

## 6. How and when did national parks begin in Victoria?

### Aim

This activity familiarises students with the history of Victoria's national parks. It investigates the location of national parks and they were declared.

### Background

Up until the early 1970s the establishment of national parks was based on the efforts of various groups and individuals. Since then Victoria's national parks have progressively been expanded from some 4% of the State to approximately 16% today. This is the result of a strategy to identify and proclaim areas that are representative of all land ecosystems from desert to alpine and coasts to inland.

In the last decade more attention has been given to protecting biodiversity. In 1997 the Department of Natural Resources and Environment released a Biodiversity Strategy for Victoria. This included maps of Victoria's vegetation cover pre-1750 and 1987. These maps are being used to identify which plant communities are not yet well represented in parks. Steps can then be taken to identify new areas to add to the park system.

### Materials

- Map of national parks in Victoria (Victoria's national parks map and brochure is provided as part of this education resource kit, and is also available online via Parks Victoria website [www.parkweb.vic.gov.au](http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au) Click on Brochures).  
See also maps of Victoria's vegetation cover: pre-1750 and 1987, provided in the back cover of *Victoria's Biodiversity: Directions in Management*. NRE. 1997. These maps are also available online at [www.nre.vic.gov.au/plntanml/biodiversity/index.htm](http://www.nre.vic.gov.au/plntanml/biodiversity/index.htm)
- Resource sheet 6a: Guide to Victoria's national parks.
- Resource sheet 6b: A brief history of national parks in Victoria.

### Activities

1. The class will need to work in seven small groups. Each group can select or be given one of the seven regions listed in column 1 of the table in Resource sheet 6a: Guide to Victoria's national parks. (Note: Since Gippsland has many parks, this region could be divided between two groups. Since Central region only has one park, it could be added to one of the other 6 regions). Two students could take responsibility for the collation of information on the class map.

2. Using the information provided, students note down when each park in their assigned region was declared and the reasons why this was done.

3. Using this key and the correct colours, add the information for the parks to the class map. Either use coloured stickers or circle its number with the correct colour.

Before 1930 .....red  
1930-1960 .....green  
1961-1980 .....yellow  
1981-1995 .....blue

4. Each group prepares a brief talk outlining the reasons why the parks in their region were declared (using the heading listed in the table: *Reasons why national parks were declared in Victoria (see next page)*).

5. A spokesperson from each group reports to the class.

6. As each talk is presented students complete the table: *Reasons why national parks were declared in Victoria*.

7. Each group writes a brief paragraph summarising the main reasons for declaring national parks over the past 100 years.

8. Discuss as a class whether there appear to be any changes over time in the reasons why parks have been declared?

## Reasons why national parks were declared in Victoria

Referring to Resource sheet 6a: *A brief history of national parks in Victoria*, tick one or more of the following reasons that were important for declaring that national park.

Part of Victoria	Date established	Beauty spot (landscape)	Unique natural features (plants, animals, geology)	Unique cultural or historical features	Protection from other human uses	Recreation opportunities	Recommendation by a government authority (e.g. L.C.C or E.C.C.)	Determined action by an individual or group
<b>North-west</b>								
1. Murrumbidgee								
2. Hattah-Kulkyne								
3. Wimmerie								
<b>Western</b>								
4. Little Desert								
5. Grampians								
<b>South-west</b>								
6. Mount Eccles								
7. Lower Glenelg								
8. Mount Richmond								
9. Port Campbell								
10. Otway								
<b>Around Melbourne</b>								
11. Brisbane								
12. Organ Pipes								
13. Kinalake								
14. Dandenong								
15. Churchill								
16. Mornington								
17. Yarra Ranges								
18. Lake Eildon								
19. French Island								
<b>North-east</b>								
20. Fraser								
21. Mount Buffalo								
22. Burrowa-Pine								
23. Alpine								
<b>Gippsland</b>								
24. Baw Baw								
25. Morwell								
26. Tarra-Bulga								
27. Wilsons								
28. Mitchell River								
29. The Lakes								
30. Snowy River								
31. Errinundra								
32. Lind								
33. Alfred								
34. Cooracambra								
35. Croajingolong								
<b>Central</b>								
36. Terrick Terrick								

