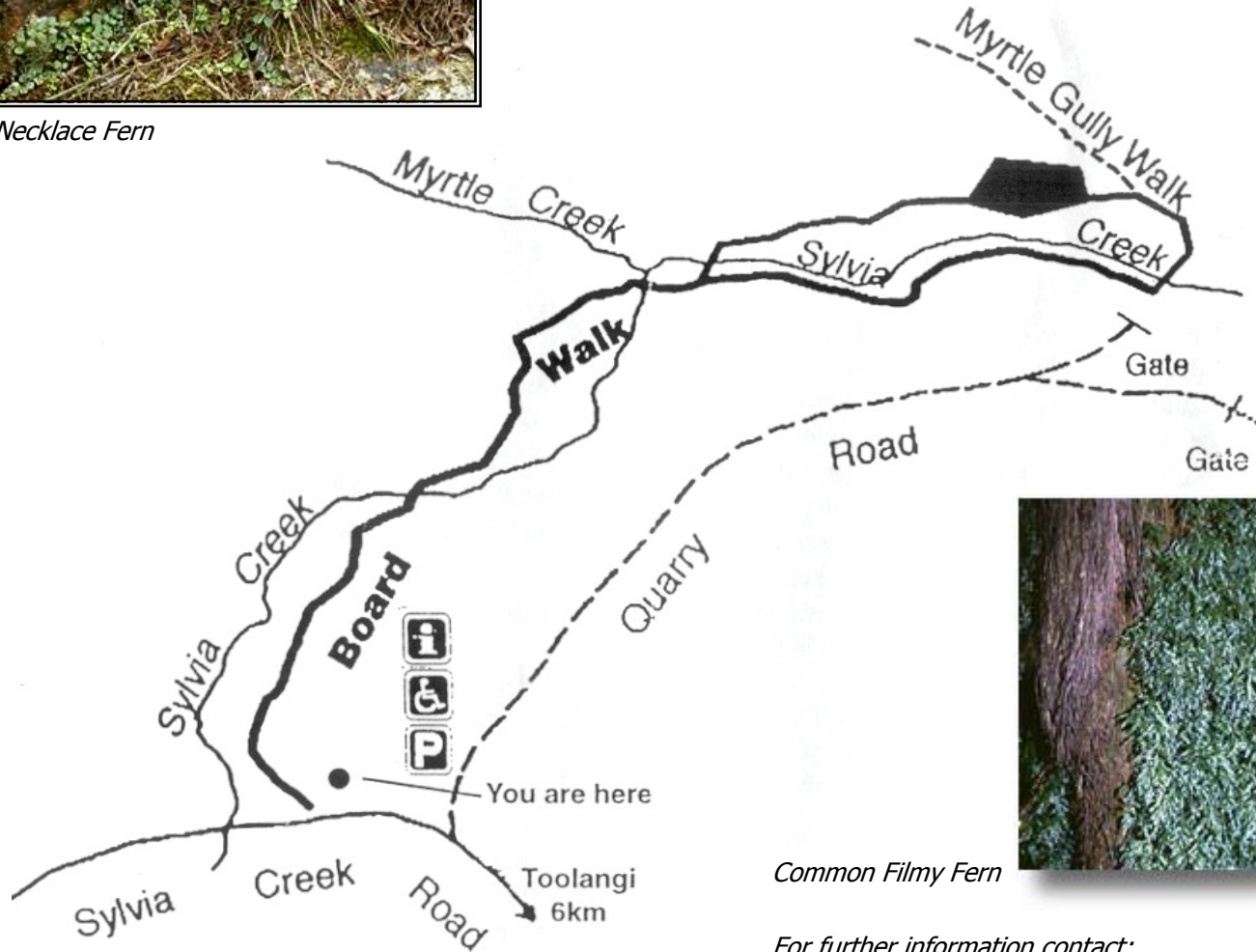


Wirrawilla Rainforest Walk

Myrtle Gully Walk 4.2km
(joins Sylvia Creek Road)



Necklace Fern



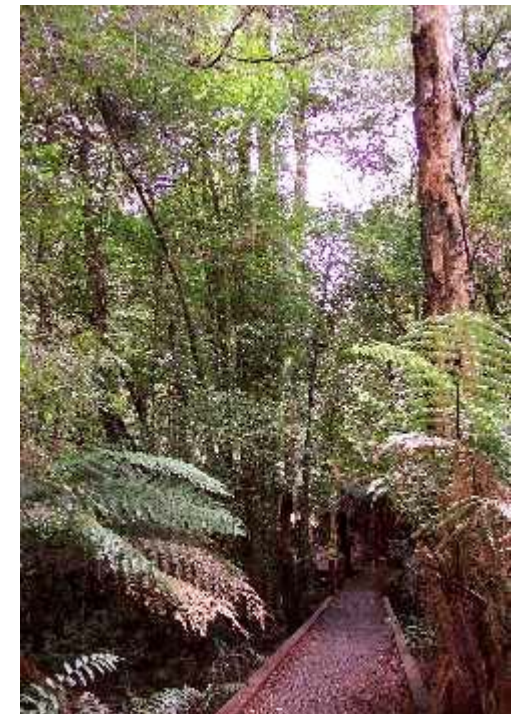
Common Filmy Fern

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Department of
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Wirrawilla Rainforest Walk

