

# VICTORIA'S PROTECTED PLACES



Parks Victoria is a State Government organisation that cares for more than 3,000 parks and reserves in Victoria. These protected places make up 18 per cent of Victoria's landmass, 75 per cent of Victoria's wetlands and 70 per cent of Victoria's coastline.

Rangers and scientists, in partnership with Traditional Owners, are responsible for managing our protected places. Together, they decide what actions to take to ensure Victoria's protected places remain healthy. A healthy ecosystem supports Victoria's unique native plants and animals as well as vital ecosystem services such as clean air and clean water.

Victoria's protected places are also home to important cultural heritage. Aboriginal people have been connected to the land and sea for tens of thousands of years. Parks Victoria supports this continued connection to Country and partners with Traditional Owners to care for Victoria's cultural landscapes.

Victoria's protected places safeguard our unique ecosystems and cultural heritage, whilst also providing all visitors the opportunity to enjoy and experience our precious natural spaces.

## VICTORIA'S 9 MAIN ECOSYSTEMS



The Alps



Grasslands



Heathlands



The Mallee



Dry Forests and Woodlands



Wet Forests and Rainforests



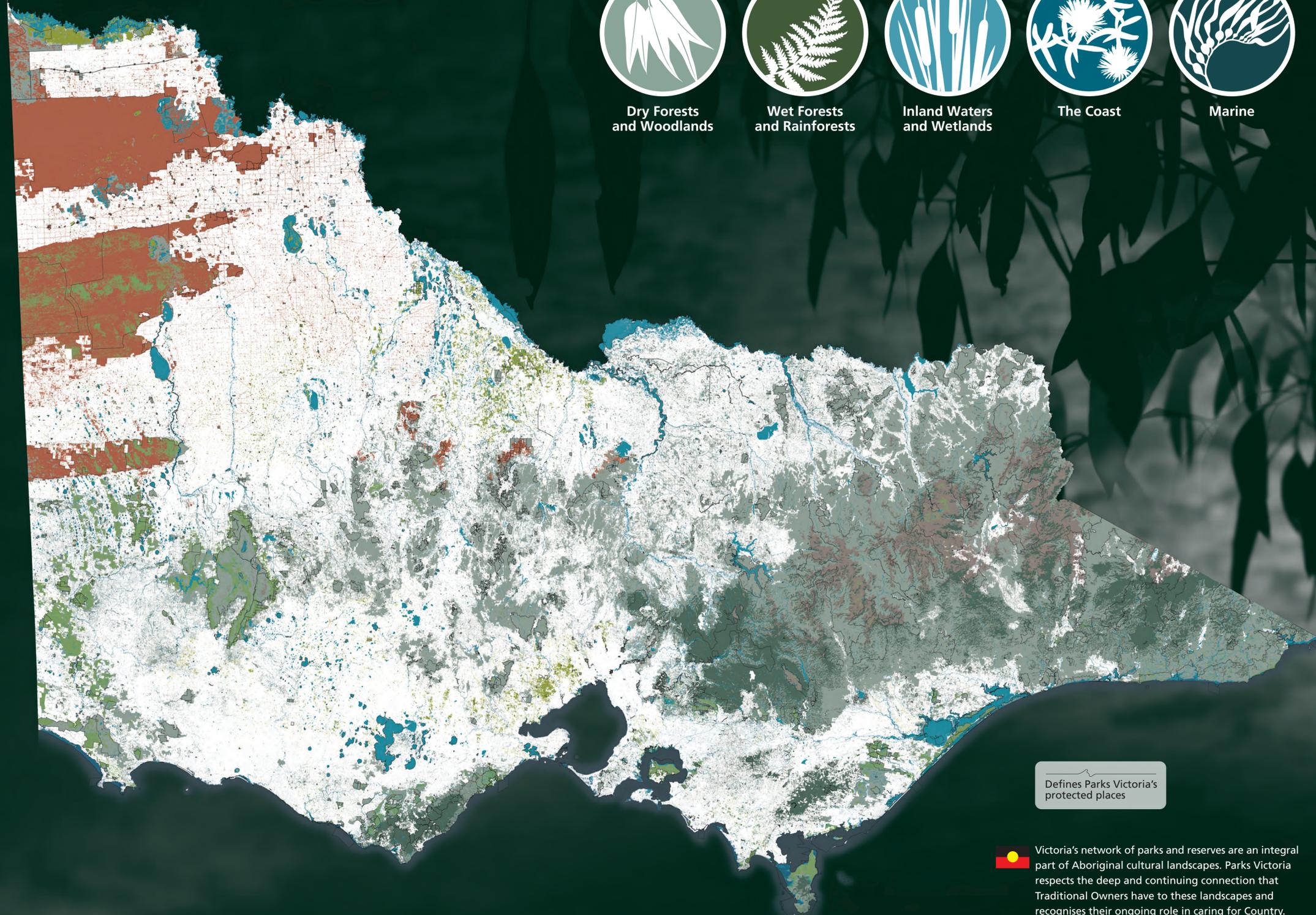
Inland Waters and Wetlands



The Coast



Marine



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## What is an ecosystem?

An ecosystem is made up of all the living and non-living things in an area. The living parts of ecosystems include all the plants, animals, bacteria and fungi. The non-living parts of ecosystems include things like sunlight, water, soil, air and temperature.

Victoria's landscape has been shaped by geological movement, weathering and human interaction over hundreds of thousands of years. Today Victoria is home to nine main ecosystems, which are all unique and important in their own right. Victoria's protected places aims to safeguard these ecosystems including the valuable cultural, scientific and natural beauty they contain.

## VICTORIA'S FAUNAL EMBLEMS



### HELMETED HONEYEATER

The striking yellow, olive and black Helmeted Honeyeater is the only bird species endemic to the state of Victoria. It relies on streamside swamp forests to breed and thrive.



