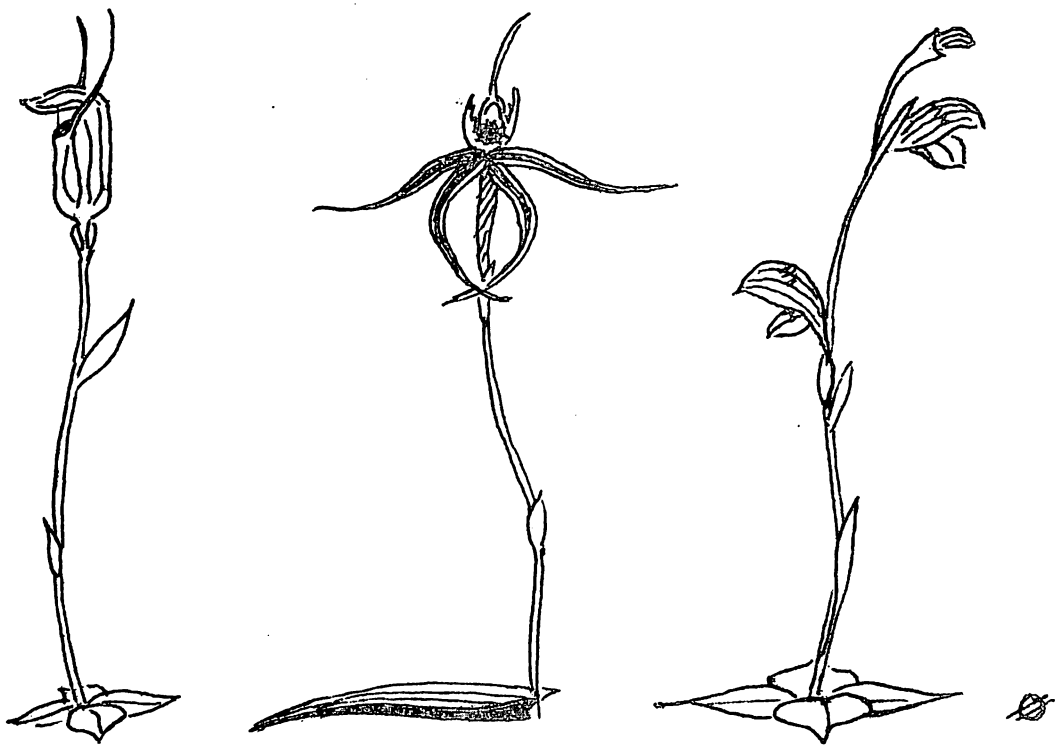
HATTAH LAKES NATIONAL PARK



Nature Trail

This short nature trail has been designed to show you the features of a typical sample of mallee country.

The trail commences near the junction of the Murray Valley Highway and the Park Entrance Road. Begin your leisurely walk at the "TRAIL" notice

The numbers along the winding path correspond with those in the trail leaflet guide which identifies and makes brief comment on the 40 items listed:

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Total length of Trail 1280 yards

