

REMOTER SPOTS ON GULPA ISLAND

If the forest is dry, if you have a 4WD and if you have good maps, it is possible to visit some of the remoter parts of Gulpa Island.

From Mathoura, drive south to Picnic Point Road. Immediately after crossing Gulpa Creek, turn north (left) onto Gulpa Creek Road. Follow this road north for three kilometres to Little Edward Road. **Sage's Road** runs south off Little Edward Road ~ look for Emu, Southern Whiteface, Brown Tree-creeper and Diamond Firetail (e.g. near 35° 47S; 144° 55E). It is worth checking out the waterhole on the far side of the Banksia Exclosure. At the end of Sages Road, turn right and then left. Bird alongside **Duffey's Lagoon** and follow Duggans Road to the intersection of Millewa Road (Tocumwal Road) at Edwards Bridge. Turn right on to Millewa Road to return to Mathoura via Picnic Point Road. En route, it is worth stopping at the bird hide.

OTHER BIRDING GUIDES IN THIS SERIES

- Barmah Forest
- Deniliquin
- Echuca-Moama
- Gunbower Island and Cohuna area
- Kamarooka Forest
- Kanyapella and Wyuna
- Perricoota Road and Perricoota Forest
- Terrick Terrick National Park

These guides can be downloaded in colour from the web site of the Echuca & District Branch of BOCA:
http://users.mcmedia.com.au/~stocky/boca_echuca.html

Local birding information is available on the site, including:

- birding sites
- photos of local area birds, and
- notes on local conservation reserves.

Langmans Sandhill, Gulpa Island

A good birding spot in the Mathoura area is Langmans Sandhill, Langmans Road but the site is only accessible in dry weather and when the forest is not in flood.

It might be wise to obtain a forest map from the Mathoura Tourist Information Centre, Cobb Highway, before attempting this full-day or half-day outing.

From Mathoura, take the Picnic Point Road to the eastern side of the town. Immediately after crossing Gulpa Creek, turn left onto Gulpa Creek Road and follow this road for several kilometres.

Immediately before Barkers Bridge (GPS 35° 42 25S; 144° 54 50E), turn east on to Junction Road. Veer right onto Langmans Road. Stop once you come to a fenced exclosure. Park your vehicle and walk alongside of the fence, away from Langmans Road, down to the Edward River. (GPS 35° 48 20S; 144° 56 05E)

Birds to look for here include Superb Parrot, White-browed Babbler, Gilberts Whistler, Western Gerygone, Spotted Pardalote, Striated Pardalote and Red-browed Finch.

Return to your vehicle and retrace your journey back to the bridge over The Edward. Cross the bridge and follow the track a relatively short distance to the Cobb Highway.

It is worth birding near the entry grid where the vegetation changes from Red Gum to Box (GPS 35° 43 00S; 144° 56 07E). In particular, look for these birds: Emu, Red-rumped Parrot, Southern Whiteface, Brown Tree-creeper, Brown Quail and Diamond Firetail.

Follow Highway 75 south back to Mathoura or north to Deniliquin.

Birding spots of northern Victoria and southern Riverina

Gulpa Creek Mathoura

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Great Crested Grebe in the Reed Beds
by David Ong

It is suggested that you use NSW maps Mathoura 1:50,000 and Deniliquin 1:50,000 (or other maps) in conjunction with this guide.

This birding brochure is one of a series of guides prepared by members of the Echuca and District Branch of Bird Observation & Conservation Australia.

A day outing along Gulpa Creek, Mathoura

Mathoura is located about 45km north of Echuca-Moama (about 40km south of Deniliquin) along Highway 75. Consider calling in at the Mathoura Visitor Information Centre for a brochure on the Gulpa Creek Walk Trail (Stop 1). There are toilets here.

Stop One: Walking Track alongside Gulpa Creek

Drive north on the highway to the edge of Mathoura and turn right onto an unsealed track (signposted "Forest Walk") just beyond the mandarin orchard and park in the picnic area alongside Crane's Bridge (GPS 35° 48 S; 144° 54 E). Cross the footbridge and walk along the creekside track until you see a wetland on your left (on the other side of Gulpa Creek Road).

