

Morwell National Park

Visitor Guide



Situated in the northern foothills of the Strzelecki Ranges, this peaceful park features a staggering array of plant and animal species. Walk through the varied bushland to uncover something special such as powerful Lyrebird mimicry or a delicate Pink Finger orchid.



Getting there

The park is situated 16km south of Morwell and is reached via Churchill or Yinnar. It is a pleasant two-hour drive from Melbourne.

Things to see and do

Walking

The best way to enjoy Morwell National Park is to walk through it. Fosters Gully Nature Walk and Stringybark Ridge Track depart from the Kerry Road picnic area. Interesting walks can also be found in the Billys Creek area of the park.



Billys Creek Track – 1.5km, 30 minutes one way

From Junction Road car park to But But Track, this is a pleasant walk along the creek flats beside Billys Creek, passing through areas which have been revegetated over the past 20 years. Some excellent remnant vegetation can also be seen along the creek banks, including Manna Gum, Blue Gum and the vulnerable Strzelecki Gum.



Weir Track – 800m, 15 minutes one way

From But But Track to Billys Creek Weir this track crosses several footbridges over the creek and passes through some superb stands of Manna Gum before arriving at the old weir.



Lodge Track – 2km, 40 minutes one way

From Billys Creek Weir to Morans Road this track climbs steeply up a ridge through a variety of forest types containing Blue Gum, Mountain Grey Gum, Messmate and Apple Box (But But). A strenuous walk, but the views make it worthwhile.



Clematis Track – 1.2km, 30 minutes one way

From Billys Creek to Lodge Track and climbing through a damper forest type which contains Blackwoods and Musk Daisy Bush, this track joins Lodge Track half way up on its

climb to Morans Road, but is not quite as steep. Clematis and Wonga Vine can be seen flowering profusely along this track in early spring.



Blue Gum Hill Track – 3km, 1 hour return

Blue Gum Hill Track starts a short distance along Lodge Track, and then follows a small creek for 500m before beginning the climb up Blue Gum Hill. Looking out over Billys Creek and the surrounding steep hills, the Latrobe Valley can be seen in the distance.

Return via the same route or take the track to the west, which follows a steep spur down to Billys Creek and back to the weir.



Zig Zag Track – 1.2km, 30 minutes one way

From Weir Track to Jumbuck Road, this is an alternative route into the weir area from Jumbuck Road.



Fosters Gully Nature Walk – 2.3km, 1 hour circuit

Take a journey of discovery along the Fosters Gully Nature Walk where the forests and undergrowth provide food and shelter for many species of birds and animals. If you are quiet you may be able to see and hear the wildlife living in the park. The walk commences at the Kerry Road picnic area.

As you walk along the track, the numbers in this guide refer to pegs along the track.

1. Forest of the future

Here, on the left of the track you can see young Varnish Wattles and Grey Gums that have regenerated on an area cleared in 1970.

This area is a valuable habitat for small native mammals such as bush rats and marsupial mice. A short distance along, turn right at the firebreak, then left at the Fosters Gully sign.

2. Forest homes and storeys

This huge Mountain Grey Gum is probably more than 200 years old. It is 6.5m in circumference and nearly 60m high. Mature or over-mature trees like this one have numerous

holes where branches have broken off. Birds such as Rosellas, and mammals like Brush-tailed Possums, make their homes in the hollows.

In this forest, Grey and Blue Gums form the canopy or upper level of vegetation. Below this are Pittosporum, Hazel Pomaderris, Blanketleaf and other trees of medium height. Then come lower-growing plants such as Treeferns, Cassinia and creepers which can grow in the heavy shade of the taller species, and finally ground plants like ferns and mosses. These vegetation levels are often called storeys.

3. Land of the Lyrebird

You have now entered the habitat of the superb Lyrebird. Lyrebirds are ground-feeding birds, feeding on worms, snails and insects found in the forest litter. You will probably see places along the track where they have been scratching in the soil. It is the male Lyrebird which has a varied and powerful song – including the mimicry of other bird songs.

4. Different trees

Here another eucalypt grows – the Messmate. Its name was given in Captain Cook's day and can be readily identified by its leaves, which form an oblique angle across the stem. The scratching on this and other trees in the park is caused by either Ring-tailed possums building nests or Sugar-gliders gliding from tree to tree in search of sap, nectar and insects living in the trees.

5. Old quarry

The area on the left was used as a sand and gravel quarry in the 1920s, but the scars of mining have since been healed by nature.

Spend a little time here on the seats and you should see and hear some of the park's rich birdlife like Honey-eaters, Eastern Spinebills and White-throated Tree-creepers.

About 150m further along the track, turn right at the sign to Lyndon's Clearing.

6. Lyndon's Clearing

This is a good place for lunch at the table provided, or you can just sit back on the seats and watch the birds. Wedge-tailed Eagles can often be seen high overhead and many small bush birds frequent the clearing. Lyndon's Clearing is named after Mrs Ellen Lyndon of Leongatha, who previously lived on a farm near here. Her studies of the plant and animal life of this forest established its significance, and together with the Latrobe Valley Field Naturalists Club she was instrumental in having the park proclaimed in 1967.

