

The beautiful Box-Ironbark State forests surrounding Maryborough contain diverse native plants and animals. They provide great places to relax and appreciate the natural environment. This area also has a rich cultural and industrial history. Look carefully and you may find evidence of past people and activities.

**Our Box-Ironbark forests tell a fascinating story of change and survival. How you use the forest today will shape our forests of the future. How will you help shape the next chapter?**

### Getting here

Maryborough is 180km north west of Melbourne and 75 km south west of Bendigo. From Melbourne, head north west along the Calder Highway. Turn left on to the Pyrenees Highway, which leads to Maryborough.

### History

The Indigenous Jaara Jaara people have occupied the Box-Ironbark forest area for thousands of years. The dialect for the local area is Djadjawurrung. The Jaara Jaara knew the Maryborough township area as *Tuaggra* and a Maryborough street now bears this name. These people have a special connection with the land. The forest provided critical food and shelter and they respected and looked after the land. In this dry and harsh country where water was often scarce, rock wells hollowed out by Indigenous people provided a reliable source of water. Some wells remain, with the most elaborate set at Bull Gully. These wells are dug 130 cm into sandstone and have a capacity of 160 litres. They have never been known to dry up.



Photo: Aboriginal rock well (Parks Victoria)

The arrival of European settlers dramatically reduced the population of the Jaara Jaara people. Many traditional ways of living was lost as their movement and activities were restricted by European settlement.

Today, the remaining Jaara Jaara people still share a special connection with the land and the Box-Ironbark forest. They are strongly involved in forest management and continue to strengthen their culture on country.

### Before the gold rush (1836—1853)

The arrival of European settlers established the pastoral beginning of the Maryborough area. The Simson brothers were the first to arrive in 1840, just a few years after Surveyor-General, Major Mitchell, explored the region. The land they first used to graze stock included the area where the Maryborough township now lies. While it was known gold could be found in the area in the late 1840s, pastoralists successfully kept this secret until the 1950s. It was thought that gold fever would disrupt and ruin farmers living on the land.

### The discovery of gold (1854—1916)

James Esmond made the first officially recognised gold discovery in Victoria at Clunes in 1851. Nearby Maryborough was soon infected with gold fever and the gold rush began in June 1854. As predicted, the ensuing chaos disrupted the pastoralists. In June 1854, Maryborough had just 100 miners. By September there were 25,000 miners swarming across the landscape. It was a tough life for miners, with living and working conditions harsh and unsanitary. Water was scarce and a reliable water source was a major ongoing problem for miners, particularly in the drier months.

Gold mining was initially an individual or group effort that involved muscle power, endurance and lots of luck. Most miners knew almost nothing about mining and learnt new techniques from other miners and veterans from the Californian rushes. Methods included panning, ground sluicing, cradling, puddling and digging shafts. Once the surface gold was exhausted, mining shafts were laboriously dug to bedrock, where extensive deposits of gold were often found in quartz. The small mining groups eventually began to dwindle as larger companies who could invest in expensive machinery dominated the industry.





Photo: Duke Mine, Timor, North of Maryborough 1880s. Reproduced with permission from the Knowledge Resource Centre, Department of Infrastructure, Victoria.

The thousands of people on the gold fields depended on the forest for resources. It was stripped of timber for mining operations, railway sleepers, fence posts and firewood. The soil was constantly dug over and disturbed in the search for gold. The ecological impacts were enormous and the degraded land became less suitable for pasture. Take a look at the beautiful forest surrounding you – what you see today is very different to the forest that existed before European settlement.

#### After the gold rush (1917–present)

In 1917, the end of deep leading signalled the mining boom was over. Victoria's goldfield towns faced a bleak future. While many small towns failed to survive, Maryborough built its industrial base in the 1920s, reviving old industries and establishing new ones.

Maryborough is now a thriving and beautiful historic regional town, surrounded by spectacular Box-Ironbark forest. State forest is managed for economic, social and environmental values. Many relics of its gold rush days remain in the forests and the area remains popular for gold prospectors.

#### Plants

The State forests surrounding Maryborough form a part of the Box-Ironbark Forest region. The Box-Ironbark ecosystem is a precious and unique environment that provides habitat to numerous native plants and animals. Predominant overstorey species include Grey Box (*Eucalyptus microcarpa*), Red Box (*E. polyanthemos*), Yellow Gum (*E. leucoxylon*) and Red Ironbark (*E. tricarpa*). In the canopy you may also see native parasitic Mistletoe (*Amyema miquelii*) on the branches of eucalypts. This parasitic plant is an important source of food for many native animals including the Mistletoe Bird and the threatened Painted Honeyeater.



Photo: Mistletoe (*Amyema miquelii*) (Parks Victoria)

The understorey typically has numerous native grass species, although taller shrubs including Golden Wattle may also be present. During Spring and early Summer, wild flowers blanket the forest floor. Look carefully and you may find Shiny Everlastings or delicate orchids, including Slender Sun-orchids, Greenhoods, Pink Fingers, Wax-lip Orchids. If you are extremely lucky, you may see Endangered Lowly Greenhoods.



Photo: Shiny Everlasting (Parks Victoria)

#### Animals

The Box-Ironbark forest surrounding the Maryborough is home to many native animals. Common animals include the Short-beaked Echidna, the harmless Little Whip Snake, Olive Legless Lizard and the Eastern Bearded Dragon. At night, you may spot animals including the Common Ringtail Possum, Brush Tailed Possum and Sugar Glider in the tree canopy.



Photo: Little Whip Snake (Parks Victoria)



This forest is particularly important because it provides habitat for vulnerable, endangered and endemic species. The Brush-tailed Phascogale is a vulnerable species found in the Box-Ironbark forest in the Maryborough area.



