

A

Park for *today*

**Yellingbo
State Emblems
Park**

Proposal prepared by:

*Woori Yallock Creek Park Alliance
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This proposal seeks the creation of a park to protect all Victoria's terrestrial emblems & to link public land across the Yarra Valley.

The Park will:

- **protect habitat for all Victorian terrestrial emblems and a large number of other significant species and communities**
- **link the Dandenong Ranges National Park to the Bunyip State Park and Yarra Ranges National Park**
- **include only existing public land and acquisition of private land is not proposed**
- **combine existing Nature Conservation, Bushland and streamside reserves into one Park**
- **create a new park of 2200 hectares on Melbourne's fringe**
- **provide for existing recreation uses of the land to continue**
- **rationalise the current confused mixture of public land tenure and management arrangements and provide a single land manager for the important landscape scale biolinkages**
- **provide a framework for community groups and private land owners to assist in the protection of biodiversity both within the Park and on adjoining private land**
- **integrate with the Yarra4Life strategy of the catchment management authority and build upon the streamside management program of Melbourne Water**
- **provide a single land manager for the land and provide a framework for integrated fire management and pest plant and animal management on the public land**

A proposal to create the Yellingbo State Emblems Park linking the Dandenong Ranges National Park to the Bunyip State Park and to the Yarra Ranges National Park.

Background

Between the Dandenong Ranges & Yarra Ranges National Parks and the Bunyip State / Kurth Kiln Park are a series of nature conservation, streamside and other reserves that all have high biodiversity and landscape scale linkage values. These reserves are located along the Woori Yallock and Hoddles Creeks and sub-tributaries and along the Yarra River itself. It is proposed that all this public land should be combined into a single new park, the **Yellingbo State Emblems Park**.

The Park will be on the outer fringe/Green Wedge between 35 and 60 kilometres from Melbourne.

The main public land is along the Woori Yallock Creek, Hoddles Creek and part of the Yarra River. The Woori Yallock catchment contains the Emerald, Perrins, Sassafras, Ti-tree, Menzies, Cockatoo, Shepherd, McCrae and Sheep Station Creeks all with crown water frontages. The Woori Yallock Creek catchment has long been considered a biodiversity “hot spot” and DSE sponsored the preparation of a Local Action Plan (LAP) for part of the catchment. In considering the preparation of the LAP the department acknowledged the number of environmental and friends groups in the area and the extent that friends input has enhanced the environment.

Why Yellingbo State Emblems Park?

Yellingbo: in recognition of the central role of the existing Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve in protecting the flora and fauna of the area and also as it is at the geographical centre of the proposed Park. Yellingbo is also significant as it recognises “Yellingbo” the name of the last known Aboriginal person. It is interesting to note that the Township of Yellingbo was originally named Claxton and then Parslows Bridge before being named Yellingbo in the 1940’s.

Yellingbo means today to the Woiwurrung people.

State Emblems: in recognition that the proposed park is the only place where all Victoria’s state terrestrial emblems can be found in the one location. These emblems are Helmeted Honeyeater, Leadbeater’s Possum and Pink Heath.

Why create a single Park?

- Combining the existing public land into the one park will substantially improve the community understanding and recognition of the values of these areas. The existing individual reserves and particularly creek frontages are frequently thought of as unmanaged waste land with little value, in which almost anything goes. The change of land status will enhance the community understanding that the land has high values and should be managed to protect and enhance environmental values whilst providing limited recreational opportunities.
- Currently, there are a range of public land managers, DSE, Parks Victoria and Shires. Uncertainty about the status of public land makes it difficult for the many enthusiastic community groups to participate in the enhancement of the public land along streams. The creation of a new park could be used as a driver to encourage additional community support and co-operation for better management. Having one manager for all the land would greatly simplify agency management and would mean that property owners, for example, would no longer need to take out a licence from DSE prior to applying for funding under the Melbourne Water Stream Frontage Program. Also community groups who want to assist in the management of public land would no longer have to become a Committee of Management in order to work on this land. The creation of the park will assist community groups in sourcing funds from a range of funding bodies such as Melbourne Water. The current uncertainty about management status makes it difficult to access the funding that is available.
- The creation of a single reserve would streamline the complex regulations that apply on the many different parcels that make up the proposed park. This would ease management and create a situation where the community will readily understand what activities can be undertaken in the reserve.
- The creation of a single land manager will provide opportunity for integrated fire management plan to be prepared for the public land and for staff resources to be made available to manage the environmental and fire management issues associated with the public land.
- The Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority is implementing a strategy called "**Yarra For Life.**" This strategy recognises the biodiversity value of the Woori Yallock catchment and the need to enhance the biolinkages on a landscape scale. Some \$400,000 funding has been obtained from the Australian Government "Caring for our Country" initiative. The strategy targets private property with woodland forest cover. This proposal and the Y4L strategy fit hand in glove and creation of the park would form a sound basis for implementation of the Y4L strategy. The proposed park plan attached to this proposal has been overlaid over the Y4L strategy plan (hatched areas on plan)

How should the park be created?