7. Ferns and sedge

This damp south-facing area is a home to ferns including Gristle Fern, and Soft and Rough Tree Ferns.

8. Black stump

The tall burnt stump here is probably a relic of the bush fires which burnt large areas of Strzelecki State Forest in 1946. Areas like Fosters Gully were burnt only once every two or three hundred years and natural regeneration returned the forest to its former glory.

9. Aspect

You can rest on the seat here and look across the gully. The effects of the position of the sun or aspect can be plainly seen. The slope you are climbing faces south, so is sheltered from direct sunlight and northerly winds. It supports shade-loving species such as ferns and Victorian Christmas Bush.

Across the gully, the slope faces north and receives full sunlight for most of the year. The canopy species of Grey Gum and Blue Gum are still the same, but the understorey species, mainly bracken and grasses, are much sparser.

10. Messmate ahoy!

You have now left the Grey Gum forest of the gully and are entering the drier Stringybark forest of the higher slopes. The most common tree here is the Messmate. Along this part of the track in winter, many kinds of fungi and mosses can be seen on the logs and ground.

11. Cherry Ballart

The Cherry Ballart is not a eucalypt but a common species in Victorian Stringybark forests. It can be recognised by the 'cherry' fruit growing at the end of swollen stems and obtains some of its nutrients from the roots of nearby plants.

As you follow the trail, look out for native orchids: Pink Fingers and Waxlips in the spring; Hyacinth orchids and Cinnamon Bells in the summer; and Parson's Bands and Autumn Bird orchids in the autumn. They thrive in this light sandy soil and open forest.

12. Firebreak

This wide firebreak is not a particularly attractive feature of the park, but it is a necessary part of park management. It helps to prevent fires from entering the park and protects neighbouring private properties from fire.

Here you will also see a different tree species. It is an Apple Box or But But, found in forests in Gippsland and north-eastern Victoria.

Return down the hill to the picnic area, the start of the walk.



Grand Strzelecki Track – 100km, 3-4 days, or 1-2 days broken into smaller sections

Go further afield to explore the beauty of the Strzelecki Ranges and embark on the Grand Strzelecki Track.

Over 100km of walking tracks connecting two National Parks – Morwell and Tarra-Bulga – you will traverse changing landscapes including valleys, farmlands, old and regrowth forests, bushfire regeneration and managed forests.

For further details visit www.grandstrzeleckitrack.org.au/

Billys Creek

The Billys Creek area is one of great natural beauty with high scenic values and relics of past land uses. Areas of remnant Strzelecki Ranges vegetation can be seen, along with previously degraded areas which have been rehabilitated. Over 30,000 trees have been planted on the creek flats between Junction Road and the Billys Creek weir. Recreational activities include picnicking, bird watching, nature study and bushwalking.

Plants and wildlife

The vegetation varies from dry eucalypt forest in the west to heavily timbered fern gullies along the streams, lined with tall Mountain Grey Gums and Blackwood trees. Many species of orchids can be found, from the tiny Bird Orchids of autumn to the summer flowering Hyacinth Orchid, the largest ground orchid in Victoria. The rare Butterfly Orchid also occurs in the park.

Nearly 100 species of native birds have been identified so far. Yellow Robins, Grey Shrikethrushes and Crimson Rosellas are often seen, and Superb Lyrebirds can be heard at times. Koalas, wallabies, kangaroos, possums and many smaller mammals are common. Reptiles seen in the park include Black, Copperhead and Tiger snakes, and several lizard species including goanna.

Facilities

Picnic tables, a gas barbecue, information and toilets can be found at the Kerry Road picnic area. Picnic tables are also available at Lyndons Clearing and Billys Creek. Camping is not permitted. Accommodation is available in Churchill or Morwell.

Help us look after this magnificent park

- Firearms, dogs, cats and other pets are not permitted in the park.
- All plants, animals, other natural features and cultural sites are protected and must not be disturbed or removed.
- Feeding wildlife is bad for their health. It is an offence to feed or leave food where it is accessible to wildlife. Penalties apply. Store all food securely and properly dispose of all rubbish, including food scraps.

Be prepared and stay safe

Morwell National Park is in the West and South Gippsland fire district. Bushfire safety is a personal responsibility. Anyone entering parks and forests during the bushfire season needs to stay aware of forecast weather conditions. Check the Fire Danger Rating and for days of Total Fire Ban at www.emergency.vic.gov.au, on the VicEmergency smartphone app or call the VicEmergency Hotline on 1800 226 226.

No fires may be lit on Total Fire Ban days. On Code Red Fire Danger Rating days this park will be closed for public safety. Closure signs will be erected but do not expect an official warning. Check the latest conditions at www.parks.vic.gov.au or by calling 13 1963.

For emergency assistance call Triple Zero (000). If there is a green emergency marker sign near you, read the information on the marker to the operator.