

18. Mount Disappointment Forests



The Mount Disappointment forests are rich and diverse forested lands on a high dissected granite plateau. The forests range from dry forests in the north and west through to wet Mountain Ash forest in higher southern plateau and southeast slopes. The area is divided into the smaller **Wandong Regional Park** on the west, **Mount Disappointment State Forest** on the western catchments and **Kinglake National Park** (mostly the closed-to-public Wallaby Creek Water Supply Catchment) on the eastern side. The State Forest has many access roads and tracks and a few marked walking tracks.

The forests of Mount Disappointment are on the land of the Taungurung and Wurrundjeri 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

Main Mountain Road runs through the State Forest. Entry roads to the forest ultimately join *Main Mountain Road* and many of the side roads and tracks run off these roads. The entry roads are:

North Mountain Road in Wandong joins **South Mountain Road** near the start of Wandong Regional Park. *South Mountain Road* becomes *Main Mountain Road* from *Sheils Road* and *The Bump*.

Spur Road from Clonbinane becomes the other end of *Main Mountain Road* in the State Forest.

Clonbinane Road from near *Waterford Park* enters the State Forest at *Anderson Garden* and becomes *Westcott Creek Road* linking with the many other roads and tracks around *Sunday Creek Reservoir*. *Anderson Garden* has camping, picnic facilities and toilets.

Murchison Spur Road off *Strath Creek Road* from *Broadford* follows a ridgeline south to become *Murchison Road* at the Forest boundary. The track to *Strath Creek Falls* runs off to the east. The road eventually joins *Flowerdale Road* at 10.9 km.

Forest Road off the *Whittlesea Yea Road* near *Hazeldene* climbs the eastern side of the plateau. At the Forest boundary (3.0 km from the *Yea Road*), *Forest Road* becomes *Flowerdale Road* and continues west past *Murchison Road* at 16.7 km to join *Main Mountain Road* at about 18.6 km. *Number One Camp* is near the junction with *Murchison Road*.

Within the State Forest, there is a confusing network of roads, some good but some rough and washed out and some closed to traffic. Notes on these roads and particularly on road closures are on the last page of these Reserve Notes.

Significant routes through the Forest include:

Mount Disappointment Forest Drive: This is a large loop off *Main Mountain Road*. It runs south along *Disappointment Road* to *Blairs Hut* and the *Mount Disappointment Walk*. It then travels along *Board Road*, one of the gems of the trip through mountain ash forest on the border of the closed *Wallaby Creek* catchment, and past *Flat Rock Lookout*. The route turns west into *Cottrell Road* and back to *Main Mountain Road*. **Note:** this was an all-seasons gravel road but is now closed from the June long weekend to *Cup Day* to avoid track and illegal off-track damage during wet conditions, risks from fallen stags killed by the 2009 fire, and rubbish dumping.

More maps, track notes and information will be provided in future versions of this Reserve Note

Walking Tracks

The State Forest has three designated walking tracks:

Mount Disappointment Summit Walk (3.5km): The walk begins at Blairs Hut on Disappointment Road. *More details to follow.*

Strath Creek Falls Walk (1.0 km): From Murchison Road, the turnoff to a carpark is well signposted. The viewing point is a short walk from the carpark.

Sunday Creek Reservoir Walk (5km): The walk starts at Anderson Garden on Sunday Creek at the end of Clonbinane Road. *More details to follow.*

Silver Creek Walking Circuit (14.3km): This walk is along the edge of Kinglake National Park along wide dirt roads accessible only to walkers. This is a delightful circuit through forests with many wildflowers and the Wallaby Creek Cascades at the southern end. It contains some steep pinches but shorter and/or gentler loops are an option. Some tracks may have fallen trees to be negotiated. Entry is on Silver Creek Road off Yea Whittlesea Road (opposite the CFA Shed).

Wallaby Springs Reserve: a short walk along King Parrot Creek Track. Although the forests were affected by fire, they still have many magnificent old Manna Gums and Narrow-leaf Peppermint. Entry points are from two carparks off the Yea Whittlesea Road. Road 22 at the south end has an off-road carpark. From here, a bush track runs down to a picnic table on King Parrot Creek and over Stony Creek to the loop road at 170m. The loop walk starts at a locked gate beside the road 200m further north of Road 22. It is about 400m long with many side tracks. This is the only publicly accessible area of the eastern sections of the State Forest.

