

Won Wron & Mullungdung State Forests

The Won Wron and Mullungdung State forests are situated 200 kms from Melbourne, north east of the town of Yarram on the South Gippsland Plain. Won Wron occupies 6700 ha and Mullungdung 13800ha. The two forests are bisected by the Bruthen Creek with Won Wron to the west and Mullungdung to the east.

The first inhabitants of the area were the Brataualoong people. For thousands of years they gathered fish and shellfish from the nearby coastal waters and used the timber and game from these forests as a source of food and building materials for shelters, canoes and various tools.

The twin forests provide for a variety of activities including picnicking, camping, walking, sightseeing, horse-riding, and car touring.

Getting There

From Melbourne take the Princes Highway to Traralgon and then head towards Yarram along the Hyland Highway. Both forests are accessible from the Hyland Highway between Yarram and Traralgon or from the South Gippsland Highway between Yarram and Sale.

Attractions

Picnic Spots

The 'Gums' along the Hyland Highway and 'White Woman's Waterhole' off Napier Road are designated recreation sites with picnic tables and fireplaces provided.

Camping Spots

With toilet and fireplace facilities available, 'White Woman's Waterhole' is an ideal base from which to explore the historic and natural features of the forests. A cleared camping area is available at 'Big Tower' but no facilities are provided.

Walking tracks

White Woman's Walk

Skill level: Basic Fitness level: Low
Distance: 2 km return (45 mins)

A two kilometre walking track winds its way through the forest adjacent to White Woman's Waterhole. It starts on the eastern end of the picnic area near the toilet and is defined by posts and triangular track markers. As you walk you will pass through two very different ecological vegetation classes (EVCs). The damper-low lying areas consist of species such as Manna Gum, Grey Gum, Swamp Paperbark and a variety of sedges which are more adapted

to the heavier, moister soils found here. The higher-sandier areas consist of plants that have adapted to drier conditions such as Yellow Stringybark, Black She-Oak and Bracken Fern. Many other native plant species may be viewed along the way and if you tread quietly you may just catch a glimpse of some of the abundant wildlife that also inhabits the area.

Old Railway Walk

Skill level: Basic Fitness level: Low
Distance: 2 km one way (45 mins)

Commencing a short distance east or west of White Woman's Waterhole along Napier Road, the Old Railway walking track follows a small section of what was once the final stage of the Great Southern Railway.

Lowland Forest Drive

Grade: Medium 60 km return (Full Day)

Please note - Road conditions may become difficult after heavy rains.

Stop 1. Historic Saw Pit

Pits like this were constructed during the early days of timber harvesting to break down logs using cross-cut saws with one man above and one below in the pit. Imagine being below with the bark and sawdust showering over you, sticking to your sweat and getting in your eyes. It is no wonder that the person on the bottom was called the 'underdog'.

Stop 2. White Woman's Waterhole

Local legend has it that the naming of White Woman's Waterhole involved the sole European survivor of a shipwreck off the Ninety-Mile Beach who was taken in by a tribe of Aborigines that used this waterhole. She engraved a message on a nearby tree that was subsequently found by a passing stockman. A search party was formed and after a skirmish, the lady was rescued, whereupon she returned to England.

3. Goodwood Township & Mill

In 1910 a Western Australian firm, Kalgoorlie-Boulder Firewood Co., set up a mill in the Mullungdung to exploit its relatively untapped timber resources. A steel tramline was built to Port Albert and by mid-1911, 40 tonnes of timber were transported each day.

Yellow Stringy Bark was the primary timber cut for sleepers for the Victorian Railways and also for jetties, blocks for the tramways and for street paving. Bullock teams were used to drag the timber to railway sidings. The

two foot (60cm) gauge tramline ran for 32.6kms and consisted of three locomotives: "Mona", "Lila" and "Amie", that could pull 8 ½ to 9 tons. On September 1 1914 an unfortunate accident occurred when "Mona" blew up and the driver was killed.

The Goodwood township was quite substantial with a hall, school, church and company store. There was also a sports ground with football team, cricket team, tennis club and cycling group.

In 1920 the mill closed and the buildings were transported to Woodside, Yarram and Noojee. Today the forest has reclaimed much of the site but some remnants such as the mill site and tramway bridges still remain.



Goodwood Locomotive 1914
William and Jeffrey Collins Collection

4. Bullocky's Grave

In 1870 a German migrant named Alex Stranner stopped his bullock team near here to tend to failing brakes. Unfortunately the leading bullocks moved forward while he was underneath the wagon and Alex Stranner was run over and killed. His body was found four days later by mill workers who wrapped him in a tarpaulin and buried him in this gully where the ground was soft.

5. Tom's Cap

On February 9 1841 Angus McMillan started out from Stratford, accompanied by Tom Macalister, four stockmen and an Aboriginal guide. On February 11 they reached Tom's Cap (so-called after Macalister's headgear) where they obtained their first view of Corner Inlet, a waterway that would open up Gippsland as an agricultural region and assure future prosperity.

6. Frouds Sawmill

William Froud and his sons Alfred and James began mill operations on this site in 1929. Water for the mill was pumped from a deep well in nearby Dead Bullock Gully. The site once consisted of several houses, bullock yards and store sheds. Alfred and James were both killed during WWII and William sold the mill to the Kauri Timber Company in 1945. It finally closed in 1951 when the timber ran out.

7. The Big Tower

The Big Tower was erected in 1941. It is a wooden structure, about 94 ft high with its pylons rammed 12 ft into sandstone. No lifting equipment was used in its construction. It was one of five towers erected in the

Yarram district for fire spotting, following the 1939 bushfires. The Mullungdung Tower was manned every summer until 1960, when it was abandoned.

Flora

The Won Wron and Mullungdung Forests comprise mostly open forests of Yellow Stringybark and Messmate, with Blue Gum, Manna Gum and Mountain Grey Gum in the wetter gullies and woodlands of Yertchuk and Shining Peppermint on the sandy soils. Low open forests of White Stringybark occur in the north of Mullungdung and there are extensive woodlands of Silver Leafed Stringybark on the swampy flats that border the watercourses. Swamp Gum and thickets of Swamp Paperbark occur widely in swamps and along streams. Saw Banksia, Cherry Ballart and Black She-Oak are widespread understorey species.

Fauna

Won Wron and Mullungdung Forests support a range of native animals. The Echidna, Emu, Eastern Grey Kangaroo, Black Wallaby, Blue Tongue Lizard, and Tree Goanna are commonly seen during the day. Snakes are also relatively common during warmer periods and if you come across one, keep your distance and admire. Remember that they are fully protected and essential parts of the forest ecosystem.

An after dark spotlight walk scanning the tree tops may reveal a variety of other species and is also a good time to listen for the distinctive calls of the variety of frogs that inhabit the area. Over 100 bird species have been recorded throughout the two forests.

For more information

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) is responsible for managing Victoria's State Forest. For further information contact the Department of Sustainability and Environment office at Yarram (☎ 5183 9100) or DSE's Customer Service Centre on ☎ 136 186.

Visit DSE's website

<http://www.dse.vic.gov.au>
then select "Forestry".

The Won Wron & Mullungdung State Forests are managed for a wide range of uses including catchment protection, timber production, recreation and conservation. If you are interested in how State Forests are managed, the current Gippsland Forest Management Plan can be viewed on the Department's website on the Internet at

<http://www.dse.vic.gov.au>
then select "Forestry", then select "Publications".

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