Photo: Phascogale (Parks Victoria)

Endangered species found here include the locally endangered Bush Stone-curlew and the Swift Parrot, which breeds and feeds in Tasmania but crosses Bass Strait in Autumn to spend its winter on the mainland largely feeding on sweet nectar from winter flowering eucalypts found in Box-Ironbark forests.



Photo: Swift Parrot (Parks Victoria)

## Geology and geomorphology

The Box-Ironbark landscape is relatively flat and derived from the base of sedimentary mudstone, slates and sandstone. Harder metamorphic rocks and sandstones often protrude as clusters of rocky hills that contrast with the relatively flat surrounding landscape. Granite intrusions also occur and often appear as distinguished clusters of huge boulders, which are interesting to explore and climb. Gold-bearing quartz reefs lie within the ancient sediments and provided most gold from this area.

Soils of the Box-Ironbark region are generally shallow and derived mostly from the Ordovician era (430-500 million years ago) when ocean covered this area. These old shallow soils have lost nutrients through weathering processes. In many places, especially rocky-outcrops, the base rock lies close to the ground surface and the roots of hardy plants grow directly into disintegrating rock.

## Activities to enjoy in the State forest

Box-Ironbark forests are great for lazy picnics and a stroll through historical sites. There are numerous activities to enjoy. Please keep our Box-Ironbark beautiful by reducing your impacts and taking your rubbish home. Respect native plants, animals, historic sites and geographical features.

### Prospecting

Prospecting for gold, gemstones or other minerals can be exciting and sometimes rewarding. Many of the world's largest nuggets were found near Maryborough. All prospectors require a Miner's Right. You can purchase a Miner's Right online from the Department of Primary Industries website at [www.depi.vic.gov.au](http://www.depi.vic.gov.au). Prospecting is permitted in most State forests and many reserves. Please remember to re-fill any holes you dig and leave the area the way you find it.

### Bush walking

Bush walking is one of the best ways to explore and experience Box-Ironbark forest. If you are lucky and observant, you may stumble across hidden relics of the gold rush. Wild flowers blanket the forest floor and fill the forest with colour during early Spring and Summer. Box-Ironbark State forest is great for walking your dog, although it's important you keep it under control and don't disturb wildlife or visitors. More information on walking tracks is provided in the *Walk It* brochure available from the Maryborough Tourist Information Centre.

### Camping

Most camping spots in the forest are informal bush camps suitable for the self-sufficient camper who enjoys 'roughing it'. Leave your bush camp the way you find it.

Observe all fire regulations and Total Fire Ban days. Use existing fireplaces or dig 30 cm deep trenches. Fires should be less than one metre square and at least three metres clear of flammable material. Collect only dead wood from the ground. Never leave fires unattended and ensure they are completely extinguished before you leave.

### Bird watching

Bring your binoculars because the Box-Ironbark forest is home to numerous bird species and ideal for bird enthusiasts. This area provides habitat for some endangered bird species including the Swift Parrot and the locally endangered Bush Stone-curlew.



Bush Stone-curlew  
(Photo: DEPI/McCann)



### Bike riding

Box-Ironbark forest contains a maze of interesting tracks suitable for bike riders. If you're using a motorbike, ensure it is registered and keep to designated vehicle tracks.

### Attractions

**Timor Reservoir** is located in the Timor State Forest. It provides picnic tables and BBQ facilities, making it a perfect spot for a lazy picnic. Head north from Maryborough until you reach Timor Road. Turn left into reservoir road and follow the signs to Timor Reservoir. (GPS coordinates GDA94: Zone 55 Easting 0742779, Northing 5902039)

**Dooleys Dam** is a basic bush campsite located in Havelock State Forest off Lucknow Lead track. No facilities are provided at this site. On the north side of the dam, there are remains of an old puddler used in the gold rush. (Easting 0747807, Northing 5901360)

**Battery Dam and Bully Gully Rock Wells** are a major attraction, containing many gold rush relics. Picnic tables and a BBQ are available for day visitors. Follow the walking track from Battery Dam to the Bull Gully Rock Wells made by the Jaara Jaara people. See the Battery Dam and Craigie State Forest Note for more information. From Maryborough, head along the Maryborough/Majorca Road (Inkerman Street) until you enter Craigie State Forest. Turn west on to Graves track at the sign for Battery Dam. (Easting 0744338, Northing 5892247)

**The Chinese baths** in Wareek State Forest are believed to be the site of the original joss and bath house. Chinese miners made these baths and they remain clearly visible today. This area is popular for prospecting and while no facilities are provided, it's a great place for a bush camp. From Maryborough, head south to Talbot on the Ballarat– Maryborough road. Turn west up Talbot–Avoca Road until you reach Possum Gully Road. You'll find the Chinese baths on the west side of Possum Gully Road. (Easting 0736265 Northing 5886572)

**Brogan's hut and paddock** are the remains of a home once occupied by the Brogan family. Amazingly, the mud brick walls of the house are still clearly visible. James and Harriette Brogan lived in this tiny one room house with four children. Brogan's hut and paddock are in the Daisy Hill State Forest, off Mudbrick Track. Access Mudbrick Track from Pussum Gully Road or from Settling Ponds Road. (Easting 0736914, Northing 5887692)

### FOR YOUR OWN SAFETY!

Look out for old mine shafts when walking through the forest.

### More information

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) is responsible for managing Victoria's State forest.

Visit the DEPI website at [www.depi.vic.gov.au](http://www.depi.vic.gov.au)

For more information contact:

- DEPI Maryborough office ☎ 5461 0800
- DEPI Customer Service Centre on ☎ 136 186.

### Acknowledgements

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