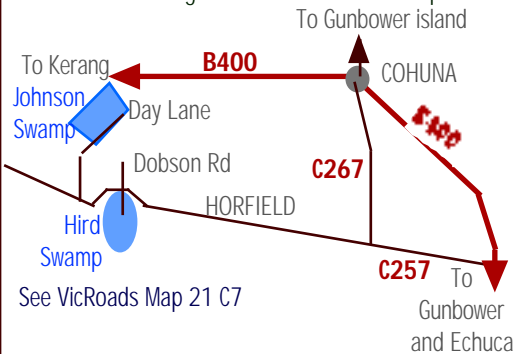


Johnson and Hird Swamps

Located off Kerang-Leitchville Road, Johnson and Hird swamps host ~ when they contain water ~ lots of water birds. Painted Snipe have sometimes been observed over summer in Hird Swamp. Water authorities often alternate the flooding of Hird and Johnson Swamps.



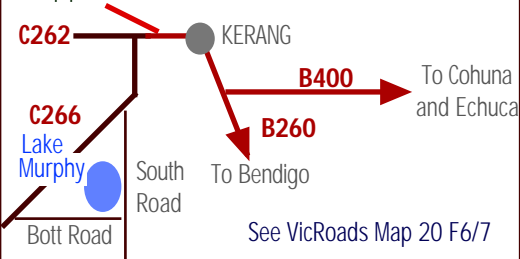
Local birders have observed around 50 species at each of the swamps over the period of a few hours.

If you intend to wade in the swamps to look for Snipe, 'gum boots' or 'waders' are recommended.

Birders should avoid the duck hunting season!

Lake Murphy

Further afield, Lake Murphy often affords good birding. When it contains water, it is advisable to drive around Lake Murphy, checking out both sections (Big Lake Murphy and Little Lake Murphy). Because some birds prefer deeper water than others, different water birds might be feeding in different parts of the lake. Some of the birds observed at Lake Murphy over recent years include Brolga, Freckled Duck, Avocet, Ruff, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Little Stint.



Birding spots between Echuca and Cohuna Wills Bend

Wills Bend is a popular camping and boating spot about 17km north-west from Echuca, via the B400 and O'Dwyer Road.

Outside of holiday times and weekends, when boaters and campers are absent, the birding in this section of Echuca Regional Park can be very rewarding, up to 50 species being observed over a few hours.

There are picnic tables and toilets at Wills Bend.

Benarca State Forest lies to the west, on the NSW side of the Murray.

Murphy Swamp

That part of Murphy Swamp located on the northern side of the B400 (Murray Valley Highway) 18.7km from Echuca is a remnant of a once-larger swamp. Entry to Murphy Swamp is via a gate alongside the B400 a few hundred metres north-west of Fraser Road. Although there is another section of swamp to the south (which can be accessed via Hatwell Road), most has been drained to make way for farms. This is a pity insofar as Brolgas and other water birds used to live on the area which has been drained. The number of species you can observe on the northern part of Murphy Swamp depends greatly upon the water level in the swamp. Look for Whistling Kite, Swamp Harrier, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Black-tailed Native Hen, Purple Swamp Hen and Musk Duck.

Baillieus (Richardsons) Lagoon

Continue along the B400 for about 2km from Murphy Swamp and turn right into Baillieu Road. The road travels through Baillieu Estate for about a kilometre before entering wetland. Keep veering left until you are alongside Baillieus (Richardsons) Lagoon. If the lagoon contains water, the birding here may be excellent. Look for Brolgas.

Torrumbarry Weir

Return to the B400 and continue on for about 11km. Turn right onto Torrumbarry Weir Road (the turn off is about 6km after Torrumbarry township). Continue to the end of this road. Birds often found in the gardens at Torrumbarry Weir include Blue-faced Honeyeater, Grey Shrike Thrush and Brown Treecreeper. Birds found near the spillway may include Little Pied Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant and Darter.

Thompson Weir

Leave the B400 at Gunbower (there is a hotel on the corner) and follow Thompson Bridge Road alongside the creek, crossing it alongside small weir. It is worth stopping here and walking through bushland on the dirt track between the creek and a wetland. This is a great birding spot!

Birding spots of northern Victoria and southern Riverina

Gunbower Island & Cohuna area **5**



Brolgas by David Ong

This birding guide is one of a series prepared by Echuca and District Branch, Bird Observation & Conservation Australia. This guide should be used in conjunction with Hayman's Echuca-Cohuna-Gunbower Forest Activities Map and/or other detailed forest maps.

