



Coolart Wetlands and Homestead

Woodland Walk

The Woodland Walk which starts outside the Visitor Centre has 4 different loops. You can choose the one that is best suited to your time schedule and energy levels!

Loop 1	1.0 km	0.5 hour
Loop 2	2.0 km	1.0 hour
Loop 3	2.7 km	1.5 hours
Loop 4	3.1 km	2.0 hours

Along **Loop 2** are numbered pegs. The following notes explain the ecology and environmental issues in our coastal woodland at those points.

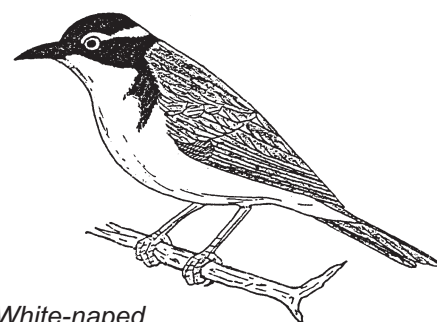
Stop 1 Woodland pond

This is a good spot to sit quietly and watch the bush birds feeding in the trees and shrubs and coming down to drink from the pond. Although only small, a pond like this can be quite important in providing water for bushland birds and animals. The dominant vegetation in the pond is cumbungi or bullrush. Often looked on as a nuisance in dams, but here it provides valuable habitat for frogs - five species have been heard calling from this pond, all at the same time! From here on, keep a look out for Koalas. Many of the gum trees here have suffered from over browsing by Koalas and sometimes have to be protected with metal collars to prevent Koalas climbing them.

Stop 2 Remnant woodland & revegetation

The area you have just walked through is one of the few patches of bush on Coolart that was never cleared for farming. The dominant species of the woodland are Manna Gum, Drooping She-oak and Coast Banksia.

This is an area we are concentrating on to eradicate weeds and replant with indigenous plants such as the Tussock Grass (*Poa poiformis*) which provides habitat for indigenous Swamp Rats (who don't actually need it to be swampy), lizards and Copperhead Snakes. On the slope above we have a stand of Radiata Pine - our tallest "weed"!



*White-naped
honeyeater*

Stop 3 Merricks Creek

Named after Coolart's first settlers the Meyricks. Merricks Creek at this point is tidal. The saltmarsh plants here have adapted to being totally or partially submerged by salt water at high tide and then being totally exposed to the heat and sun at low tide.

Here you can cross the bridge constructed in 1995 for a beautiful view of Western Port Bay. The remains of the original



Parks Victoria Ranger

"Victoria has all the outdoors you could wish for – mountains, forests, beaches and bushland, all preserved in our parks. Our natural landscapes have been here longer than anyone knows, and together we can make sure they're here forever."

**For more information
call the Parks Victoria
Information Centre
on 13 1963 or
visit our website at
www.parkweb.vic.gov.au**

Further Information

Parks Victoria
Information Line
Ph: 13 1963

www.parkweb.vic.gov.au

Coolart Visitor Centre
Lord Somers Road
Somers 3927
Phone 5983 1333

Parks Victoria District Office
P.O. Box 400
ROSEBUD 3939
Ph. 5986 8987

Peninsula Visitor
Information Centre
Point Nepean Road
DROMANA 3936
Ph. 5987 3078

Caring for the environment

Help us look after this park
by remembering these
guidelines:

Take all rubbish home with
you.

Keep to the formed
walking tracks.

Bicycles are not permitted

Swimming, fishing and
other water activities are
not permitted

Dogs, cats or other
domestic pets are not
permitted

All native plants and
animals are protected

Please leave the park as
you found it.

bridge which was over 100 years old can be seen next to the new one.

Crossing back to Coolart the track follows the course of the creek. This is a highly disturbed environment. The Grimwade photographs show Manna Gums and she-oaks here, but they have been replaced by tea-tree and weeds like smilax and dolichos pea. These may have spread from an old rubbish tip that used to be here. Dumping garden waste into the bush is a sure way to introduce these and other weeds. Remember that a weed may be fine in a garden but a big problem in the bush.

Stop 4 Home Creek

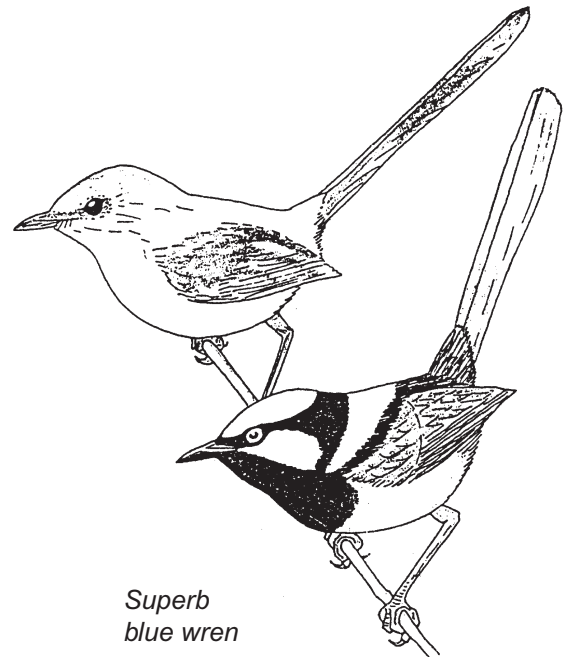
The bridge spans Home Creek and roughly marks the transition between salt and fresh water - tidal to the left, fresh to the right. Saltmarsh gives way to Common Reeds.

The reed beds are home to several species of secretive birds. Crakes and rails, which are small waterhens, live on the ground and have runs through the reed stems. In the summer the reeds come alive with the song of the Clamorous Reed Warbler, a seasonal visitor to Coolart which builds a nest of plant material woven between two or three reed stalks. Here it is almost impossible to see these birds, but from our Crake Hide near the Wetlands Observatory you are almost certain to see one.

If you would like a nice long walk with lovely views over the reed beds, cross the bridge to loops 3 & 4 and explore an area that was revegetated with over 8000 trees in 1986. For a quicker way back return a few steps and follow loop 2.

Stop 5 Trees in trouble

The Manna Gums here as in other parts of Coolart, have been seriously damaged through over-browsing by Koalas. Habitat degradation, clearing and removal of natural population controls have resulted in an unbalanced ecosystem where Koala populations build up to high numbers relative to the number of trees that they have to feed on, and over-browsing occurs. This problem is managed by guarding the trees to deny the Koalas access, catching and relocating Koalas to less populated areas of Victoria, and also planting more trees to provide more food for future generations of Koalas.



*Superb
blue wren*

Stop 6

Changing landscape

Change has always been part of Coolart's history (Aborigines people made significant changes especially with their use of fire). This is a good spot to look at some of the changes that have taken place.

Down below us on the flat, low -lying ground was once coastal woodland that was almost completely cleared for grazing and to provide firewood, fencing and building materials. This has been returned to woodland through planting work done mostly by the Friends of Coolart. Wire or plastic guards are essential to protect the newly planted trees from rabbits. The plants we use for revegetation are all grown from seed collected locally so that we keep the integrity of our local gene pool and grow plants best suited to local conditions and local wildlife.

The farmland to the north west used to be seasonal swamps. These were drained possibly as far back as the 1860s to create the productive pastures now grazed by sheep and cattle. In the early 1980s new wetlands (which can be seen from the nearby hide) were built to create habitat for wetland birds and animals, restoring a little of what was taken away all those years ago.

From here you can either follow the woodland walk back to the homestead via the Garden Dam or take the wetland walk to the lagoon, observatory or homestead.