



The Box-Ironbark landscape (Photo: Norm Stimson)

Bendigo is fortunate to be surrounded by Box-Ironbark forests and woodlands which boast a diverse array of plants and animals as well as Indigenous and European cultural heritage sites.

Bendigo was built off the back of the forests, supplying numerous resources for local industries and providing employment, which helped Bendigo become the thriving city it is today. Many changes have occurred over the decades and evidence of the different uses can be found throughout the forest today.

Our Box-Ironbark forests tell a fascinating story of change and survival. How you use the forest today will shape the forests future. How will you help shape the next chapter?

Getting here

Bendigo State forests are located about 150 km north of Melbourne. There are two routes to the region. You can travel up the **Calder Highway** or alternatively the **McIvor Highway**. It takes about 1.45 hours to 2.30 hours to travel from Melbourne.

Indigenous culture

The Jarra Jarra people of the Dja Wurrung language group occupied and roamed the Bendigo region for thousands of years, living by hunting, fishing and gathering. European settlers arriving in the area in the 1830s saw Aboriginal people displaced from land and dramatic changes occurred to their traditional way of life. There were numerous conflicts with pastoralists, the availability of food resources reduced and new diseases all had a severe impact on the Jarra Jarra people.

Despite the upheavals, Aboriginal people tried to maintain their old way of life and settlers occasionally observed ceremonies such as initiations and corroborees. Many Aboriginals adopted the new colonial life, finding work as shepherds, stockriders, shearers, bark cutters, gold miners and domestic servants.

Bendigo's golden past

The first European in the Bendigo district was Surveyor-General of New South Wales, Major Thomas Mitchell. He explored the area in 1836 on his expedition into western Victoria. The first pastoralists arrived in the 1840s to squat on land and successfully grazed sheep. Bendigo now stands on what was once part of the 80,000 ha Mt Alexander North Run, later known as the Ravenswood Run.

Bendigo was named after a shepherd at Ravenswood, who was a famous local boxer nicknamed 'Bendigo' after a world-famous bare-knuckle United Kingdom boxer called William Abednego 'Bendigo' Thompson. A local creek where Bendigo worked was also known as Bendigo creek, and thus it was that the city became known as Bendigo despite the official name of 'Sandhurst'.

The gold rush shaped the history of Bendigo. It was discovered here in 1851, bringing thousands of miners to swarm local streams and rivers searching for alluvial gold. When this was exhausted they began mining below the surface for quartz based gold. By 1860, the goldfields had changed from small operations to major mines with deep shafts.



View of Sandhurst from Belmont and Saxby mines, Bendigo, 1888 (Source: Department of Primary Industries)

As miners rushed to Bendigo, a number of communities were formed. The Irish moved into the St Killians district, the Cornish established themselves at Long Gully, the Germans settled at Ironbark Gully and the Chinese at Emu Point made a huge impression on the goldfields.

With the discovery of gold, forest clearing began in earnest. The Colonial Government's attitude that wood should be available at very low cost, led to the placing of very few controls on the harvesting of timber. Timber was used for support structures in mines, to fuel steam boilers, build houses and buildings, fences, furniture, the railways and telegraph system. Timber was usually – and remains for some people in the region – the only form of heating available.

Gold production in Bendigo continued much longer here than in other regions, with mining occurring to the 1950s. During this time, Bendigo produced about 22 million ounces of gold, making it the richest goldfield in eastern Australia and the seventh richest in the world (this record held until it was surpassed by Kalgoorlie in Western Australia in the 1990s).

When the numerous gold mines declined in production, the eucalyptus oil industry became an important source of work. The first eucalyptus oil producer in Bendigo was a chemist called Richard Sandner who operated a plant and refinery in Bridge Street from 1876. By 1900, many other distillers operated on the northern edge of Bendigo and in the Whipstick. In 1926, the Forest Commission established a eucalyptus distillery at Gunyah in Wellsford State Forest. See the Wellsford Forest Note for more information. Today, there are just two eucalypt distilleries operating in Bendigo. Most of the world's eucalyptus oil is now produced overseas.

