

Warburton Habitat Tree – Environment Education

School Program destination descriptions:



Cool Temperate Rainforest (9km from Warburton) Dating back to Gondwanaland this is the oldest forest type in the world, with the largest diversity of epiphytes and invertebrates over all forest ecosystems. Home to the ancient **Myrtle Beech (Nothofagus cunninghamii)**, this ecosystem is on the National and World Heritage lists; for adding outstanding natural, indigenous and heritage value to Australia, and for outstanding universal values providing a living example of earth's evolutionary history. This forest has survived ice ages and dinosaurs so that we may be enchanted by its beauty and overwhelmed by its age. Old growth **Mountain Ash (Eucalyptus regnans)** between 300 and 400 years of age make up the emergent layer of this ancient forest and provide habitat for an array of biota, over 100 bird species, several hundred plants and over 30 mammal taxa, including the endangered Leadbeater's Possum. These giants play a key role in the collection of Melbourne's fresh drinking water, provide critical habitat for our native hollow dwelling species, and are extensively logged with 80% of harvested timber becoming woodchips. Discuss the natural and human disturbances that threaten this 'Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988'; listed Community.

Feature: 40 m long observation platform stretching out into the Rainforest canopy and a 350m long elevated walkway that takes you through the Rainforest Gallery above the forest floor!

Mt Donna Buang (18.1km) at 1250m was the first snowfield in Victoria and is the closest Sub-alpine ecosystem to Melbourne. The snow covered mountains of the Yarra Ranges National Park are a valuable resource for our catchments, the preservation of local biodiversity and tourism. These sub-alpine Montane forests are of high conservation significance, home to unique vegetation and endemic animal species. The Alpine Ash forests are becoming increasingly valuable to the critically endangered Victorian animal emblem, the Leadbeater's Possum; due to loss of habitat within the Mountain ash forests through fires and logging. Fire, climate and invasive species are some of the challenges and processes that threaten this harsh, yet vulnerable ecosystem.

Feature: 21 metre Summit Tower with panoramic views over Melbourne, Yarra Valley, Mount Dandenong, the Cathedral Ranges, Mt Baw Baw and the Alps. Snow may be present during winter months!

Yarra River – Birrarung is home to the Wurundjeri people and has played a pivotal role in pre-European history and early settlement within Victoria. It is 242km long and begins 40km above the Upper Yarra Reservoir on the Southern slopes of the Reefton Spur. The Upper Yarra offers pristine waters, an abundance of wildlife and aquatic species, old growth Eucalypts, ancient ferns and unique plant life. Warburton boasts the largest platypus population for any town within Victoria. The river is clean and full of life. This biodiverse aquatic ecosystem provides an abundance of habitats and special places.

Features: Swing bridges, old growth Eucalypts, Californian Redwood, human disturbances

Upper Yarra Reservoir (25.5km) – Explore Melbourne's Water Catchment at the uppermost accessible point of the Yarra River. The Yarra Catchment is surrounded by 157,000 ha of closed forests, is fed by 24 major tributaries, provides Melbourne with 80% of its fresh drinking water, is home to 1/3 of Victoria's population and 1/3 of all Victoria's animal species.

Features: Dam Wall, Outlet, Fern Gully Walk, riparian zone, mountain tributary, signs of wildlife

Indoor Forest – Under the canopy, visit our life-like display of native taxidermy bird, reptile and mammal species. These animals are a valuable educational resource, providing an opportunity for students to observe physical characteristics of species, while discussing distribution, habitats, threats, behaviour and life cycle/development. Also available is the 'Nocturnal Niche'; here students will enjoy a bit of spotlighting to see what we can find in our forests at night. This interactive experience will increase awareness to the uniqueness of our incredible wildlife and to the threats and challenges they face with reduced and declining habitat. A visit to the Environment Discovery Centre is an exciting addition to our environment programs, complimenting field trips and adding to the forest experience.