

# Belfast Coastal Reserve

## Visitor Guide



Belfast Coastal Reserve boasts a long stretch of rugged coastline with sandy beaches, grassy dunes, basalt outcrops and chains of wetlands to experience, explore and enjoy. The reserve is a great place to walk, connect with nature, and see many threatened bird species including some that fly in from all over the world.



### Getting There

Belfast Coastal Reserve is located between Warrnambool and Port Fairy in Victoria's south-west. Warrnambool is a 256km drive from Melbourne along the Princes Highway (A1), or if approaching from the west it's a 583km trip from Adelaide to Port Fairy. The main visitor areas are accessed from the A1.

### Acknowledgment of Country

The reserve is significant to Aboriginal people, being the traditional land of the Eastern Maar Traditional Custodians.

For thousands of years, south-west Victoria has been home to the clans that comprise the nation of the Gunditjmara, living on the coast and volcanic plains of their traditional lands, in a cultural landscape that continues to exist today.

Cultural heritage exists in the form of habitation sites, coastal middens, stone artefacts, the names of local places given by ancestors, and through many more features of Country.

The reserve is a place where living cultural heritage connections provide communities and individuals with a sense of identity and continuity. It is a part of us and who we are, and we ask that you care for it when you visit.

### About the Park

The reserve is a narrow, 20 km-long stretch of coastline of open beaches, sheltered bays, black basalt rock, tall grassy dunes, and wetlands.

Visitors here can enjoy rugged coastal scenery and feelings of 'getting away from it all' while beach walking, snorkelling, surfing, fishing and birdwatching.

### Places of interest – refer to the map for details

#### Golfies (eastern end of East Beach)

Enter off Skenes Road via a narrow gravel road west of Port Fairy Golf Course, to the carpark. Walking and beach fishing are popular here, and the area is known amongst surfers for its consistent shore break.

#### Mills Reef (Golf Course East)

The access road is off the bend in Woodbine/Skenes Road, and the carpark abuts the eastern side of Port Fairy Golf Course. It is a 200m walk to the beach along a gravel path.

This area's beautiful black rocky outcrops support an abundance of sea life and shape the coastline to provide important breeding habitat for Hooded Plovers.

#### Killarney Beach, Boat Ramp Access and Caravan Park

This area is managed by Moyne Shire Council. Refer to the map.

Killarney Beach, at the end of Mahoneys Road, is sheltered from wave action by offshore reefs making it a popular place to walk, snorkel and fish. This is not a Lifesaver patrolled beach.

Killarney Beach is a popular fishing spot, with whiting, salmon and squid frequenting the gutters, reefs and seagrass beds.

A 4WD-access boat ramp is located at the eastern end of the beach, with its own car park accessed from Basin Track.

The Killarney Beach Caravan Park offers paid camping. Amenities here include a sports oval, children's playground and the only accessible public toilet near the reserve.

See the Moyne Shire website for more information.

#### Basin

To access the Basin visitor site, take the unsealed Basin Track from Mahoneys Road, near Killarney Beach. Long vehicles are not recommended as the track and car park are narrow.

This site features sheltered beaches and rockpools – a great site for watching rare shorebirds from all over the world including Ruddy Turnstones, Godwits, and Double-banded Plovers.

Boat launching is permitted at the Basin. It is across beach sand, so a 4WD vehicle is recommended. Please return all vehicles with trailers to the carpark after launching and retrieving boats, to keep the beach clear and safe for visitors and wildlife.

Snorkelers can take advantage of the occasionally crystal clear blue waters alive with magnificent underwater kelp habitat and its residents (conditions permitting – no lifesaving service).

