

28. Beveridge Spring



Beveridge Spring is a small remnant of the original extensive wetlands across the basalt plains in the Merri Creek Valley. The Spring emerges from the base of Mount Fraser. Tall marsh with Common Reeds and swamp scrub vegetation with Woolly Tea-tree can be approached across mown grasslands. Basalt boulders occur on the flats and rocky rises either side of the Spring. The Spring is within the Beveridge Recreation Reserve with community, CFA and horse-riding facilities in Lithgow St off the Hume Freeway.

This reserve is on the land of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People. We acknowledge their Elders past and present and emerging, and their care of Country over many millennia. We ask that all people respect this ancient heritage and care for the land we now share.

Directions

Beveridge Recreation Reserve is in Lithgow Street, Beveridge. From the freeway exit to Beveridge and Mandalay, turn east and the Reserve is on the right. Parking is available inside the entrance.

Walking Tracks

The Reserve has no walking tracks but some of the grasslands are slashed for easy access to the edges of the wetlands. Plans are well underway for a walking track and boardwalk which will loop around the spring – see [here](#).



Grasslands in dry conditions may be suitable for all abilities with assistance.

T

Toilets may be available in the community buildings at the entrance (may be locked at times).

Landform and Geology

Beveridge Spring is a small wetland beneath the volcano of Mount Fraser. Eruptions at Mount Fraser produced both a high scoria cone and extensive basalt flows. These flows blocked Merri Creek and tributaries, creating many wetlands between lines of stony basalt rises including *wallan wallan* Swamp. One flow extended south along the old line of Merri Creek and beneath the Yarra River at Flinders Street, Melbourne. Mount Fraser last erupted about 800,000 years ago.



In Beveridge, Mount Fraser slopes from the north into the Recreation Reserve (left side of photo above) to some rocky knolls (photo next page on left). A tongue of lava runs a short distance along the southern edge of the Spring (right side of photo above with houses). This rise has some rock hollows and stone fences (photo next page on right). Beveridge Spring lies between these rocky rises. Earthworks have filled and flattened some of the recreation area and pushed boulders into the head of the Spring.



Beveridge Spring is a perennial spring fed by water filtering underground from Mount Fraser. In the Beveridge Recreation Reserve, the Spring feeds water into the shrubby vegetation at the head of the wetland then along a wide swale of tall marsh vegetation. At the western end of the Reserve, the wetlands open out into a wide area of flat land now mostly mowed. A drainage line probably an excavated drain, runs under Spring Street and the Freeway. It is part of the headwaters of Kalkallo Creek that meanders through drains and a few natural water courses in urban growth areas into Merri Creek south of Donnybrook.

Beveridge Spring is the last remnant of the formerly extensive Inverloch Swamp southeast of Mount Fraser. Over the whole of the Merri Creek Catchment, only 83 ha remain out of an original 2,140 ha (<4%) of wetlands. This makes Beveridge Spring a significant site for conservation.

Vegetation

Approximately four hectares of the 9.8 ha Reserve have remnant vegetation of poor to moderate quality.

Wetland areas have a complex of different ecological niches depending on water regime and soils. Soils in the reserve are heavy black clays that absorb water to become waterlogged in wet conditions and develop big cracks in dry conditions. This may make it difficult for deeper rooted plants to become established.

In the Reserve, the following plant communities have been identified, all severely reduced and most classed as Threatened.

Stony Knoll Shrubland: Small areas in the Reserve but with many indigenous species. Rocks have a mosaic of lichens and mosses.

Creepline Tussock Grassland: Largely lost to slashing, Phalaris or Reeds.

Swamp Scrub: Dominated by Woolly Tea-Tree but also includes the graceful Tassel Sedge and other wetland species. This could be classed as *Swampy Riparian Woodland* but lacks the Swamp Gums. Beveridge Spring has one of the only stands of *Swamp Scrub* on public lands in

the Volcanic Plains around Melbourne, and the Woolly Tea-trees are unusually tall-growing and of an apparently unusual age. Seeds are collected from these plants for revegetation programs.

Tall Marsh: Typically dominated by Common Reeds (*Phragmites australis*) with native Cumbungi (*Typha domingensis*) and a variety of other wetland plants and some climbing weeds. Low-lying areas adjacent to the current tall marsh vegetation are mowed and extremely weedy but the Reeds are clearly trying to invade and expand the area covered by *Tall Marshland* vegetation. The dominance of the Reeds is a normal feature of *Tall Marshes*.

Plains Grassland: The original community may have been *Scoria Cone Woodland* with Rough-barked Manna Gums rather than the mapped *Plains Grassy Woodland* with Red Gums. Trees and shrubs typical of these communities are missing apart from a few Black Wattles and Blackwoods scattered around the Spring. The ground cover has a few native species including wallaby grasses but are mostly dominated by Phalaris and other weeds. Sections of the Reserve are separated by a line of ageing pine trees. The higher slashed areas are mostly used for recreation. The low-lying slashed areas are ecologically *Tall Marsh* (above).

