

Kamarooka Forest

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This birding guide has been written by Peter Allan (Phone 03 5484 1576) and is one of a series prepared by members of the Echuca and District Branch, Bird Observation & Conservation Australia (BOCA).

Before following the route outlined in this brochure, we suggest you either download a map of the forest from the Parks website or obtain a map from the Parks Victoria offices, Midland Highway EPSOM.

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Kamarooka Forest

Situated about 30km north of Bendigo, the former Kamarooka State Park is now part of Greater Bendigo National Park. The northern boundary parallels the Elmore-Raywood Road; the south-west corner adjoins the former Whipstick State Park.

Kamarooka Forest comprises open, tall Grey Box woodland in most of the northern, eastern and western sides, with a patchy understorey of various acacias (including Whirrakee Wattle), Cassinia, melaleucas and other shrubs. Strips of Yellow Gum occur along depressions and flats, with Red Gum only along seasonal creeks in the east.

The central and southern areas support large areas of mallee eucalypts from tall Kamarooka Mallee (squared-off fruits and buds) and Bull Mallee (large leaves) on better soils, merging into low Green Mallee (bright shiny green leaves) and Blue Mallee (small blue/grey leaves) on poorer, stony land. Combined with melaleuca and other low shrubs, these form often dense areas of 'Whipstick Scrub'.

Past heavy utilisation for gold mining, timber, eucalyptus oil and charcoal production has resulted in a relatively young forest. Grazing ceased in the 1980s. No severe fire has occurred for many years. However, 13 dry years have reduced undergrowth and bird life in the Box areas.

North to south, the main access roads are Millwood Road, Clays (also called East Kamarooka) Road and the only sealed road, Bendigo-Tennyson Road. Although called roads, the east-west and diagonal tracks are of variable quality and are often boggy in wet periods.

The best birding spots are around dams, in good blossom patches, and in the Grey Box forest where the understorey is thickest. The condition of these areas varies. In summer and dry periods, many species come to drink from dams, allowing good viewing. March Flies can be a nuisance in late February and March.

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has published several good booklets on birds and plants of the Bendigo District. These are available from the BFNC P.O.Box 396 Bendigo 3552 or from BOCA's Blue Wren Gift Shop in Nunawading (phone 1300 305 342)

Species on the edge of their northern and southern ranges meet in Kamarooka. The dominant family is the honeyeaters, mainly due to the mixed eucalypts and shrubs providing blossom, though variable in quality and timing, almost the whole year round. Particularly attractive to the some 20 honeyeater species which have been recorded here are Yellow Gum (April-November), Kamarooka Mallee (January-February), and Blue Mallee (April-June).

More specifically, Tawny-crowned and Purple-gaped Honeyeaters live in low mallee; White-naped and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters visit from May to August; Black and White-fronted Honeyeaters are erratic visitors although occasional nesting has been recorded.

Other birds to look for include Painted Button-quail, Brush and Common Bronzewing, Spotted Nightjar, lorikeets, Shy Hylacola, Red-capped Robin, Hooded Robin, Crested Bellbird and Gilbert, Golden and Rufous Whistler.

Mammals include Eastern Grey Kangaroo, Black Wallaby, Antechinus, Sugar Glider, Ringtailed Possum and Common Brushtail Possum.

Other guides in this series:

- Barmah Forest
- Deniliquin
- Echuca-Moama
- Gulpa Creek and Gulpa Island, Mathoura
- Gunbower Island and the Cohuna area
- Kanyapella and Wyuna
- Perricoota Road, Moama
- Terrick Terrick National Park

Guides can be downloaded in colour from our web site at http://users.mcmedia.com.au/~stocky/boca_echuca.html

Birding in Kamarooka

by Peter Allan

Access Kamarooka Forest from the Midland Highway (A300) or the Raywood-Elmore Road (C337). Turn south off the C337 onto Millwood Road and drive south into the park.

Area 1: Junction of Camp and Millwood roads

Approximately 800 metres from the northern boundary of the park is a dam by the crossroads. Listen and look for Crested Bellbird, Jacky Winter and Hooded Robin. Summer migrants such as woodswallows and Rainbow Bee-eater favour this area.

Rush Dam is about a km west along Camp Road.

Of three roads going east, try Harrower Road, 500m further south, through Grey Box-Yellow Gum woodland to Bendigo-Tennyson Road and turn south to Campbell Road. Alternatively, take Campbell Road which is a further 5km south and which passes through often dense mallee directly to Area 2.

Area 2: Old distillery dams, Campbell Road

The entrance to an old eucalyptus oil distillery site is on the south side of Campbell Road, about 600m from Bendigo-Tennyson Road, and is marked by a small walking track post. The dams here are rarely dry. This is a good area for mallee birds, especially when Blue Mallee is in bloom. Many honeyeaters may be observed here, including Purple-gaped and Tawny-crowned. Other birds to look for are Shy Heathwren, Red-capped Robin, Inland Thornbill, Brush Bronzewing and the yellow-rumped form of Spotted Pardalote.

Closer to the junction with Bendigo-Tennyson Road is a small depression, which when water-filled allows viewing from your car.

To the east of Bendigo-Tennyson Road, Campbell Road becomes Burnside Road, a 'no through road'. The dense heath mallee, recently burnt, suited Tawny-crowned Honeyeater and Variegated Wren.

Area 3: Camp Road east

Drive north on the Bendigo-Tennyson Road to Camp Road, which crosses the sealed road just inside the park's northern boundary.

Mulga Dam picnic area is 800m west along Camp Road at the start of a long walking track. However birding is usually better about 350m EAST along Camp Road where two old tracks go to the left toward the boundary. Look here for Eastern Yellow Robin, Hooded Robin, Brown Tree-creeper and Diamond Firetail. Flycatchers inhabit the forest edges and Black Honeyeaters have been seen when the Kamarooka Mallee is in bloom.

Area 4: Camp Road Dam

Continue east along Camp Road for 1.2km, ignoring tracks on your right, to a dam at crossroads. This is a most-reliable dam, popular with honeyeaters, Peaceful Dove, Diamond Firetail and, in summer-early autumn, migrants. There is clear viewing from the car.

Area 5: Camp and Clay Road to Clays Road

A kilometre along Camp Road is a right-hand turn onto Clay Road (not signposted). About 200m along Clay Road is a stand of Quandong, containing many old nests of White-browed Babblers. The road passes through Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) areas. Listen for Gilbert and Rufous Whistlers and Crested Bellbird. Clay Road ends at the north-south Clays (E. Kamarooka) Road, near another dam which, if full, may be useful.

Note: Clay Road and Clays Road are different roads; sign-posted road names do not always accord with names used in some road directories.

Area 6: Noble Road

Drive 1.7km south along Clays Road to the entrance of Noble Road. When in blossom, a tall stand of Yellow Gum attracts honeyeaters such as Yellow-plumed, Yellow-tufted and Fuscous.

Drive east along Noble Road for approximately 2km to an old mill site alongside Round Creek. Here, old Red Gums have hollows for Long-billed Corellas and Galahs. In wet years, Black Duck and Maned Duck sometimes visit. Check out the surrounding woodland for Gilbert Whistler, White-browed Babbler and Black-chinned Honeyeater.

You can usually exit the forest east by Noble Road, then the short Barowski Road (shown as a red B on the map below) to Kelly Road or, if you are travelling south, to Filby Road and Goornong-Mayreef Road. However, when it's flowing, Round Creek cuts Barowski Road and the only way out is back along Noble Road to Clays Road.

Sketch map of Kamarooka Forest