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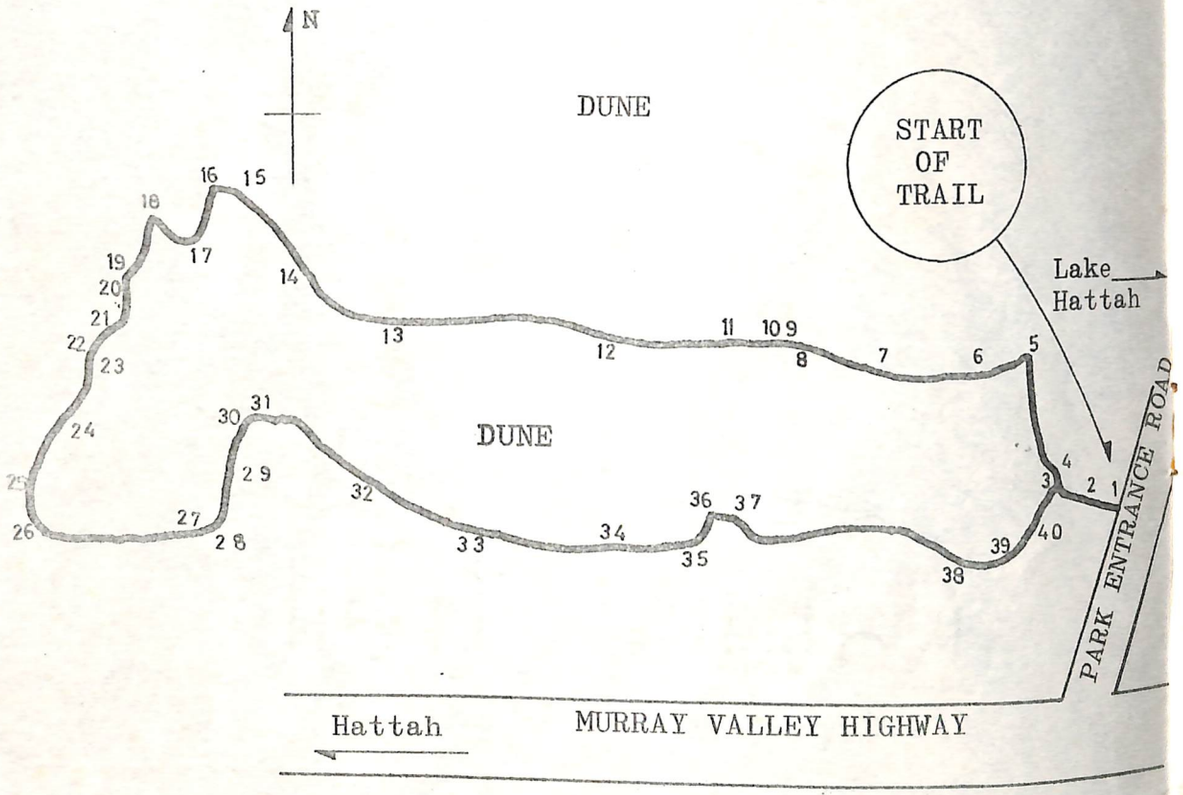

NO. 1 CLUBMOSS DAISY-BUSH (Olearia lepidophylla). This small shrub flowers during late summer and autumn when it is usually covered with a dense mantle of snow-white blooms. This is one of the many kinds of daisies found in the park.

NO. 2 PORCUPINE GRASS (Triodia scariosa). Probably the most abundant plant in the park. During normal spring seasons it sends up tall, slender flowering stems, the seeds of which are relished by the glorious Mulga Parrots. Although this prickly grass may irritate your legs you can see that its spines allow many wild-flowers to evade the jaws of the rabbit. Small rep-tiles also live underneath the spines for protection, including three species of legless lizards which look like little snakes.

27 yards

NO. 3 GREEN TEA-TREE (Leptospermum laevigatum var. minus). Small groups of this abundant shrub are to be found on sand dunes in the area. During spring it carries many lovely white blossoms and the groups of tea-tree often look like flowering orchards. These shrubs often have greenhood orchids growing under the shelter of their south-eastern sides.

12 yds.

NO. 4 GREENHOOD ORCHIDS Two types of Greenhood Orchids grow near this peg during spring, both of them only a few inches high. The Dwarf Greenhood (Pterostylis nana) has only one flower on each stem, and has two long thin sepals which stand up like miniature horns above the flower. The Midget Greenhood (Pt. mutica) has several flowers on each stem and does not have erect lateral sepals.
The Green-comb Spider-orchid (Caladenia dilatata) also grows in this area. These three orchids are illustrated on the front cover.

12 yds.

