

32. Black Spring Flora Reserve



Black Spring Flora Reserve is a small reserve enclosing part of one of the largest spring soaks in the Pyalong area. The soak has Swamp Gums over a mass of reeds and sedges and the dry slopes have a great stand of old Candlebarks. The Reserve (aka **Tooborac I19 Bushland Reserve**) is on the west side of Northern Highway 5km north of Mollison Creek bridge in Pyalong. The Reserve is part of Landcare's Forest Link between the Tooborac and Cobaw forests.

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

Black Spring Flora Reserve is on the west side of Northern Highway 5km north of Mollison Creek bridge in Pyalong. Parking is available at the start of a rough track through the Reserve.

Walking Tracks

A rough vehicle track runs through the Reserve from the Northern Highway into an un-named road reserve. The grassy dry forest makes for easy walking off track. The wetland areas are sensitive to disturbance and should be avoided.



Warning: The Candlebark trees are old and falling branches are a risk.



The only track is rough and eroded and not suitable all abilities.



Driving through the Reserve is discouraged to protect the tracks and vegetation and to control illegal dumping and firewood collection.



The Reserve has no toilets.

Landform and Geology

The Reserve is covered with sands from the granite hills to the west. Spring-soaks are common along these lower slopes of the granite but are rarely or incompletely mapped. Only three in this area are officially mapped as wetlands: the wetland upstream from the Reserve, another small wetland towards Pyalong and a small section of Turner Creek nearer Pyalong.

The soak in this Reserve extends about 700m upstream of the Reserve (including excavations for one large and several small dams) and downstream as a small creekline ("Black Spring Creek"). The creek runs southeast under the Northern Highway and opens out into another spring soak and a wide drainage line running down to Turner Creek.

Turner Creek marks the boundary between the granite slopes and a high ridge of the metamorphic aureole to the east. The valley floor is wide with extensive soaks and wetlands running down to join Mollison Creek 50m east of the trestle bridge in Pyalong.

Vegetation

The highlight of this Reserve is the small patch of more-or-less intact [Spring Soak Woodland](#) (a threatened ecosystem). Spring soaks are a significant feature of the granite country but most are on cleared grazing land. The only remaining trees in this Spring Soak Woodland are Swamp Gums

in a small area in the southeast of the Reserve (photo left). Most of the spring soak within the Reserve and all the upstream area is sedgeland without trees (photo right). The ground cover is a thick mass of rushes, sedges, native cumbungi and wildflowers such as swamp billy-buttons.

The small area of spring soak with trees is marked on vegetation maps but not wetland maps. The sedgelands upstream are not mapped as spring soaks but the area above the reserve is on wetland maps. Confused?



In the south-east corner of the Reserve, a small creek emerges from the wetland and across a flat area of [Swampy Riparian Woodland](#) with an overstorey of Swamp Gums and healthy understorey of grasslands including swards of Weeping Grass.

Despite the maps, all the wetlands running to Turner Creek and along the creek towards Pyalong represent a very extensive wetland. Some is mapped as *Swampy Riparian Woodland* but most is mapped as *Valley Grassy Forest*! This wetland system needs better recognition.



Another highlight of the Reserve is the large area of [Valley Grassy Forest](#) on the drier slopes dominated by the white trunks of Candlebarks. Large patches of mature Candlebark forest are rare in the granite country. One corner near the road has Red Stringybarks. The sparse understorey is mostly Silver Wattles and other acacias. The ground is densely covered with native and introduced grasses with scattered wildflowers. A few logs have escaped the firewood collectors.

Plant databases have no plants recorded within cooee of this Reserve. Plant lists are being developed.

Wildlife

Black Spring is at the intersection of two bushland corridors – the Northern Highway with large numbers of old trees and the Tooborac to Cobaw Forest Link created by Nulla Vale Pyalong West Landcare Group.

The Forest Link joins the old rail reserve where the rail reserve, Northern Highway, Ladder Hill Road and part of the small Tooborac I98 Bushland Reserve come together to create another rich bushland area. From here, the Forest Link runs south along the old rail reserve which veers away from the highway. Opposite Black Spring Reserve, the Link crosses the fenced wetland back to the highway and into the Reserve. It continues up the unnamed road west of the Reserve over the granite hills and south across West Road (see the drive notes in NT30 Langley Flora Reserve).

Black Spring Reserve also has many features that provide good range of habitats including the large old Candlebarks in their grassy woodlands and the spring soak woodlands and sedgelands.

This must be a rich place for many vertebrates and invertebrates. But only a few species have been recorded for the Reserve: one beetle, one skink (in 1981) and 46 birds (including a pheasant!). More surveys are needed and useful species lists prepared so that the values of this Reserve can be fully recognised.

Aboriginal history

The Reserve is on the land of the Taungurung People. The wetlands in the Reserve and along Turner Creek would have been rich places for First Nation People living in this area. Turner Creek is listed as an area of [Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity](#) from just north of Black Spring through to Mollison Creek in Pyalong.

History after colonisation

Europeans colonised the land from the late 1830s. Sheep and cattle would have grazed into spring soak especially in dry seasons and dams were sunk into the soak for stock water. Most of the trees around the soak and surrounding hills were cleared. This clearing would have increased when the Northern Highway started to carry people and goods to the Heathcote and Bendigo goldfields from the 1850s. From the 1860's the land was subdivided for settlers and even later for one of Australia's many grand land settlement schemes. In 1889, the Heathcote Junction to Bendigo Railway began carrying people and goods, and particularly timber for sleepers, mine props and firewood.