Parks Victoria

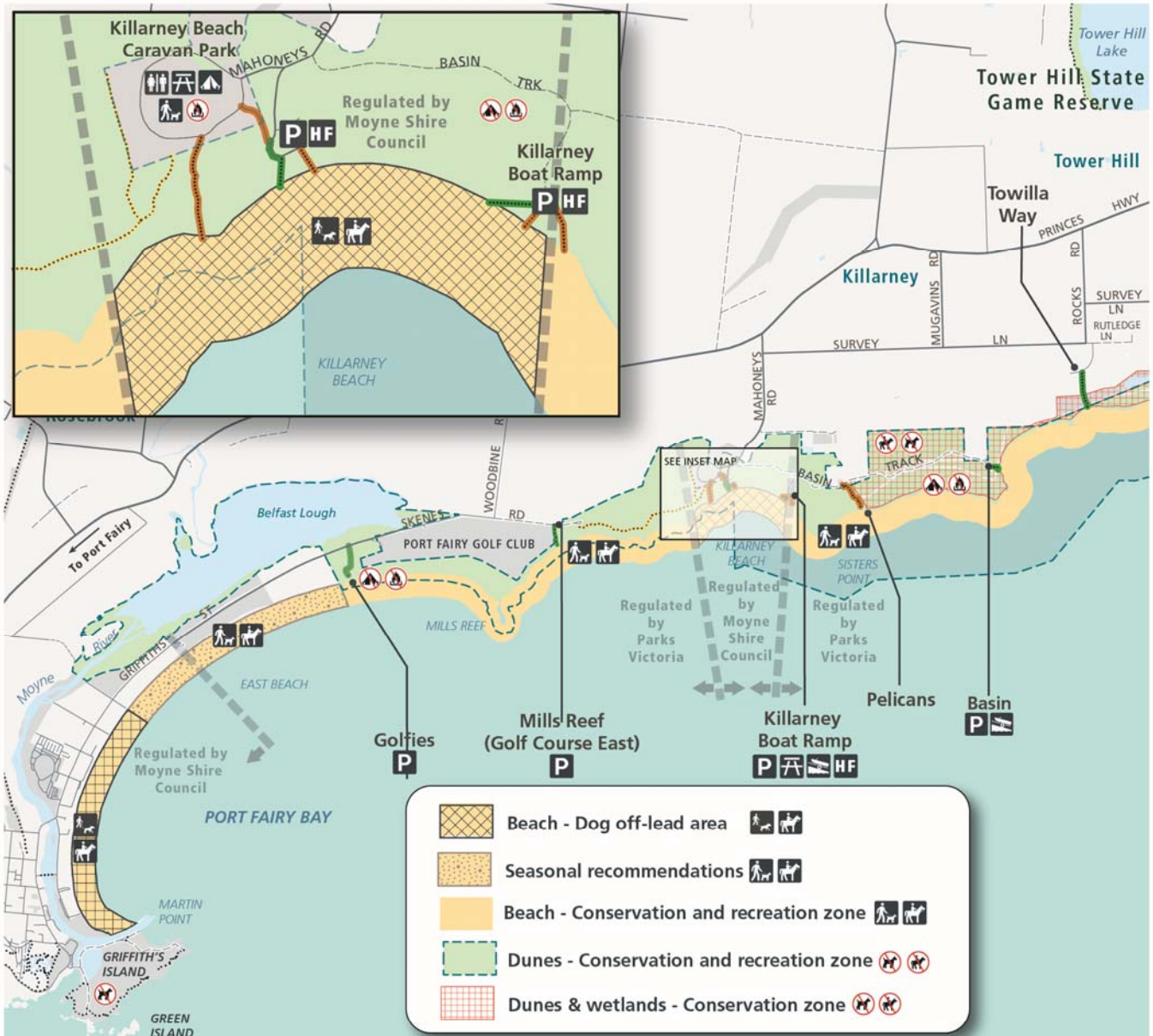
Phone 13 1963

[www.parks.vic.gov.au](http://www.parks.vic.gov.au)



# Belfast Coastal Reserve - Recreational User Map

## Western section



	Beach - Dog off-lead area	
	Seasonal recommendations	
	Beach - Conservation and recreation zone	
	Dunes - Conservation and recreation zone	
	Dunes & wetlands - Conservation zone	

<b>P</b> Parking	Dogs on-lead only	Belfast Coastal Reserve (land and offshore)	Local government area/ regulation boundary
Toilets	Dog off-lead permitted	Park/ reserve	
Picnic area	Recreational horse riding	Public land	<b>Designated Beach Access Tracks</b>
Camping area (Killarney Beach Caravan Park)	Horse float access	Lake/ river	Dog on-lead and pedestrian access track
Boat ramp	Gate	Walking track (pedestrian only)	Recreational horses, dogs and pedestrian access track
	No dogs permitted	4WD	
	No horses permitted	Unsealed road	
	No camping permitted	Management vehicles only	
	No fires permitted	Sealed road	

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# Belfast Coastal Reserve - Recreational User Map

## Eastern section

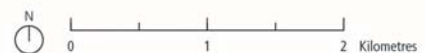


	Beach - Conservation and recreation zone	
	Dunes - Conservation and recreation zone	
	Dunes & wetlands - Conservation zone	

Parking	Dogs on-lead only	Belfast Coastal Reserve (land and offshore)	Sealed road
Toilets	Dog off-lead permitted	Park/ reserve	Local government area / regulation boundary
Picnic area	Recreational horse riding	Public land	Port Fairy - Warrnambool Rail Trail
	Horse float access	Lake/ river	
	Gate	Swamp	<b>Designated Beach Access Tracks</b>
	No dogs permitted	Walking track (pedestrian only)	Dog on-lead and pedestrian access track
	No horses permitted	4WD	Recreational horses, dogs and pedestrian access track
	No camping permitted	Unsealed road	
	No fires permitted	Management vehicles only	



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## Rutledges Cutting

Rutledges Cutting, or 'The Cutting', is a quiet beach accessed via carparks along Gormans Road. It is a popular place for walking and beachcombing, renowned for its wide, long sandy beach, backed by tall dunes.

