

33. Tooborac Nature Conservation Reserve



Tooborac Nature Conservation Reserve is a 425ha area of hills and forests. The Reserve has an interesting geological history along a fault line. It has many old trees among the younger regrowth, and a rich diversity of shrubs and wildflowers typical of the variety of dry forests in Box Ironbark country. It can be explored along more than 10km of walking tracks. The Reserve is on the Seymour Tooborac Rd, Tooborac.

This reserve is on the land of the Taungurung 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

Tooborac Nature Conservation Reserve is on the Seymour Tooborac Road. The Reserve has five entrances from the road, some very rough. Tooborac NCR also includes a 20ha area north of the road, bounded by a loop of old road.

The Table below includes some natural features and little known reserves on the road to the Tooborac NCR and Tooborac State Forest. Distances are from the Puckapunyal turnoff on the Seymour Tooborac Road if coming from Seymour (column 1) or from junction of the Northern Highway and Seymour Tooborac Road if coming from Tooborac (column 2).

0 km	25.8 km	Start odometer to zero at the Puckapunyal turnoff on the Seymour Tooborac Road.
6.8 km	19 km	Road crosses Bylands Creek then runs beside the Bylands Creek Water Frontage .
10.5 km	15.3 km	Road runs through Puckapunyal Streamside Reserve . Parking is available on Reserve land on the south side of the road, about 100m east of the bridge across Gardiner Creek. These two reserves have meandering creeklines with many pools in wet seasons, and a diversity of eucalypts including Red Gums, Yellow Gums, Grey Box, Yellow Box and Broad-leaved Peppermint.

Tooborac Nature Conservation Reserve

14.8 km	11 km	<i>Entry 1:</i> 180m past Panyule Road, at the top of a rise coming off open farmland, with a sign "Tooborac Nature Conservation Reserve" and an entry track onto North Track in the Reserve.
15.4 km	10.4 km	<i>Entry 2:</i> top of rise. Open area on the left (south) side of road with and another track into the Reserve. Not a safe place to exit or re-enter the main road.
15.8 km	10 km	Road cutting with spectacular folds and faults in the rock strata.
16.6 km	9.2 km	<i>Entry 3:</i> very rough entrance.
16.8 km	9 km	<i>Entry 4:</i> also rough.
17.1 km	8.7 km	<i>Entry 5:</i> safest entry to West Track but may be wet. Old notice at the entrance. Parking 50m from the road.

Tooborac State Forest

20.3 km	5.5 km	<i>Entry 1:</i> pullover area and sign. The first part of North Track is generally passable but may have washouts impassable for low vehicles. The track curves around a corner in the fence, to a parking space at the
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junction with East Track that runs south near the boundary (see Walking Tracks). North Track continues west may be rough and steep. It links to Ridge Track which is even steeper.

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| 21.2 km | 4.6 km | <i>Entry 2:</i> with signs and a fenced revegetation area. Passable for a short distance, then rough and steep. |
| 22.1 km | 3.7 km | <i>Entry 3:</i> with signs and fenced revegetation area, adjacent to a gully. Passable with parking space 50 m from the road, then may be rough. Good wildflower area. |
| 23.2 km | 2.6 km | <i>Entry 4 and 5:</i> Entry 4 (on left) is a good entry point to West Track. Parking space near a dam after 150m. Entry 5 to North-west loop starts on the right side of the entrance but this is a rougher track. For vehicles coming from Tooborac, these entrances are about 80m after the “Tooborac State Forest” sign. |
| 25.8 km | 0 km | Northern Highway junction. |

Walking Tracks

Tooborac Nature Conservation Reserve has many tracks, some in good condition and some that are steep, overgrown, eroded and/or hard to follow. **Note:** Track names used in this Reserve Note are for convenience in describing routes and are not official names. **Note:** the map only shows the main tracks. The Reserve has many other rough and overgrown tracks.

