATIONAL PARK
 Figure 1
 PARK BOUNDARY



TARRA-BULGA NATIONAL PARK
 Figure 2
 PARK MANAGEMENT ZONES