NO. 5 — 45 yds.
SCRUB CYPRESS PINE (Callitris verrucosa). This native pine is usually bushy and stunted and is best identified by the many little "warts" on its woody fruiting cones. It usually grows on dunes.

NO. 6 — 27 yds.
ANGULAR YELLOW MALLEE (Eucalyptus incrassata var costata). This specimen is much larger than usual. Generally it grows only on the tops of the narrow sand dunes. Note the many ribs and angles on the large "gum nuts" or fruits. During spring it has a fine show of large creamy-yellow blossoms.

NO. 7 — 50 yds.
CASTLE-BUILDING ANT This inoffensive ant prefers to build above ground level. Much vegetable matter is incorporated in the structure; and note the only entrance to the fortress - right at the top.

NO. 8 — 30 yds.
PRICKLY CRYPTANDRA (Cryptandra tomentosa). One of the two species of Cryptandra shrubs listed for this park, and by far the most common of the two. It produces masses of small white flowers during mid-spring.

NO. 9 — 16 yds.
GREY MALLEE (Eucalyptus socialis). This kind of mallee eucalypt is greyer in foliage than the other species found here. Note the long "pixie-cap" peaks of the buds and the wine-glass shape of the fruits or nuts. It usually grows on the sides of rises and often assumes a sprawling habit, quite unlike this specimen.

NO. 10
GREEN MINTBUSH (Prostanthera microphylla). These aromatic little plants growing at the base of the Grey Mallee are our sole representative of the well-known mintbush group. In Spring it has dainty little green and purple flowers.

NO. 11 — 50 yds.
NARROW-LEAF MALLEE (Eucalyptus foecunda). It is usually easy to distinguish this mallee from its relatives because its leaves are very small and narrow. It has a great abundance of chestnut-red "egg-in-an-eggcup" buds and small "wine-glass" fruits. It is the most prolific seed-producer of our local mallees and has the greatest abundance of blossoms.

NO. 12 — 53 yds.
BLUE (ROUGH) HALGANIA (Halgania cyanea). The small bright blue flowers of this little perennial may appear anytime after a good rain. Under favourable conditions it will sprout from the lateral roots, often several inches away from the parent plant.

NO. 13 — 40 yds.
DESERT CASSIA (Cassia nemophila). One of the two Cassias growing in the mallee soils of this park. The fine leaves are very variable. The Boronia-shaped flowers which occur in spring have earned it the local name of "Yellow Boronia", and give off a delightful aroma of chocolate vanilla.

NO. 14 — 47 yds.
NEALIE WATTLE (Acacia rigens). This species usually grows as a bushy shrub and often provides a beautiful display of rich yellow blossoms in spring.

NO. 15 — 13 yds.
WHEEL-FRUIT (Gyrostemon australasicus). The closest relative to this plant is the Bell-fruit Tree found further afield in this park. The fully-developed fruits are set out radially in the shape of a tiny wheel, hence the name of the species.

NO. 16 — 4 yds.
GOLDEN PENNANTS (Loudonia behrii). This is one of the Cinderellas of the mallee scrublands, for through out most of the year it is a dead-looking plant; but it awakens in spring and sends up many tender green stems amidst the dry remains of the previous year, and soon masses of bright, yellow-green flowers wave in the gentle breezes.

NO. 17 — 65 yds.
DESERT GREVILLEA (Grevillea pterosperma). A stately shrub seldom reaching tree proportions and growing on the sand dunes and sometimes in the depressions. In Spring it displays numerous creamy-white blossoms somewhat similar to those of bottle brush shrubs.

NO. 18 — 26 yds
BROOM MILKWORT (Comesperma scoparium). The wiry, broom-like stems of this species sometimes bear tiny, blue, two-winged flowers over a period of several months if conditions are favourable. It is one of the several kinds of local native plants destroyed by rabbits. A rare species, this is the only locality in Victoria from which it has been recorded.

