



Why should Gunbower become a National Park?

Below are just some of the national and internationally important natural values of the Gunbower forest and wetlands, one of Victoria's natural wonderlands

- It is listed as a **Wetland of international significance** under the **Ramsar Convention**
- It is listed on the **Register of the National Estate** and the **Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia**.
- It is part of the **second-largest River Red Gum wetland in the world**

Ecological Values

The Gunbower-Koondrook-Perricoota Icon Site is the second largest River Red Gum forest in Australia. The Forest is important for organic carbon storage, water supply and purification, groundwater recharge, flood control and maintenance of flow regimes.

- More than **210 species of native flora and 143 species of native fauna** have been recorded at the Forest.
- The Forest provides habitat for **numerous threatened plant and animal species** including birds, fish and reptiles
- Several species listed nationally under **the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999** include **Dwarf Swainson-pea, River Swamp Wallaby-grass, Western Water starwort, Superb Parrot** and the **Warty Bell Frog**
- Other **species listed as threatened, endangered or vulnerable in Victoria** include the **Barking Owl, Squirrel Glider, Bush Stone-curlew, Great Egret, Little Egret, Whitebellied Sea-Eagle, Carpet Python, Growling Grass Frog** and the **Giant Bullfrog**

Fauna

The Forest provides habitat for many fauna species. During flood periods, the Forest becomes a **large waterbird breeding area**, with over **22 waterbird species recorded**, including waterfowl, ibis, egret and cormorant species.

- The **only record of Intermediate Egret (*Ardea intermedia*) breeding in Victoria** is in the Gunbower Forest (in 1974 there were an estimated 500 nests, and in 1982 there were over 100 nests).
- Breeding colonies of the **Rufous Night Heron** the **Little Egret** and the **Great Egret** have also been recorded in the Forest.

- Birds such as the **Regent Honeyeater** and **Australasian Bittern** are also found in the forest.
- Fish such as **Murray Cod, Golden Perch, Silver Perch, Flathead Gudgeon, Flat-headed Galaxias, Flyspecked Hardyhead** and **Crimsonspotted Rainbowfish** use the Forest as habitat and for breeding and recruitment when flooding allows.

Indigenous cultural heritage

The Gunbower-Koondrook-Perricoota Icon Site is the traditional homelands of the Barapa Barapa, Wamba Wamba and Yorta Yorta people. The Indigenous communities know this through knowledge passed down through the generations.

- There is also **archaeological evidence** suggesting that these communities have been in this part of the country for **more than ten thousand years**; traditional stories suggest that the communities were on the land long before (pers. comm. Jeannette Crew).
- The site contains many locations that are important to Indigenous people, creating a landscape of cultural significance. **Sites include scarred trees from which canoes or shields have been cut, sacred or significant sites, middens, ovens, burial sites, shell deposits, mounds, sub-surface cultural deposits and hearths** (Rhodes 1996, site register Aboriginal Affairs Victoria).
- The cultural landscape is still important for Indigenous communities today with special places for stories, song lines, spiritual sites and evidence of ancestors. Some plant and animal species are also important to Indigenous communities today being used for craft and other activities.

Wetlands and ecological communities

- Gunbower-Koondrook-Perricoota Icon Site has wetlands and ecological communities which have been **recognised as important at international, national and state levels.**
- Gunbower-Koondrook-Perricoota Icon Site contains wetlands that are recognised under the **Ramsar International Wetlands Conservation Agreement.**
- These wetlands are **important in supporting waterbird colonies** during breeding seasons.
- Gunbower state forest has been listed on **the Register of the National Estate** (Australian Heritage Commission) as an 'Indicative Place'. This is in recognition of its natural values as a waterfowl breeding area.
- The River Red Gum Grassy Woodland ecological community occurring in the Gunbower Forest has been listed under Schedule 2 of the **Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988.**

[The information contained in this briefing note is directly sourced from the Draft Gunbower Koondrook- Perricoota Icon Site Environmental Management Plan (NCCMA 2007)]