

Terricks Grasslands

The main forested section of Terrick Terrick National Park is located about 55km west of Echuca and 4km north of Mitiamo via Sylvaterre-Timms Lake Road.

Prior to the addition of native grasslands, the forested area of Terrick Terrick National Park was a State Park. Following the purchase of the 1262 hectare Davies property ~ a native grassland reputed to support more Plains Wanderers than any area of comparable size in Victoria ~ the park's status was upgraded to a National Park. The Davies acquisition is from the north-east corner of the forest to Bendigo Creek and beyond.

Several non-contiguous native grasslands have subsequently been purchased and added to the park, e.g. Tomara Gilgais, Wanurp Grasslands and Terrick East Grasslands. These additions mean Terrick Terrick National Park has one of the largest native grassland areas of any Victorian conservation park, and protects several nationally-threatened plant species, e.g. Chariot Wheels, Red Swainson Pea and Murray Swainson Pea.

Added to the Park in 2012, a long strip of Bendigo Creek features Lignum (a thin-leaved shrub which provides protection for small birds), River Red Gum, Black Box, Umbrella Wattle and several locally uncommon plant species.

The Meadows, an area of grassland and marshland, is now part of the Park. When containing water, the marshland attracts many waterbirds.

Before the Davies acquisition, the park covered an area of 2,500 hectares. Additions have increased the size to about 4,000 hectares.

At times sheep graze the grasslands area to help keep introduced grasses at bay, to encourage the growth of native herbs, and to maintain favourable conditions for the endangered Plains-wanderer.

The Davies family grazed stock at conservative levels, from the early 1900s for nearly 100 years. Fortunately for animals such as the Plains Wanderer, Curl Snake and Hooded Scaly-foot, and for plants such as Plains Leek-orchid and Annual Buttons, the owners felt no need to use fertilizers or chemicals. They rarely, if ever, ploughed the land.

No fewer than 28 of the 1,200 indigenous plants recorded for the property are of significance. Annual Buttons was believed to be extinct until discovered growing on the grasslands. Wild flowers on the grasslands are at their best from late August to November unless heavy rains have promoted a thick cover of grasses or unless drought prevails.



Credits

Above: RESTLESS FLYCATCHER (Murray Chambers)
Front panel DIAMOND FIRETAIL (Albert Wright)
Reverse side: FEMALE PLAINS-WANDERER (David Ong)

Authors: Keith Stockwell and Peter Allan with assistance from members of the Friends of Terrick Terrick National Park Inc.
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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

Our other local birding guides include:

Barmah Forest	Bendigo
Cohuna and Gunbower	Echuca-Moama
Deniliquin	Gulpa Island, Mathoura
Kamarooka Forest	Kerang
Perricoota Road, Moama	Wyuna and Kanyapella

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

Birding Guide to Terrick Terrick National Park



Birding in Terrick Terrick National Park

This tour commences at Mitiamo. (36° 12' 42S; 144° 13' 53E). From the crossroads in Mitiamo, drive north on the Sylvaterre-Timms Lake Road for about 4km. Just after the bitumen ends, turn east onto Picnic Track. There is an information box at the park entrance. Because the box is often empty, it is wise to download park notes from the Parks Victoria web site prior to your visit.

Stop One: Link Track (off Picnic Track)

It may be worth stopping along Link Track, a short distance off Picnic Track. Check out the bush here for Flame Robin (winter migrant), Red-capped Robin, Hooded Robin, thornbills, Diamond Firetail, Crested Shrike-tit, Eastern Rosella and Varied Sittella. Diamond Firetails often nest here in Spring and decorate their nests with wild-flowers.

Terrick Terrick Forest supports Victoria's largest stand of native White Cypress Pine, meaning parts of the park have a European rather than Australian appearance. This is one such area.

Return to Picnic Track, keeping an eye-out for Australian Ringneck.

