

Gunbower National Park



Visitor Guide

The 8892ha Gunbower National Park is a unique and diverse wonderland of waterbirds, wildlife and aquatic plants. With a backdrop of the Murray River, majestic River Red Gums and sandy beaches, the park is ideal for camping and a range of water-based recreation.



The Victorian Government created Gunbower National Park, along with other new and expanded parks, in June 2010 to protect and enhance the River Red Gum forests in Victoria.

River Red Gum forests have high natural, cultural and economic values. These forests are under increasing pressure from climate change, drought and reduced water flows in the northern rivers.

Protecting this precious environment relies on balancing the economic and recreational activities with preserving its natural beauty and values.

Enjoying the park

Walking – There are many short and long walks throughout the area. A new 14km walking track near Koondrook will take you past the Eagle Tree and a number of cultural sites. Contact the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) for further information.

Scenic drives – A leisurely half day drive, starting at Cohuna links a number of historical, cultural and ecological sites (see overleaf).

Fishing - The river is a breeding ground for native fish species such as Murray Cod and Golden Perch.

A current NSW Freshwater Recreation Fishing Licence is required for the Murray River. A Victorian Recreational Fishing Licence is required for fishing in waters south of the Murray River.

Camping - Basic bush camping is available alongside the Murray River and Gunbower Creek on the island.

Boating and canoeing - The five kilometre canoe trail at Safes Lagoon near Koondrook in the adjacent State Forest will take about two hours to complete (return). Bring your own canoe, and check water levels and access before you go. See DSE trail brochure for information.

Swimming is popular, particularly at the numerous sandy river bend beaches.

Note: Take care when swimming - cold water and fast currents can be hazardous and there may be submerged logs. Diving or jumping into the water can be dangerous.

A rich history

Gunbower Island was frequented by two clans - the Barapa Barapa and the Yorta Yorta.

The Barapa Barapa and Yorta Yorta people have long connections with the area now known as Gunbower National Park. The area was known as Kanbowro – twisting and tortuous like the necks of the black swans. When exploring you may discover shell middens (kitchen hearths), burial sites and scar trees. These Australian heritage sites are protected by law.

The first European settlement occurred at Gunnawarra station where squatters grazed sheep and cattle. In the early 1870s the value of the River Red Gum timber was realised and the timber industry began. Timber was first used for railway sleepers to expand the rail network. Log transport was expensive and time consuming so timber cutters selected trees closest to the river.

