

The Fontainbleu Dam Picnic Area, located in the Rushworth State Forest, managed by the Department of Environment and Primary Industries is approximately 170km north of Melbourne.



Photo: Fontainbleu Dam

Fontainbleu dam and puddler located here are examples of the areas rich mining history and are of regional heritage significance.

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries aims to balance the surrounding Box-ironbark forests for multiple uses and values including nature conservation, tourism, recreation, timber utilisation, honey production, water catchment protection and sustainable resource use.

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

Getting There

From Rushworth head south along High St, then follow Rushworth-Nagambie Rd towards Whroo. Continue past Half Way Dam and Balaclava Hill. Turn right onto Tait Hamilton Rd. At the intersection with Scrubby Rd and Old Kilmore Rd, continue straight ahead into Scrubby Rd. Fontainbleu Dam Picnic Area is approximately 3km along Scrubby Rd on the left hand side near the intersection with Thompsons Rd.

Aboriginal History

This area was long the home of the Nguraim-wurrung Aboriginal people. The arrival of Europeans to the district saw the demise of these people, after which the area became shared between three adjacent clans, the Yorta Yorta to the north, the Jaara Jaara to the west, and Taungurung to the south and east. Marriage was permitted between these clans and several dialects were spoken. Ironbarks were called *yirrip* and box trees were called *buludj*. Ironbark blossoms were used by clans

to make a sweet beverage, *yeerip korr*, and bark from box trees was used for building huts. Trees were also utilised for making weapons such as a *lil-lil* made from yellow gum, which could break your limbs, fracture your ribs and penetrate your skull. Shields called *mulka* were made from Ironbark and Yellow Gum. Possum skins were wrapped around the handles of shields to protect knuckles and provide additional grip.

Today the Yorta Yorta, the Jaara Jaara and Taungurung people continue to have an interest and involvement in this area.

European Exploration and Settlement

In 1836 Surveyor Major Thomas Mitchell explored this district. In 1836 Joseph Hawdon accompanied by John Gardiner and Captain Hepburn, brought the first cattle overland from New South Wales to Port Phillip and settled in the district. On the 22nd January 1838 Hawdon described the Waranga lands as "*entirely new country hitherto untrodden by the foot of civilised man.*" By 1850 the area was extensively settled by pastoralists. In 1853 Europeans with the assistance of Aboriginals discovered gold at the site later known as Main Gully which initiated the gold rush in the region.

Mining History

Fontainbleu reef was opened in December 1860 and mining continued for over three decades. Today you can see evidence of reef mining from the early 1890s. In 1867 a gold rush began in the area after John Woods Russell discovered alluvial gold in the Nine Mile Creek below Fontainbleu. John Woods Russell received a 50 pound reward for his discovery. In 1859 this area became part of the Waranga North Mining Division. Surface mining continued at Fontainbleu until the 1940s.

Reef miners working in the Waranga North Mining Division would have been envied as the reefs were reported to be rich in gold, "*Yields of gold from quartz of great richness have diffused around a spirit of unprecedented enterprise.*" In March 1870 the Mining Surveyors' Report states that "*At Fontainbleu, Henry Thompsons average of nearly 3oz per ton is drawing attention to the numerous undeveloped quartz reefs in that neighbourhood.*" In June 1889 the reef at Fontainbleu was stated to be "*unlikely any hitherto worked in the division, being a saddle formation, with an average thickness of 12 feet, present depth of shaft 60 feet.*"

Natures Living Treasures

As most of the surrounding land has been cleared for agriculture or other uses, State Forests have considerable conservation significance. They are known to support numerous rare and threatened species of plants, birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. There are 1500 species of native plants and 250 species of native vertebrate animals in the region.



Photo: Spreading Wattle (DEPI/ Norm Stimson)

The flora and fauna of Box-Ironbark communities is unique. These forests and woodlands with their shallow soils are dominated by interesting eucalypts Yellow Gum (*Eucalyptus leucoxylon*), Red Stringybark (*E. macrorhyncha*), Grey Box (*E. microcarpa*), White Box (*E. albens*), Red Box (*E. polyanthemos*) and Red Ironbark (*E. tricarpa*). Fascinating creatures such as the Brush-tailed Phascogale, Squirrel Glider, Swift Parrot, Powerful Owl, Common Dunnart, honeyeaters and legless lizards inhabit the diverse understorey.



Photo: Yellow-footed Antechinus (DEPI/McCann)

If you are a keen detective look for the Yellow-footed Antechinus, *Antechinus flavipes*. They are small, sharp-snouted marsupials that typically weigh between 20 and 80 grams. Antechinus have an interesting breeding cycle in which all the males die after mating, within a few days of each other, so that the remaining population consists entirely of pregnant females. Mating occurs in July and in August to September, females give birth to up to 14 young. Young are initially carried, attached to the teats and after a month, are left in a nest until weaned. Females may live to breed in a second season.



