

Birdwatching in the River Red Gums



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Australia is blessed with an array of spectacular bird life. Beautiful colours, distinctive calls, rare species and sometimes unusual behaviours are the envy of twitchers the world over, and the river red gum forests of southern NSW are no exception.

ABOUT THE AREA

Towering majestically over a network of waterways, the river red gum reserves in the Western Riverina stretch for over 100,000 hectares, making it the world's largest continuous region of river red gum forest, and home to more than 150 species of birds.

Enjoy the company of egrets and cormorants, keep an eye out for the endangered superb parrot, and watch like a hawk for night herons, black swans, yellow rosellas, ducks, falcons, cockatoos, tree creepers, pardalotes, kingfishers and owls. And this is just for starters. Add in the multiple bird hides and it's truly a birdwatchers paradise!

GETTING THERE

The Yanga, Murray Valley and Murrumbidgee Valley Regional and National Parks are ideal places to get up close with the river red gums and their amazing bird life. Established to conserve the gums and their unique and delicate ecosystems, these parks are perfect for getting busy with the binoculars.

All three can be found in the Western Riverina district of southern NSW. So if you're within coo-ee distance of towns such as Deniliquin, Balranald, Moama, Mathoura, Narrandera, Leeton or Hay, then you're in the right place. And if you're not, then it's worth the trip.

TOP BIRDWATCHING HOTSPOTS

The reserves have plenty of top birdwatching spots, with enthusiastic birdwatchers flocking to the several strategically placed hides and walks. For more information be sure to visit www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au, or join one of the small group tours on offer by Australian Ornithological Services at www.philipmaher.com. Their years of experience mean they know all the best spots for sighting rare and endangered birds in the area.

REED BEDS BIRD HIDE BOARDWALK

Reed Beds Bird Hide at Mathoura in the Murray Valley National Park is bliss for birdwatchers.

HOW TO GET THERE

Travel to the Mathoura Visitor Centre on the Cobb Highway, drive south for 1km along the Cobb Highway, turn left into Picnic Point Road and turn right after 4.6km.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Allow 1 hour. An easy walk – don't forget your bird identification book!

YANGA LAKE WALKING TRAIL AND BIRD HIDE

An easy 1km walk from the historic Yanga Homestead in the Yanga National Park, this walk takes you along the edge of Yanga Lake to a secluded bird hide. This is an ideal place to see great crested grebes, sea eagles and other water-bird wonders.

HOW TO GET THERE

Yanga Homestead precinct is located 8km east of Balranald. Turn south off the Sturt Highway at the Yanga rest area and continue along to the Homestead. The walk starts from the viewing deck on the cliff overlooking Yanga Lake, then goes down to the shoreline and along the eastern edge of the Homestead peninsula.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Walk takes around 30 minutes.
Easy – perfect for all ages and abilities.