What we see now in the forests surrounding Bendigo is slow regeneration from past disturbances. They continue supplying local communities with valuable resources such as timber, honey, eucalyptus oil and gravel, though strict controls ensure forests are managed sustainably, to ensure they are around for our grandchildren to enjoy.

Geology and geomorphology

The bedrocks of most of the Bendigo area date back to the ancient Paleozoic era. They consist of steeply folded sedimentary rocks and alternating layers of siltstone, slate, and sandstone, laid down as mud and sand when the ocean covered this area 500 million years ago.

This ancient sea was elevated and subjected to heat and pressure from east and west, to form the highly folded rocks you see today. Bendigo's 'saddle reefs' are world renowned for containing rich veins of the gold.

The ancient weathered soils are generally nutrient poor, gravelly and porous, making plant and animal life in these areas rather challenging. To survive in the Box-Ironbark forests, plants have made amazing adaptations. These include deep root systems, underground dormant buds or

bulbs and leaves with a reduced surface area to help reduce transpiration.

Discover Nature's Treasures



Red Ironbark
(Photo: Stimson)

Certain thoughts spring to mind when the words Box-Ironbark are mentioned. The dark and deeply furrowed bark of the ironbark trees, the light flaky appearance of box trees, golden wattle flowers and the sound of twigs and leaves crackling on the dry forest floor beneath your feet. The vibrant array of wildflowers, the chatter of parrots, flocks of sweet singing birds, the rich aroma of eucalyptus oils and nectars, along with the striking contrasting trunks of the Box and Ironbark trees offers a charm unique to these forests.

Victoria's Box-Ironbark forests and woodlands are unique and special. They have enormous environmental values and strong cultural and community ties and traditions.

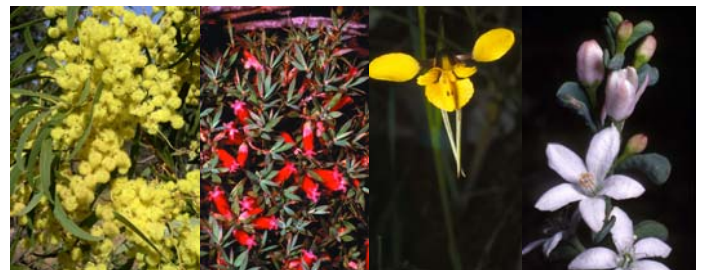


They are home to 1,500 plant species, 228 bird species, 25 mammals, 37 reptiles, 10 frogs

Brush Tailed Phascogale
(Photo: Norm Stimson)

and an endless number of invertebrates. This diversity of animals, particularly birds, is evident when walking through the forest at dusk and dawn.

One of the highlights of Bendigo forests is the occurrence of rare and threatened plants and animals. They include the: Powerful Owl, Brush-tailed Phascogale, Bush Stone Curlew, Pink-tailed worm Lizard, Swift Parrot, Regent Honeyeater, Growling Grass Frog, Buloke, Ausfeld's Wattle, Whirrakee Wattle, Dainty Phebalium, Small leaf Wax flower, McIvor Spider Orchid and Swamp Diuris and many others all call the Box Ironbark home.



Golden Wattle (Photo: DSE), Cranberry Heath (Photo: DSE), Swamp Diuris (Photo: Stimson), Bendigo Waxflower (Photo: Stimson)

Bendigo State forests

Wellsford State Forest (7187 ha) – located 15 km north east of Bendigo, this is a large predominately Ironbark forest. In Spring, it provides a marvellous display of wildflowers. Wellsford State Forest has an extensive history of supplying Bendigo with resources including timber, eucalyptus oil and honey.

