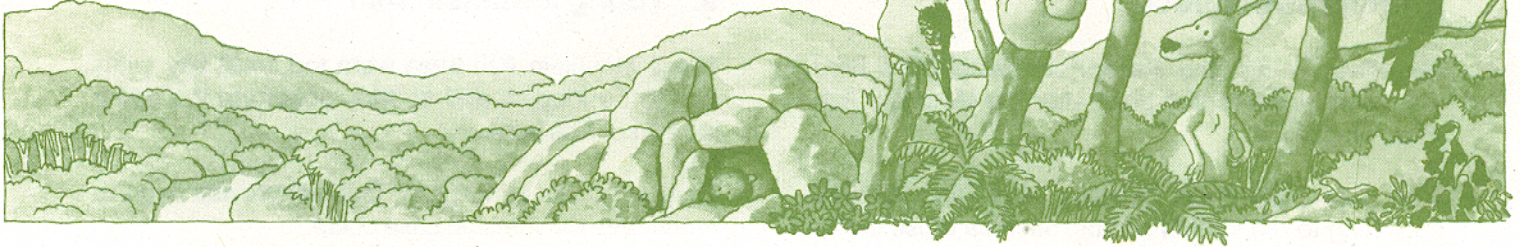


Lyrebird Ridge Track

Tarra-Bulga National Park



The new Lyrebird Ridge Track is 1.2 km long (one way). It takes about an hour to walk to the end of the track and back from the carpark at the Tarra-Bulga Visitor Centre.

These notes refer to numbered pegs along the track and introduce some of the stories of this forest ... a forest that is returning after logging earlier this century.

The track is accessible for people with disabilities. Its surface and grades are suitable for wheelchairs, though some help may be needed on the further half of the track.

Listen and look for lyrebirds as you go along. Their clear songs can be heard at any time, and they are often seen, especially early or late in the day.

1. Return of the forest

From here you can see three of the main tree species that make up this forest. They are:

- . Mountain Ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*)
- . Silver Wattle (*Acacia dealbata*)
- . Blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*)

Most of the huge old Mountain Ash trees that once grew here were felled between about 1890 and 1945. The present trees either were not logged or have regenerated from seed.

Wattles are the first trees to grow after a forest has been logged or burnt.

2. Sawdust heap

All that remains of a small sawmill that operated here is a heap of sawdust and a sawpit.

Logs were dragged out of the forest and cut into lengths or billets by a steam-driven saw. The billets were then taken by horse-drawn tram to another sawmill in the area for final cutting.

In the early 1900s there were at least three sawmills around Balook.

3. Ferns and more ferns

Ferns thrive in cool wet forests like this.

To the left and right of the track you can see a Soft Tree-fern and a Rough Tree-fern. Gently feel their bases to tell them apart.

On the ground, Mother Shield-ferns are abundant. They can reproduce by means of a *bulbil* or baby fern growing on a frond.

4. Rainforest of the future

If you could come back in 500 years, you might find a fully-fledged rainforest here.

Victoria's cool temperate rainforests are survivors from an ancient, wetter climate. Remnants of them are found only in moist sheltered places like mountain gullies.

Mountain Ash trees need a fire to regenerate. Without fire, when they die they may be replaced by rainforest species like Myrtle Beech, Blanket-leaf and tree-ferns. Some of these are already growing here.

5. Epiphytes

Many plants in wet forests and rainforests don't grow on the ground.

The Kangaroo Ferns that grow on this Blackwood tree are not parasites but *epiphytes*. They use the trees for support but obtain their own food and water.

Ferns are not flowering plants. Instead of seeds, they have spores. You can see these in clusters or *sori* under the fronds.



6. Regrowth forest

The Silver Wattle and Hazel Pomaderris trees here are forest pioneers that grew after the Mountain Ash trees were felled.

They are short-lived species and are already beginning to die. Often shrubs, such as those at the next sign, are replacing them.

Mountain Ash trees cannot regenerate without a fire.

7. Shrubby understorey

When the pioneer wattles and hazels die, more light reaches the forest floor, allowing other plants to grow.

Shrubs here include daisy bushes (*Olearia* species), Prickly Currant-bush, Stinkwood, Banyalla, Dogwood and Mountain Pepper.

These shrubs, with their flowers, berries and associated insects, attract a variety of birds. Watch for robins, fantails, scrub-wrens, thornbills and others.

8. Felling a forest

The huge Mountain Ash trees that once grew here had massive buttressed roots.

To make it easier to cut them down, notches were made in the trunk well above the ground. Springboards were jammed into these for the axemen to stand on.

It would take two men a whole day to cut down one tree.

9. Young Mountain Ash

These Mountain Ash trees were too small fifty years ago to be logged, and so they now form the upper storey species here.

They will continue to grow, and will provide seed to regenerate the forest in case of fire.

10. Stop, rest and listen

This is the end of the Lyrebird Ridge Track.

Take time to rest and listen to the sounds of the forest.

There may be lyrebirds or whipbirds in the gullies. Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos may fly over with their creaking call. And Crimson Rosellas often speed through the trees.

Ringtail possums, echidnas, wallabies and wombats are no doubt around, but are unlikely to be seen - they're secretive or nocturnal.

Think of the forest as a living system, stable yet changing and adaptable, made up of thousands of interdependent living things. Let us ensure that future generations can enjoy it as we can.

Henry Kendall expressed his feelings about a similar forest in the poem *Bellbirds*:

By channels of coolness, the echoes are calling,
And, down the dim gorges, I hear the creek
 falling;
It lives in the mountains, where moss and the
 sedges
Touch with their beauty the banks and the ledges ...