### LEADBEATER'S POSSUM

Victoria's very own forest fairy, the critically endangered Leadbeater's Possum, needs hollow trees in old wood eucalypt forests to build their bark nests.



### WEEDY SEADRAGON

The delicate and shy Weedy Seadragon can be found among the kelp forests and seagrass beds off the coast of Victoria. However, their camouflage makes them hard to spot!

## VICTORIA'S 9 MAIN ECOSYSTEMS



### 1 The Alps

The Alps are characterised by rocky peaks with rounded mountain tops and plateaus. The highest mountain areas support the growth of heathland, grassland and alpine bogs.

At lower altitudes small, beautifully coloured snow gums are found. These trees will only grow to 10 metres tall because the environment is so harsh.

Animals such as the Baw Baw Frog and the Mountain Pygmy-possum have developed amazing adaptations to cope with the cold, windy, snow-covered habitat.

Alpine National Park  
Mount Buffalo National Park  
Baw Baw National Park



### 2 Grasslands

Grasslands consist of many interesting and varied species of grasses. These grasses have adapted to survive severe weather changes such as temporary flooding in winter and quick drying soil in summer.

In spring and early summer grasslands put on a colourful display with grasses, orchids, daisies, bush peas and lilies all flowering.

The critically endangered Plains-wanderer forages for seeds and insects among the grasses of short, sparse grasslands.

Terrick Terrick National Park  
Craigieburn Grassland Nature Conservation Reserve  
Derrimut Grassland Nature Conservation Reserve



### 3 Heathlands

Heathlands are characterised by dense, low shrubs and scattered, twisted trees. Their stunted growth is a result of the harshness of the environment in which they live.

Fire is important to the health of the heathland ecosystem as it improves soil quality for plant growth and it clears the dense shrub layer to allow smaller plants to put up shoots and flowers.

The heathlands support many flowering plants, rich bird life and a large number of small mammals, such as dunnarts and the New Holland Mouse.