Merri Creek Management Committee are working with botanists from Artur Rylah Institute to identify the original vegetation and develop revegetation guidelines.

Plant lists are in preparation.

Wildlife

Beveridge Spring is an isolated wetland remnant but mobile species such as birds can and do use it as a stepping stone across the landscape. The perennial Beveridge spring is potentially important as a refuge for water dependant flora and fauna. Sympathetic management of the Kalkallo Creek corridor could return some connectivity to the Spring.

The Spring provides a good breeding place for wetland birds including the Brown Quail, the Australian Spotted Crake and the international migratory Latham's Snipe (a Threatened species last recorded in the Reserve in 1991). The calls of the Reed Warbler are a feature of the warmer months. The vegetation in the Reserve may be suitable for other wetland birds of conservation interest.

The Reserve is a haven for reptiles (particularly skink species) and frogs. Growling Grass Frogs (status Vulnerable) were recorded in 2007 and may still be present. Many insects also use the wetlands including the 'Swamp Tigertail' Dragonfly (*Synthemis eustalacta*) and other species we know little about.

Fauna lists are in preparation.

Aboriginal history

The Reserve is on the land of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people. Although Mount Fraser is included in areas of [Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity](#), this does not extend into the Beveridge Recreation Reserve. Surveys have found possible stone chips on the stony knolls. The use of wetlands by First Nation People is well known elsewhere and we should be aware that the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung would have been here, harvesting roots and tubers and hunting for birds and the small mammals that have now gone from this environment.

More broadly, these were the people who worked the [Mount William Stone Hatchet Quarry](#) and traded the stone tools with many other Aboriginal groups across a wide area of the country.

History after colonisation

John Batman representing the Port Phillip Association (an association of businessmen) arrived in Port Phillip in June 1835 and made an agreement with local Aboriginal People for a large area of land. This was followed by 20,000 sheep and more “squatters” that extended their holdings north, at the same time as overlanders brought cattle and sheep from New South Wales. Governor Bourke in Sydney moved quickly to nullify Batman’s agreement but also to allow settlers to rent “Crown land” in the Port Phillip area. George Mercer (in London) held land at Mercer’s Vale in 1836 that became Beveridge from 1853.

The cattle and sheep would have grazed the swamplands particularly in dry times. Rabbits and introduced plants would have added to the impacts of livestock. Inverlochy Swamp was drained leaving a few remnants such as Beveridge Spring. Cattle continued to graze the area around the Spring into the 1990s.

The wetland area of the Reserve was recommended as a Bushland Reserve in the Land Conservation Council Melbourne District 2 Review in 1994. Cattle were removed and species such as Common Reeds and Woolly Tea-tree proliferated. Parks Victoria and Mitchell Shire Council commenced to manage the vegetation in the section of the land sometimes labelled Beveridge Bushland Reserve. The recreation area was also developed with community buildings and a manège, and regular slashing of the grassland areas.

Management

The Reserve is Crown Land. Mitchell Shire Council is now the official Committee of Management managing the bushland and recreation areas as whole. More information on the proposed path and board walk and other works are available under Mitchell Shire below.

Strangely, Beveridge Spring is not listed as a site of [Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity](#) and the stone fence is not on the Victorian Heritage Database.

Further information

Merri Creek Management Committee:

Beveridge Recreation Reserve Vegetation Management Plan 2011-16. Produced for Mitchell Shire Council. <https://cdn.mitchellshire.vic.gov.au/general-downloads/Beveridge-Recreation-Reserve-Vegetation-Management-Plan.pdf>

Merri Creek Management Committee (2018). Swamps and Wetlands of the Upper Merri Creek Catchment.

https://www.mcmc.org.au/images/image/general/Swamps_and_Wetlands_of_the_Upper_Merri_Creek_Catchment_2018.pdf

Environmental Education resources at <https://mcmc.org.au/environmental-education> and <https://mcmc.org.au/information-publications> including a Virtual General Tour of the Merri Creek Catchment at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SX9m8OnyxVY>

Mitchell Shire Council:

<https://www.mitchellshire.vic.gov.au/our-region/parks-and-playgrounds/beveridge-recreation-reserve>

Beveridge Recreation Reserve Master plan documents at <https://engagingmitchellshire.com/beveridge-recreation-reserve-master-plan/widgets/363122/documents>

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation: <https://www.wurundjeri.com.au>
Maya V. Tucker (1988). *Kilmore on the Sydney Road*. Shire of Kilmore.

Acknowledgements

This Reserve Note was prepared by BEAM Mitchell Environment Group. Thanks to Mitchell Shire Council and Merri Creek Management Committee for their assistance and support.

Author: Peter Mitchell

Version: 1 19 May 2024

These notes are a work in progress. If you have any comments or additional information on the nature and ecological history of Beveridge Spring, please contact us at <https://www.beam.org.au/contact>.



Beveridge Spring



 Beveridge Reserve  Creekline  Roads  Entry