NO. 19 — 21 yds.
LITTLE SEDGE (Gahnia lanigera). This fine, grass-like plant is a perennial. The Black-and-white Skipper Butterfly uses this plant as food for its diminutive green larvae which emerge as flying insects about April each year.

NO. 20 — 4 yds
DESERT BOG-RUSH (Schoenus subaphyllus). On first appearance this plant looks similar to the nearby Little Sedge; but note the entirely different shape and position of seed heads. It is also a perennial.

ANGULAR YELLOW MALLEE

DUMOSA MALLEE

NO. 21 — 20 yds.
COMMON AOTUS (Aotus ericoides). During spring this low perennial helps to enliven the sandy areas with bright yellow-and-red pea flowers, somewhat like the "bacon-and-eggs" plants of further south. This is the food plant for the caterpillars of the tiny Fringed-blue Butterfly (coloured brown with a checkered edge to its wings).

NO. 22 — 21 yds.
PALE MAT-RUSH (Lomandra glauca). The clustered flowers and the greyish leaves distinguish this plant from the Scented Mat-rush which is marked at peg 26. Similarly, the leaves are greyer than the White Mat-rush (No. 23).

NO. 23 — 11 yds.
WHITE MAT-RUSH (Lomandra leucocephala). This tough-leaved member of the lily family has masses of tiny creamy-white flowers each spring. The plant is inconspicuous until the columns of blooms appear.

NO. 24 — 71 yds.
DUMOSA MALLEE (Eucalyptus dumosa). This is related to the Angular Yellow Mallee (No. 6) but usually keeps to the firmer soils on the flats. It flowers during Autumn.

NO. 25 — 35 yds
SLENDER DAISYBUSH (Olearia teretifolia). This slender evergreen is a sparse flowerer, preferring sandy and loamy soil rather than the loose sands of the dunes.

NARROW-LEAF MALLEE

NO. 26
6 yds.

SCENTED MATRUSH (Lomandra effusa). The dense, grasslike foliage of this lily sometimes hides the short, loose panicles of scented flowers which form low down at its base. This kind of tussock is not plentiful in the park.

NO. 27
66 yds.

DESERT HEATH-MYRTLE (Baeckea crassifolia). During springtime this nondescript perennial is covered with masses of delightful, tiny pink flowers, very similar in shape to those of the Green Tea-tree's white blooms.

NO. 28
3 yds.

BLACK-ANTHER FLAX LILY (Dianella revoluta). One of the two tall-growing flax lilies found in the park. It flowers each spring and its many dark-blue blooms refuse to look up to the sky. Later in the year it has masses of attractive steel-blue berries.

NO. 29
34 yds.

STICKY SWORD-SEDGE (Lepidosperma viscidum). This sword-grass type of plant is fairly widespread in these parts and is used as a nesting site by White-eared Honeyeaters.

NO. 30
21 yds.

BROOM BALLART (Exocarpos sparteus). One of the two local "wild cherries", bearing the tiny cherry-red fruits at the tips of the slender, pendant foliage. Its orange-coloured trunk, golden-bronze-green leaves and willow-like habit render it a very fine sight. It occurs only in the sand dunes country.

NO. 31

SWEET APPLEBERRY (Billardiera cymosa). This elegant little plant is one of the four kinds of creepers seen in this park. During spring it has light-blue flowers, although the colour may be creamy or dull purple, while the fruits assume a purple hue. Not at all common.

NO. 32
43 yds.

DARK TURPENTINE BUSH (Beyeria opaca). There are two kinds of turpentine bushes in the park, but this is the most common of the two. It is abundant on the flats where travertine limestone gravel lies only a few inches below the top soil. Its spring-time flowers are waxy-yellow and tiny. The leaves have a resinous smell when crushed or burnt.

