

Kamarooka Forest

Situated about 30km north of Bendigo, Kamarooka forest is part of Greater Bendigo National Park. The northern boundary parallels, but is south of, the Elmore- Raywood Road and the south-western corner adjoins the former Whipstick State Park.

Kamarooka Forest comprises open, tall Grey Box woodland in most of the northern, eastern and western sides, with a patchy under-storey of various acacias (including Whirrakee Wattle), *Cassinia*, melaleucas and other shrubs. Strips of Yellow Gum occur along depressions and flats, with Red Gum only along seasonal creeks in the east.

The central and southern areas support large areas of mallee eucalypts from tall Kamarooka Mallee (squared-off fruits and buds) and Bull Mallee (large leaves) on better soils, merging into low Green Mallee (bright shiny green leaves) and Blue Mallee (small blue/grey leaves) on poorer, stony land. Combined with melaleuca and other low shrubs, these form often dense areas of 'Whipstick Scrub'. Past heavy utilisation for gold mining, timber, eucalyptus oil and charcoal production has resulted in a relatively young forest. Grazing ceased in the 1980s. Planned burns and many dry years have reduced undergrowth and bird life.

North to south, the main access roads are Millwood Road, Clays (also called East Kamarooka) Road and the only sealed road, Bendigo-Tennyson Road. Although called roads, the east-west and diagonal tracks are of variable quality and are often boggy in wet periods. The best birding spots are around dams, in good blossom patches, and in the Grey Box forest where the under-storey is thickest. The condition of these areas varies.

Species on the edge of their northern and southern ranges meet in Kamarooka. The dominant family is the honeyeaters, mainly due to the mixed eucalypts and shrubs providing blossom, though variable in quality and timing, almost the whole year round. Particularly attractive to the 20 honeyeater species which have been recorded here are Yellow Gum (flowering April-November), Kamarooka Mallee (flowering January-February), and Blue Mallee (flowering April-June).

More specifically, Tawny-crowned and Purple-gaped Honeyeaters live in low mallee; White-naped and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters visit from May to August; Black and White-fronted Honeyeaters are erratic visitors although occasional nesting has been recorded.

This is one of a series of bird guides produced by BirdLife Echuca District that can be downloaded from the branch's website, a link to which is on the BirdLife Australia web site www.birdlife.org.au

Other local birding guides:

Barmah Forest	Bendigo
Cohuna & Gunbower Island	Deniliquin
Echuca-Moama	Gulpa Island, Mathoura
Perricoota Road, Moama	Terrick Terrick National Park
Wyuna and Kanyapella	

For more information, email echuca@birdlife.org.au



Photographs by Murray Chambers

Above: EASTERN SPINEBILL

Below: WHITE-FRONTED HONEYEATER

Front panel: YELLOW-TUFTED HONEYEATER

Text by Peter Allan

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Kamarooka Forest birding guide



Birding in Kamarooka Forest

by Peter Allan

Kamarooka Forest can be accessed from the Midland Highway (A300) or the Raywood-Elmore Road (C337). Turn south off the C337 onto Millwood Road and drive south into the park.

Area 1: Junction of Camp and Millwood roads

Approximately 800 metres from the northern boundary of the park is a dam by the crossroads (36° 30' 10S; 144° 20' 40E). Listen and look for Crested Bellbird, Jacky Winter and Hooded Robin. Summer migrants such as wood-swallows and Rainbow Bee-eater favour this area. Another good birding area near here is Rush Dam and the bushland surrounding it. Rush Dam is located alongside Camp Road about a kilometre west.

Of three roads going east, try Harrower Road, 500m further south, through Grey Box-Yellow Gum woodland to Bendigo-Tennyson Road and turn south to Campbell Road. Alternatively, take Campbell Road which is a further 5km south and which passes through mallee directly to Area 2.

Area 2: Old distillery dams, Campbell Road

The entrance to an old eucalyptus oil distillery site is on the south side of Campbell Road, about 600m from Bendigo-Tennyson Road, and is marked by a small walking track post. The dams here (36° 32' 55S; 144° 22' 06E) are rarely dry. This is a good area for mallee birds, especially when Blue Mallee is in bloom.

Many honeyeaters may be observed here, including Purple-gaped and Tawny-crowned. Other birds to look for are Shy Heathwren, Red-capped Robin, Inland Thornbill, Brush Bronzewing and the yellow-rumped form of Spotted Pardalote.

Closer to the junction with Bendigo-Tennyson Road is a small depression which, when water-filled, allows viewing from your car.

There are other good birding spots alongside Campbells Road. It may be worth spending a few hours birding at spots along Campbells Road.