Stop Two: Bushland east of Mitiamo Cemetery

Continue driving along Picnic Track until you come to a T-junction. Turn right (south), then veer east, and follow the track to the eastern side of a cemetery. Explore the bushland here. There is a variety of plants, both old and young, including Sandalwood, Hakea, Hopbush and Drooping She-oak and Buloke. Owing to grazing in the past, there are relatively few plants of middle-age. Note the healthy soil crust, with lots of lichen. Look for White-browed Babbler, Mistletoebird, Hooded Robin, wood-swallows, thornbills and Jacky Winter. This area is at the edge of the forest, close to farmland: such peripheral zones are often rich in bird species.

You may wish to visit the gravel extraction pits to the west of the cemetery (on the map). In dry weather, many birds come to drink from pools in the larger pits.*

Stop Three: Mount Terrick Terrick (Mitiamo Rock)

Retrace your route to the T-intersection but continue north to a picnic ground. It is worth climbing Mitiamo Rock to view the surrounding countryside. Whilst walking to and from the summit, look for raptors and Gilbert Whistler. A unique form of Correa (with bells of three colours on some plants) and Mintbush grow near the start of the track. The picnic ground is an ideal place for morning tea or lunch.

There are often Tree Martins nesting in the picnic ground. Diamond Firetail is often seen near the toilets. Before leaving here, it is often worth birding at the base of the rock. Birds sometimes seen at the base of the rock include Gilbert Whistler, Brown Tree-creeper and Crested Shrike-tit. Painted Button-quail is sometimes seen nearby.

Return to Sylvaterre-Timms Lake Road. You can take Picnic Track back to that road but it is possible to leave Picnic Track and follow Allen Track. A birding stop anywhere along Allen Track is often fruitful (). Look for Babblers (there are three species in the park).*

Stop Four: Eastern edge of the forest

Drive to the intersection of Sylvaterre-Timms Lake and Mologa-Echuca roads. Turn east onto Mologa-Echuca Road and drive to the eastern edge of the forest. It is usually worth parking here and walking along a firebreak in a southerly direction. This area is usually particularly good birding early and late in the day. It is usually worth spending an hour or so in this area. From here drive east to Kow Swamp Road and turn left (north).

BELOW: MAP SHOWING THE TERRICKS FOREST AND ITS SURROUNDS
Apart from a strip alongside Bendigo Creek, the National Park is shaded green. Note: The park includes grassland sections outside of the area of the map.



Stop Five: Fabians Paddock

Drive north along Kow Swamp Road, looking for Black Falcon, Australasian Pipit and grassland birds. After a few kilometres, you will see the old Davies homestead on your right. You may wish to turn west onto Fabians Road (or Leahys-Ferris Road) and walk on the grasslands. The wildflower display is sometimes good in spring. Under no circumstances should you drive on the grasslands.

If you wish to spotlight for Plains-wanderer at night (you won't see them during the day), wait until the Friends of Terrick Terrick open weekend on the first weekend of October each year. For information about the open weekend, email echuca@birdlife.org.au

Stop Six: Dam alongside Squire Track

Drive west on Jungaburra Road to Sylvaterre-Timms Lake Road and drive south back to the forest. Turn west onto Squire Track. A dam near the intersection with Rogers Track is often a good spot for Budgerigar, Cockatiel, Black-chinned Honeyeater and Diamond Firetail. After birding here, return to Sylvaterre-Timms Lake Road and drive south to Marlow Track.

Stop Seven: Reigel Rock and rock wells

Turn east onto Marlow Track. Follow this track until you see a flat, rocky formation on your right. Birds often come in to drink at wells in the rock. It is worth stopping here, checking out the wells and then walk toward Reigel Rock, looking for raptors and Cockatiel. There are often bush birds at the base of the rock.

• Note: *There is a marsh on The Meadows (Davis Road) that is sometimes home to crakes and other waterbirds.*



About Plains-wanderer

One reason for the addition of native grasslands to the park was to protect the Plains-wanderer. This bird resembles a quail. It demands native grassland that has bare or lichen-covered ground between clumps of grass.

With most bird species, the male has more-colourful plumage than the female (pictured). With the Plains-wanderer, it is the reverse.

This species is well-camouflaged and spends most of its time on the ground. It is rarely observed during daylight hours or on cold, windy nights.

LEFT: FEMALE PLAINS-WANDERER photograph by David Ong