

Gunbower National Park



Visitor Guide

The 8892ha Gunbower National Park is a unique and diverse wonderland of waterbirds, wildlife and aquatic plants. With a backdrop of the Murray River, majestic River Red Gums and sandy beaches, the park is ideal for camping and a range of water-based recreation.



Black Swans – Photo: Paul O'Connor DEPI

River Red Gum forests have high natural, cultural and economic values. These forests are under increasing pressure from climate change, drought and reduced water flows in the northern rivers.

Protecting this precious environment relies on balancing the economic and recreational activities with preserving its natural beauty and values.

Enjoying the park

Walking – There are many short and long walks throughout the area. A new 14km walking track near Koondrook will take you past the Eagle Tree and a number of cultural sites. Contact the Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) for further information.

Scenic drives – A leisurely half day drive, starting at Cohuna, links a number of historical, cultural and ecological sites (see overleaf).

Fishing - The river is a breeding ground for native fish species such as Murray Cod and Golden Perch.

A current NSW Freshwater Recreation Fishing Licence is required for the Murray River. A Victorian Recreational Fishing Licence is required for fishing in waters south of the Murray River.

Camping - Basic bush camping is available alongside the Murray River and Gunbower Creek on the island.

Boating and canoeing - The five kilometre canoe trail at Safes Lagoon near Koondrook in the adjacent State Forest will take about two hours to complete (return). Bring your own canoe and check water levels and access before you go. See DEPI trail brochure for information.

Swimming is popular, particularly at the numerous sandy river bend beaches.

Note: Take care when swimming - cold water and fast currents can be hazardous and there may be submerged logs. Diving or jumping into the water can be dangerous.

A rich history

Gunbower Island was frequented by two clans - the Barapa Barapa and the Yorta Yorta.

The Barapa Barapa and Yorta Yorta people have long connections with the area now known as Gunbower National Park. The area was known as Kanbowro – twisting and tortuous like the necks of the black swans. When exploring you may discover shell middens (kitchen hearths), burial sites and scar trees. These Australian heritage sites are protected by law.

In 1860 Fredrick Masters left Echuca in a rowing boat for Swan Hill, making camp at the site now known as Masters Landing. Fredrick built himself a permanent shelter from the bark of Grey-box trees. The house is still standing today, more than 150 years later.

In the 1870s, Paddle Steamers worked up and down the river six or seven months of the year. Goods were off-loaded at Masters Landing and taken to Gunbower by horse-drawn dray or wagon. Produce was brought to the site for the return trip to Echuca or loaded onto boats headed up the Darling River.

