

Colquhoun State Forest

Situated approximately 270km east of Melbourne, the Colquhoun State Forest is managed by the Department of Sustainability & Environment, and includes the area of land known as the Colquhoun Regional Park.

Rich in history the Colquhoun State Forest offers many wonderful attractions for visitors to the area, including car touring, bush walking, fishing and swimming, and cycling the East Gippsland Rail Trail and Gippsland Lakes Discovery Trail.

Getting there

The Colquhoun State Forest is located in East Gippsland between the towns of Bruthen, Swan Reach, Lakes Entrance and Nowa Nowa. Roads branching off the Princes Highway and the Bruthen Nowa Nowa Road are the main routes used by visitors to access the Forest.

Indigenous history

The Gunai are the Indigenous people of Gippsland. Dating back 25,000 years, they lived and travelled through the Colquhoun State Forest and surrounding lands for thousands of years.

The first of the Gunai people was Borun, the pelican, who came down from the mountains in the northwest carrying a canoe on his head. As he walked he heard a constant tapping sound but he could not find a source. When he reached the deeper waters of the inlets, he put down his canoe to find a woman in it. She was Tuk, the musket duck who had been making the tapping sound. She became the mother of all the Gunai people.

Before European contact, most Gunai people lived in harmony with each other and the land. They would often meet for corroborees, to trade goods, conduct initiation or marriage ceremonies and to dance and feast.

European history

Rich history is prominent within the Colquhoun Forest. A tramway was constructed in the early 1900s and used until the mid-1930s to move granite from the Mississippi Creek quarry to Lakes Entrance. The granite was used to build a new permanent entrance to the Gippsland Lakes, as the original timber pylons had been severely damaged by the marine toredo worm.



Work to re-open the route as a shared use trail commenced in 2000, as part of an integrated statewide program by the then Department of Natural Resources & Environment to re-open selected disused rail corridors to public access.

Work was completed in 2003, and included surfacing the path with crushed granite to provide a firm cycling surface, for what is now the Gippsland Lakes Discovery Trail.

Significant flora

White Stringybark (*Eucalyptus globoidea*) and Silvertop Ash (*Eucalyptus sieberi*) forests dominate the Colquhoun State Forest. These low fertility areas have a long history of timber harvesting and frequent fuel reduction burning which has reduced the plant diversity of these areas over the years. The gullies and creekline vegetation have a higher soil fertility and contain the highest diversity of plant species dominated by Mountain Grey Gum (*Eucalyptus cypellocarpa*), and Manna Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*). The gullies in the Log Crossing Picnic Area have limestone derived soils exposed which support a threatened plant community – Limestone Box Forest – dominated by Blue Box (*Eucalyptus bauerana*) and Gippsland Blue Gum (*Eucalyptus globulus*).

Significant fauna

The Colquhoun State Forest supports a variety of native fauna species, including Swamp Wallabies (*Wallabia bicolor*) and Wombats (*Vombatus ursinus*). The large mature eucalypt trees along Mississippi Creek provide valuable wildlife habitat. Tree hollows may be homes for Brushtail Possums (*Trichosurus vulpecula*), Common Ringtail Possums (*Pseudocheirus peregrinus*), Crimson Rosellas (*Platycercus elegans*) and Eastern Rosellas (*Platycercus eximius*). Small Forest Bats (*Vespadelus vulturinus*) might roost under loose bark during the day, leaving at dusk to hunt for insects. In summer, Tree Goannas (*Varanus varius*) might be seen near picnic areas. They supplement their natural diet of snakes, birds and eggs with left behind picnic scraps. The Superb Lyrebird (*Menura novaehollandiae*) is another stunning species to look out for. The eucalypts around the Trestle Bridge also support a population of Koalas (*Phascolarctos cinereus*).

Forestech

Forestech is located 10km north-west of Lakes Entrance, within the Colquhoun State Forest itself. A campus of the East Gippsland Institute of TAFE, it is a uniquely designed building that showcases the creative potential of the timber industry through innovative furniture design, which is one of the many courses offered. It is open to the public

weekdays within working hours, and offers café, visitor and forest information, car parking and toilet facilities.