Photo: Flowering Golden Wattle

Scan the ground and the tree trunks for signs of a Tree Goanna, *Varanus varius*. This is a very large, narrow-snouted and long-tailed lizard that lives in trees and sometimes on the ground. They lay 6 to 12 eggs, usually in a termite mound and feed on a range of invertebrates and vertebrates.



Photo: Tree Goanna (DEPI/McCann)

Historical Mining Evidence to Discover

Visit Fontainebleau to learn about alluvial and reef mining. Plan a picnic beside Fontainebleau dam and explore mining artefacts from the second half of the 19th Century. These include:

- Remains of a central pivot post and trench from a puddle machine used for alluvial mining. Located near the western end of the dam bank (between the dam and Scrubby Track).
- A 3m high earth and mullock loading ramp which was used by horse drawn drays to carry rock to battery engines which then pulverised quartz to enable gold to be retrieved (10m south of the picnic area).
- Scattered hand made brick fragments associated with the boiler setting, which consisted of 8m long stone walls at ground level, positioned 6 feet apart.
- Remains of stone chimneys from previous inhabitants.
- There are reports of six unmarked graves in the area. Some are thought to be those of Mr Henry Thompson and his children. Where do you think these people were buried and why do you think they were buried here rather than at the Whroo cemetery?



Photo: A horse-driven puddling machine in Central Victoria in the 1880s (DEPI)

Things to do

- Open your senses and take time to relax and reflect. How would you survive in this environment living a similar lifestyle as the Nguraimm-wurrung Aboriginal people? Where would you seek shelter and find food to eat?
- Can you imagine what it would have been like to have lived on the goldfields in a tent city? Compare the contrast of the hardship of working with pick and shovel in chilly winters and scorching dry summers, to the elation of finding your fortune.
- Get active! Walk along one of the many tracks around the forest, ride your horse or bike along the bush roads and appreciate the beauty of the forest. Be sure to stay on formed roads when riding.
- Camping and picnicking is a great way to relax and enjoy the Box –Ironbark surroundings. Most of the camping spots are informal bush camps suitable for the self – sufficient camper. Remember to look after the forest by taking your rubbish home with you.
- Take your dog for a walk. Making sure your dog is under control at all times.
- Try your luck by fossicking or prospecting with a current Miner's Right. Remember any holes created by prospecting must be filled in.
- Enjoy a car or motorbike tour of the forest, exploring the extensive road network. Make sure you are licensed and registered and always stay on formed roads.
- Test your hunting skills with licensed firearms and protect the forest from pest animals such as foxes and rabbits.
- Explore and search the forest for clues that give us evidence from the past – remember to leave everything as you found it.

Lets look after our living museum!

- All native plants, animals, historic sites are protected by law.
- Campfires are part of the outdoor experience. However sparks can easily start the bush burning. You can take care with fire by observing all fire regulations and Total Fire Ban days, always use existing fireplaces where possible or 30 cm deep trenches, collect only dead wood from the ground for campfires, ensure your fires is less than 1 metre square and at least 3 metres clear of burnable material, never leave fires unattended, and ensure fires are safe and that they are completely extinguished when you leave.

FOR YOUR OWN SAFETY

Take care for old mine shafts when walking through the forest.

For More Information

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries – DEPI is responsible for managing Victoria's State Forest. For further information contact the Department of Environment and Primary Industries office at Bendigo (☎ 5430 4444) or DEPI's Customer Service Centre on 136 186.

Visit DEPI's Website

<http://www.depi.vic.gov.au>

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its officers do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

Acknowledgements

Bannear, David (1993) Historic Mining Sites in the Rushworth (Waranga North) Mining Division. Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

Clark, Ian D and Cahir, David A. (2004) Tanderrum "Freedom of the Bush"; The Djadjawarrung presence on the goldfields of Central Victoria. Friends of Mount Alexander Diggings, Castlemaine, Victoria

Environment Conservation Council (2001) Box-Ironbark Forests and Woodlands Investigation. Final Report. Victoria Parade, East Melbourne.

Flett, James (1979) The History of Gold Discovery in Victoria. p81. Poppet Head Press.

Forster, Harley W. (1965) Waranga 1865-1965 F.W. Cheshire Melbourne.

Hammond, Joyce (1978) The Golden Years of Rushworth and Whroo. Printed by Rowprint Services (Vic.) Pty. Ltd. p10.

Heathcote Progress Association; Heathcote Forest Ecotourism Project. Historical Note Discovery Guide to Heathcote's Forests.

Nelson, Brien (2004) Experience Bendigo Outdoors. (Brochure) National Indigenous Cadetship Program, Greater City of Bendigo, Department of Environment and Primary Industries, LaTrobe University, Parks Victoria.

Nelson, Brien (Indigenous Team Leader) and Lees, Bambi (Indigenous Team Project Officer) (Nov 2005) Parks Victoria. Personal Communication.