## Guide to Victoria's national parks

	Date established	Size (ha)	Km from Melbourne	Entrance fee	Camping	Accessible for caravans
<b>North-west Victoria</b>						
1. Murray Sunset	1991	633 000	500		Yes	Yes
2. Hattah-Kulkyne	1980	48 000	490		Yes	Yes
3. Wyperfeld	1921	356 000	450		Yes	Yes
<b>Western Victoria</b>						
4. Little Desert	1968	132 000	375		Yes	Yes
5. Grampians	1984	167 000	260		Yes	Yes
<b>South-west Victoria</b>						
6. Mount Eccles	1960	5 470	330		Yes	Yes
7. Lower Glenelg	1969	27 3000	400		Yes	Yes
8. Mount Richmond	1960	1 733	385			
9. Port Campbell	1964	1 750	250		Yes	Yes
10. Otway	1981	12 750	200		Yes	Yes
<b>Around Melbourne</b>						
11. Brisbane Ranges	1973	7 517	80		Yes	
12. Organ Pipes	1972	85	25			
13. Kinglake	1928	11 430	65		Yes	Yes
14. Dandenong Ranges	1987	1 920	36	Yes		
15. Churchill	1941	193	32			
16. Mornington Peninsula	1988	2 450	100	Yes		
17. Yarra Ranges	1995	76 000	80			
18. Lake Eildon	1958	3 750	150		Yes	Yes
19. French Island	1996	11 100			Yes	
<b>North-east Victoria</b>						
20. Fraser	1958	3 750	150	Yes	Yes	Yes
21. Mount Buffalo	1898	31 000	330	Yes	Yes	Yes
22. Burrowa-Pine Mountain	1978	18 4000	430		Yes	
23. Alpine	1989	646 000	350		Yes	
24. Chiltern Box-Ironbark	1997	4 320	275			
<b>Gippsland</b>						
25. Baw Baw	1979	13 3000	200		Yes	
26. Morwell	1967	396	170			
27. Tarra-Bulga	1986	1 522	220			
28. Wilsons Promontory	1905	49 000	250	Yes	Yes	Yes
29. Mitchell River	1986	11 900	300		Yes	
30. The Lakes	1956	2 390	330		Yes	Yes
31. Snowy River	1980	98 700	450		Yes	
32. Errinundra	1988	25 600	460		Yes	
33. Lind	1926	1 365	430			
34. Alfred	1925	3 050	470			
35. Coopracambra	1988	38 800	500		Yes	
36. Croajingolong	1979	87 500	550		Yes	
<b>Central Victoria</b>						
37. Terrick Terrick	1998	3 770	225		Yes	

## 6b. A brief history of national parks in Victoria

- 1882 **Ferntree Gully** reserve, popularly known as a national park, was declared to protect the fern gullies, and for public recreation. It was 167 ha in size.
- 1892 **Tower Hill** National Park Act was passed, protecting 600 ha of land and native vegetation surrounding a volcanic crater. The Act was sponsored by the local member of parliament. Tower Hill became a State Game Reserve in 1961.
- 1898 A temporary reserve was set aside as a "site for a national park" at **Wilsons Promontory**. This meant the land could not be sold for farming. Members of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria had been campaigning for a national park here for 15 years. Similarly 1 170 ha were reserved at **Mt Buffalo**. The Bright Progress Association had requested reservation of a public park at Mt Buffalo in 1888 to forestall further destruction by timber extraction and the removal of ornamental ferns and shrubs.
- 1904 An area of 20 ha was set aside for a park at **Bulga** in response to requests from the Council of the Shire of Alberton for preservation of "fern gullies unequalled in any part of Victoria".
- 1905 An area of 30 400 ha was permanently reserved as a national park at **Wilsons Promontory**. This area was part of the 1898 temporary reserve; the balance, and more, was permanently reserved in 1908. The 1905 reservation was made in response to representations to the Minister of Lands by a large deputation appointed at a public meeting. It was declared "as a heritage of the people for ever". The richness and diversity of the heathlands were also noted.
- 1908 A public meeting was convened by Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Col. John Burston, leading to the formation of a National Parks Association. Its purpose was to muster public support for reservation of national parks in Victoria. This lapsed after a few years; its successor was the Victorian National Parks Association, founded in 1952.
- 1909 An area of 380 ha reserved in **Tarra Valley** for "road purposes and the preservation of natural features". The source of the initiative for this reservation is unknown but was probably also the Shire of Alberton.
- An area of 3 900 ha was temporarily reserved as a site for **Wyperfeld** National Park to protect the Malleefowl and other native birds. This was mainly due to the efforts of naturalist Arthur Mattingley who visited the area in September 1907, and vigorously promoted its values as a national park.
- An area of 4 620 ha was temporarily reserved for a national park at **Mallacoota Inlet** (later part of **Croajingolong**) following a deputation to the Government from a public meeting organised by the National Parks Association. In the same year an area of 1 920 ha was similarly set aside at **Wingan Inlet** also (also later part of **Croajingolong**) which the National Parks Association had advocated as a "beauty spot" and for protection of the seal colony on the Skerries.
- 1925 **Alfred** National Park was established, made up of 1 357 ha, and permanently reserved as a national park. This was the result of representations by the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria on behalf of Charles Daley and Edward Pescott who had visited the area and recommended the preservation of the subtropical "jungle" (rainforest) on Mt Drummer. On the same date 1 167 ha were permanently reserved as **Lind** National Park to ensure the preservation of native flora in the valley of Euchre Creek, following the recommendation of a Crown Lands Investigation Committee.
- 1927 Reservation of **Spermwhale Head** (later **The Lakes**) National Park, a total area of 1 452 ha, was achieved thanks to the combined representations of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria, Mr F. Lewis (Chief Inspector of Fisheries and Game) and Mr F. Barton, whose family were prominent local landholders. This land was formerly owned by the Bartons.