Circuit Walk (8.1km, anticlockwise): the circuit begins in a parking area about 50m in from Entrance 5. The track follows along the low hills and swales on the western side of the Reserve (Western Track), past the two link tracks to the fence at the south end of the Reserve (at 2.5 km). The route continues as the Ridge Track running east and north and crossing some steeper swales before climbing and following the ridgeline on the east side of the Reserve to the Middle Link Track junction at 4.4km. The Ridge Track continues along the ridge, drops down through a swale and over another high point before the junction with North Track at 6.3 km. Turn left back into the Ironbark forest, then left again at 7.0 km. North Track rejoins West Track at 7.9 km. Turn right back 250m to the carpark.

The main branches from the Circuit Walk from the Ridge Track are:

Middle Link Track at 4.4km: the track to the left runs west 1.0 km down to the West Track then right another 0.7 km back to the carpark.

North Track at 6.3km: turn right at the junction with Ridge Track. The eastern end of North Track has branches after 360m, left to Entrance 2 (another 300m to the road) or right winding over the ridge to Entrance 1 (another 800m to the road).



All tracks are rough and uneven and not suitable for all abilities.



Tracks may be impassable or closed at times determined by Parks Victoria. Driving through the Reserve is discouraged to protect the tracks and vegetation, to control illegal dumping and firewood collection and enhance the enjoyment of the Reserve.

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The Reserve has no toilets.

Landform and Geology

The eastern side of the Reserve is a line of hills that mark a divide between catchments. On the east, steep slopes drop down to Gardiners Creek. On the western side of the Reserve, a series of gullies drain into Donkey Creek. Both creeks run north through Puckapunyal to Mitchell Creek and the Goulburn River.



The line of hills through the Reserve is formed from alternating layers of softer pale siltstone and hard dark sandstone known as the *Wapentake Formation*. These layers formed 407 to 420 million years ago from sediments running from ancient mountain ranges eastwards into the waters of the continental shelf. The rocks in cuttings show deposits of fine sediments that gradually accumulated as multiple thin layers of siltstone on the ocean floor. This slow deposition was interrupted by coarser sediments that swept

across the ocean floor from flooded rivers and marine landslides and settled as single bands of hard sandstone spread over the siltstones.

Around 380 million years ago, tectonic forces pushed these layers above sea level to create the land of central Victoria. East of the Reserve is the north-south *Moormbool Fault* where the tectonic forces caused the layers to fold, break and slide past each other as visible faults in the rock strata. These contorted layers are clearly seen in the cuttings along Seymour-Tooborac Road 15.8 km from the Puckapunyal turnoff (see Directions above).

In the south-west, the hills are mostly mudstone formed in deeper ocean (*Dargile Formation*). Mudstone is more erodible, and the hills are lower and gentler.

Vegetation

The steeper rocky hills are mapped as [Heathy Dry Forest](#) but sheltered areas are more like [Grassy Dry Forests](#). These open forests are mostly Red Box and Red Stringybark with some Grey Box and occasional Yellow Box. The trees are generally small reflecting the harsh environment on the ridges. The understorey ranges from tussocky plants such as Silvertop Wallaby-grass to a more diverse grassland with scattered low shrubs and a sparse but varied mix of lilies, orchids and other wildflowers.



The lower north-western slopes are open [Box Ironbark Forests](#) with Mugga Ironbarks as a visible component of the forest and an understorey with many shrubs, tussock grasses and wildflowers. Most of the Ironbarks are young trees.

Walking tracks on West Track cross many wide gullies of [Valley Grassy Forests](#) that are more like woodlands with Grey Box and some Yellow Box with a variety of understorey species including patches of saw-sedge in wetter areas.

This Reserve was State Forest until recently and was used for timber and firewood collection and later probably as a site for army training. The impact of logging can be seen in the scarcity of large old trees (and absence of hollows) and the many old stumps showing the amazing ability of trees



to coppice and recover. The diversity of the understorey and ground cover species is rich despite the disturbances over the past 190 years.