Stony Creek Trestle Bridge

The Stony Creek Trestle Bridge was built in 1916 when the existing rail line from Melbourne to Bairnsdale was extended to Orbost. This 97km Bairnsdale to Orbost extension through rugged terrain was reputed to have been the most difficult rail project undertaken in Victoria. In service for over 60 years the bridge was damaged by bushfire in 1980, with the last train crossing in 1988.

At 247m long and 20m high, it is the largest standing bridge of its kind in the State, and is listed on the Register of Historic Sites. Built of red ironbark and grey box timber, it is a fine example of the early engineering skills that utilised the resources and materials found on site.

Costicks Weir

Widespread and disastrous 1939 bushfires prompted the construction of this weir as a reliable water source. "Jack", John Hilbert Costick, was the forester of the day who supervised the building of the weir. A modest weir, the structure nonetheless provides a good example of the use of local materials to provide a water supply for fire fighting.

Gippsland Lakes Discovery Trail

The 25km long Gippsland Lakes Discovery Trail (GLDT) takes cyclists and walkers from the East Gippsland Rail Trail to Lakes Entrance through the Colquhoun State Forest. It offers spectacular forest and ocean views along with historical attractions such as remaining sections of rail line in the bush, cuttings through embankments (signs of the tramway's easement), and blocks of granite scattered alongside the tram route.

Brochures on the Trail are available on the Department's website (refer to the GLDT Forests Note), at Forestech and the Bairnsdale and Lakes Entrance Visitor Information Centres. Although horse riding is permitted on State Forest roads, it is not allowed on the GLDT.

Walking tracks

1. Tramway walk

Skill Level: Basic Fitness Level: Low
2km, 1 hour return – Walk upstream (north) from Log Crossing Picnic Area for approximately 1km until reaching a bridge. In evidence are the remains of an original "bedlog" bridge constructed in the early 1900s for the tramway. Return to Log Crossing via same route.

2. Forestech-Log Crossing walk

Skill Level: Basic Fitness Level: Average
5km, 2 hours return – From the Log Crossing Picnic Area cross the pedestrian bridge and head southwesterly, crossing the GLDT. The track climbs gently, crossing a few small gullies until reaching open forest and Forestech. Return to Log Crossing via same route.

3. Discovery Trail walk

Skill Level: Basic Fitness Level: Average
15km, 5 hours return – Walk upstream from Log Crossing Picnic Area for 7km until reaching Quarry Road. Just north of Quarry Road, before the track heads up away from

the creek, is a 100m detour to the historic granite quarry. Return to Log Crossing via same route.

Colquhoun Forest Discovery Drive

The Colquhoun Forest Discovery Drive begins at Forestech, and site markers and interpretive signs and brochures guide the drive. Highlights include Log Crossing Picnic Area, fuel reduction burning sites, examples of silvicultural practices, the historic granite quarry, Costicks Weir, and the Trestle Bridge. The Forest Drive ends with re-entry onto the Princes Highway 2km short of Nowa Nowa. Brochures are available from Forestech, and Lakes Entrance and Bairnsdale Visitor Information Centres.

Picnic sites

Picnic facilities are available at:

- Log Crossing Picnic Area – car parking for 8-10 cars; toilets; picnic tables; barbecues, interps.
- Trestle Bridge – car parking for 8-10 cars; toilets; interps.

Looking after our forests

- Don't disturb native plants and animals.
- There is no rubbish collection service, so please take your rubbish home.
- Dogs must be under direct control at all times and are expected to be kept on a leash in picnic and camping areas or when near other visitors.
- Take care with fire - observe all fire regulations and Total Fire Ban days. Preferably use existing fireplaces; never leave fires unattended; ensure fires are completely extinguished when you leave.
- Minor forest (unsealed) roads can become boggy in winter. Stay on major (sealed) roads in wet weather.
- Motor vehicles including motorcycles must not be driven off formed roads.

For more information

The Department of Sustainability & Environment (DSE) is responsible for managing Victoria's State Forest. For further information contact DSE's Bairnsdale office ☎ 03 5152 0600 or DSE's Customer Service Centre ☎ 136 186.

