

Braeside Park

Self Guided Heathland Trail



Visitor Guide

This self guided heathland trail has been designed to encourage you to use all your senses to learn about the environment here at Braeside Park. The loop runs off the northern part of the Red Gum Trail, east of the Eastern Picnic Ground and is a nice, short stroll suitable for all ages. Along the track you will find eight numbered posts, which lead you through a number of different landscapes. Enjoy your walk!

1. A grain of sand

Look down - what is under your feet? Pick up some soil and rub it in your hands.

You are standing on sand which was once part of a thin line of sand dunes, separating the sea from a 5000 hectare wetland known as the Carrum Carrum Swamp. When the waters rose at the closing of the last ice age, some 8000-9000 years ago, a major geological faulting occurred, forming Port Phillip Bay. The receding seas left the Carrum Carrum Swamp which stretched from Dandenong to Mordialloc and along to Frankston.

2. Anyone for tea?

The trees in front of you are a type of banksia (*Banksia marginata*), commonly known as Coast Banksia. Notice the unusual cones. The Bunurong Aboriginal people who roamed the area prior to European settlement, used the nectar from the banksia cones to make tea. They also made paint brushes from the bristly parts of the flowers.

3. Welcome to the neighbourhood

Footprints in the sand, diggings on the side. Many different native and introduced animals live at Braeside Park. See if you can spot their footprints in the sand. At the sides of the trails, you will see diggings. Many of these are caused by the introduced rabbit. You may also see their scats (droppings).

If you are very quiet, you may see the Short-beaked Echidna, a native animal that uses its claws and 18cm tongue to search out ants and termites. It also digs at the side of the trail. Shhh, you may catch a glimpse of one as it waddles along!



Short-beaked Echidna ©MT

4. A home among the gum trees

Can you see the hollow in the tree to your left? It takes between 60 and 140 years for a tree to form a hollow, which many of our native animals rely on for shelter and nesting.

The trees around you are Coastal Manna Gum (*Eucalyptus pryoriana*) and River Red Gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*). The Manna Gums thrive in well drained sandy soils, whilst the Red Gums prefer heavier, wetter clay. Red Gum is often used for fence posts and house stumps because the wood tolerates wet conditions well. The Bunurong Aboriginal people cut out the bark for canoes, shields and other implements. This did not kill the tree, but left a scar. These trees are culturally significant to the Aboriginal people as part of their heritage.

5. Cheap transport

On your right is a plant called Yorkshire Fog Grass. This plant is growing in the wrong place - it is a weed, not a native plant, and is not controlled by predators (such as caterpillars or grasshoppers) or by grazing animals.

Weeds are transported by the wind, carried by birds and animals (either on their bodies or in droppings) or included in mud that has stuck to cars, equipment and even people's shoes.



For further information

Parks Victoria
Information Centre
Call 13 1963

or visit the
Parks Victoria website
www.parkweb.vic.gov.au

Caring for the environment

Help us look after this park by remembering these guidelines:

Take all rubbish home with you

Dogs, cats and horses are not permitted in the park

Portable gas barbeques only

All native plants and animals are protected

Leave the park as you find it

Please don't throw this park note away. Keep it, return it for others to use, or recycle it

On days of Total Fire Ban

No fires may be lit
Park barbeques do not operate

Portable barbecues are not permitted

As you continue, try to identify some other weeds that occur in the park, such as Scotch Thistle, Blackberry and Deadly Nightshade.



Scotch Thistle

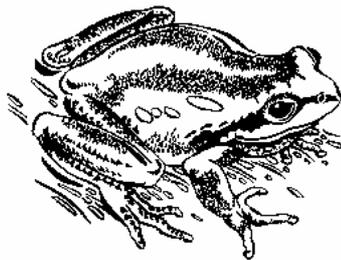
6. Up in smoke

In front of you is an area which has been subject to numerous fires. Used carefully, fire is an accepted management tool to regenerate areas of the heathland. The Aboriginal people used fire to clear pockets of land to promote the growth of young foliage and grasses, which, in turn, attracted kangaroos and other native animals that were a source of food.

Occasional fire can promote germination of seeds stored in the soil, and nutrient-rich ash fertilises the young plants. The area of heathland that you are now in has been regenerated naturally from seeds stored in the soil germinated with the assistance of the fires that have burnt this area.

7. Waders, warblers and wanderers

The water in front of you is part of a series of ponds, swamps, weirs and channels that have been constructed via the conversion of a natural drainage line, the Dingley Drain. These ponds provide ideal habitat for water loving plants, birds, frogs and mini-beasts. How many types of birds can you see? Are the birds building nests, looking for food, sleeping or just basking in the sun?



Brown Tree Frog ©MT

8. The last stand

In front of you is the Heathland Conservation Zone which covers 45 hectares. This area is open to the public only in the company of a ranger. It contains the greatest diversity of species of any plant community in the park, containing plant species now rare or extinct in metropolitan Melbourne, such as orchids and Snowgums.

The heathland area is also rich in animal life, providing the only remnant habitat in the local area for gliders, bats and Common Brushtail and Ringtail Possums. Being nocturnal they can be seen at night more often than during the day.



Common Ringtail Possum ©MT

Do not feed the wildlife!

You may notice that the ducks at this pond waddle over as you approach. They are expecting you to feed them, but *for the sake of the ducks*, we ask you to refrain from feeding them so they can remain healthy and happy.

We hope that you have enjoyed the Heathland Trail. Please come back soon to view the seasonal changes that occur in the park.

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