It is proposed that the park would be created as a single Nature Conservation Reserve under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act. The Crown Land (Reserves) Act has one disadvantage to the creation of a similar reserve (Park) under the National Parks Act as was originally proposed. The difference is that under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act there is no scope for Council or other authority owned land to be managed as part of the reserve. This provision only exists under the National Parks Act. Hence conservation reserves owned by Yarra Ranges and Cardinia Councils adjoining the proposed park cannot be managed as part of the reserve and some highly significant areas will not be under complementary regulatory controls. For example the Cardinia owned Emerald Quarry Reserve adjoining the proposed Sassafras Creek Nature Conservation Reserve is considered to be of National significance (Biosis 2007) but will not be able to form part of the park.

Land proposed to be included in the park

These streams are adjoined for a substantial part of their length by crown land and they link other major public land reservations. The reserves or proposed reserves include (for ease of reference the names and numbers referred to in the Land Conservation Council Melbourne Study Area 2 final recommendations 1994 have been shown below):

- Warramate Hills Nature Conservation Reserve (C35), on the confluence of the Woori Yallock Creek and Yarra River (490 hectares)
- Yarra River frontages (G1) from Warramate Hills to the Hoddles Creek (85 hectares)
- Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve (C36), on the confluence of Woori Yallock/Cockatoo and Sheep Station Creeks (630 hectares)
- Sassafras Creek Nature Conservation Reserve (C37), including frontages to Emerald, Perrins, Sassafras, Ti-tree, Menzies and Woori Yallock Creeks (240 hectares)
- Wrights Forest (G202)(160 hectares)
- Hansen Creek Forest (G180)(124 hectares), and
- Menzies, Emerald, Woori Yallock, Cockatoo, Shepherd and McCrae stream frontages not included in the above reserves (G1) (120 hectares).
- Hoddles Creek and Black Leather Creek (G1) and (G177) (60 hectares)
- Hoddles Creek Education Area (J8) (285 hectares)

It is proposed that the above land be included in a single park. **This would create a park of approximately 2200 hectares.** This is approximately 60% the area of the Dandenong Ranges National Park (3540 Ha) or Kurth Kiln Park (3470 Ha).

The park is proposed to be created from existing public land without the need to acquire any private land. The existing uses of the public land involved will not be affected by the creation of the proposed park.

While many of the streamside reserves are linear and narrow, the habitat resource on public land currently is already supplemented by significant areas of adjacent private land. There are mechanisms available, such as Yarra4Life described above, Bush Broker, Trust for Nature arrangements and Melbourne Water Stream Frontage Grants that can effectively enhance and then protect biodiversity values without the need to acquire private land.

Values of the park

The proposed reserve is the only place where all state terrestrial emblems can be found in the one location. These emblems are Helmeted Honeyeater, Leadbeater's Possum and Pink Heath.

Yellingbo NCR is the sole remaining natural site where **Helmeted Honeyeaters** exist. Helmeted Honeyeaters were present at Butterfield Reserve (proposed Sassafras Creek NCR and Council owned reserve) until the 1970's, Wright Forest (Cockatoo) until the 1983 and Warramate Hills until the 1960's. A population of **Leadbeater's Possum** occurs within this Reserve, which is geographically isolated and genetically separate from the main Mountain Ash population in Central Victoria. The significance of the Yellingbo Leadbeater's Possum population increased substantially following the huge number of deaths of the central highlands population in the 2009 bushfires. The park would also contain substantial populations of the endangered **Emerald Star Bush** (or white star bush) *Asterolasia asteriscophora* ssp *albiflora*. The largest known population of the Emerald star bush is located on the Cardinia Council owned Emerald Quarry Reserve, Menzies Creek Stream reserve (and adjacent private land). The second largest population is on the Wrights Forest Reserve.

The proposed park would contain a number of important Biosites ranging from National Significance (Yellingbo NCR and Sheep Station Creek. The adjoining Kurth Kiln Park and parts of McCrae and Shepherds Creeks are also of National Significance), State Significance (Emerald Creek, Sassafras Creek, Perrins Creek, Wright Forest and part of Cockatoo Creek) and Regional Significance (part of Warramate NCR and Woori Yallock Creek & Yarra River frontages, part of Sassafras Creek, Menzies Creek, Ti Tree Creek).