Visit DSE's website

Currently the Department of Sustainability & Environment manages the Colquhoun State Forest to balance a variety of uses and values. These include biodiversity conservation, recreational and educational opportunities, archaeological and heritage values, nature-based tourism, protection of water catchments and water quality, and landscape values. Timber and other forest products, such as honey, are also provided for on a sustainable basis.

The current Tambo Forest Management Plan can be viewed on the Department's website:

<http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/forests>

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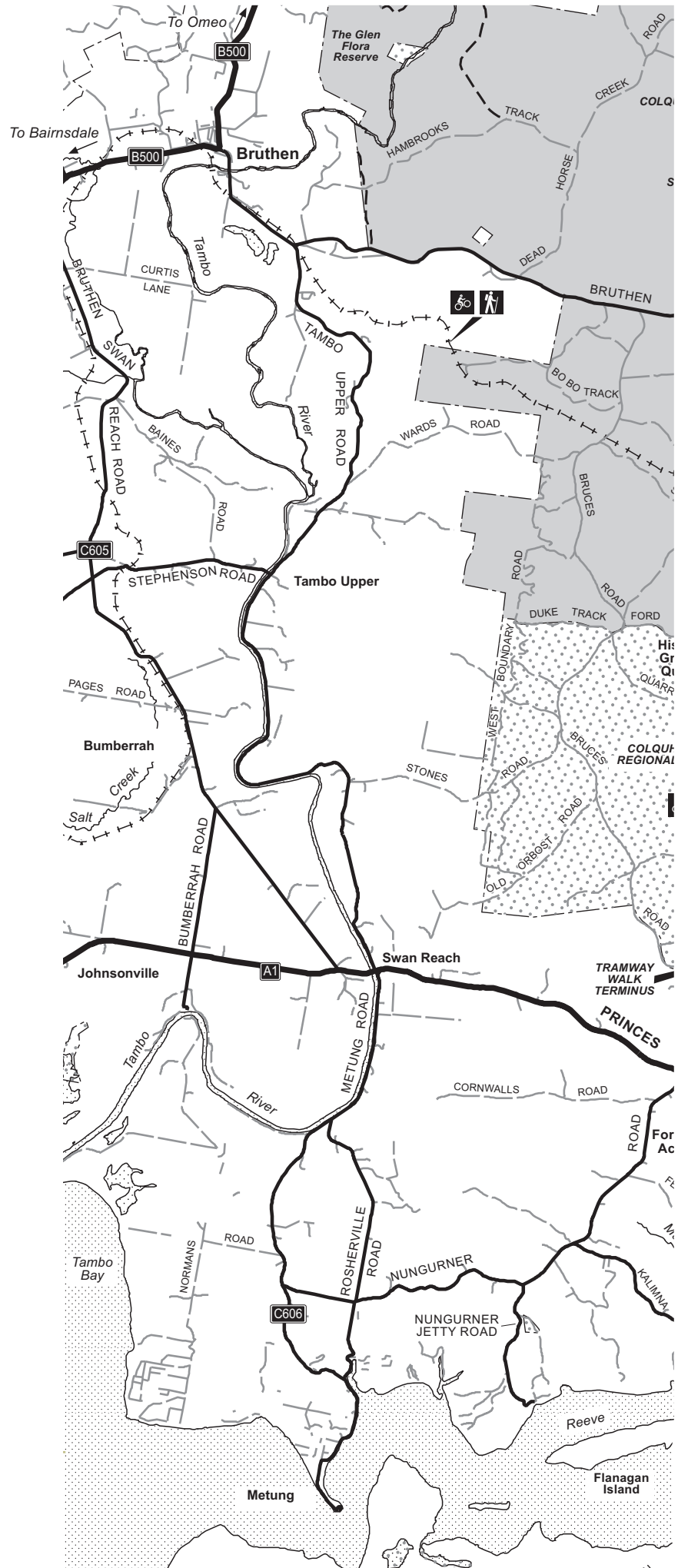
Colquhoun State Forest