Version 2.1 January 2009

Green Birding Route

With birding stops, this trip on Gunbower Island covers an area north-west of Cohuna and requires a full day (and a good map). Rather than starting at Cohuna, the circuit can be accessed via Spences Bridge or from a bridge over Gunbower creek near Koondrook.

Turn north-east off the roundabout at Cohuna onto Island Road. Island Road passes through parkland which usually affords good birding.

After 1.7km turn sharply left onto a marked forest drive (Rifle Butts Track). Continue along the main track for about 0.7km until you reach a map sign. Veer right and follow the Forest Drive to the Murray River. Alternatively, follow the first section of the green route to the Murray River.

Upon reaching the Murray, turn left onto River Road. After a few hundred metres, River Road crosses a regulator which allows authorities to flood parts of the island at certain times whilst keeping water out at other times. Continue along River Track for about 20 minutes, ignoring Threander Track and Iron Punt Track, and turn left at Five Mile Break. It is worth stopping at this intersection and walking down to the river.

A short distance along Five Mile Break is a lagoon which is sometimes a good birding spot. After about 2km you come to a regulator on Little Gunbower Creek. Before crossing the regulator, park your vehicle and walk alongside Little Gunbower Creek for a few hundred metres. A kangaroo pad reaches a broader area of water where there is a large cut log to sit on (35°42S, 144°10E).

Return to your vehicle, and continue along Five Mile Break to Black Swamp. Look for seldom-used side tracks which will take you to the edge of this lagoon (35°43S, 144°11E).

Turn left onto Koondrook Track. At a T intersection, turn left onto Iron Punt Track. If there is water in Black Swamp, it is worth turning left onto Black Swamp Track and following it to a spot with open water. Return to Iron Punt Track. A fence on your right is the boundary of the Reedy Lagoon Protection Zone. Near a gateway into Reedy Swamp, turn right onto Reedy Track and follow the main track back to Island Road. There are lots of good birding spots along Island Road.

Good spots around Barham-Koondrook

There are several good birding spots near Barham-Koondrook: Clump Bend, at the Koondrook end of Gunbower Island for Gilbert Whistler and Grey-crowned Babbler; the bush around Barham Golf Club for Bush Stone Curlews; the Tullakool Evaporative Ponds (about 30km north of Barham) for waders and ducks; and Thomas Road (about 25 north of Barham) for Banded Lapwing, Blue-winged Parrot and White-winged Fairy-wren.

Birding on Gunbower Island

Gunbower Island is a 26,400 ha flood plain located between the Murray River and Gunbower Creek. It is an internationally recognised wetland of significance for its importance to birdlife, native mammals and amphibians. It's the traditional land of the Barababaraba tribe of eight clans. They called the area Kanbowro. Part of Gunbower Island is farmed. Most of the remainder is either State Forest or conservation reserve. DSE (LAF) has produced a leaflet on Gunbower State Forest which outlines a forest drive. Hayman's Cohuna-Echuca-Gunbower Forest Activities Map is highly recommended. Other useful maps include Keely 1:50,000 and Barham 1:50,000 (NSW Central Mapping Authority). All are available by phone order from Information Victoria. Region 20 CFA maps 192 and 193 are also excellent. The map below is meant as a sketch map only.

Orange Birding Route

Turn north-east off the roundabout at Cohuna onto Island Road. Island Road passes through parkland which usually affords good birding.

After 1.7km turn sharply left onto a marked forest drive (Rifle Butts Track). Continue along the main track for about 0.7km until you reach a map sign. Turn right on to Chettle Track and stop in box forest for bush birds. A track on your right leads to Little Reedy Lagoon (35°46S 144°16E). During summer, if the lagoon has water, ibis roost here.

