

27. Green Hill Reserve



Green Hill is a volcanic cone on the southern side of Wallan. It is one of several volcanic cones at the eastern edge of Victoria's Newer Volcanic Province. The vegetation is mostly grassland with a circle of weedy shrubs around the summit that together provide habitat for many grassland birds such as Black-shouldered Kites. Green Hill is accessible from Windham Street, and a short climb provides great views of the surrounding landscape.

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

Enter the Reserve at the southern end of Windham Street, Wallan.

Walking Tracks

Enter the front gateway to the Wallan Bowling Club and turn left (east) across the grassy flat in front of the hedge hiding the Wallan Bowling Club to a gate in an old wire fence. From here, there are no fixed walking tracks, but mowed areas and vehicle tracks may be followed to the summit or around the hill.



The Reserve is not accessible to all abilities.



The Reserve has no toilets.

Landform and Geology

The area around Green Hill is at the eastern edge of the vast volcanic plains of western Victoria. Green Hill is a lava dome, a type of volcano created by the outpouring of fluid lava. This lava flowed into the areas around Wallan, and hardened to the basalt rocks that can be seen on the northern slopes and in the quarry to the west.



South of Green Hill is Mount Fraser (photo, centre), formed from showers of frothed-up lava (scoria) and lava flows. These flows are relatively recent (800 thousand years old). Flows from Mount Fraser extend south as rocky rises visible past Beveridge, with one flow running south beneath Flinders Street and the Yarra River in Melbourne. Northeast of Mount Fraser, the group of low hills to the right in the photo is Springs Hill, with a crater and lava flows indicating another place with a violent past.

The lava flows from Mount Fraser blocked waterways of Merri Creek and its tributaries, creating many wetlands including the extensive *wallan wallan* Swamp (including Herne Swamp in the area now known as Wallan East) and *burung buluk* (Hanna Swamp) west of the Freeway. Around 1939/40, the basalt flow was dynamited to drain the swamp, and Merri Creek and other streams

through the swamp were converted to straight channels. More recently, pondages were excavated around Wallan East urban developments to control flooding of urban areas. Further south, part of the swamp is now Wallan Sewage Treatment Plant. All these features are visible from Green Hill.

North of Green Hill is Pretty Sally, a much older (4-5 million years old) volcano with basalt weathered to deep rich soils. To the east is the tree-covered plateau of Mount Disappointment and further north is Mount Hickey at the southern edge of Tallarook Plateau. Both these areas are ancient rocks (more than 380 million years old) uplifted, eroded to a flat plain, uplifted again as a plateau now dissected by eroding streams. To the west is a narrow ridgeline of ancient sedimentary rocks, with the route of Old Sydney Road used to avoid *wallan wallan* Swamp (see Natural Treasure 26 Old Sydney Road Wildflower Area).

Vegetation

Green Hill is classed as Herb-rich Foothill Forest but it has the heavy cracking soils like the volcanic cones further south. These are classed as [Plains Grassy Woodland](#) but are more likely to be *Scoria Cone Woodland (EVC 894)*. Research at Arthur Rylah Institute (ARI) suggests that the lower slopes of Green Hill were dominated by the rough-barked form of Manna Gum which is found on many of the stony rises around Beveridge and elsewhere in Victoria. The middle slopes may have been dominated by a tree-form of Silver Banksia, assorted Wattles and Sweet Bursaria. The top of the cone may have had little or no overstorey trees. The understorey would have had a dense native grass layer (especially Common Tussock-Grass and Wallaby-Grass) and a rich herb layer including native peas and daisies.

None of these trees and shrubs are on Green Hill. Some areas may have been natural grasslands with deeper-rooted trees and shrubs having difficulty establishing in the sometimes waterlogged, sometimes cracking clay soils. Alternatively, the absence of trees could be caused by the regular use of fire by the First Nations People to maintain open grasslands. Or the trees may have been removed by the colonisers. History books refer to an estate at “Bald Hill” south of Mount Fraser.