- 1928 Reservation of the site for **Kinglake** National Park. The first move for such a park was made by the Shire of Eltham in 1913. Professor William Laver revived the idea nine years later; and eventually, with the support of the Town Planning Association, he met with success. The area of the Park was 5 670 ha. Later 22 ha in Jehosaphat Gully was donated to the government by Professor Laver.
- 1930 Permanent reservation "for public purposes" of 193 ha of the former Dandenong Police Paddocks, under the Narre Warren Land Act. This land became the **Dandenong** (later **Churchill**) National Park in 1941. Ambitious plans for the development of the park as a public sports ground in natural surroundings were thwarted mainly by lack of funds. This land protected native plants and animals near Melbourne.
- 1952 Victorian National Parks Association was founded, an outcome of the work of the Field Naturalists Committee, to work for the preservation of areas and objects of scenic, historical or scientific interest. Submissions to the government on impending national parks legislation were the Association's first task.
- 1956 The National Parks Act 1956 came into effect. This was the first legislation in Australia to provide specifically for the control of National Parks by a single, specialised government body. Thirteen existing national parks were listed in the Act: **Alfred, Bulga, Churchill, Fern Tree Gully, Kinglake, The Lakes, Lind, Mallacoota Inlet, Mount Buffalo, Tarra Valley, Wilsons Promontory, Wingan Inlet, Wyperfeld.**
- 1957 The National Parks Authority was formed and began work under the new Act. This Authority had the responsibility for managing Victoria's national parks. The first Director was the famous naturalist and broadcaster Crosbie Morrison, but he died after only a year in the position.
- Fraser** National Park an area of 2 670 ha was established. Forests of eucalypt and wattle, and former grazing land, were protected from further development.
- 1960 **Hattah Lakes** (later part of **Hattah Kulkyne**) National Park, an area of 17 820 ha, was declared, marking the successful conclusion of a campaign to protect its unique plants and animals begun 20 years earlier. **Mt Eccles**, only 32 ha in size (later enlarged), was declared to protect its volcanic landscape. **Mt Richmond**, also a small park of only 621 ha, was declared. It is a sand covered extinct volcano surrounded by low flat land, and it protects significant flora and fauna.
- 1962 **Glenaladale** National Park (later part of **Mitchell River** National Park) was proclaimed. This was an area of 163 ha of land donated by Australasian Papermill Forests Pty Ltd.
- 1964 **Port Campbell** National Park, 710 ha, was declared. This coastal strip includes outstanding geological features such as London Bridge and The Twelve Apostles. It is also an important site for muttonbird rookeries on the off-shore islands.
- 1967 **Morwell** National Park, an area of 139 ha, was established. Half the funds to purchase the land were provided by the Shire of Morwell, half by a special State government grant. This area is a remnant of the original forests of the Strzelecki Ranges. Vegetation varies from wet gully plants to dry open forest.
- 1968 **Little Desert** National Park, an area of 1 160 ha, was declared
- 1969 **Little Desert** National Park enlarged to 33 670 ha following widespread public controversy over whether the land should be cleared and developed for farming, or preserved in its natural state. **Lower Glenelg** National Park (9 070 ha) also established.
- Captain James Cook** National Park (later part of Croajingolong National Park) an area of 2700 ha, was also declared.

1970 Land Conservation Act passed, establishing the **Land Conservation Council** (LCC) to make recommendations to the government on the use of public land in Victoria. The Director of National Parks is a member of the Council. Many new parks created as a result of the Council's work. Its recommendations are based on detailed scientific land analysis and wide public consultation.