FIVEBOUGH WETLANDS

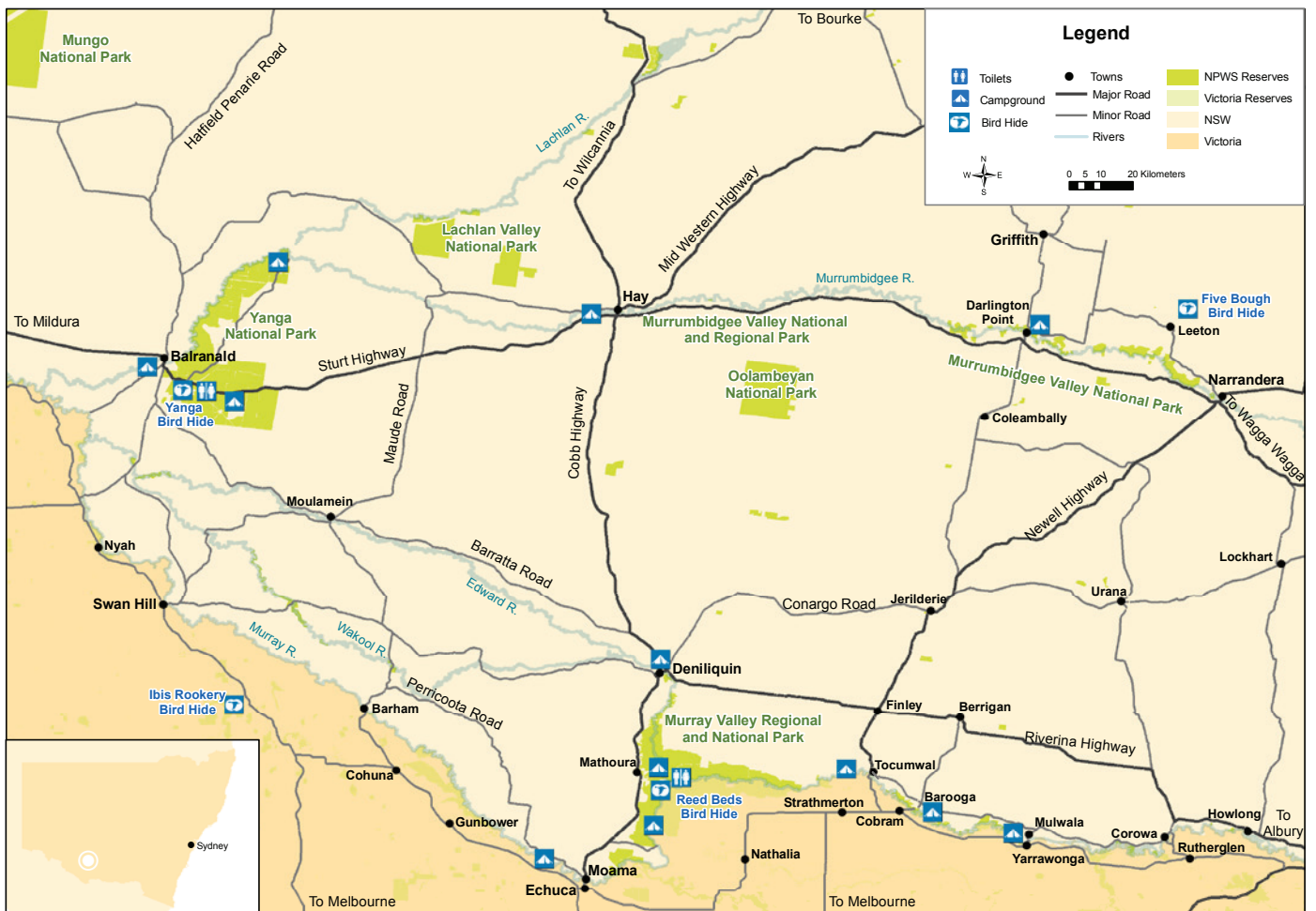
Located near Leeton NSW, this wetland wonderland – with its walking trails, bird hides and viewing platforms – provides a variety of habitats for waterbirds.

HOW TO GET THERE

Fivebough Wetlands is 2 km north-east of Leeton, NSW, on Petersham Road.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Check with Leeton Visitor's Centre for accessibility prior to visiting. For details visit www.fivebough.org.au.



TURKEY FLAT

Turkey Flat, in the Murrumbidgee Valley National Park, boasts a fascinating array of wetland and bushland birds.

HOW TO GET THERE

Turkey Flat is 10.5km from Leeton, NSW. Head east towards Narrandera along Yanco Avenue. At Yanco, cross the train line and turn right into Urolely Road and right again into River Road. Travel for approximately 3.1km. Access to Turkey Flat is via the National Park entrance on the left hand side of the River Road.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

River Road is an unsealed road and only suited to dry weather driving.

NARRANDERA NATURE RESERVE

Just 3.5km from Narrandera is Narrandera Nature Reserve, a perfect place to see a great range of birdlife.

HOW TO GET THERE

From Narrandera, follow Lake Drive, cross the canal and follow the unsealed road through the Narrandera Flora and Fauna Reserve.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Access to the Nature Reserve is by walking or bicycle only.

WHEN TO GO

October to March is prime time for birdwatching in the region.

SAFETY INFORMATION

When spending time in the river red gums it's important to steer away from camping or sitting beneath the larger trees, which have a deadly reputation for dropping limbs (they're nick-named 'widow makers' for a reason!).

Many NSW parks are remote and rugged places, weather can change quickly and conditions in the bush or on the water may be unpredictable. When visiting a national park, be aware of the risks and take responsibility for your own safety and the safety of any children in your care. Remember to plan ahead, choose your walks and activities to match your stamina and fitness level, ensure you take enough fresh drinking water and food for your trip, and tell someone where you're going and when you'll be back.

PARK RULES

Camping is free in the river red gum reserves, and there's no need to book. Just pull up your caravan or car and pick a spot in the designated campground.

Cooking outdoors is part and parcel of the camping experience, and it's a good idea to pack a gas or liquid fuel stove for your trip. Unlike many other bush camping spots, small campfires are allowed in the river red gum reserves outside of the solid fuel ban period, but you may need to bring your own firewood.

If you do have a small campfire, make sure you completely extinguish all fires before leaving an area or going to bed. Heavy fines may apply if campfires or other unshielded flames are left unattended.

And don't forget, dogs are only allowed in certain areas, so best to check before you bring Fido along for the ride!

TO FIND OUT MORE AND FOR TOURS

www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/murray-valley-national-park

www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/murrumbidgee-valley-national-park

www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/yanga-national-park

For tours contact Australian Ornithological Services at www.philipmaher.com