Each individual reserve has high conservation values including:

Yellingbo:

- The Sedge-rich *Eucalyptus camphora* Swamp Community is of National Significance (McMahon *et al.* 1991) and is listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act as a vegetation community in demonstrable decline, and prone to future threats which are likely to result in extinction. The community has been nominated for listing under the EPBC Act.
- *Ardea alba*, Great Egret. FFG listed.
- *Egernia coventryi*, Swamp Skink. FFG listed.
- *Gymnobelideus leadbeateri*, Leadbeater's Possum. FFG listed.
- *Haliaeetus leucogaster*, White-bellied Sea-eagle. FFG listed.
- *Lichenostomus melanops cassidix*, Helmeted Honeyeater. FFG listed.
- *Ninox strenua*, Powerful Owl. FFG listed.
- *Porzana pusilla*, Baillon's Crake. FFG listed.
- *Rallus pectoralis*, Lewin's Rail. FFG listed.

Sassafras Creek:

- *Lichenostomus melanops cassidix*, Helmeted Honeyeater has been found in the past (around Butterfield reserve) and it has been identified as a potential site for re-introduction of the species. The area includes examples of damp forest and shrubby foothill forest. Mountain Ash dominates the overstorey in the upper reaches, while mountain grey gum and manna gum dominate the lower reaches. These communities also provide habitat for a wide diversity of faunal species. (LCC 1994)
- *Asterolasia asteriscophera ssp albiflora*, Emerald Star Bush. FFG listed. Largest population is located on a Council reserve (National significance) adjoining the Menzies Creek and is found on the reserve. There is also a population located on private land approximately half way between Butterfield reserve and Yellingbo NCR.
- *Ninox strenua*, Powerful Owl. FFG listed.
- *Austrogammarus australis*, Dandenong Freshwater Amphipod. FFG listed.
- *Austrogammarus haasei*, Sherbrooke Amphipod. FFG listed.
- *Cyathea cunninghamii* Slender Tree Fern. FFG listed.
- Relics of the 1850's Dandenong's Goldfields.
- Dandenong Ranges walking track (Historic Emerald-Sassafras tourist track from early 1900's)
- The Southern Sassafras Cool Temperate Rainforest Community. FFG listed.

Warramate Hills:

- Contains one of the few areas of relatively undisturbed native vegetation in the Yarra Valley. It supports high quality and unusually weed-free examples of damp forest, shrubby foothill forest, heathy foothill forest, riparian forest and flood plain communities. Having more than 190 plant species, 20 mammals, 74 species of birds, 3 reptiles and invertebrates. (LCC 1994)
- Has approximately 2 kilometres of frontage to the Yarra River.
- *Pomaderris elliptica*, (no common name) is found there. Its most western occurrence.
- *Miniopteris schreibersii*, Common Bent-wing Bat.
- *Varanus varius* Lace Monitor
- Damselfly

