

3. Changing times

Aim

This activity introduces students to the human history of the Dandenong Ranges. They can see how various landuse practices and policies of different times reflect the attitudes and values of the people of that particular time.

Materials

- Resource sheet 3a: Indigenous people in the Dandenong Ranges.
- Resource sheet 3b: European settlements in the Dandenong Ranges (1) – brief version.
- Resource sheet 3c: European settlements in the Dandenong Ranges (2) – more detailed version for older students.
- Resource sheet 3d: Timeline: Dandenong Ranges National Park.
- Workbook and pens.

Note: A timeline and several versions of Resource sheets are provided. Teachers need only reproduce the one(s) suitable for their class.

Background

The forests of the Dandenong Ranges are an important part of Victoria's heritage. Indigenous people and Europeans use them.

The forests provided food and timber in the early years, acting as a major health resort at the turn of the century and today as a conservation and recreational resource.

Activities

1. After reading the Resource sheet 3a: Indigenous people, list the various ways in which indigenous people used the Dandenong Ranges environment as part of their lifestyle before European settlement.

2. Which native plants or animals do you think Daniel Bunce meant by 'opossum', 'porcupine' or 'orchidacea'.

3. Read the Resource sheet 3b.
 - a) State two ways in which early settlers used the land.
 - b) What hardships did early settlers face?
4. Both the indigenous people and the early settlers used the Dandenong Ranges.
 - a) List the impacts indigenous people had on the environment.
 - b) List the impacts early settlers had on the environment.
 - c) Which group had the greatest impact on the environment. Explain your answer.
5. Rail travel and motorcars made the Dandenong Ranges more accessible. Explain how this technology had an impact on the Dandenong Ranges environment.
6. A group of tourists were spotted taking Soft Treeferns from the Dandenong Ranges National Park.
 - a) In the 1920s how would this action have been viewed by the community?
 - b) If this action was undertaken today, how would it be viewed by the community?
 - c) What influences have led to these changes in attitude?
 - d) Do you think past attitudes have led to problems for present users of the park? Explain.
7. The Future: 2020
Write a short statement outlining what you think the Dandenong Ranges National Park will be like in the year 2020. You should discuss the following points:
 - Size of the park.
 - Major uses of the park.
 - Problems facing the park.
 - Attitudes of the community.
 - Conservation and management issues.

Link to Section 1

See also Section 1 of this education resource kit, in particular: Parks and SOSE

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

3a. Indigenous people in the Dandenong Ranges

The following is an extract from the diaries of early explorer Daniel Bunce, a botanist who during the 1840s made the first recorded European expedition into the Dandenong Ranges.

'This was the first time I had ever camped for the night in company with aborigines. It being clear and starlight, we were sufficiently sheltered for the night by a few branches from the neighbouring gum trees.

As an additional protection for me, my new friends covered the spot where I was to lie with sheets of bark supported upon wattles. They cooked an opossum for our evening meal.

In searching for and catching the opossum, the natives display acute observation and much skill. Indications of the presence of their game, quite imperceptible to the white man, are by them instinctively recognised. They examine cursorily all the large trees likely to afford shelter to the animal. If, from observation of any particular tree, the hunter has conceived it probable that the opossum has taken refuge amongst its branches, he, by making a series of notches in the bark for his feet, ascends to what altitude he pleases.

The native women sometimes went out by themselves and returned with a quantity of the liquid amber gum which exudes from the black wattle tree. This gum they call korong. They prepare it as a relish for their food.

During the excursion, our diet consisted chiefly of opossum and kangaroo varied occasionally with the flesh of the porcupine and wombat. The heart and crown of the fern tree, slightly roasted, furnished us with an acceptable dish, the taste of which reminded me with the taste of coconut. Native potatoes, or roots of the orchidacea were not wanting.'

'Corhanwarrabul' was the indigenous people name for the Dandenong Ranges. It appears from historical accounts that two groups, the Bunurong (Western Port) and the Woiworung (Yarra Yarra), used the Dandenongs as hunting grounds during the summer months.