Saltwater and Kellys Swamp are behind the dunes east of this area. To help prevent erosion and to protect cultural sites please keep to existing tracks or the beach.

The ocean here is wild and powerful and visitors are advised against swimming. Surfing is for experienced surfers only.

Beach fishing using heavy gear is conducted here.

Saltwater Swamp (and the upstream Kellys Swamp) wetlands are included in the Conservation Zone. They provide important feeding and refuge locations for a range of bird species, including the endangered Orange-bellied Parrot.

Horse riding and on-lead dog walking are permitted on the beach (but not in the wetlands or dunes).

Motor boats, kiteboards and windsurfers are not permitted in the wetlands.

## Cultural Significance

The abundant natural resources in the area from the ocean, wetlands and nearby forests provided food and materials to support large, thriving communities of Aboriginal people.

Early European accounts noted permanent villages nearby, and large inter-tribal gatherings at *Tarerer* (Kellys Swamp) to celebrate and share in the bounty of the sea.



Aboriginal heritage sites are a key reason for protecting the dunes

## Environmental Significance

The reserve's coastal dune scrub and grasslands continue to provide a refuge for animals and plant species of local, national, and international significance, and have become a focus of conservation efforts.

Almost 200 different native species of bird, mammal, fish, reptile and amphibian have been recorded from the Belfast Coastal Reserve, of which 50 are currently listed as threatened.

The reserve is a significant nesting area for the state's threatened Hooded Plover and is home to many other coastal and wetland birds including Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers and Orange-bellied Parrots.



## Things you need to know

- Hooded Plovers live and breed here during summer months. Beach areas and rocky outcrops may be fenced off and signposted to give Hooded Plover chicks a chance to survive.
- Roaming dogs are a proven threat to Hooded Plover breeding and survival. Significant fines apply for allowing dogs to roam off-lead or to disturb wildlife.
- Poison baits targeting foxes (but also fatal to dogs) are laid throughout the reserve's wetlands and dune areas as part of an ongoing fox control program. These baits contain *PAPP (para-aminopropiophenone)* which may be fatal to dogs if ingested, requiring immediate veterinary attention
- Patrolled swimming beaches are not available. They are available over summer in Port Fairy and Warrnambool.
- Racehorses train at Rutledges Cutting and Killarney Beach. A controlled amount of professional racehorse training is permitted in the mornings. Please be alert and share the beach safely at these times.

## Help to look after the Reserve

The main activities undertaken in the reserve are indicated on the accompanying map, and on local signs. Visitors should familiarise themselves with the reserve regulations, put in place to keep the beaches safe and enjoyable for wildlife and visitors.

- You can help to protect our important and timid beach nesting birds by keeping your activities to the water's edge; please avoid entering or lingering at fenced-off nest sites
- Please keep your dog on-lead at all times and do not allow it to disturb wildlife. Pick up after your dog
- Keep your horse close to the water's edge, and ride with consideration of other beach users and wildlife
- When driving, keep to formed roads and car parks
- When walking in dune areas, please keep to formed tracks
- Please take your rubbish home
- All cultural artefacts and archaeological deposits are protected by law and must not be disturbed or removed
- For further information about the reserve or volunteering Contact 13 19 63 or visit [www.parks.vic.gov.au](http://www.parks.vic.gov.au)

## Be Prepared and Stay Safe

Belfast Coastal Reserve is in the South West Fire District. Bushfire safety is a personal responsibility. Anyone entering parks and forests during the bushfire season needs to stay aware of forecast weather conditions.

Check the Fire Danger Rating, days of Total Fire Ban, or information on other emergencies on the VicEmergency smartphone app, or call the VicEmergency Hotline on 1800 226 226, or at [www.emergency.vic.gov.au](http://www.emergency.vic.gov.au).

No fires may be lit in the reserve; penalties apply. The risks, and penalties are increased on Total Fire Ban days.

On Code Red Fire Danger Rating days, or under emergency, this park will be closed for public safety. Do not expect an official warning, it is your responsibility to be aware of warnings and emergencies in your area.

Check the latest park open and closure conditions at [www.parks.vic.gov.au](http://www.parks.vic.gov.au) or by calling 13 1963.

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