This Reserve contains a relatively healthy remnant of the original large spring-soak woodland and surrounding forest. The original purpose of the Reserve is to be determined, but it has been partly cleared and continues to be used illegally for firewood collection.

The only signage for “Black Spring Flora Reserve” disappeared in the last decade. The title of Tooborac I19 Bushland Reserve comes from the Land Conservation Council’s recommendations.

From 2000, Nulla Vale Pyalong West Landcare Group created the Forest Biolink including this Reserve. The old rail lines are being proposed as Rail Trail.

Management

The Reserve 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>. Websites for Black Spring Flora Reserve (Tooborac I19 Bushland Reserve) is at <https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/places-to-see/parks/tooborac-i19-bushland-reserve>. It contains only general information on visiting reserves (at 30/6/2023).

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>

Mitchell Shire: Wallan to Heathcote Rail Trail Feasibility Study at <https://engagingmitchellshire.com/wallan-to-heathcote-rail-trail>

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

Acknowledgements

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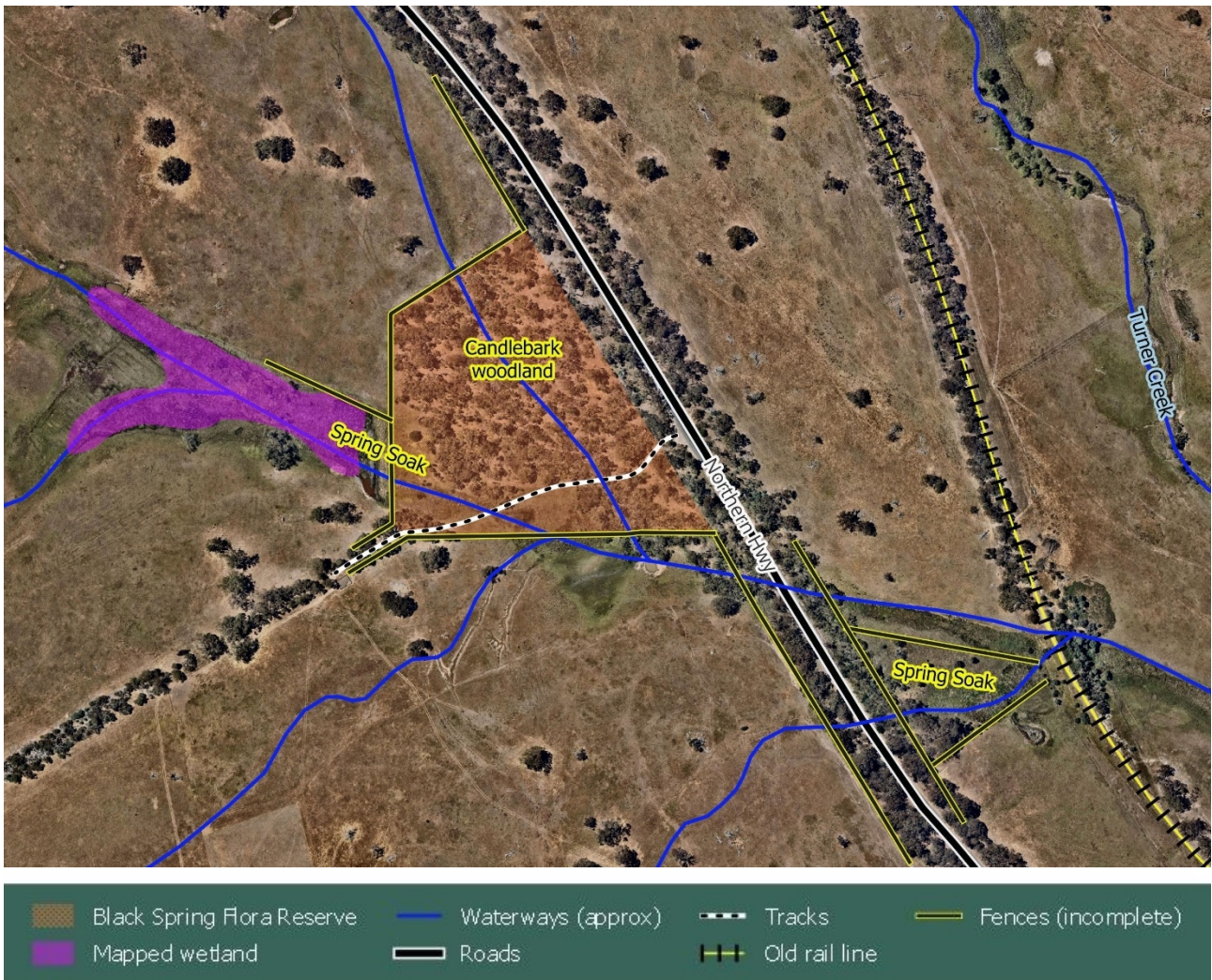
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These notes are a work in progress. If you have any comments or additional information on the nature and ecological history of Black Springs Flora Reserve, please contact us at

<https://www.beam.org.au/contact>



Black Spring Flora Reserve



Note on reserve boundaries: The Reserve has been defined on the map by the fencelines between the Reserve and farmlands, and by the road reserve along the Northern Highway rather than by title boundaries.