



# TERRICK TERRICK STATE PARK



## Where is it? How do you get there

Terrick Terrick State Park is a distinctive area of grassy woodland 4 km from the small town of Mitiamo, 60 km north of Bendigo.



As you travel north from Mitiamo you leave the flat riverine plain lying between Bendigo and Bullock Creeks to enter the gently sloping and rocky outcrop country within the park.

The park is 2493 ha and state and federal governments will purchase an adjacent grassland property of 1300 ha, add this to the current park and create the Terrick Terrick National Park in the near future.

The best time to visit the park is late August to late October if you want to catch the peak flowering and bird activity. Other times of the year apart from mid-summer are also pleasant.

## History of the park

Aboriginal people once camped in this country. To counter the hot dry summers, they constructed water collection holes in the granite outcrops. 'Terrick Terrick' is of Aboriginal origin but its meaning is not known.

After European settlement, from the 1840s, most arable land of the area was cleared for agriculture. In the 1880s local residents petitioned the government to gazette a timber reserve which became Terrick Terrick State Forest. The state park was declared in 1988.

The addition of the adjacent grassland property is the result of scientific and community recognition of its conservation value and subsequent lobbying for its protection.

## Uses and threats

As a timber reserve the Terrick Terrick forest was thinned and used for the durable, termite-resistant timber provided by the White and Slender Cypress-pines. Eucalypts were cleared to encourage the growth of cypress-pines. Sheep and cattle grazed the area from the late 1800s until recently, and gravel and kaolin extraction also took place.

Today the park protects this significant remnant of northern plains grassy woodland vegetation which contains the largest stand of cypress-pine in Victoria and several threatened plant species. The diverse fauna also includes several threatened species. Several Aboriginal archaeological sites—scar trees, shell middens and burial sites—are also protected.

Visitors can appreciate the beauty of the large smooth granite outcrops, the graceful cypress-pines and the flowering plants of the understorey and grasslands. Many little plants which used to be very familiar in country places on the northern plains are now only

common in this small area. Currently horse-riding is restricted to some public vehicle tracks in the park and dogs are allowed in the Mt Terrick Terrick picnic area. One apiary site is available for licence in the park.

The major threats to the park are weed invasion (100 introduced plants have been recorded in the park), impacts of past timber-harvesting practices (loss of large trees, selective removal of Yellow Box and Grey Box, loss of shrubs), impacts of past sheep- and cattle-grazing (depletion of shrub layer, soil compaction and erosion, introduction of weeds), rabbit-grazing and soil disturbance, and soil erosion from former gravel extraction sites and a kaolin pit. As a management plan is being developed, these threats are being considered. The draft plan recognises the need for fire ecology research to determine the most appropriate fire regimes for maintaining or enhancing biodiversity.

## Exploring the park

### 1. Mitiamo Cemetery (southern end of the park)

When approaching the park from the south you will pass through flat grazing and wheat-cropping land with scattered bulokes in the paddocks and occasional lines of River Red Gums along creeks. The fertile alluvial soils of these plains once supported extensive grasslands and grassy woodlands. As you enter the park you rise up on to granitic soils which support Pine-Box Grassy Woodland. These woodlands are dominated by White and Slender Cypress-pines, Yellow Box, Grey Box and the odd patch of Buloke on the deeper, sandy soils at the base of the outcropping granite slopes.

The vegetation around Mitiamo Cemetery is typical of this Pine-Box Grassy Woodland. The cypress-pines here and throughout the park apparently regenerated after a fire in the 1870s which wiped out the previous generation of these fire-sensitive trees. As in other parts of the park, Grey Box and Yellow Box were ring-barked and burnt in this area to encourage the growth of the cypress-pines which were more favoured for timber harvesting.

Destruction of the large, old box eucalypts reduced the supply of nectar food for birds and mammals that rely on the prolific blossom of these trees. Another consequence of this destruction has been the loss of nest hollows for mammals and birds, as unlike the eucalypts, the cypress-pines rarely form hollows due to their resistance to damage from termites. Old eucalypts also carry thick, peeling bark which harbours prey for foraging birds such as the Grey-crowned Babbler which is endangered in Victoria and in low numbers in the park. Leaf and twig litter beneath these trees provides further foraging habitat and the babblers use these materials to build their stick nests in tall shrubs. Litter beneath eucalypts provides essential habitat for a suite of woodland fauna including the threatened Bush Stone-curlew and the Woodland Blind Snake.

The cemetery site has been excluded from grazing for longer than other parts of the park so a rich diversity and abundance of herbs and shrubs occurs here. These include Clustered Everlastings, Creamy Candles, Swainson-pea, Spur Velleia and greenhood orchids. Kangaroo Grass is present and the removal of grazing has also assisted the regrowth of trees.

## 2. Mt Terrick Terrick picnic area (base of Mt Terrick Terrick)

The woodland surrounding the picnic area is also Pine-Box Grassy Woodland. However, Yellow Box is more predominant here than at the cemetery because this site was recognised as less suitable for the growth of cypress-pine and fewer box trees were removed. There are some large individual Yellow Box which provide nest hollows for animals such as the Common Brushtail Possum and possibly the threatened Barking Owl which occurs in the park.

You will notice that there are few shrubs in this area due to past stock-grazing practices, impact of rabbits and quarrying. A contour bank at the base of the rocks was created to stop erosion caused by these impacts. Weed invasion has also resulted from these disturbances.

## 3. Climbing Mt Terrick Terrick

As you ascend Mt Terrick Terrick you will pass through a vegetation community described as Granitic Outcrop Mosaic. You will observe small patches of vegetation in the coarse sandy soils formed in pockets between the granite rock slabs. Deanes Wattle, Nodding Blue-lily, Rock Isotome, Rock Correa and Snowy Mint Bush are some of the plants adapted to these sites. The rock slabs are covered by lichens and mosses—a moist environment for the growth of annual herbs.

There is a greater abundance of shrubs here than at the base of the mountain because access has been more difficult for grazing stock. There is some rabbit disturbance at this site.

The flora of Mt Terrick Terrick is like that of Mt Wycheproof and Mt Kooyoora further to the west, and the Warby Range in north-east Victoria.

## 4. Top of Mt Terrick Terrick

From the top of Mt Terrick Terrick you command a broad view across the Northern Plains. Most of the native vegetation has been cleared and what remains is fragmented into small islands in a sea of farmland.

Look north to Kow Swamp, a significant Aboriginal burial ground and archaeological site, and once a picturesque River Red Gum swamp before it was used as an irrigation storage and salting from inlet creeks degraded the ecology of the area. To the north-west are Mt Hope and Pyramid Hill, to the west the Loddon irrigation district which has been largely cleared of native vegetation, to the south and east is the dryland country which still supports remnants of Plains Grassland communities.

You can see the private property immediately to the north-east of the park which is to be purchased and added to the park. It supports open grasslands, grassy

woodlands and grassy wetlands on alluvial soils which complement the grassy woodlands on granitic soils in the current park. As a combined national park, the two areas will provide a far more representative example of northern plains vegetation than the Terrick Terrick State Park alone. The property also supports many threatened plants and animals which don't occur in the state park.

## References

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- National Parks Service (June 1996) *Terrick Terrick State Park: Draft Management Plan*, Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Victoria.
- Slattery D. (1995) 'Terrick Terrick State Park', *Park Watch* 186: 24–25.

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