Be fire ready and stay safe

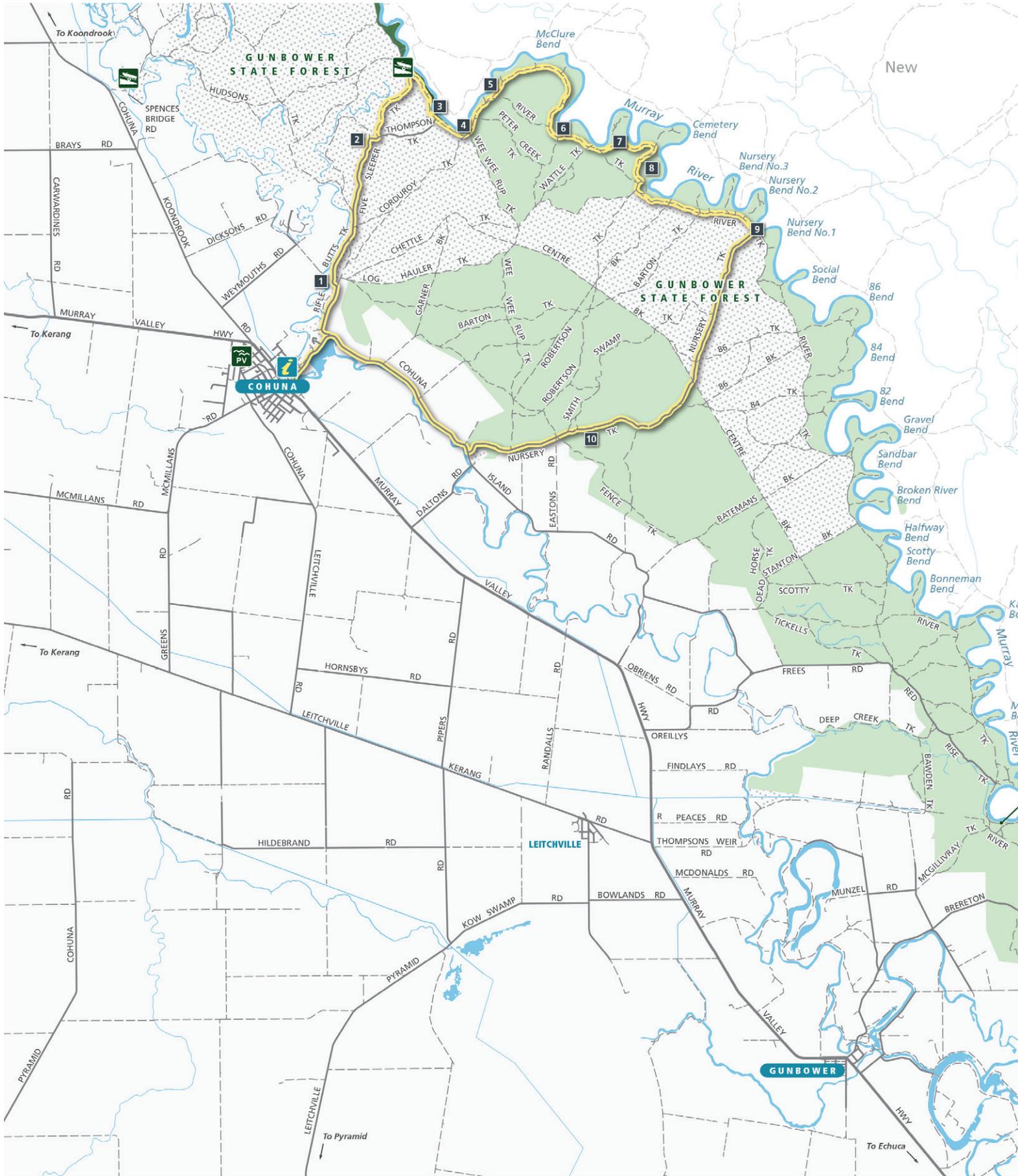
On days of forecast Code Red Fire Danger this park will be closed for public safety.

If you are already in the park you should leave the night before or early in the morning for your own safety.

Rangers will patrol where possible, however you may not receive a personal warning that the park is closed so check by calling **13 1963** or visit **www.parks.vic.gov.au**.

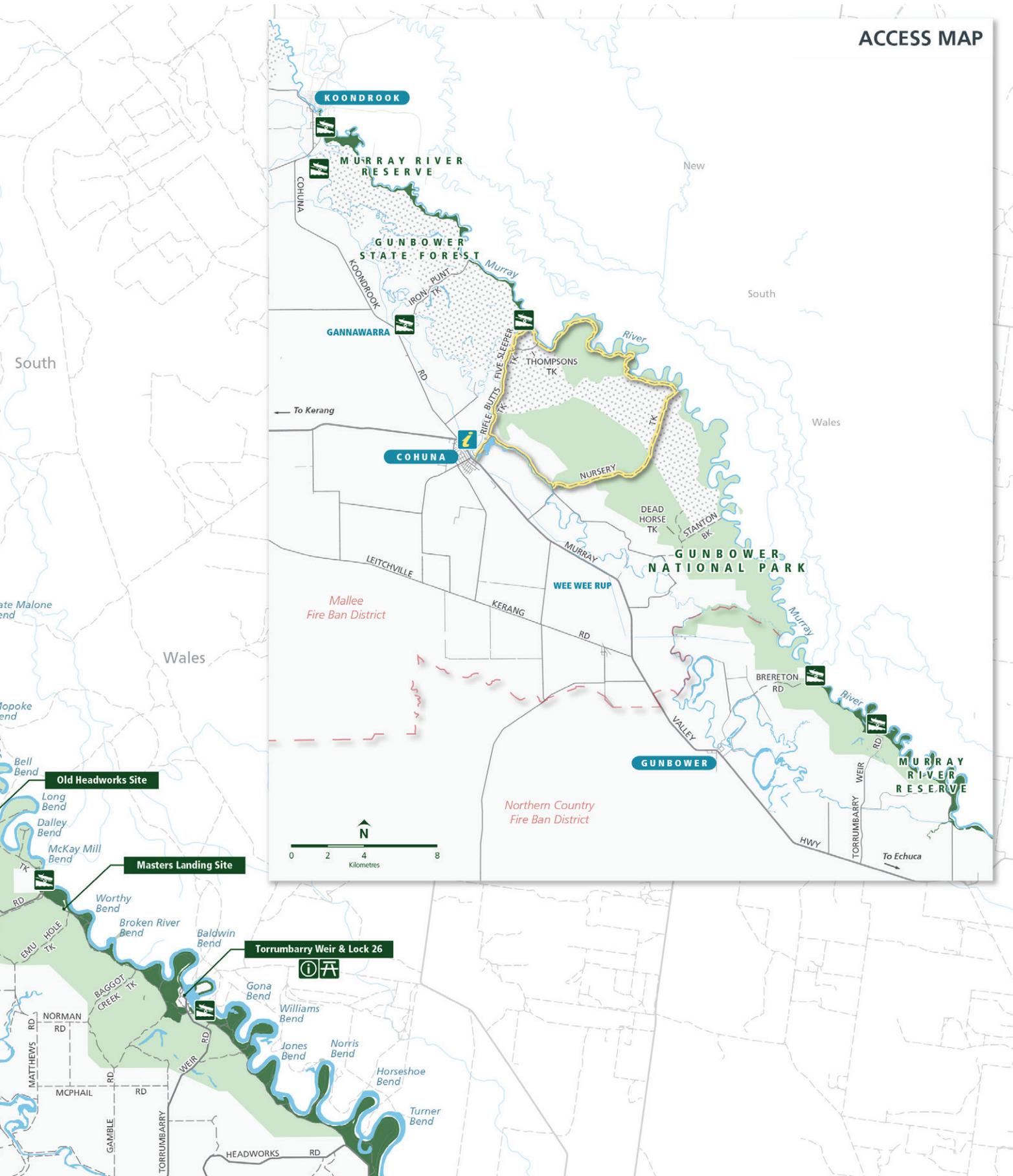
For up to date information on fires in Victoria or general fire safety advice call the **Victorian Bushfire Information Line** on **1800 240 667** or visit **www.cfa.vic.gov.au**.

