

Buchan Caves Reserve



Visitor Guide

Nestled in a picturesque valley in East Gippsland the Buchan Caves Reserve hides an underground world of colour and enchantment just waiting to be discovered. Hundreds of caves are located in this region and some of the most spectacular limestone formations in Australia can be found here. The Reserve is home to the Royal Cave and Fairy Cave, two of the finest caves in the region boasting elaborate stalactites and stalagmites and beautiful calcite

Location and access

Buchan Caves Reserve is located 360km east of Melbourne. The Reserve is 60 mins from Bairnsdale via Bruthen (B500/C620/C608), or 45 mins from Lakes Entrance via Nowa Nowa (A1/C620/C608).

Welcome to Country

On Friday 22 October 2010 both the Federal and State Governments formally recognised the Gunaikurnai people as the Traditional Owners of over 20 per cent of public land within Gippsland and Eastern Victoria. The Victorian Government and the Gunaikurnai people formally signed Victoria's first settlement agreement under the new Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010. This agreement involved the transfer of ten parks and reserves to the Gunaikurnai as "Aboriginal Title" which will be jointly managed in conjunction with Parks Victoria.

Buchan Caves Reserve is one of the jointly managed parks within Gippsland. This agreement recognises the fact that the Gunaikurnai people have always been connected to their land and are the rightful people who speak for that Country. These parks and reserves are cultural landscapes which are part of our living culture.

Facilities

Buchan Caves Reserve provides facilities for both day visitors and overnight campers. You will find cabins, wilderness retreats, powered and unpowered sites, hot showers, toilets, a laundry, a camper's kitchen and electric and wood fired barbecues. There is also a playground and a swimming pool which is fed from an underground stream. The Visitor Centre boasts an interpretive display of the cave systems within the reserve.

Cave tours

Guided tours are conducted every day of the year except for Christmas Day. From the September school holidays to Easter, there are five tours daily.

After the Easter school holidays until the September school holidays there are three tours daily.

From ancient times

The limestone rock at Buchan was laid down during the Devonian period about 300 - 400 million years ago. At the time, the sea covered this area of East Gippsland which was alive with shellfish and coral. Their remains were deposited in layers and over the years compacted to form limestone. As the ocean receded, the limestone was subjected to severe earth movement, which folded and crumpled the land into its present formation.

Forming a cave

The layers of limestone are known as 'bedding planes'. Vertical joint lines across the bedding planes allow water to seep through the rock, and over time this water action slowly dissolves the limestone. This is how cave development begins.

Over many thousands of years the water eventually carves out the rock leaving large chambers and passages. The underground rivers are now dry or have altered their course, although there are still small flows in the wet season when the caves come alive.

Cave decorations

Decorations in caves are caused by seepage of rainwater through tiny cracks in limestone rock. When this water reaches a cave droplets accumulate on the ceiling. Carbon dioxide gas is then released from the water droplet leaving a small ring of calcite. Over thousands of years this process continues, drop after drop, slowly forming a stalactite. In faster growing periods the water splashes to the floor forming stalagmites. Sometimes the stalactites and stalagmites meet to form a pillar or a column. When the water flows down the walls or roof of a cave at a slight angle, blanket or shawl decorations are produced. Large 'flowstone' formations resembling waterfalls are caused by water flowing over ledges of rock or gravel banks.

For further information

Parks Victoria

Information Centre

Call 13 1963

or visit the

Parks Victoria website

www.parks.vic.gov.au

Park Office

Buchan Caves Reserve

Caves Road

Buchan Vic 3885

Lakes Entrance

Visitor Information Centre

Cnr Marine Pde &

The Esplanade

Lakes Entrance Vic 3909

Ph: (03) 5155 1966

Bairnsdale

Visitor Information Centre

240 Main Street

Bairnsdale Vic 3875

Ph: (03) 5152 3444

Caring for the environment

Help us look after your park by following these guidelines:

Please DO NOT FEED the kangaroos and other wildlife as this can spread disease

Pets are not permitted

Rubbish should be placed in the bins provided

Light fires only in fireplaces provided and never on days of

Total Fire Ban (Eastern District)

Respect speed rules and No

Parking signs

Bicycle helmets must be worn

by cyclists in the reserve

Please do not attach ropes or camping equipment to any of

the trees within the reserve

Cave decorations should not be touched or interfered with

Warnings

Buchan Caves Reserve is in the East Gippsland Total Fire Ban District. It is your responsibility

to know if it is a day of Total

Fire Ban. If in doubt call the

Victorian Bushfire Information

Line: 1800 240 667.