The ECC Box Ironbark Investigation (2001) noted that the Reserve had one old tree site and two fauna refuges (locations not given) and noted that the Reserve contributed to the “representation of several vegetation communities” in the region.

Plant lists are in preparation.

Wildlife

Around 100 bird species have been recorded in the Tooborac State Forest and Tooborac Nature Conservation Reserve. These include the Speckled Warbler (status Endangered) and Powerful Owl (Vulnerable). The Environment Conservation Council noted habitat for Powerful Owls in its review of the forests.

Emus have also been recorded, a cornerstone species that is rarely seen in the region. They may be a key to restoring the health of these forests.

Tuans (Brush-tailed Phascogales, Vulnerable) have also been recorded, along with Sugar Gliders, Brush-tailed possums. Kangaroos, wallabies and the wonderful Echidna are also seen on the Reserve.

The presence of several tree hollow-dependent species indicates that there are still some good older growth trees in the forests. The two forests added to the regrowth forests in Puckapunyal and many private bushland blocks in the area make a very significant wildlife reserve in the region.

Aboriginal history

The Reserve is on the land of the Taungurung People.

History after colonisation

From the 1840s, many parts of the district were taken for grazing but, in 1905, 30,500 acres remained as the Warrowitue State Forest. Tooborac SF and Tooborac NCR were the southern edges of this forest. The forests were harvested for firewood, timber and poles, particularly during about two decades from 1905 when the railway through Tooborac was linked to an extensive tramway network from McIvor Siding and Major's Line by the McIvor Timber and Firewood Company. Between 1939 and 1942 most of the forest and private land was incorporated into the Puckapunyal Military Area leaving the two Tooborac State Forests. Until recently, the Reserve was "Tooborac State Forest No 2".

Use of the forest for timber and firewood collection is reflected in the absence of large old trees and the network of roads and old tracks. In 2001 the Environment Conservation Council's (now VEAC) Box Ironbark Forests and Woodlands Investigation recommended the forest be designated a Nature Conservations Reserve. It is now managed by Parks Victoria and firewood collection is banned.

Management

The Park is Crown land managed by Parks Victoria.

The Crown land is included in the [Land Use Activity Agreement](#), a part of the [Taungurung Recognition and Settlement Agreement](#).

Further information

Parks Victoria: Parks Victoria can be contacted on 13 1963 or go to <https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/contact-us>. Website for Tooborac Nature Conservation Reserve is at <https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/places-to-see/parks/tooborac-nature-conservation-reserve>. It contains only general information on visiting reserves (at time of publication of this Reserve Note).

Taungurung Land and Water Council at <https://taungurung.com.au/>. Taungurung Recognition and Settlement Agreement at <https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/your-rights/native-title/taungurung-recognition-and-settlement-agreement>

Frank Stamford (2014). *The McIvor Timber and Firewood Company, Tooborac, Victoria*. Light Railway Research Society of Australia Inc., Melbourne.

Goulburn Broken CMA Revegetation Guide: information on different ecological vegetation communities, plant communities and plants in the Goldfields zone at <https://www.gbcma.vic.gov.au/revegetation/zones/goldfields>

Environment Conservation Council/Victorian Environment Assessment Council Box-Ironbark Forests and Woodlands Investigation—Resources and Issues Report and Final Recommendation. <https://veac.vic.gov.au/investigations-assessments/previous-investigations/investigation/box-ironbark-forests-woodlands-investigation-ecc-2001>