Gunbower National Park



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|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------|------------------------|----------------|
| Park information | Parks Victoria office | Highway | 4WD track | Gunbower Nat |
| Visitor information | Forest drive stop number | Main road | Walking track | Murray River R |
| Picnic table | | Sealed road | Forest drive | State Forest |
| Boat ramp | | Unsealed road | Fire district boundary | Waterbody |

ACCESS MAP



www.parks.vic.gov.au

Disclaimer: Parks Victoria does not guarantee that this data is without flaw of any kind and therefore disclaims all liability which may arise from you relying on this information.

Data source acknowledgements: State Digital Mapbase, The State of Victoria and Department of Sustainability and Environment.

Cartography by Parks Victoria March 2013
For mobile App search for Avenza PDF Maps

For further information
Call Parks Victoria on **13 1963**
or visit www.parks.vic.gov.au

Cohuna Gateway to Gannawarra
Visitor Information Centre
90 King George Street
Cohuna Vic 3568
Tel: (03) 5456 2047

Echuca-Moama Visitor
Information Centre
2 Heygarth Street
Echuca Vic 3564
Freecall: 1800 804 446

Caring for the environment

Help us look after your park
by following these guidelines:

Please take rubbish with you for
recycling and disposal

All plants, animals, historical and
archaeological sites and
geographic features are protected
by law

Dogs are permitted in Gunbower
State Forest and Murray River
Reserves

Dogs and other pets are
not permitted in
Gunbower National Park

Firearms are prohibited

Campfires must be contained in a
pit at least 30cm deep, no larger
than one metre square with a
three metre clearance. Bring your
own firewood where possible

No fires may be lit on a day of

Total Fire Ban. Gas or electric
barbecues may be used provided:

- a 3 metre area is cleared of
anything flammable
- at least 10 litres of water is
available for immediate use
- an adult is in attendance at
all times

Gunbower National Park is in the
**Mallee and Northern Country
Total Fire Ban Districts**

It is your responsibility to know if
it is a day of Total Fire Ban. If in
doubt call the Victorian Bushfire
Information Line on 1800 240 667

Vehicles, including motor bikes,
may only be used on formed open
roads. Drivers must be licensed
and vehicles registered and
roadworthy

40km speed limits apply

Healthy Parks Healthy People

*Visiting a park can improve
your health, mind, body and
soul. So, with over four million
hectares of parkland available
to Victorians, why not escape
to a park today!*



A haven for plants and animals

One hundred and ninety-five species of native fauna have been recorded in the park, with 30 threatened species such as endangered Inland Carpet Python, Silver Perch, Giant Bullfrog, Broad-shelled Turtle and Squirrel Gliders. Kangaroos and Emus are common.