Park closures

Be prepared to leave early as extreme weather may cause the closure of some park areas for public safety.

Healthy Parks Healthy People

Visiting a park can improve your health, mind, body and soul. So, with over four million hectares of parkland available to Victorians, why not escape to a park today!

Interpreted walking tracks

F J Wilson Walk (1 hours, 2 km return)

This walk starts about 100m east of the Visitor Centre following the Royal Cave exit track and ends near the Fairy Cave entrance. From here you can return along the main road through the reserve. Numbered posts along the walk refer to points featured in this park note.

Who was F J Wilson?

Before coming to Buchan in 1907 Frederick Wilson spent most of his career working at Jenolan Caves in the Blue Mountains (NSW). He was 66 years of age when he started work at Buchan. As supervisor Wilson contributed significantly to the development of the Reserve.

1. Discovering stream passages

Behind this entrance a short tunnel leads to the Federal Cave, an old tourist cave. It is more than 400m long and contains very white and strikingly beautiful formations.

Discovered by Frederick Wilson and William Bonwick in 1915, the cave was opened to visitors in 1917.

Wilson and Bonwick discovered Federal Cave by following a stream passage leading from the Royal Cave. This stream passage passes through Fairy Cave, Royal Cave, Federal Cave and Dukes Cave, ending its journey at the swimming pool.

Until 1970 Federal Cave was lit by power generated here at the Reserve. When electricity was connected to Fairy and Royal Caves, Federal Cave was closed and sealed off.

Interest in Federal Cave has grown in recent times and it is now available for specialised tours during Christmas and Easter school holidays. In 2007 a low voltage lighting system powered by solar energy was introduced into the Federal Cave by the Friends of Buchan Caves.

2. Limestone at Buchan

The limestone at Buchan formed about 380 million years ago under very shallow seas covering much of East Gippsland. A later period of movement of the earth's crust raised this area above sea level. Limestone is a rock that contains more than 50% calcium carbonate, which is usually present as the mineral calcite.

The skeletons of most marine animals which lack backbones, such as corals, starfish, sea urchins and shells are made up of calcium carbonate. Some algae

can also produce calcium carbonate. The limestone here is composed of dark grey lime mud through which is scattered numerous fossils.

Look at the small grooves in this rock, called 'Rillenkarren' or 'Solution Flutes'. They are formed by rainwater draining across the rock, gently dissolving the limestone. As time goes by, the grooves become deeper.

3. Hidden fossils

The Royal Caves tour ends here. Although Royal Cave was discovered in 1910, this artificial exit tunnel wasn't completed until 1929. Look for fossils in the limestone wall built around the exit.

4. Natural steps

Notice here how the steps have been made from the layers of limestone. These layers are known as 'bedding planes'. Vertical joint lines across the bedding planes allow water to seep through the rock from the surface, and over time this water action slowly dissolves the limestone.

This is how cave development begins. Good examples of fossilised coral and brachiopods can be found here in the rock.

5. Shh...what can you hear?

From here, take a moment to stop and listen for the Lyrebirds and Bell Miners. Did you know that the Lyrebird can perfectly imitate just about any sound it hears?

From here you head towards the Fairy Cave entrance and down the steps back to the main road. On your way back to the Visitor Centre take your time to look at the many ornamental trees planted in the Reserve since the 1930s.

Wildlife

The Reserve is also a wildlife refuge. Animal life is abundant with over 100 species of birds having been recorded, including King Parrots, White Winged Choughs and Currawongs which can be seen around the camp area. Listen for the Bellbirds and Lyrebirds near the Fairy Cave entrance. Kangaroos are plentiful, but please do not feed or disturb them. At night the campground comes alive with Brush-tailed Possums and sometimes the calls of Boobook Owls.