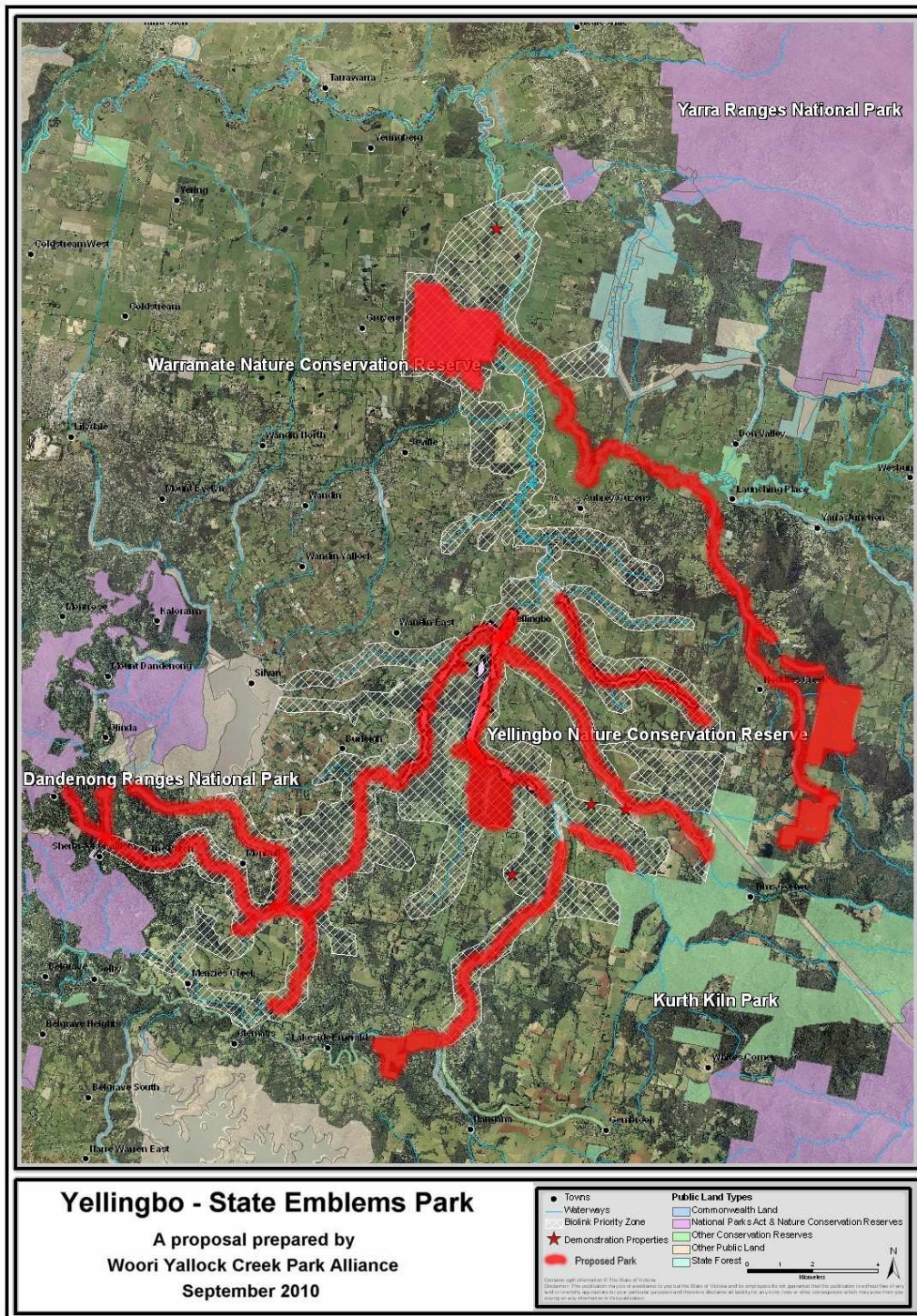
Wrights Forest:

Wrights Forest includes the G202 reserve described by the former LCC but also includes the frontage to the Cockatoo Creek and several buy back areas.

- *Asterolasia asteriscophera ssp albiflora*, Emerald Star Bush. FFG listed. Second largest population is located this reserve.
- *Lichenostomus melanops cassidix*, Helmeted Honeyeater was found adjoining the Cockatoo Creek until 1983. Site has potential for re-introduction of the species
- *Ninox strenua*, Powerful Owl. FFG listed.
- Significant stands of mature *Banksia spinulosa* which LCC advised should be protected.
- *Correa reflexa ssp lobata* Powelltown Correa
- *Tetratheca stenocarpa* Long Pink Bells

The creation of the Yellingbo – State Emblems Park is a unique opportunity to protect indigenous Flora and Fauna within greater Melbourne and build upon the commitment and volunteer work of the many friends and environmental groups in the catchment.

Area plan



The public land (Crown land) shown red including Yellingbo NCR, Sassafra Creek NCR (proposed), Warramate Hills NCR, Wright and Hansen Creek Forest Reserves, Hoddles Creek Education area and stream frontages along the Yarra River, Woori Yallock, Cockatoo, Emerald, Menzies, Shepherds, McCrae, Hoddles and Black Leather Creeks (not included the reserves listed above) are proposed to be included in the Yellingbo – State Emblems Park.

Woori Yallock Creek Park Alliance

The Woori Yallock Creek Park Alliance is a collective of Community Groups primarily within the Woori Yallock Creek Catchment.

Friends of Helmeted Honeyeaters Inc
Meander-A group caring for the Menzies Creek and Emerald Tourist Track Inc
Macclesfield Landcare Group
Monbulk Landcare Group
Johns Hill Landcare Group
The Patch Landcare Group
Friends of Wrights Forest
Friends of Hoddles Creek
Friends of Leadbeater's Possum
Friends of Sassafras Creek
Southern Ranges Environment Alliance
Cardinia Environment Coalition
Upper Yarra and Dandenongs Environment Council
Save the Dandenongs League Inc
Bird Observation & Conservation Australia (BOCA)