Be fire ready and stay safe

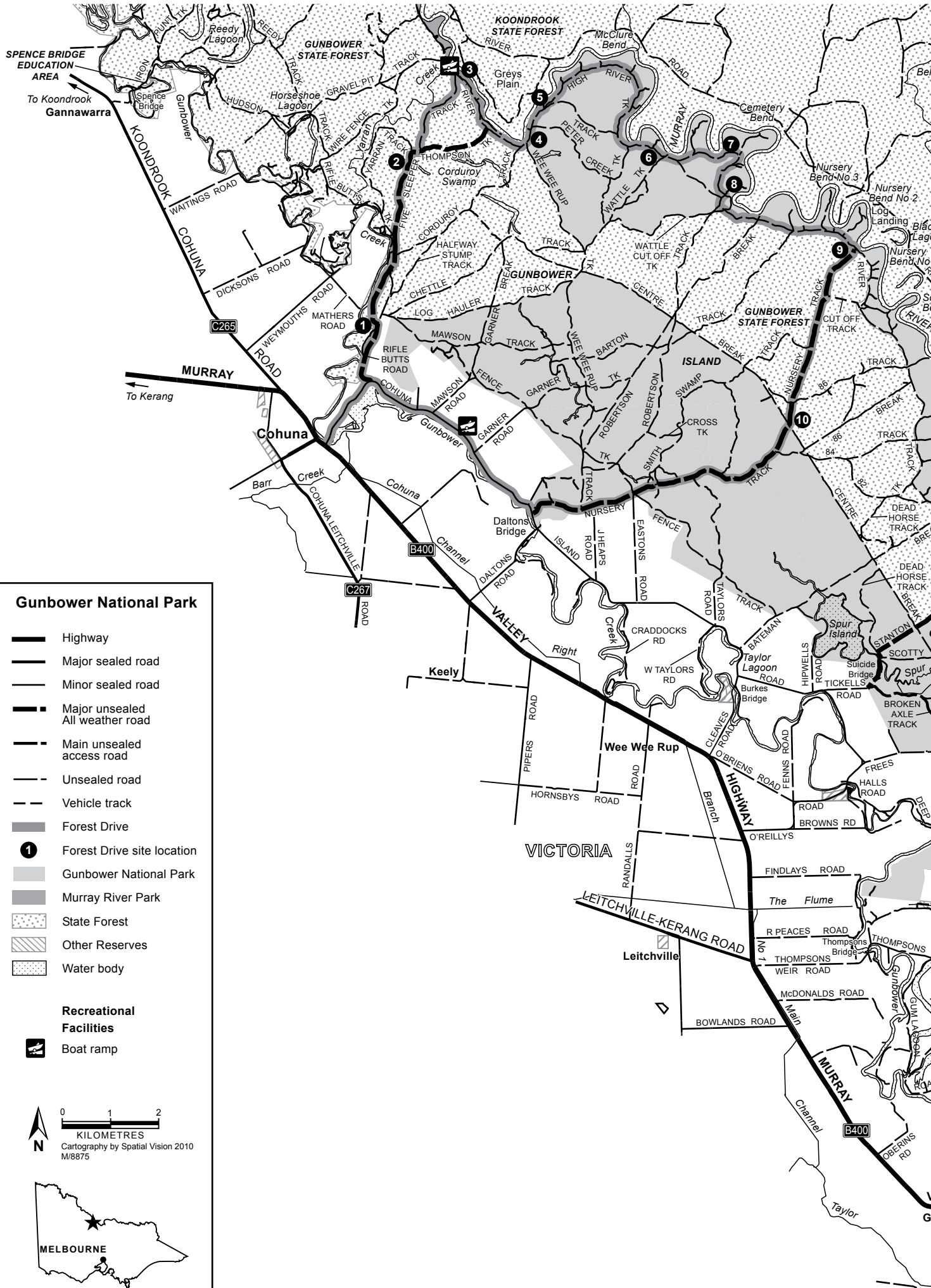
Many parks and forests are located in high fire risk areas. **On days of forecast Code Red Fire Danger this park will be closed for public safety.**

If you are already in the park you should leave the night before or early in the morning for your own safety.

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

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





Gunbower National Park

- Highway
- Major sealed road
- Minor sealed road
- Major unsealed All weather road
- Main unsealed access road
- Unsealed road
- Vehicle track
- Forest Drive
- Forest Drive site location
- Gunbower National Park
- Murray River Park
- State Forest
- Other Reserves
- Water body

Recreational Facilities

- Boat ramp



For further information

Parks Victoria
Information Centre
Call 13 1963

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

Kerang Tourist Centre
Wellington Street
Kerang Vic 3579
Tel: (03) 5475 2569

Echuca-Moama Visitor
Information Centre
2 Heygarth Street
Echuca Vic 3564
Freecall: 1800 804 446

Caring for the environment

Help us look after your park by following these guidelines:

Please take rubbish with you for recycling and disposal

All plants, animals, historical and archaeological sites and geographic features are protected by law

Dogs and other pets are not permitted in the park

Firearms are prohibited

Gas fires and barbecues are recommended. Campfires must be contained in a pit at least 30cm deep, no larger than 1 metre square with a 3 metre clearance. Bring your own firewood where possible

No fires, including barbecues, may be lit on a day of Total Fire Ban. **Gunbower National Park** is in the **Mallee Total Fire Ban District. It is your responsibility to know if it is a day of Total Fire Ban.** If in doubt call the **Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667**

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

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

40km speed limits apply

A haven for plants and animals

One hundred and ninety-five species of native fauna have been recorded in the park, with 30 threatened species such as endangered Inland Carpet Python, Silver Perch, Giant Bullfrog, Broad-shelled Turtle and Squirrel Gliders. Kangaroos and emus are common.