The Forest has no other established walking tracks but many wonderful places worth a visit. There are opportunities for many more walking tracks through the Forest including along the old timber tramways. For more information on walking and camping refer to the [Forest Notes for Mount Disappointment State Forest](#).



Warning: The State Forest is popular with 4WD and trailbikes. These may be speeding on narrow tracks and are often in convoys, particularly during weekends.



Within the State Forest, there is a confusing network of roads, some good but some rough and washed out. Maps of roads may be inaccurate and not up-to-date. Some roads may be closed permanently or during the winter; check the FFMV website for [Seasonal Forest Road Closures](#).



All abilities access is limited. *More information to follow.*



Picnic tables are available at all visitor sites.



Camping is available at Anderson Garden and at Number One Camp and Number One Horseyard Camp on Flowerdale Road. Fires can be lit at camp sites subject to [Fire Restrictions and Regulations](#).



Toilets are available at Blairs Hut near Mt Disappointment, Anderson Garden, the Trail Bike Visitor Area, Regular Camp on the northern end of Main Mountain Road, and at Number One Camp and Number One Horseyard Camp on Flowerdale Road.

Landform and Geology

From around 520 million years ago, sediments of silt, sand and gravel were laid down in the sea, hardened to rock, and lifted to complete the land surface of Victoria around 380 million years ago. *Mount Disappointment Granodiorite* intruded as molten rock into these sedimentary layers around 380 to 354 million years ago. Over the following millennia, the overlying rocks eroded to expose an ellipse of granodiorite surrounded by an aureole of hard metamorphic rock (hornfels). This eroded surface was uplifted over the past 100 million years to create the east-west divide through Victoria.

The Mount Disappointment area is a gently domed ellipse of granodiorite with the highest point (Mount Disappointment) in the south-west. The hard metamorphic aureole is less erodible and forms very steep slopes to the east and south of Mount Disappointment. The older sedimentary rocks extend the plateau west and north with erosion creating steep ridges and gullies towards the lower country. The sedimentary ridges provide good access routes onto and across the plateau.

Viewed from the south, the elevated plateau is an obvious feature with the ancient sedimentary rocks gradually rising from Kilmore Gap near Wandong to the high granodiorite dome of Mount Disappointment then dropping away to the east.

The Plenty River carries runoff from southern slopes of the high plateau. The East Branch carries water into Toorourrong Reservoir and hence to Yan Yean. King Parrot Creek runs north below the eastern side of the plateau to join Strath Creek and the Goulburn River. However, the headwaters of two branches of King Parrot Creek - Silver Creek and Wallaby Creek - are captured by an aqueduct running along the eastern slopes of the plateau. The aqueduct carries the water south across the Divide into Jacks Creek, Plenty River East and Toorourrong Reservoir. All these streams are in the Wallaby Creek Designated Water Supply Catchment Area supplying water to Melbourne.

On the western side of the plateau, Sunday Creek rises in the high granodiorite plateau. The headwaters of Sunday Creek are captured in the Sunday Creek Reservoir with a pipeline up to Hollowback Reservoir above Wandong feeding through to Kilmore and a second pipeline down the valley to Broadford. Dry Creek starts near Mount Disappointment and runs down to Wandong. Reedy Creek/Dabyminga Creek starts in the northwestern ridges and valleys and runs north to

Reedy Creek and Tallarook. Strath Creek also runs off the northern slopes and joins King Parrot Creek at Strath Creek.

Vegetation

The vegetation around Mount Disappointment clearly shows the effects of altitude and aspect on moisture regime. The western and northern slopes are lower and drier, with a mosaic of [Grassy Dry Forest](#) and [Herb-rich Foothill Forest](#) gradually becoming damper with altitude. Most gullies have ribbons of *Damp Forest*.

The higher country on granodiorite and the steep south-east slopes of the aureole have *Damp Forest* of Messmate and Narrow-leaved Peppermint and *Wet Forest* of Mountain Ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*). The deepest south-east gullies contain patches of *Cool Temperate Rainforest* with Myrtle Beech and Sassafras. The wetter forests are mostly in the protected Wallaby Creek Catchment area and include some of the tallest Mountain Ash in Victoria (up to 91.6m; Mifsud 2003).