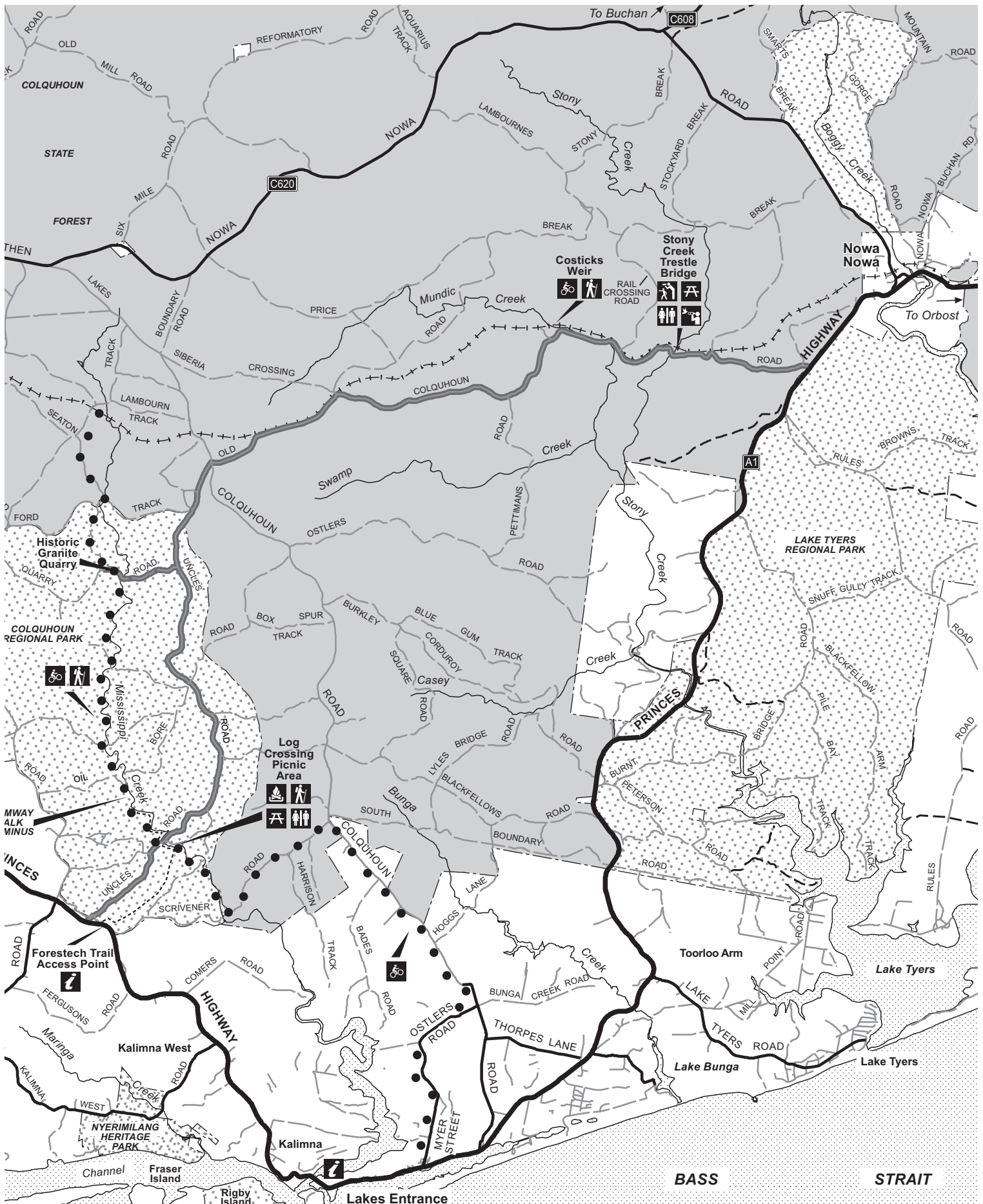
- Highway
- Sealed road
- Major unsealed road
- Unsealed road
- Vehicle track (4WD)
- Forest Drive
- Walking track
- East Gippsland Rail Trail
- Gippsland Lakes Discovery Trail
- State Forest
- Park / Reserve
- Water body

Recreational Facilities

- Bicycle trail
- Fireplace
- Lookout
- Picnic table
- Toilets
- Tourist information
- Walking
- Wildlife viewing

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