The indigenous people followed tracks through the foothills to summer hunting grounds in the Great Divide, crossing though the Dandenong hills. Monbulk was an area for large group gatherings. The Yarra Yarra people entered via Ferntree Gully. The Westernport indigenous people entered via Emerald.

Working with Wurrundjeri elders, artefacts such as stone axes and other implements continue to be found.

In 1835 the first white settlers arrived in Port Phillip Bay. This tiny settlement signalled the beginning of the end for the indigenous people's way of life and by the 1850s they had ceased their summer visit to the Dandenongs.



Common Ringtail Possum © MT

3b. European settlement in the Dandenong Ranges (1)

Early European Settlement

By the 1840s the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges had been settled by Europeans. A further influx of settlers in the 1850s resulted in the clearing of land on the upper slopes. A variety of crops were planted and livestock such as cattle and sheep were introduced into the area.

Melbourne's population was rapidly increasing and there was a constant need for timber supplies. Timber splitters invaded the Dandenong Ranges, felling the giant eucalypts for houses, bridges and the railways. As the areas were cleared they were given over to farming and housing.

Early 20th Century

By the early 1920s the hills had become a popular destination for holiday makers and weekenders. Many guest houses and tea rooms were established throughout the area.

To further cater for the growing population the bushland was subdivided into quarter acre blocks. Subdivision was often haphazard with little regard for planning regulations and controls. Owners quickly set about felling and clearing native bushland in an attempt to create a suburban-like atmosphere.

The rail link to the town of Belgrave and the ever developing road network enabled access to the previously difficult-to-reach higher altitude areas of the ranges.

Today

The Dandenong Ranges National Park is recognized as an important natural resource close to Melbourne.

Management priorities are to protect the park and its conservation value. In particular the focus is on wildlife management and protection, habitat conservation, weed control and reducing the adverse impacts of urbanisation on the natural environment.

Local residents now need to adhere to an extensive range of planning regulations and controls. The park has put in place various regulations for park visitors - these regulations are aimed at protecting and conserving the area.

The local community is encouraged to participate in the planning and management of the park. Numerous 'Friends' groups play an active role in the rehabilitation of various areas within the park.

The Dandenong Ranges National Park was proclaimed on 13 December 1987.



3c. European settlement in the Dandenong Ranges (2)

Early European settlement

By the early 1850s, farming had commenced in the foothills of the Dandenongs. Wholesale clearing began as the settlers extended further into these forests searching for more agricultural land and timber resources. Timber splitters entered the forest, felling giant eucalypts to be used for railway sleepers, piers, bridges and sailing ship masts.

In 1867, a 10,700 hectare timber reserve called the Dandenong Woori Yallock State Forest was established to protect the area from indiscriminate clearing. But by the end of the 19th century only one-fifth of this original timber reserve remained in public ownership. The push by settlers for land near Melbourne pressured the Government into releasing 4,400 hectares for selection in 1878. A further 4,900 hectares were released in the 1890s as an attempt to assist people with housing and subsistence during times of financial depression.

The villages of The Patch, Monbulk, Mt Dandenong, Olinda, Sherbrooke, Kallista and Belgrave were established in the late 1800s. From the late 1860s Melbourne residents began to visit the area for recreation. At first the retreat of the wealthy, the area became a popular destination for the general population with the advent of the railway in the 1890s and later the motorcar.

In 1882 land was reserved as a site for public recreation and subsequently it was extended to 227 hectares in 1927 and declared the Fern Tree Gully National Park.

Early 20th Century

The area became a focal point for the arts and attracted painters, writers, poets, naturalists and mystics. Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton, Anneas Gunn and C. J. Dennis were some of the artistic people living in the area at this time.

Between the early 1900s to the mid 1920s the beauty of the hills attracted a large number of holiday makers and

weekenders. Land was cheap to buy and roads were pushed through unreserved forested areas where quarter acre blocks were developed for weekend shacks. During this time many well-known guest houses were built, most of which were destroyed in the bushfires of 1923 and 1926.