In 2009, the extremely hot Black Saturday fires burnt most of the State Forest and Regional Park. The fire initially ran from near Kilmore East south-east along the edge of the forest. When the wind changed, a wide fire front immersed the State Forest in an extremely hot fire running up to the main ridge but then jumped, leaving some of the east-facing Wallaby Creek catchment unburnt. Fire stimulates the regeneration of Mountain Ash, and the forests are now a dense stand of young trees and understorey. Rainforest species will take much longer to recover through a succession from Mountain Ash forest if given enough time. On the other hand, the rough barked Messmate and Peppermint on the drier country can survive fire.

More information will be provided in future versions of this Reserve Note.

Wildlife

This rich and diverse forest is home to many animals, including some notable endangered species such as Gang-gang Cockatoos and Greater Gliders.

More information will be provided in future versions of this Reserve Note.

Aboriginal history

The forested lands around Mount Disappointment are on the land of the Taungurung People north of the Great Divide and the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people south of the divide. The waterways in the Mount Disappointment State Forest and Wandong State Park and the whole of Kinglake National Park are areas of [Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity](#) and include artefacts of aboriginal land use.

Taungurung forests are diverse, flowing from and into Waring. Waring (the Goulburn River) is the lifeblood of Taungurung biik. Banit ngarrap (thick forest) protects the headwaters of Waring

where they emerge in the high places in the south and east.When the forests are healthy, they are full of life and food and medicine can grow in abundance. The plants and the weather show when the time is right to travel next. In the hot months, the high forests offer refuge from the heat and the abundance of debera (bogong moth) supports gathering and ceremony. All forests are places of people. Ceremony, initiation, connection, dance and stories all flow when forests are managed by Taungurung according to lore. (from the Taungurung Nation Forest and Fire Knowledge Circle, 2023).

The forests to the south would have been similarly important to the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people.

History after colonisation

The Plenty River East Branch, incorporating Wallaby Creek and Silver Creek catchments, was permanently reserved for water supply purposes in 1872 and was added to Kinglake National Park in 1995.

Comet Mill operated from 1884 to 1902 and tramlines through the forest delivered timber to the seasoning works and rail yards at Wandong .

No. 2 Camp became Bambara School Camp run by the Salvation Army for many years but destroyed by the 2009 fires.

After the 2009 fires, the [Light Rail Research Society of Australia](#) used the opportunity to follow and map the old tramways through the forest, a now impossible task with all the regrowth but a challenge to the adventurous.

More information will be provided in future versions of this Reserve Note.

Management

Most of the publicly accessible areas are in the Mount Disappointment State Forests managed by Forest Fire Management Victoria (a part of the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action). Native timber harvesting in Victoria's state forests ended on 1 January 2024 and the future use and management of the State Forest is uncertain. While the forest is zoned Public Conservation and Resource Zone under the Planning Schemes for Mitchell Shire, the forest south of the Divide and west of the National Park in Whittlesea Shire is zoned Public Park and Recreation Zone. The significance of this zoning is being investigated.

Sunday Creek Reservoir and the water supply networks in the state forest are managed by Goulburn Valley Water. Hopefully changes in management of the forest will improve both the quality and quantity of water in this system.

Kinglake National Park is managed by [Parks Victoria](#). Most of the National Park in Mitchell Shire is within the Wallaby Creek Designated Water Supply Catchment Area and is co-operatively

managed by Parks Victoria and Melbourne Water Corporation. Access and use of this catchment is restricted.

All the Mount Disappointment forests are Crown Land. North of the Divide, these Crown lands come under the [Taungurung Recognition and Settlement Agreement](#) between the State Government and the Taungurung Land and Waters Council. In particular, Wandong Regional Park is transitioning ownership from the Crown and management from Parks Victoria to the Taungurung People. The Park will be managed jointly by the State Government and the Taungurung. South of the Divide, the registered Aboriginal Party is the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.

The Victorian Heritage Register included [Comet Mill](#) and many timber and mining industry sites in the forest are listed on the Victorian Heritage Inventory including [Germantown](#) near Reedy Creek.

Further information

Forest Notes: Mount Disappointment State Forest at

https://www.ffm.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0023/26366/FS0011-Mt.Disappointment-State-Forest.pdf. Useful maps and information on the walks.

Road closures: <https://www.ffm.vic.gov.au/permits-and-regulations/closures-of-parks-and-forests>

Parks Victoria: Parks Victoria can be contacted on 13 1963 or

<https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/contact-us>

Kinglake National Park at <https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/places-to-see/parks/kinglake-national-park> has limited maps and information on the parts of Kinglake National Park in Mitchell Shire. Dogs are not allowed in this Park.