Acknowledgements

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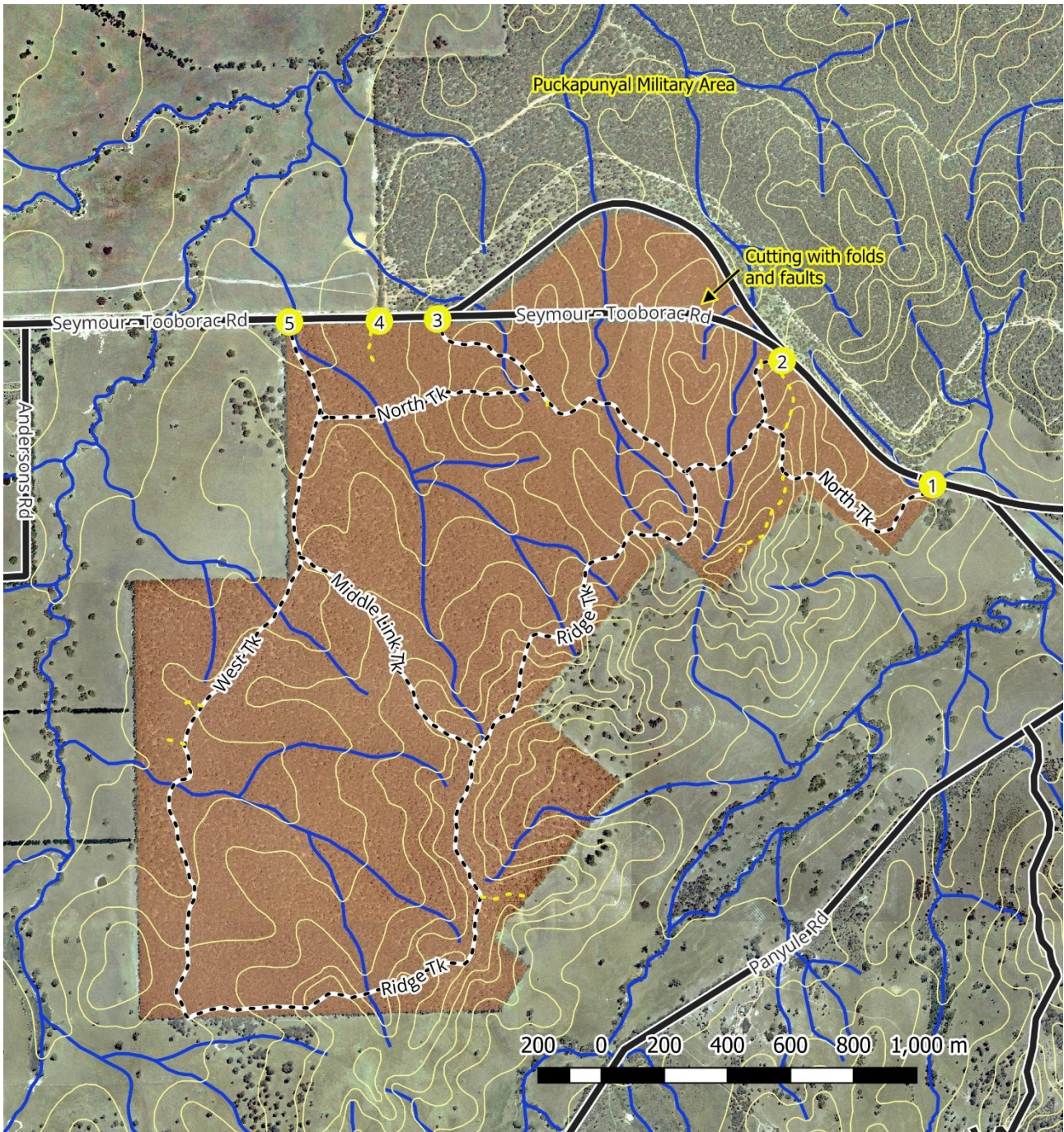
Author: Peter Mitchell

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



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Tooborac NCR	Roads	Walking/overgrown tracks	Entry points
Watercourses	Vehicle tracks	Contours 10m	

Map notes: Names on tracks are not official names and the Reserve has no signposts.