Visitors to the ranges in the early 1920s often returned home laden with ferns and flowers for their gardens and vases, indicating the conservation ethic (or lack of it) of the time. The ranges were also a popular destination for berry picking.

Permanent settlement was spasmodic throughout this period. There was an upsurge in subdivision after World War 1, then a lull in the 1930s due to the Depression.

Post World War II

Residential development expanded steadily from the late 1940s, altering the character of the ranges and making them almost a suburb of Melbourne. Many people commuted to the city for work.

During the 1940s and 1950s public debate was very intense concerning development in the hills. Some residents, concerned about the rate and nature of land subdivision in the Dandenongs, formed the 'Save the Dandenongs League' in 1944. A Buy Back Program was initiated creating a corridor linking the Fern Tree Gully and Sherbrooke sections of Dandenong Ranges National Park. The government's purchase of Doongalla Estate in 1950 was the first example of this acquisition program.

Major bushfires in 1962 and 1968 further accelerated the acquisition program in order to develop a fire protection buffer.

Dandenong Ranges National Park

The Dandenong Ranges National Park was proclaimed on 13 December 1987.

3d. Timeline: Dandenong Ranges National Park

- Pre European** Indigenous people used the Dandenong Ranges and surrounds.
- 1850s** Settlement commences in the foothills of the ranges.
The forest areas provide timber for use in railways, piers and bridges.
- 1867** Dandenong Woori Yallock State Forest comprising 10,700 hectares proclaimed a timber reserve.
- 1878** 4,400 hectares of Dandenong Woori Yallock State Forest released for settlement. A further 4,900 hectares released ten years later.
- 1882** 168 hectares in Fern Tree Gully and the summit of One Tree Hill reserved for public recreation. This area, along with a further 60 hectares proclaimed as Fern Tree Gully National Park in 1927.
- 1898** Bushfires in the park.
- 1900** Railway extended from Upper Ferntree Gully to Gembrook.
- 1901 – 1906** Kiosk operated in Fern Tree Gully National Park. Lookout tower built on One Tree Hill. Dancing rotunda built in park.
- 1907 - 1908** Bushfires in the park.
- 1920s** The area attracts large numbers of holiday makers and weekenders. Most owners clear their blocks.
Severe bushfires in the park.
- 1936** Aviary built near kiosk in Fern Tree Gully National Park. Zoo established including both native and exotic animals. It was closed in 1956.
- 1938** First full-time ranger-curator, Ernest Bertrand, appointed.
- 1939** Koalas introduced into the park.
- 1944** Formation of 'Save the Dandenongs League'.
Public debate regarding the issue of urban development.
Ranger staff increased to two.
- 1950** Doongalla Estate (1920 hectares) purchased by the State Government. This is the first initiative in a program to create a corridor between Fern Tree Gully and Sherbrooke areas of the Park.
- 1951** Snow fell in the park.
- 1956** Fern Tree Gully National Park extended to 378 hectares.
Zoo closed and dismantled.

- 1958** Sherbrooke Forest declared a Forest Park.
Sherbrooke Lyrebird Survey Group established to study and monitor the life history of the Lyrebird.
- 1962** Major bushfire burns out a large area covering much of Fern Tree Gully, the Basin, Ferny Creek, Sassafras, Olinda, Montrose and Kalorama.
- 1968** Major bushfire in the park.
Land acquisition program extended to develop a fire protection buffer zone.
- 1970s** Koalas introduced into the park.
- 1978** Fern Tree Gully National Park expanded to 459 hectares.
- 1986** Draft Management Plan team formed to investigate creation of an expanded Dandenong Ranges National Park.
- 1987** Dandenong Ranges National Park declared incorporating the Fern Tree Gully National Park, Sherbrooke Forest and Doongalla Estate and land corridors in Upwey and Sassafras.
- 1991** Final Management Plan released.
- 1997** Olinda State Forest incorporated into Dandenong Ranges National Park.
Mt Evelyn and Montrose Reserves added to Dandenong Ranges National Park.
Major bushfire in January in the park.



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