Unfortunately, drought and frequent fuel-reduction burns have adversely impacted upon bird numbers and species diversity. For instance, Fuscous Honeyeater numbers were once high, but it is now hard to observe many individuals.

To the east of Bendigo-Tennyson Road, Campbell Road becomes Burnside Road, a 'no through road'. The dense heath mallee, recently burnt, suits Tawny-crowned Honeyeater and Variegated Wren.

Area 3: Camp Road east

Drive north on the Bendigo-Tennyson Road to Camp Road, which crosses the sealed road just inside the park's northern boundary.

Mulga Dam picnic area is 800m west along Camp Road at the start of a long walking track to Black Rock. However birding is usually better about 350m EAST along Camp Road where two old tracks go to the left toward the boundary.

Look here for Eastern Yellow Robin, Hooded Robin, Brown Tree-creeper and Diamond Firetail.

Flycatchers inhabit the forest edges and Black Honeyeaters have been seen when the Kamarooka Mallee is in bloom.

Area 4: Camp Road Dam

Continue east along Camp Road for 1.2km ~ ignoring tracks on your right ~ to a dam at crossroads. This is a most-reliable dam, popular with honeyeaters, Peaceful Dove, Diamond Firetail and, in summer/early autumn, migrants. Your car can be used as a bird hide. There is clear viewing from the car.

Area 5: Camp and Clay Road to Clays Road

A kilometre along Camp Road is a right-hand turn onto Clay Road (not signposted). About 200m along Clay Road is a stand of Quandong, containing many old nests of White-browed Babblers. The road passes through Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) areas. Listen for Gilbert and Rufous Whistlers and Crested Bellbird.

Clay Road¹ ends at the north-south Clays (= East Kamarooka) Road, near another dam which, if full, may be useful.

Area 6: Noble Road

Drive 1.7km south along Clays Road to the entrance of Noble Road.

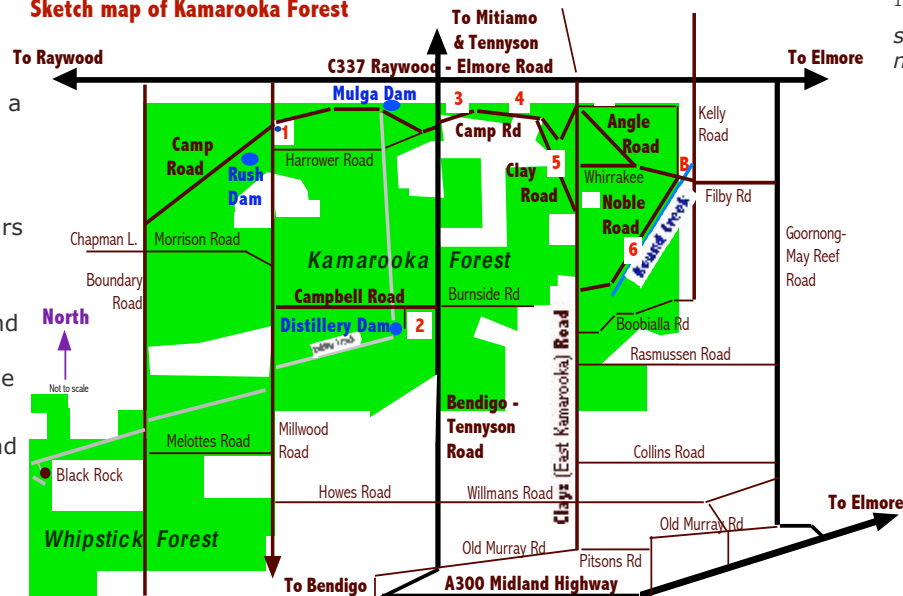
When in blossom, a tall stand of Yellow Gum attracts honeyeaters such as Yellow-plumed, Yellow-tufted and Fuscous. Drive east along Noble Road for approximately 2km to an old mill site alongside Round Creek. Here, old Red Gums have hollows for Long-billed Corellas and Galahs. In wet years, Black Duck and Maned Duck sometimes visit.

Check out the surrounding woodland for Gilbert Whistler, White-browed Babbler and Black-chinned Honeyeater.

You can usually exit the forest east by Noble Road, then the short Barowski Road (shown as a red B on the map) to Kelly Road or, if you are travelling south, to Filby Road and Goornong-May Reef Road. However, when it's flowing, Round Creek cuts Barowski Road and the only way out is back along Noble Road to Clays Road.

¹ Note: Clay Road and Clays Road are different roads; sign-posted road names do not always accord with names used in some road directories.

Sketch map of Kamarooka Forest



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