Website for Wandong Regional Park at

<https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/places-to-see/parks/wandong-regional-park> has a map but no information (30/6/2023)

Wallaby Creek Designated Water Supply Catchment Area, Kinglake National Park Management Plan (Parks Victoria 1998). See [Wallaby Creek Management Plan](#).

Friends of Mount Disappointment: <https://www.facebook.com/mountdisappointmentstateforest>.

Lots of useful information.

Mifsud, B. (2003). Victoria's Tallest Trees. Australian Forestry. Vol 66, No. 3, pp. 197-205

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237437085_Victoria%27s_tallest_trees#pf1

Mount Disappointment Tramlines and Sawmills

<https://www.victoriasforestryheritage.org.au/maps/mtdisappointment/mtd5/index.html#10/-37.5124/144.8967>. Map prepared by M Wade with tramline data provided by Colin Harvey, Light Rail Research Society of Australia (<https://www.lrrsa.org.au>).

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>

Taungurung Nation Forest and Fire Knowledge Circle, M. Hansby, L. Riches and M. Nurse. *Rapid Biocultural Expressions Assessment of the State Forests within the Central Highlands Regional Forest Agreement (CHRFA) area occurring on Taungurung Country*. Taungurung Land and Waters Council. December 2023.

https://taungurung.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/RapidBioculturalAssessment_CHRFA_Final_20240319.pdf

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation: <https://www.wurundjeri.com.au>

Kinglake Forest Adventures Camp: a private business that run camps for school groups in the Kinglake West Education Area. See <https://www.kfacamp.com.au>

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

Acknowledgements

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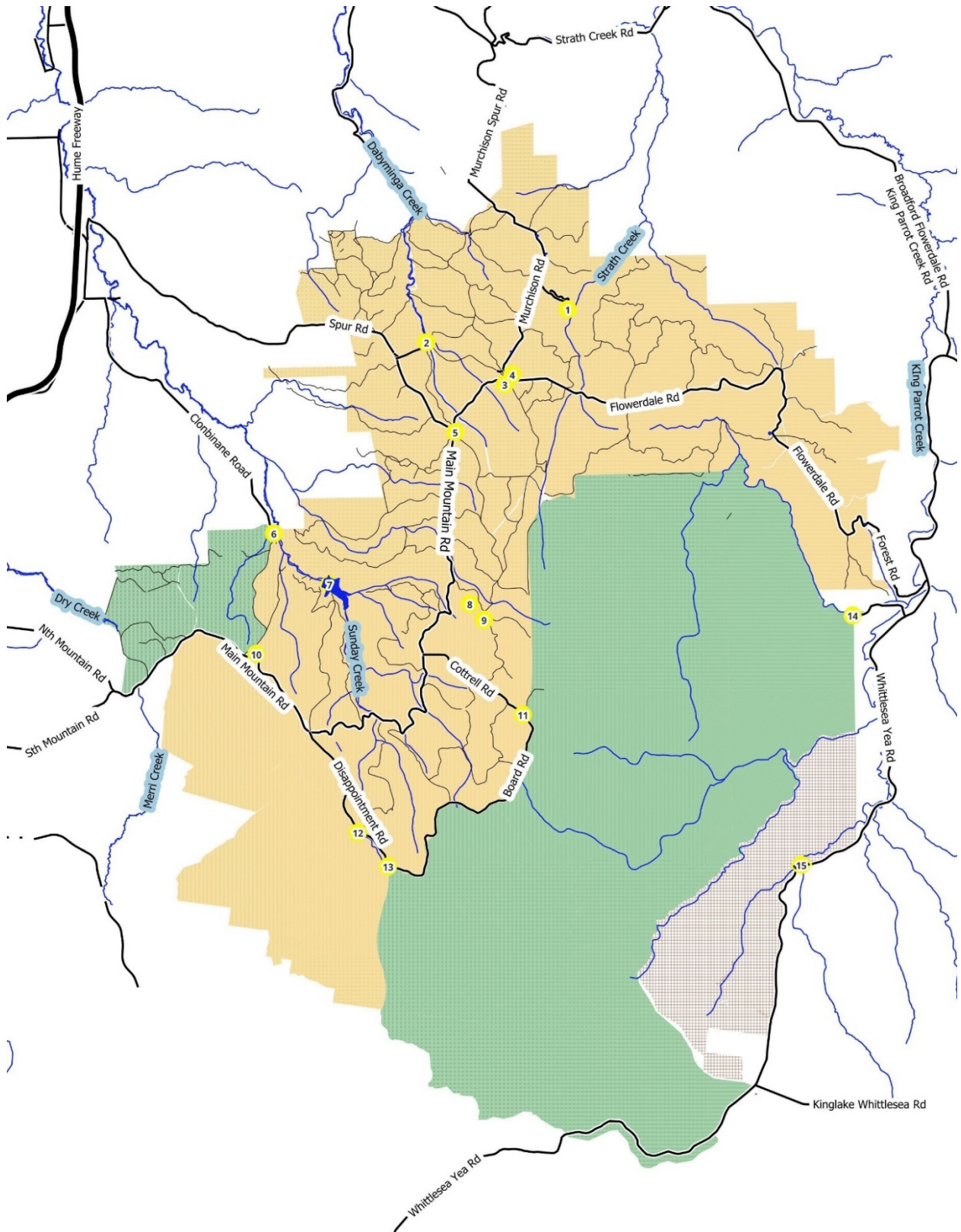
Author: Peter Mitchell

