

FRANKLIN TRACK

The Aboriginal people who inhabited the Yea area for tens of thousands of years before Europeans arrived belonged to the Warring Illium Balluk part of the Taungurung clan. They held alliances with several other clans and language groups in Victoria who together are known as the Kulin Nation.

The main walk track in the Yea Wetlands is named after John Franklin a native of the neighbouring Nira Illium Bulluk clan and recognises his contribution to Yea's development and importantly, the District's aboriginal culture heritage.

John Franklin, was somehow separated from his family and their culture at 4 years of age. John later worked in the Yea district as a farm labourer, horse-breaker, drover & farmer, contributing to the development of the area & is honoured by many proud descendants.

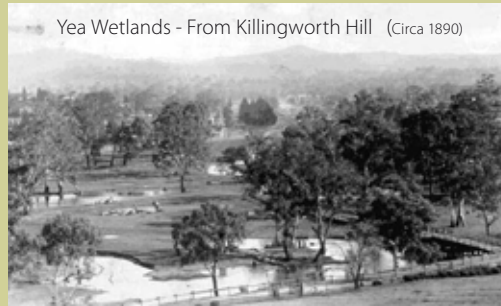
Interpretive signage along the route of the Franklin Track includes a summary of key stories of how the Aboriginals used and valued the natural assets of the Yea region's

many waterways and wetlands. They provided a year round source for hunting, sourcing food and water. More often than not the aborigines would camp nearby.

The Track and its raised boardwalks follow the highest land within the wetlands the path most likely used by the Taungurung as they stalked and hunted through the wetlands for fish, snakes possums, molluscs and lizards.

The Yea Wetlands were a rich source of 'Bush Tucker' with many native plants used for food, medicine and making baskets. Several nearby scar trees are evidence that the Aborigines removed bark for use as canoes, shields and baskets.

Take the time to read and enjoy the signs to learn and understand about our Nation's Aboriginal heritage.



Yea Wetlands - From Killingworth Hill (Circa 1890)

EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT

On Saturday, October the 2nd, 1824, Hamilton Hume and William Hovell began their historic expedition from the County of Cumberland, NSW. Their small party consisted of six men, two carts, three horses and numerous dogs.

Their objective was to explore the land between Cumberland and Westernport. Where they crossed the Yea River is not accurately recorded. It is quite likely that they crossed at the shallow ford that occurs in the river just 100m downstream from the suspension walk bridge.

This area is now a popular spot for locals and visitors alike to enjoy a paddle in the cool waters, relax in the shade - or celebrate a wedding.

For many years the Yea River floodplain and swamps were used for summer and autumn grazing. This activity, combined with upstream clearing and development for agricultural purposes led to considerable degradation of the natural wetland environment.

The Yea Wetlands Committee has phased out grazing and overseen extensive works to restore this area as a beautiful natural wetland.



Yea Discover Our Secrets

Business & Tourism Association
High Street., Yea 3717

Ph/Fax: (03) 5797 2663

email: yvic@bigpond.com

www.yea.com.au



Yea Wetlands
Committee of Management

Developing Yea's best kept Secret

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YEA WETLANDS WALK INFORMATION

Over the past 10 years the Yea Wetlands have been transformed from an inaccessible floodplain wetland to become one of Yea's best kept secrets!

Just a short walk from High Street you can now lose yourself in the peace and tranquility of the natural bush and riverine floodplain wetlands. Just walk down the Franklin Track across the cable suspension bridge, being sure to watch for platypus or native water rats foraging for food along the river bed and you begin to understand the treasure that Yea truly has.

Be sure to look up in the trees occasionally for Koalas and take the ramp off the bridge and you will enter a cleared area popular for picnics, functions or just relaxing. ... that's one of the secrets - stop, look and listen. You will be surprised at the native birds, plants and animals that you will discover.



Read the interpretive signs and unravel more secrets about the uniquely Australian aquatic mammals. Take care also to read the information about how the Aboriginals used and treated the wetlands.

Cross the first footbridge and you move from ungrazed to recently grazed land. Can you spot the difference?

Recent plantings of species indigenous to the area have been made but the impacts of past grazing and introduced grass species do confront you. Over time the area will be rehabilitated to provide the habitat necessary to house and feed our native species.

The Frog Pond

This billabong is just one of the many former courses of the Yea River. It is home to many frog species and a rare, vulnerable damselfly - *Hemiphysbia Mirabilis* - a very tiny and ancient species of metallic coloured damselfly which has only been observed in 4 other parts of Australia. We call it 'Hemi' for short. Scientists call it a living fossil - its species is that old!!



Photo: J Trueman



As you leave the Frog Pond you walk up onto a series of boardwalks which allow you to look out over the water and see the numerous birds, frogs and yes, the occasional reptile going about it's business. Please be sure not to annoy any snakes and they won't annoy you.



Photo: R. Wealands

You will pass more interpretive signs and cross another bridge before you meet the Yea Ana-branch - another course of the Yea River. Like the Yea, this has a good population of native fish (black fish, galaxids, macquarie perch - as well as introduced species such as redfin, trout and of course carp.

Here, you can elect to take the extended Wetland Loop to enjoy other wetlands or continue on the Franklin track

The old trees with their deep hollows provide important homes to many Kingfishers, Sugar Gliders, Owls, birds and bats. Similarly, fallen trees, once cut for firewood, now remain to house and protect birds, animals and reptiles from predators.

An evening walk, with the aid of a powerful torch, is an experience to be enjoyed by all. Bats, possums, sugar gliders can be observed if you walk quietly and carefully.

As you near Cummins Reserve be sure to visit the 'Flat Plat' a functional 'Art in the Environment' sculpture that is suitable for picnics and a comfortable base for explaining the wetlands many secrets to school students and groups.

Return to the Franklin Track and turn left onto the boardwalk beside Cummins Lagoon - a wetland excavated in 1985 as a joint project by the Yea High School and a local contractor.

Several smaller wetlands can provide surprise sightings of ducks and other water birds that drop in on their migratory journeys

On return to the suspension bridge climb the steps and retrace your steps back to the Information Shelter and free electric barbecue. You will feel better and better informed for the experience.

The Wetlands Committee can arrange guided tours of the wetlands for schools and groups. A small fee applies.

The Wetlands are maintained by community volunteers.

REMEMBER

- Please don't leave your rubbish - take it with you.
- Please use the Town's public toilets.
- Please keep pets on leads at all times.
- Please walk quietly and don't annoy the wildlife



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