Discover the secrets of the rainforest on the Wirrawilla Walk. **Wirrawilla** is Koori for **green trees**. It reflects the luxuriance of the surrounding plants, like the majestic moss and fern covered Myrtle Beech trees towering overhead. The walk is short and easy (20 minutes), with rest stops and wheelchair access.



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Look, listen and feel the difference! Compared with the surrounding eucalypt forest, the rainforest is cool, moist and shady, with only flecks of sunlight reaching the ground through the dense tree canopy. In this specialised environment, plants and animals compete for survival in a variety of ways. Observe the different growth habits displayed by plants to seek sunlight and attract pollinators and seed dispersers. Please keep to the track to avoid damage to sensitive tree roots or trampling on fragile mosses, filmy ferns and life in the leaf litter. Remember, the rainforest takes many hundreds of years to establish and others who follow would like to enjoy it too.

Distinctive features

The dominant trees of this *Cool Temperate Rainforest* are Myrtle Beech, *Nothofagus cunninghamii*, Southern Sassafras, *Atherosperma moschatum* and Blackwood Wattle, *Acacia melanoxylon*. Tree Ferns, *Dicksonia antarctica* grow luxuriantly below the canopy, surrounded by a dense layer of ground ferns.

Myrtle Beech is sometimes buttressed or fluted at the base, providing added strength to their enormous, mossy trunks. Their small, serrated leaves are glossy green with orange leaves indicating flushes of new growth. Shoots growing on trunks or branches can develop into trees if an opening in the canopy occurs.

Sassafras typically forms a conical shape. Its smooth bark is musk-scented and blotched with lichen. The leaves and whitish flowers are also fragrant.



Myrtle Beech

During spring and summer, many different animal calls can be heard above the rushing waters of Sylvania Creek as they identify and defend their territories, attract mates or deter predators. Listen to lyrebirds mimic their forest companions whilst they display or rake through the leaf litter in search of tasty grubs. Or look out for the inquisitive Yellow Robins and Grey Fantails. The melodious song and yellow, black and white markings of the male Golden Whistler are distinctive. Golden Whistlers sing intermittently throughout the day as they move about, taking insects from leaves, often whilst in flight. Unlike most other rainforest birds, the secretive Pink Robin breeds in the rainforest and stays throughout the winter. Its nest is made of bark and moss, bound together by spiders' webs or fern fronds, which provide camouflage in the tree ferns. Southern Water Skinks blend in the dappled light with mosses and filmy ferns on boulders or logs beside the Sylvania Creek.



Superb Lyrebird

At dusk, the small Brown and Dusky *Antechinus*, Bush Rats, Long-nosed Bandicoots, numerous insect-eating bats, Bobucks (Mountain Brushtail Possums), Ringtail Possums and owls emerge from tree hollows, decaying logs or rock crevices to hunt for food.



Golden Whistler

Many mosses, lichens, ferns and orchids use trees for support and to gain access to light. These plants are known as *epiphytes*. They also compete successfully for space, nutrients, moisture and pollinators with creepers like Clematis, Wonga Vine and Twining Silkpod which coil their way up tree trunks towards openings in the canopy.

Mulch munching activity

Plant growth and decay is a continuous cycle in the rainforest. A fallen tree, still covered with mosses, lichens, ferns and climbing plants, yet hollow inside, is a hive of activity. Microscopic animals, bacteria, fungi and numerous invertebrates, like beetles, worms and ants live in the bark, leaf litter and soil. They break down decaying plant and animal remains, releasing nutrients back into the soil for plants to use.



Brown Antechinus

Loops on your boots?

Vibration and warmth alert a hungry leech into action! The leech suddenly drops from an overhanging leaf onto a passing animal or rapidly loops towards it. Using its three pairs of jaws, the leech makes a small slit in the skin. It then applies digestive juices to anaesthetise the skin and stops the blood from clotting. After a fill of blood, the swollen leech drops to the ground where it survives without another feed for several months. Check your boots regularly to see how many new loops you have attracted. Just flick them off and observe their fascinating way of moving about.