NO. 33
45 yds

WIRY PODOLEPIS (Podolepis capillaris). A very abundant little plant growing freely in the sands almost anytime of the year. It usually carries at least a few tiny white flowers. Although very delicate in form it nevertheless is very wiry, and is thus enabled to continue growing when most of its neighbours are dead.

NO. 34
37 yds.

HARROW WATTLE (Acacia acanthoclada). Hattah Lakes National Park is the northern limit of Harrow Wattle in Victoria. The spring blossoms are orange-hued and rather sparse in comparison with other local wattles. Note the spiny branchlets.

NO. 35
71 yds

SMALL COOBA WATTLE (Acacia ligulata). This is the most widespread of the wattles found in the park. Every few years its orange-yellow blossoms are produced in abundance, and individual shrubs will sometimes flower sparsely for several months. It is a good plant for several kinds of insects, and appears to be the main diet of kangaroos during food shortages. Sometimes it assumes the habit of a small tree.

NO. 36 — 32 yds.

SILKY CRYPTANDRA (Cryptandra propinqua). It is only during winter and spring that this species of plant can be readily distinguished from the White Cryptandra (No. 8), for then its long, pointed buds appear quite different from the short, rounded ones of No. 8. Like its close relative it blooms in the springtime.

NO. 37 — 9 yds.

DESERT PHEBALIUM (Phebalium glandulosum var. bullatum) A very upright bush with showy yellow blossoms in the spring. The very long stamens bear yellow anthers giving each flower the appearance of sparkling golden stars. One of the finest of our local wildflowers.

NO. 38 — 144 yds.

ERECT GUINEA-FLOWER (Hibbertia stricta) Two kinds of yellow-flowered guinea-flowers occur in the sandy sections of the park. The Erect Guinea-flower is a more substantial bush than its relative and may continue to flower for several months.

NO. 39 — 18 yds.

PIMELEA DAISY-BUSH (Olearia pimeleoides). One of the many kinds of daisies to be seen in the park during spring months. It is then usually covered with masses of fine white flowers with yellow centres.

NO. 40 — 20 yds.

SHRUB VIOLET (Hybanthus floribundus). A delicate plant which appears to be much relished by browsing animals. Its small violet-coloured flowers usually appear during the springtime.

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Continue along this track for about 45 yards where you will meet up with the in-going trail at No. 3.

SPRINGTIME

If you are visiting this trail during Spring there are many showy wildflowers to be seen. Growing out of the Porcupine Grass you may note the dainty Twining Fringe-lily (Thysanotus patersonii). The larger and more upright Mallee Fringe-lily (T. baueri) flowers a little later.

Yams (Microseris scapigera) also grow up out of the protection of the Porcupine Grass. The flowers of this species are large and yellow, facing right up to the sun to which they bear some resemblance.

Mauve and yellow Fairy Fanflowers (Scaevola aemula) appear in places along the trail.

The bright-eyed Bent Goodenia (Goodenia affinis), a small glaucous plant with yellow flowers, often clusters around the base of a larger plant.

The everlastings add much charm to the scene and last much longer than other (soft-petalled) wild blooms. The hat-shaped, white Satin Everlasting (Helichrysum leucopsidium with a high, yellow-topped crown loves to grow out of the Porcupine Grass tufts, whereas the common Poached Egg Daisy (Myriocephalus stuartii) being unpalatable will grow anywhere in sand, thriving best on the open dunes around the lakes of the park. Occasionally along the trail the Golden Everlasting (Helichrysum bracteatum) appears as does the smaller-flowered Common Everlasting (H. apiculatum) with its clusters of small globular heads. Orange Immortelle (Waitzia acuminata), with its vase-shaped flowers and many lanceolate golden-orange petals is sometimes seen.

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FRONT COVER ILLUSTRATION

DWARF GREENHOOD (Pterostylis nana) - Left
GREEN-COMB SPIDER-ORCHID (Caladenia dilatata) - Centre
MIDGET GREENHOOD (Pterostylis mutica) - Right

NOTES

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