The park has over 200 species of birds and is one of the largest breeding grounds for waterbirds in Victoria including some of the 100 breeding pairs of White-Bellied Sea-Eagle remaining in Victoria.

Gunbower National Park has around 200 plant species. The two main forest types are River Red Gum in the wetter north west and Box in the higher south west sections.

Until damming, the River Red Gum and Box forests were flooded more frequently than today, although they still depend on environmental allocations for occasional inundation.

Victoria's Wetlands

In a climate characterised by extreme conditions - including prolonged periods of drought - wetlands play an important role. As water resources become more scarce, many wetlands continue to provide refuge in an otherwise dry landscape. A wide range of threatened plants and animals depend on healthy wetlands for their survival. When the drought eventually breaks, wetlands assist in moderating floods and erosion by holding and slowly releasing large volumes of water.

These areas are particularly valuable for their unique ecosystems and the ecological communities they support. Wetlands also perform vital natural functions such as stabilising shorelines, maintaining water flows, and purifying waterways by filtering sediments and recycling nutrients.

There are many other things about our Ramsar wetlands that many people are unaware of. For example, did you know:

- Victoria's Ramsar sites are home to as many as 1,300 species of native plants and 450 species of native animals, including more than 100 species of waterbirds?
- Lake Corangamite, part of the Western District Lakes Ramsar site, is the largest permanent saltwater lake in Australia?
- The Western Port Ramsar site contains three of Victoria's 13 Marine National Parks?
- Tens of thousands of migratory birds (some weighing in at less than 30 grams) travel from the Northern Hemisphere to visit our coastal wetlands each year?

Since European settlement, Victoria has lost more than 37 per cent of its wetland areas to degrading processes such as land clearing and draining. An alarming 90 per cent of this loss has occurred on private land. Natural resource managers, together with the community, need to work harder than ever to protect our remaining wetlands before they are lost forever.

Gunbower forest drive

1. Ramsar Convention - The separation of Gunbower Island was the result of earth movements caused by the Cadell Fault around 20,000 years ago. The sign here explains the Ramsar Convention and why Gunbower Island is recognised as a significant wetland area.

2. Timber cutters steps - Here you can see large old stumps with slits cut into the sides. Woodcutters placed planks in these slits so that they could fell the tree at a height where the tree's girth was narrower.

3. Shillinglaw's Regulator - This regulator is used to control the flow of water through the forest, allowing water to flow from the Murray River along Yarran Creek. Water slowly dispersed through the forest along runners that you may have noticed crossing Five Sleeper Track.

4. Grey's Mill - This site was originally called Block 24 from which a mill operated in the 1870s. A fire in 1919 destroyed everything on Block 24. The area is now known as Grey's Mill after Frederick Charles Grey who ran the mill from 1905 until his death in 1912, when his nephew took over.

When the mill was in operation this was a thriving community with a state school with an average of 19 students. Across the road you can see a water levy bank, thought to have been created by the residents to prevent their homes from being flooded.

5. Graham's Hut - This is the last remaining hut on the Victorian frontage of the Murray River from Torrumbarry to Swan Hill. Timber to build the hut came from the original Strachan farmhouse and was transported by horse drawn dray.

6. Wattle Creek - This damper area, covered in fallen timber, is a refuge for small animals. The tall trees provide nesting sites for many birds.

7. Cemetery Bend - The picket fenced graves are a reminder of the harshness and isolation of life in the forest. Two of these graves are reputedly of the Mathers children who died during the floods in the 1800s.

8. Robsons Mill - This bend was the site of the first licensed mill on the island founded in 1875. The mill produced timber for the suburban market in Melbourne and the steam boilers on riverboats.

9. Nursery Bend - An extensive experimental nursery was planted here by the Forest Commission. A variety of trees such as Mountain Ash and Monterey Pine can still be seen.

Accommodation

Nearby towns of Koondrook, Cohuna, Gunbower, Torrumbarry and Echuca have caravan parks, motel and bed and breakfast accommodation.

How to get there

Gunbower National Park is along the Murray River between Echuca and Koondrook around 250km north of Melbourne. Access to the major entrances is via the Murray Valley Highway.

December 2010

Printed on Australian-made 100% recycled paper