After a few kilometres, turn left on to Wee Wee Rup Track (which

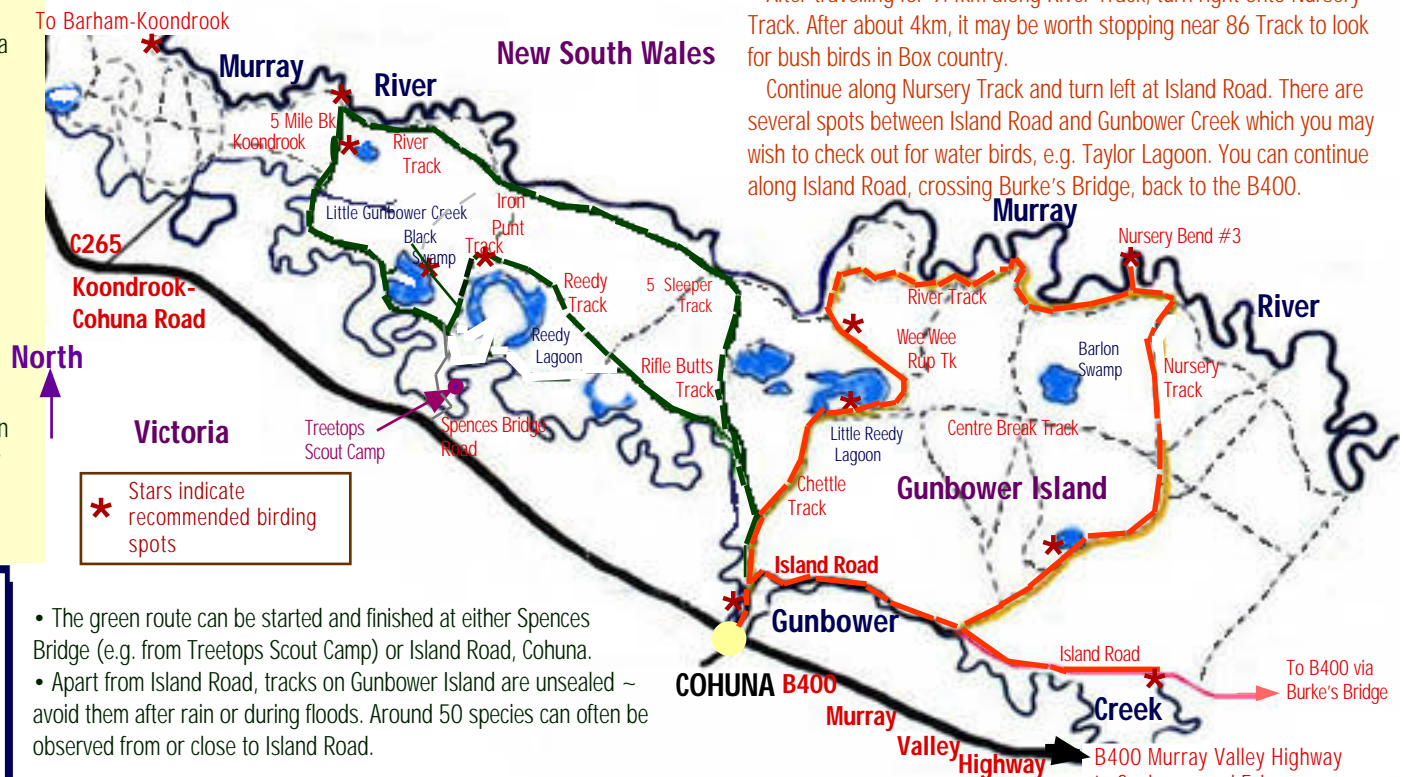
parallels Charcoal Swamp). There is a good birding spot on your right just before Wee Wee Rup Track reaches the Murray River.

Turn right onto River Track, part of the Forest Drive. The area you are in is part of Wattle Creek Special Protection Zone, a rainforest-like area.

1.1km along River Track is a turn off to Graham's Hut. There are several other tracks running from River Track to the Murray. One leads to the site of Robson's Timber Mill. Nursery Bend #3 Track often affords good birding.

After travelling for 9.4km along River Track, turn right onto Nursery Track. After about 4km, it may be worth stopping near 86 Track to look for bush birds in Box country.

Continue along Nursery Track and turn left at Island Road. There are several spots between Island Road and Gunbower Creek which you may wish to check out for water birds, e.g. Taylor Lagoon. You can continue along Island Road, crossing Burke's Bridge, back to the B400.



- The green route can be started and finished at either Spences Bridge (e.g. from Treetops Scout Camp) or Island Road, Cohuna.
- Apart from Island Road, tracks on Gunbower Island are unsealed – avoid them after rain or during floods. Around 50 species can often be observed from or close to Island Road.

This guide is one of nine which can be downloaded from the Echuca & District BOCA Branch web site at http://users.mcmedia.com.au/~stocky/boca_echuca.html