Cape Conran Coastal Park  
Anglesea Heath  
Jilpanger Nature Conservation Reserve



### 4 The Mallee

Mallee ecosystems take their name from the Aboriginal word *Mallee*, which describes a group of eucalypts with enlarged, woody bases called lignotubers that are found in these dry environments.

The lignotubers store carbohydrates and water, and allow the tree to reshoot from the base if stems are destroyed by fire. The Mallee's sandy soil supports the growth of saltbush, heathy shrubs, sedges, grasses and herbs.

The Mallee is home to more species of lizards than anywhere else in Victoria, from tiny geckos to powerful goannas.

Murray-Sunset National Park  
Hattah-Kulkyne National Park  
Little Desert National Park



### 5 Dry Forests and Woodlands

There are many types of dry open forests and woodlands across Victoria. Each type is dominated by different species of Eucalyptus tree, such as Messmate or Red Ironbark.

The understory contains a variety of grasses, herbs and some of the State's rarest orchids.

Hollows that form in dead and old trees are an important feature of this ecosystem as they provide nesting opportunities for Brush-tailed Phascogale and many types of parrots and cockatoos.

Budj Bim National Park  
Grampians National Park  
Brisbane Ranges National Park



### 6 Wet Forests and Rainforests

The cool mountains and gullies of Victoria is where you can find wet eucalypt forests and rainforests.

Our wet eucalypt forests have the world's largest flowering plant, a majestic eucalypt called Mountain Ash, reaching 100 metres in height and 15 metres in circumference. In comparison Victoria's rainforests feature non-eucalypt trees, climbers, shrubs, ferns and mosses.

Masterful songbird, the Lyrebird, can be found scratching through the leaf litter on damp forest floors in search of insects, spiders, worms and seeds.

Kinglake National Park  
Yarra Ranges National Park  
Snowy River National Park



### 7 Inland Waters and Wetlands

Victoria has a wide variety of inland and aquatic environments, including flowing waters such as creeks, streams and rivers as standing waters such as lakes and wetlands.

These waters can be permanent or temporary, plants that live in or nearby have adapted to changing water levels.

Inland waters and wetlands provide habitat for a variety of animals including fish, invertebrates, amphibians and birds, which access the water at different stages of their life cycle.

Kings Billabong Park  
Barmah National Park  
Mitchell River National Park



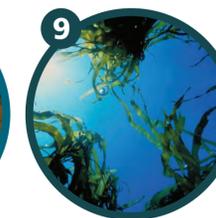
### 8 The Coast

Powerful waves, salty winds and unstable sandy soils make the coast a difficult environment for living things to survive in as it is constantly changing.

Plants such as banksias, Moonah, tea-trees, dune scrub, succulents and saltbushes have adaptations that help them cope with this challenging environment.

Coastal environments provide important breeding habitats for shore birds such as Pied Oystercatchers and Hooded Plovers.

Port Campbell National Park  
Croajingolong National Park  
Corner Inlet Marine and Coastal Park



### 9 Marine

A useful way to distinguish marine ecosystems is by separating them into marine habitats. A marine habitat is a place where certain animals and plants can be found together.

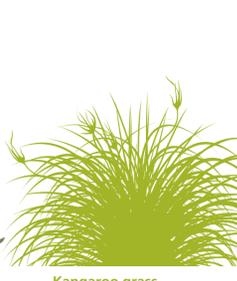
The nine main Marine habitats are: Subtidal rocky reefs, Intertidal rocky reefs, Sponge Gardens, Kelp forests, Mangroves, Mudflats, Open water, Sandy plains and Seagrass beds.

The elusive, tri-coloured Burrunan Dolphin can be found in distinct areas off the coast of Victoria. Burrunan is an Aboriginal word meaning 'large sea fish of the porpoise kind'.

Wilsons Promontory Marine National Park  
Jawbone Marine Sanctuary  
Twelve Apostles Marine National Park



Billy buttons



Kangaroo grass



Common heath



Saltbush



Eucalyptus



Fern



Bulrush



Pigface



Giant kelp