1971 The National Parks Authority was replaced by a National Parks Service, established as a Division of a new Department of State Development. There were then 23 national parks, with a total area of approximately 205 900 ha.

1972 **Organ Pipes** National Park, an area of 66 ha, was established. Several volcanic features are protected at this site. This former agricultural land was donated to the National Parks Service from the estate of the former owner.

The Ministry for Conservation was established. The National Parks Service became part of the Ministry, which included other conservation-oriented agencies.

1975 A new National Parks Act provided for the setting aside of "other parks" in addition to national parks, in which recreation, education, preservation of historical, archaeological or other features or scientific study may be the primary use. Cape Schanck Coastal Park and Warrandyte State Park were established at this time.

1978 **Burrowa-Pine Mountain** National Park, covering 17 300 ha, was established. The park has distinctive geology including volcanic remnants, mountain peaks and an exposed plateau. It also has distinctive and varied flora and fauna. Investigations by the LCC recommended that this area should have the status of a national park.

**Brisbane Ranges** National Park was also declared. Its 1 132 ha protect varied and some rare plants and animals, as well as Anakie Gorge and other forest and open woodland habitats. This national park was based on recommendations from the LCC.

1979 Four new national parks were established. **Baw Baw**, an area of 13 300 ha, includes the snowgum woodlands, heaths and grassland of the plateau. **Croajingolong** protects rainforest, woodland heathland and rare flora and fauna. The park covers 87 500 ha and takes in 100 kilometres of mostly undeveloped coastline. **Snowy River** National Park was originally proclaimed with an area of 26 000 ha. It includes a variety of scenery, from rivers and gorges to mountain ranges. **Tingaringy** (later part of **Cobberas-Tingaringy** National Park, then of the **Alpine** National Park) was also declared, with an area of 18 000 ha. These parks were all based on recommendations from the LCC.

1981 **Otway** National Park was established to protect the wet mountain forests and catchments of the Otway Ranges. Its 12 750 ha includes Myrtle Beech gullies, streams and coastline.

**Bogong** National Park, an area of 81 000 hectares, includes Victoria's highest mountain peaks. It is also the habitat of significant animal species. Vegetation types include Alpine Ash forests, heathlands, herbfields and mossbeds. It is a popular outdoor recreation area.

Similarly **Wonnangatta-Moroka** National Park contains alpine summits and significant vegetation and animal species. It is 107 000 ha in size.

Bogong and **Wonnangatta-Moroka** parks became part of the **Alpine** National Park in 1989.

1983 Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands established, taking in the former National Parks Service, Forests Commission, Soil Conservation Authority. Fisheries and Wildlife Division and Ministry for Conservation.

1984 **Grampians** National Park was declared in July 1984. It was recommended by the LCC to become a national park as it contains one third of the State's known native plant species. Brilliant spring wildflower displays attract many tourists. It is a major recreation and tourist area.

- 1986 **Tarra Bulga** National Park, covering 1 230 ha, was established. Following recommendations by the LCC, the separate national parks of Tarra Valley and Bulga were joined through a land exchange with A.P.M. Forests Pty Ltd. The area is known for its giant Mountain Ash trees, beautiful fern gullies and remnants of cool temperate rainforest.
- Mitchell River** National Park of 11 900 ha was established, taking in the former Glenaladale National Park of 183 ha (1962). It protects the Mitchell River Gorge which has dramatic scenery, significant plants and geological features. It is also a place for bushwalking and canoeing. This park was recommended by the LCC after its investigations into public land use of the area.
- Cobberas-Tingaringy** National Park of 107,000 ha was declared to protect a wide range of geological formations and vegetation types. Colonies of the rare Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby are noted among a range of animals found in the park. This area is used for outdoor recreation including bushwalking, fishing, camping and 4WD-touring. The park was recommended by the LCC; it became part of the **Alpine** National Park in 1989.
- 1987 **Dandenong Ranges** National Park of 1 920 ha was established in December. It combines Fern Tree Gully National Park, Sherbrooke Forest Park and other public land. It protects large stands of Mountain Ash forest and is an important recreation and tourist resource close to Melbourne.
- 1988 **Point Nepean** National Park of 2 200 ha was declared. This includes the former Cape Schanck Coastal Park, part of the former Nepean State Park, and former Commonwealth land. It has important historical and cultural values because of its links with early European settlement, shipping, quarantine and defence. The park also has a number of very popular beaches. It contains original Mornington Peninsula vegetation and coastal landscapes. This change in status was recommended by the LCC.
- Coopracambra** National Park, an area of 35 100 ha, incorporates the former Coopracambra State Park. The park has high biological values, including many amphibian and bat species. It includes dramatic landscapes and has high wilderness quality. Based on these values, the LCC recommended the area to become a national park.
- Errinundra** National Park, covering 25 100 ha, was proclaimed to protect Victoria's largest stand of cool temperate forest and mature wet forests, and unusual old mixed forests. The area is highly scenic and contains a wide diversity of animal species. This change in status to a national park was recommended by the LCC.
- 1989 The **Alpine** National Park was declared, covering an area of 627 680 ha. The largest national park in Victoria, it combines the original Bogong, Cobberas-Tingaringy and Wonnangatta-Moroka National Parks. It links with Kosciusko National Park in NSW and Namadji National Park in the ACT. This huge area protects much of Australia's alpine and sub-alpine landscape and habitat as well as other mountain environments. It contains important plant and animal species and provides important recreational opportunities. This park was recommended by the LCC.
- 1990 Department of Conservation and Environment established, combining the former Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands and the Department of Water Resources.
- 1991 **Murray-Sunset** National Park was declared, covering 633 000 ha. It protects pine-buloke woodlands, saltplains and a range of dry country plants and animals in an area known as the Sunset Country. It includes many vegetation types not covered by other parks, and many important plant and animal species have been recorded. It has four wilderness zones that offer recreational opportunities in an undeveloped "outback" setting. The park was based on recommendations of the LCC.