Green Hill is now grassland with a mixture of native grasses and taller introduced Cocksfoot and Phalaris. The summit circle of trees and shrubs are made up of Boxthorn (an introduced weed) and ancient Monterey Pines (also introduced). The Boxthorn is harbour for rabbits that have eaten out the grasses leaving bare ground over the summer/autumn and masses of Capeweed in wetter months.

Merri Creek Management Committee is consulting botanists ARI to develop revegetation guidelines.

The swamps and wetlands south and east of Wallan are broadly listed as Swampy Riparian Complex but importantly include some intact examples of “Seasonal Herbaceous Wetlands (Freshwater) of the Temperate Lowland Plains” [listed as critically endangered](#) under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

Plant lists for Green Hill Reserve are in preparation.

Wildlife

Although the vegetation is mostly introduced, the open grasslands and roost trees on the summit together provide good habitat for birds including Australian Pipits and Black-shouldered Kites (often seen hovering near the Freeway).

Species list is in preparation.

Aboriginal history

This reserve is on the land of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People, and the summit of Green Hill is a site of [Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity](#). The diversity of hills, rocky rises and swamps across this landscape would have provided a rich place to live.

The use of wetlands by First Nations 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 waterfowl 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 arrived in Port Phillip in June 1835 and was followed by more “squatters” and thousands of sheep and cattle that extended north to the hills behind Wallan. Overlanders also started to arrive from New South Wales with their sheep and cattle in 1837. Governor Bourke in Sydney moved quickly to allow settlers to rent “Crown land” in the Port Phillip area. Land was soon “purchased” along the Merri Creek, and tenant farm systems were established in the 1840s.

Grazing of the volcanic hills and *wallan wallan* wetlands had a big impact on the native vegetation, particularly in dry times. Rabbits and introduced plants would have added to the impacts of livestock. Drainage projects began from the early 1900s and most of the main streams including Merri Creek are now straight channels.

wallan wallan wetlands, including Herne Swamp and *burung buluk* (Hanna Swamp), and Mount Fraser have been proposed as the centre pieces of the *wallan wallan* Regional Park by [Nature Glenelg Trust](#) and [local groups](#) (Merri Creek Management Committee, Friends of Merri Creek and

the Wallan Environment Group). The proposal is now under [investigation by the State Government](#). This would be a very significant addition to the Natural Treasures in an area currently lacking large public conservation reserves.

The “Greenhill” was used as a common and was gazetted as a reserve on 2 February 1874 apart from a two-acre quarry site. It was known as “Wallan Wallan Park” on old title maps. Green Hill is one of the very few areas of Crown land in this landscape.

Over the past 20 years, urban growth has accelerated around Wallan, and Wallan is now within Melbourne’s Urban Growth Boundary. Use of Green Hill Reserve for walkers will increase, with more demand for facilities and environmental management.

Management

Green Hill is Crown land managed by Mitchell Shire Council.

Further information

Mitchell Shire Council: information on sporting facilities at <https://www.mitchellshire.vic.gov.au/our-region/parks-and-playgrounds/greenhill-reserve-wallan> and <https://wallan.bowls.com.au>

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

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

Maya V. Tucker (1988). *Kilmore on the Sydney Road*. Shire of Kilmore.

Websites about restoration of *wallan wallan* wetlands:

<https://natureglenelg.org.au/reimagining-the-future-of-the-wallan-wallan-wetlands-how-historic-information-and-modern-tools-can-guide-the-restoration-of-burrung-buluk-hanna-swamp/>

https://www.mcmc.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=786:bringing-herne-swamp-back-to-life&catid=2:uncategorised&acm=_196

<https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/suburban-parks/wallan-regional-park>

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. EPBC Act listing for *Seasonal Herbaceous Wetlands (Freshwater) of the Temperate Lowland Plains*,
<https://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publicshowcommunity.pl?id=97>

Acknowledgements

This Reserve Note was prepared by BEAM Mitchell Environment Group. Thanks to Mitchell Shire Council, Wallan Environment Group and Merri Creek Management Committee for their assistance and support. Information was obtained from a draft Fauna and Flora Assessment commissioned by Mitchell Shire Council.

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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 Green Hill and the surrounding country, please contact us at <https://www.beam.org.au/contact>.



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