Gunyah picnic area – located in the Wellsford State Forest, this area was once the site of a eucalyptus distillery and its foundations remain today. The picnic area provides tables and a fireplace for you to enjoy a picnic by the dam. See the Gunyah Picnic Area – Wellsford State Forest Forest Note for more information.

Lockwood State Forest (998 ha) – located 20 km south west of Bendigo, this forest has blue granite hills to the east which provide amazing views of the Harcourt valley to the south. Lockwood State Forest also supports numerous threatened species such as the Buloke (*Allocasuarina luehmannii*), Swift Parrot and the Brush-tailed Phascogale. This forest also supplies valuable timber products to the local community.

Sedgwick State Forest (1,185 ha) – located 15 km south of Bendigo, The undulating terrain and indistinguishable vegetation makes this forest popular for orienteering and mountain bike riding. It is home to species such as Urn Heath and the Showy Parrot Pea.

Longlea State Forest (945 ha) – located 15 km east of Bendigo, this small linear patch of forest extends from the McIvor Highway to Eppalock Road. This forest provides many recreation pursuits and supplies valuable timber products to the local community.

Lyell State Forest (1,664 ha) – located 20 km south east of Bendigo, this forest is great for observing nocturnal animals emerging at dusk. You may be lucky enough to see the Brush Tailed Phascogale, Sugar Glider, Brush and Ring Tailed Possums or Tawny Frogmouths. Swift Parrots also visit the large trees here in Spring.

Kimbolton State Forest (1,945 ha) – located 25 km south east of Bendigo, Kimbolton has large old trees which support numerous species such as Swift Parrot, Regent Honeyeater, Grey-Crowned Babbler and Brush Tailed Phascogale. Kimbolton is popular for school and orienteering groups camps and other events. Lake Eppalock is also nearby.

Nerring State Forest (439 ha) – located 10 km west of Bendigo, Nerring has a long history of supplying various timber and honey products to the local community.

Activities to enjoy in State forest

Box-Ironbark forests are accessible all year round and provide the ideal setting for recreational pursuits such as:

- Get active! Walk along one of the many tracks around the forest, ride your horse or bike along the bush roads and appreciate the beauty of the forest. Be sure to stay on formed roads when riding.
- Camping and picnicking is a great way to relax and enjoy the Box-Ironbark surroundings. Most camping spots are informal bush camps suitable for the self-sufficient camper. Remember to take your rubbish home.

- Take your dog for a walk, ensuring it remains under control and does not disturb wildlife or visitors.



Prospecting
(Photo: Stimson)

- Try your luck fossicking or prospecting with a current Miner's Right. You can purchase a Miner's Right online from the Department of Primary Industries website at www.dpi.vic.gov.au Remember to re-fill any holes you dig.
- Enjoy a car or motorbike tour of the forest, exploring the extensive road network.

Make sure you are licensed and registered and always stay on formed roads.

- Test your hunting skills with licensed firearms and protect the forest from pest animals such as foxes and rabbits. You must hold a shooter's licence.
- Explore and search the forest for clues that give us evidence from the past. Remember to leave everything as you find it.

Let's look after our living museum!

- All native plants, animals, historic sites are protected by law.
- While campfires are part of the outdoor experience, sparks can easily ignite the bush. Observe all fire regulations and Total Fire Ban days. Always use fireplaces or dig 30 cm deep trenches. Ensure your fire is less than one metre square and at least three metres clear of burnable material. Always collect dead wood from the ground. Never leave fires unattended and ensure they are completely extinguished before you leave.

FOR YOUR OWN SAFETY

Look out for old mine shafts when walking through the forest.

