Serendip Sanctuary

Visitor Guide

Take an exciting journey through the Western Plains of Victoria. This 250 hectare sanctuary is the perfect place to experience and learn about birdlife and the unique characteristics of the wetlands.

Picnic facilities

A fantastic picnic area with free undercover electric barbecues is the perfect venue for a day out with family and friends. A group barbecue area with a wood fire is also available for groups (bookings are required and a small fee applies).

Things for the Children to do

Find the five hidden Bush Art Animals.
Go Ponding and catch your own water bugs and view them through the microscopes.
Get a bird’s eye view of Serendip and beyond with the video camera on top of the tower.
View the Birds of Serendip CD Rom to see the animals going about their daily activities.
Match each bird’s beak to their feet and then work out what food each bird eats.

Environmental Education

Serendip conducts Ranger led VELS based environmental education programs to suit all year levels. Quality facilities include the Ponding site with nets and microscopes, an Activities Room and the Alcoa sponsored Frogs World.

Guided Tours are available by appointment. Moderate fees apply.

Opening Hours

Serendip Sanctuary is open from 10.00am – 4.00pm every day except for Christmas Day and Good Friday.

How to get there

Serendip Sanctuary is located at the base of the You Yangs, 60km from Melbourne and 22km north of Geelong. It is signposted from the Princes Highway.

For more information call the Parks Victoria Information Centre on 13 1963 or visit our website at www.parkweb.vic.gov.au
1. Public BBQ area
2. Group BBQ area
3. Toilets (disabled access)
4. Bustard breeding enclosure
5. Information Centre (office, theatrette, activities room, toilets, feed room, incubation room)
21. Depot

**Wildlife walk** – 1100 metres
6. Display pond
7. Watertable Watch – groundwater observation bore
8. Native grassland
9. Kangaroo and Emu walk-through enclosure
10. Brolga
11. Marshland bird observation hide
12. Dam wall
13. Lake Serendip
14. Billabong hide
15. Freckled Duck Enclosure
16. Heron Picnic Area and Pademelon walk-through
17. Walk-through Wetland and Dryland Aviaries
18. Walk-through wallaby enclosure
19. Brolga breeding enclosures
20. Bustard breeding enclosure

**Wetland walk** – 900 metres
22. Watertable Watch – groundwater observation bore
23. Lake view
24. Observation tower and video camera
25. Banding shed
26. Ponding site
27. North Arm tea-tree observation hide

**Farm Dam for Wildlife Walk** – 1300 metres
28. North Arm
29. Demonstration farm dam for wildlife

**Wader Walk** – 1400 metres
30. Magpie Geese breeding enclosure
31. Wader bird observation
The wetlands

There are many different types of wetland at Serendip, each with its own features.

**Shallow Freshwater Wetlands**

These wetlands often only hold water for a few months each year, mostly after winter and spring rain. They are called ephemeral wetlands, meaning temporary.

Brolga, rare in Victoria, use shallow, freshwater wetland areas exclusively for nesting.

Spring rains produce explosions in invertebrate life, proving valuable food resources for birds at nesting time.

Brolga, ibis and egrets, with their specialised beaks, probe in the soft mud for insects or graze on the vegetation around the water edge.

**The Marshland**

The Marshland was created by building a levee bank to catch runoff from adjacent buildings and roads. Varying depths in the Marshland cater for a range of waterbird activities such as wading, feeding, swimming and diving. The islands and vegetation provide safe roosting and food sources.

Look for Mountain Ducks, Black Swans, Magpie Geese and Wood Ducks grazing around the edges. Coots, Hardhead Ducks, Cormorants and Grebes can be seen ducking and diving in the open water.

**Lake Serendip**

When full, Lake Serendip extends over 30ha. Historically the lake dries out about every four years. The trees around the lake attract birds which you might see in the garden or the bush.

River Red Gums, with their nesting hollows, attract parrots, cockatoos, galahs and rosellas.

Wattles and melaleucas attract wattlebirds, honey-eaters and thornbills to feed on both the flowers and insects that the nectar attracts.

Black and white Mudlarks, Willy Wagtails and Magpies peck and dart around in search of insects on the ground. Swallows and Martins fly low to pick up insects which skim across the water. Black Shouldered and Whistling kites soar high looking for small prey on the ground.

**The Billabong**

This wetland is filled artificially with bore water to provide habitat for various bird and other animal species. The 5900 parts per million salt content of the water affects emergent and surrounding vegetation, requiring salt-tolerant species such as Knobby Club Rush (Isolepsis nodosa), Fragrant Saltbush (Rhagodia parabolica) and Tanged Lignum (Muelenbeckia florulenta) to be grown here. The Billabong provides shelter and deeper water.

Moorhens and Swamphens nest in the rushes, while Sacred and Straw-necked Ibis use them to build their nests in the nearby trees. Magpie Geese and Ducks swim and dive in the open water and roost on logs and the islands.

**North Arm - a permanent wetland**

The North Arm is an example of a permanent open water wetland. The Western Plains are one of the few areas in Victoria where permanent wetlands are common.

Permanent wetlands provide more reliable fish populations and attract fishing birds such as comorants and pelicans.

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**A rich human history**

In 1856 the property of Lara, which included the area now occupied by Serendip, was sold by the Crown to Robert De Little from Launceston. Since then the property has been resold a number of times and used for everything from farming, sheep studs and even a health resort for alcoholics (1907 to 1930).

In 1959 the State repurchased the property with a view to further developing the site as a Wildlife Research Station. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s gradual changes were made to the property to accommodate the needs of wildlife and its research.

Serendip Sanctuary opened to the public in 1991 and is now managed by Parks Victoria.

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