The land on the highway side of the creek is much higher, marking the edge of an uplifted block called the Cadell Tilt Block, which blocked the Murray about 15,000 years ago, leading to the formation of the Barmah and Moira Lakes.

Look for bush birds alongside the creek, e.g. White-plumed Honeyeater, Silvereye, Red-browed Finch, the yellow form of Crimson Rosella, Striated Pardalote, Striated Thornbill and White-browed Scrub-wren.

Waterbirds may be observed on and alongside Gulpa Creek and on the nearby swamp, e.g. Darter, Maned Duck, White-faced Heron and Black Duck.

Return to Crane's Bridge. Birds can be observed from the picnic table provided. A sculpture depicts a Murray Cod.

Because of the recent construction of a new foot bridge, you can now walk all the way to Polly's Bridge, Picnic Point Road, but a car shuttle is needed.

Stop Two: Deadmans Creek

Continue along Picnic Point Road and be on the lookout for the bridge over Deadmans Creek. Just before the bridge is a track to a parking area alongside Gulpa Creek. Unless flooded or overgrown with weeds, this is a good spot to look for birds of prey and waterbirds.

The creekside walking track is closed at the entrance to the Reed Beds Exclosure (a reserve of about 2,000ha). The vegetation has recovered well since cattle have been excluded and some endangered plants have become more common.

Stop Three: Reed Beds bird observation structure

Continue along Picnic Point Road and turn right into the car park of a bird viewing structure which is part of the "Tri-avian Corridor" (GPS 35° 50S; 144° 57E) and which is about 7km from Mathoura.

As you approach the hide listen and watch for White-plumed Honeyeater, Sacred Kingfisher, the yellow form of Crimson Rosella, Nankeen Night Heron and White-throated Tree-creeper. From the hide, look for Musk Duck, Black Swan, Grey Teal, Darter, Little Pied Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant, White-faced Heron, Intermediate Egret, Great Egret, White-bellied Sea-eagle, Swamp Harrier, Great Crested Grebe, Australasian Grebe and Welcome Swallow. In summer, Clamorous Reed Warblers sing from the reeds.

On the other side of Picnic Point Road further toward Picnic Point and beyond the Tocumwal turnoff, there is a roadside gravel dump (GPS 35° 50 00 S; 144° 57 37 E). Southern Whiteface, Jacky Winter, Peaceful Dove, Crimson Rosella (yellow form), Red-rumped Parrot, Diamond Dove and Common Bronzewing are often seen on the other side of the roadside sandhill but please do not enter either the fenced revegetation area or private property.

Stop Four: Waterbird Observatory Track

Continue a short distance until you see the turnoff alongside Gulpa Creek. It is worth stopping at the start of this track to search for Azure Kingfisher and Sacred Kingfisher. The track to the site of the old hide is often untrafficable. You may wish to drive or walk as far as a suspension bridge. White-browed Scrubwrens are often seen just over the suspension bridge. The giant rush which grows once the red gum forest gives way to swamp is the world's tallest, *Juncus ingens*. There is also a tall reed, *Phragmites australis*.

Stop Five: Picnic Point

Return to Picnic Point Road and travel further toward Picnic Point. En route look for Grey-crowned Babbler and Blue-faced Honeyeater. This is a good birding spot as birds such as White-browed Scrubwren and Red-browed Finch seem to have become used to people and show little fear. Nankeen Night Herons are often observed in the trees across the Murray River. There are public toilets here.

Stop Six: Tarragon Road

Just prior to Picnic Point is a turnoff to Tarragon Lodge and Murraybank Caravan Park. Finches can sometimes be observed near the bridge over Gulpa Creek. Look for Grey-crowned Babbler and Blue-faced Honeyeater along this road.

In dry weather, it is possible to return to the Cobb Highway from Stop- 6 via a Forestry Drive through Moira State Forest. Once you enter Moira State Forest near Poverty Point, you may follow the Forest Drive signs back to the Cobb Highway. Look for emus.

Alternatively, simply return to Mathoura the way you came.