The park has over 200 species of birds and is one of the largest breeding grounds for waterbirds in Victoria including some of the 100 breeding pairs of White-Bellied Sea-Eagle remaining in Victoria.

Gunbower National Park has around 200 plant species. The two main forest types are River Red Gum in the wetter north-west and Black box and Grey Box in the higher south-east sections.

Until damming of the river, the River Red Gum and box forests were flooded more frequently than today, although they still depend on natural flooding or environmental allocations for occasional inundation.

Significant wetlands

Gunbower Forest, including the Gunbower National Park and Gunbower State Forest, is an internationally significant floodplain system and the second largest River Red Gum forest in Victoria. Spanning 20,000ha, the forest has long been regarded as a valuable natural resource and supports habitat for endangered birds, animals, native fish and plants; Internationally significant Ramsar Wetlands; Indigenous and European cultural heritage sites and River Red Gum, Black Box, and Grey Box communities.

Through the Living Murray program, environmental water is delivered to Gunbower Forest to maintain several permanent and semi-permanent wetland complexes, protect and enhance the River Red Gum communities and provide breeding opportunities for colonial water birds.

Environmental watering and recent flood events triggered significant breeding events of the Great Egret. Other significant bird species that utilise Gunbower Forest during periods of inundation are Little Pied Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant, White-necked Heron, Spoonbills, Darters, Australian White Ibis, the Australasian Grebe and the White-Bellied Sea-Eagle.

River Red Gums respond to environmental watering and natural flooding with flushes of new growth and some regeneration of understorey vegetation.

Hundreds of records were made from several frog species including Spotted Marsh Frog, Barking Marsh Frog, Perons Tree Frog, Pobblebonk, and Plain Froglet. All species successfully bred in the flooded areas of the Forest.

During flooding events and environmental watering, some parts of Gunbower National Park and Gunbower State Forest are closed to prevent damage to roads and tracks and for your own safety. Please respect these closures and stay off wet and flooded tracks. Tracks will be re-opened when it is safe to do so.

Gunbower forest drive

1. Ramsar Convention - Gunbower Island formed as the result of earth movements caused by the Cadell Fault around 20,000 years ago. The sign here explains the Ramsar Convention and why Gunbower Island is recognised as a significant wetland area.

2. Timber cutters steps - Here you can see large old stumps with slits cut into the sides. Woodcutters placed planks in these slits so that they could fell the tree at a height where the tree's girth was narrower.

3. Shillinglaw's Regulator - This regulator is used to control the flow of water through the forest, allowing water to flow from the Murray River along Yarran Creek. Water slowly dispersed through the forest along runners that you may have noticed crossing Five Sleeper Track.

4. Grey's Mill - This site was originally called Block 24 from which a mill operated in the 1870s. A fire in 1919 destroyed everything on Block 24. The area is now known as Grey's Mill after Frederick Charles Grey who ran the mill from 1905 until his death in 1912.

When the mill was in operation this was a thriving community with a state school with an average of 19 students. Across the road you can see a water levy bank, thought to have been created by residents to prevent their homes from flooding.

5. Graham's Hut - This is one of the last remaining huts on the Victorian frontage of the Murray River from Torrumbarry to Swan Hill. Timber to build the hut came from the original Strachan farmhouse and was transported by horse drawn dray.

6. Wattle Creek - This damper area, covered in fallen timber, is a refuge for small animals. The tall trees provide nesting sites for many birds.

7. Cemetery Bend - The picket fenced graves are a reminder of the harshness and isolation of life in the forest.

8. Robsons Mill - This was the site of the first licensed mill on the island founded in 1875. The mill produced timber for the suburban market in Melbourne and the steam boilers on riverboats.

9. Nursery Bend - An extensive experimental nursery was planted here by the Forest Commission. A variety of trees such as Mountain Ash and Monterey Pine can still be seen.

10. Nursery Track - Notice the vegetation change from River Red Gum on the lower, sandier soils to Black Box at higher elevations where the soil has a higher clay content.

Accommodation

Nearby towns of Koondrook, Cohuna, Gunbower, Torrumbarry and Echuca have caravan parks, motel and bed and breakfast accommodation.

How to get there

Gunbower National Park lies along the Murray River between Echuca and Koondrook around 250km north of Melbourne. Access to the major entrances is via the Murray Valley Highway.

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