Parks Victoria (Feb 2002) Whroo Historic Reserve. Visitor Guide. (Brochure).

Rushworth Tourist and Development Trust. The "Puddle" Machine (poster).

The Goldfields of Victoria. Reports of the Mining Registrars June 1886, June 1889 and March 1870. By Authority John Ferres, Government Printer, Melbourne.

Thomson, Nicki and Stanley, Alison (Nov 2005). Goulburn Diggings Inc. Personal Communication.

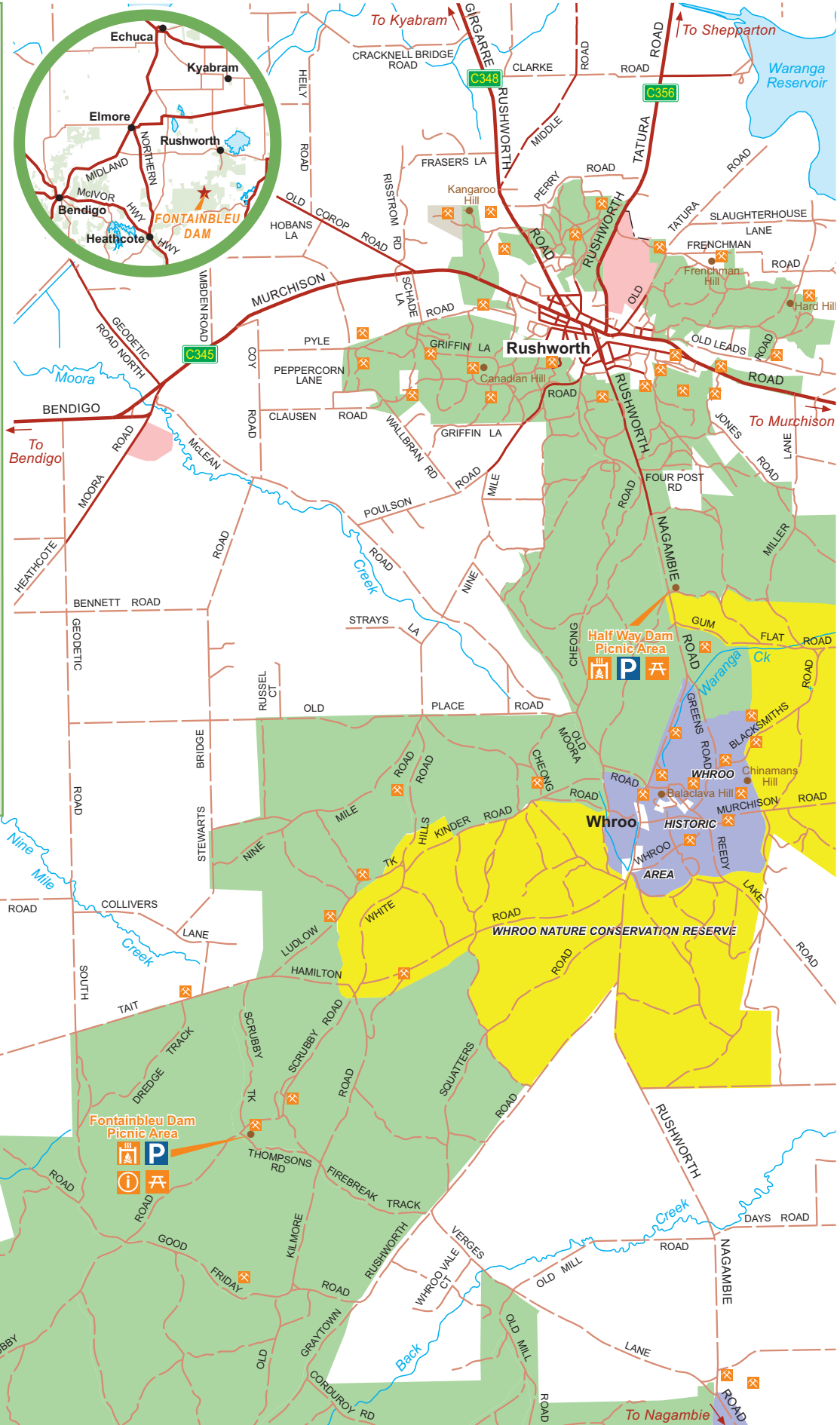
Fontainebleau Dam Picnic Area

- Major sealed road
- Minor sealed road
- Major unsealed road
- Minor unsealed road
- State Forest
- Nature Conservation Reserve
- Flora Reserve
- Historic Area
- Recreation Reserve
- Earth Resources
- Water body

Recreational Facilities

- Barbecue-Wood
- Carpark
- Historic site
- Information
- Picnic table

0 1 2
KILOMETRES
Cartography by Spatial Vision 2006
M/8592



This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its officers do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