More information

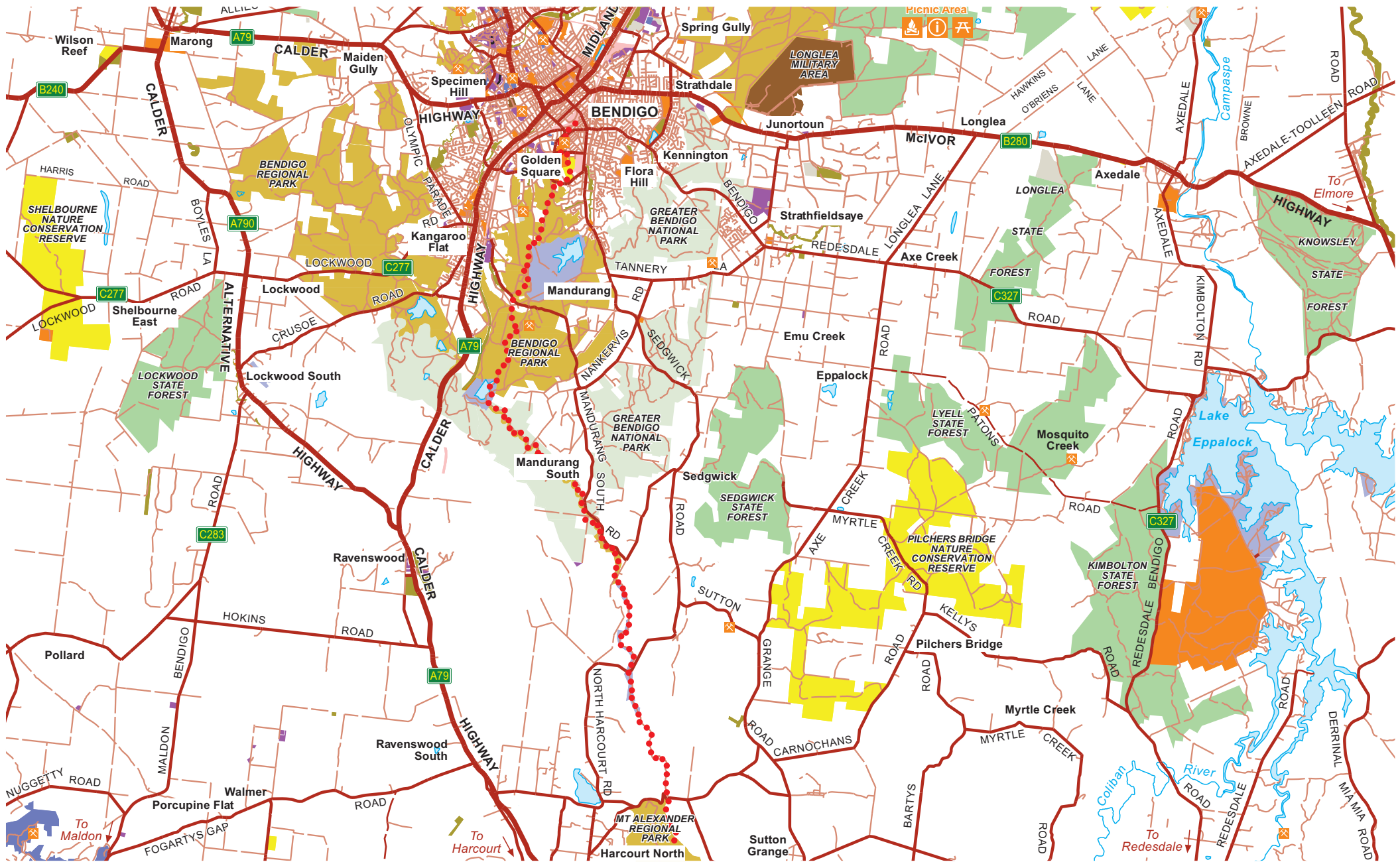
The Forest Service in the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) is responsible for managing Victoria's State forest.

Visit the Forests Service website at www.dse.vic.gov.au/forests.

For more information contact:

- DSE Bendigo office ☎ 5430 4444
- DSE Customer Service Centre ☎ 136 186.

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