- 1992 **Bunurong** Marine Park declared, protecting coastal and marine areas east of Inverloch.
- Wabba Wilderness** Park in NE Victoria declared, and 19 Wilderness Zones set aside in existing national parks.
- Following the State election, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources was set up, replacing the previous Department of Conservation and Environment.
- 1993 Proclamation of Bunyip, Dergholm and Leaghur State Parks and Gembrook Park. Annual number of visitors to parks passed 10 million. National Parks Service re-established within the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources when the Department is re-organised.
- 1994 National Parks Service manages over 100 parks in Victoria. Parks cover 2 948 925 hectares - 12.9% of Victoria's total area, 33.5% of Victoria's public land.
- 1995 Parliament passes Act to establish **Yarra Ranges** National Park (76 000 hectares) in the mountain forests between Marysville, Healesville and Warburton. Much of this land is water catchment for Melbourne but access and facilities will be developed where appropriate. Several other parks enlarged, and **Point Nepean** National Park becomes **Mornington Peninsula** National Park.
- 1996 **French Island** National Park established.
- Department of Natural Resources and Environment established, combining Department of Conservation and Natural Resources with Department of Agriculture and other agencies. The National Parks Service becomes part of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment.
- Parks Victoria was created in December 1996 by bringing together the management of the former National Parks Service and the former Melbourne Parks and Waterways, together with other park assets previously managed by a range of different authorities, committees of management and trusts. Parks Victoria's Charter is to manage parks and other assets on behalf of the State.
- 1997 Environment Conservation Council Act passes, establishing the Environment Conservation Council (ECC). This replaces the Land Conservation Council (LCC).
- Chiltern National Park established.
- 1998 The Parks Victoria Act 1998 was proclaimed on 3 July 1998. This legislation formalised Parks Victoria 's provision of services under an agreement with the Department of Natural Resources and Environment.
- 1999 **Terrick Terrick** National Park established. It contains areas of native grassland. An area of 1 800 ha on the western slopes of the east Kiewa valley added to the **Alpine** National Park. This was the last of several areas to be added to the park as a result of the National Parks (Alpine National park) Act 1989.
- 2000 The National Parks (Amendment) Act 2000 was passed by parliament, providing for 13,261 hectares to be added to parks, including:  
an area of 13 ha added to **Organ Pipes** National Park  
3 ha added to **Yarra Ranges** National Park.  
16 ha added to **Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park**  
13,135 ha added to **Alpine National Park** (comprising the Wongungarra wilderness and an area excised from the park in 1997).

**\*Note:** ha = hectares. 1 hectare = 2.469 acres.  
Acres have been converted to hectares in early parks.

This summary is based on Sandra Bardwell's Doctoral thesis "National Parks in Victoria 1866-1956". Information for the years 1975 to 1996 has been sourced from National Parks Service Annual Reports. Information for the years 1997 to 2000 sourced from Parks Victoria Annual Reports and *Victoria's National Parks. A Centenary History*. E. Anderson. 2000.