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








This Reserve Note is incomplete and a work in progress. If you have any comments or additional information on the nature and ecological history of the Mount Disappointment forests, please contact us at <https://www.beam.org.au/contact>



Mount Disappointment Forests



Detailed maps will be provided in future versions of this Reserve Note.

 Parks and Reserves	 Major roads	 Walking tracks
 State Forest	 Access roads	 Features
 South-east restricted areas	 Other roads and tracks	 Gates
 Waterways and dams	 Closed roads	

Features and facilities

1. Strath Creek Falls **W P**
2. Trail Bike Visitor Area **P T**
3. Number One Camp **C T**
4. Number One Horseyard Camp **C T**
5. Regular Camp **P T**
6. Anderson Garden camping and picnic area **W C P T**
7. Sunday Creek Reservoir **W**
8. Mount Mickey
9. Comet Mill Historic Site
10. Hollowback Reservoir
11. Flat Rock Lookout
12. Mount Disappointment
13. Blairs Hut (Mount Disappointment Summit Walk) **P T**
14. Silver Creek Trails **W**
15. Wallaby Springs Reserve **W P**

W: walks, **C:** camping, **P:** picnic facilities, **T;** toilet

Notes on Forest boundaries: The Mount Disappointment Forests comprise:

Mount Disappointment State Forest: accessible to the public.

Wandong Regional Park: also accessible to the public.

Kinglake National Park (Wallaby Creek Catchment): closed to the public.

Kinglake West/Flowerdale area: the land between the Yea Whittlesea Road and the National Park is a mix of National Park and Kinglake West Education Area, State Forest and other Crown Land. These are managed by Parks Victoria, Forest Fire Management Victoria and Melbourne Water. All these areas are closed to the public except for the Silver Creek Walking Trails and Wallaby Creek Reserve (see Walking Tracks above).

Notes on roads and tracks: The Mount Disappointment Forests have many roads and tracks that may or may not be passable due to seasonal conditions, damage after fire or floods, or lack of maintenance particularly after disasters and limited funding. Some may be seasonally or permanently closed. Caution is needed at all times.

Roads are marked and named as “Roads” on maps and signposts. Roads are generally passable for 2WD and 4WD vehicles, but subject to changes in condition.

Tracks are also marked and may be named as “Tracks” on maps and signposts. Some tracks are not named. Tracks are single lane, rough and unsuitable for 2WD vehicles. They are also more likely to be unsuitable for 4WD vehicles because road conditions make them impassable or because using these tracks will cause further damage and erosion.

Closed roads and tracks: Some roads and tracks have been closed permanently with barriers. Some may be identified on the map but more may be closed in the future. Many are becoming overgrown and will disappear in time. Others may be maintained as walking tracks.

Some roads and tracks are closed seasonally to prevent damage or when tracks are already damaged and needing repairs. In particular, parts of the Mount Disappointment Forest Drive may be closed. Check the FFMV website for [Seasonal Forest Road Closures](#).

Some tracks have simply been designated “Road Unmaintained”. Most are being allowed to become overgrown and disappear into the forest, although a few are still in active use. Many older tracks have already largely disappeared and are no longer on maps.

Kinglake National Park (Wallaby Creek Catchment) and forests close to Kinglake West are closed to the public.