Be fire ready and stay safe:

Many parks and forests are located in high fire risk areas. On days of forecast Code Red Fire Danger this park will be closed for public safety. If you are already in the park you should leave the night before or early in the morning for your own safety. Closure signs will be erected and rangers will patrol where possible, however you may not receive a personal warning that the park is closed so check the latest conditions by calling 13 1963 or visit: www.parks.vic.gov.au. For up to date information on fires in Victoria or general fire safety advice call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667.

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Walks

Buchan Caves Reserve boasts an impressive system of walking tracks. For the short easy walks, all you need are sturdy shoes with good tread and comfortable clothing. For the longer and more demanding walks such as Reserve and Granite Pools Tracks, a reasonable level of fitness, good boots and plenty of water are recommended. For your safety please remain on the walking tracks.

Spring Creek Walk (1.5 hrs, 3 km return)

This superb walk splits into the higher Tea Tree Track and the lower Kanooka Track with both meeting at the Spring Creek Falls. The Tea Tree Track is an adventurous walk that has some steep areas on its way up to the falls. A short distance along the track to your left, the rock type changes from the grey Buchan Caves Limestone to the older Snowy River Volcanics.

At the end of the track there is a viewing platform. After inspecting the falls, take the lower Kanooka Track. On your way back, you will criss-cross the creek and enjoy the mossy rocks, beautiful ferns and trees dominated by Kanooka. Keep an eye out for Lyrebirds, Gippsland Water Dragons, Kookaburras, King Parrots and other wildlife.

Moon Hill Walk (0.5 hr, 0.5 km return)

This short walk leads to an excellent viewpoint overlooking the Reserve. The walk will take you past a small cave, so take your torch and have a look in the entrance to Moon Cave. The track continues past the Devils Punchbowl, a large collapsed cave system, to the top of the hill. From here you can see the extent of the exposed limestone on both sides of the valley.

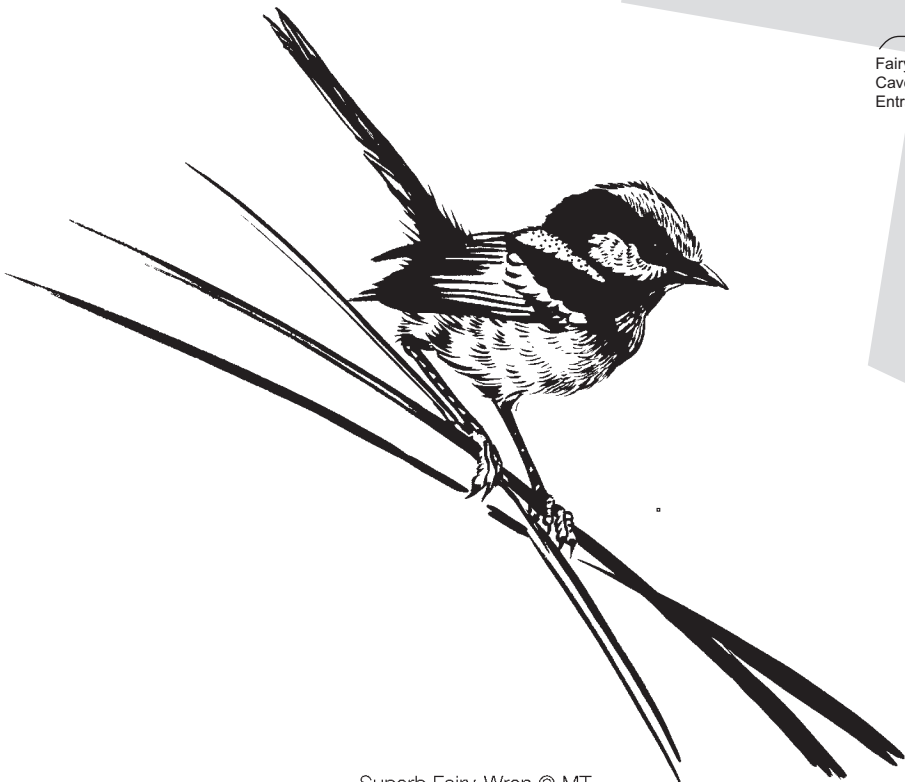
Caves Reserve Track (2 hrs, 4 km return)

This walk starts opposite the children's playground following a fire access track along a ridge to the north western corner of the Reserve. Making your way up this track you will come to an intersection.

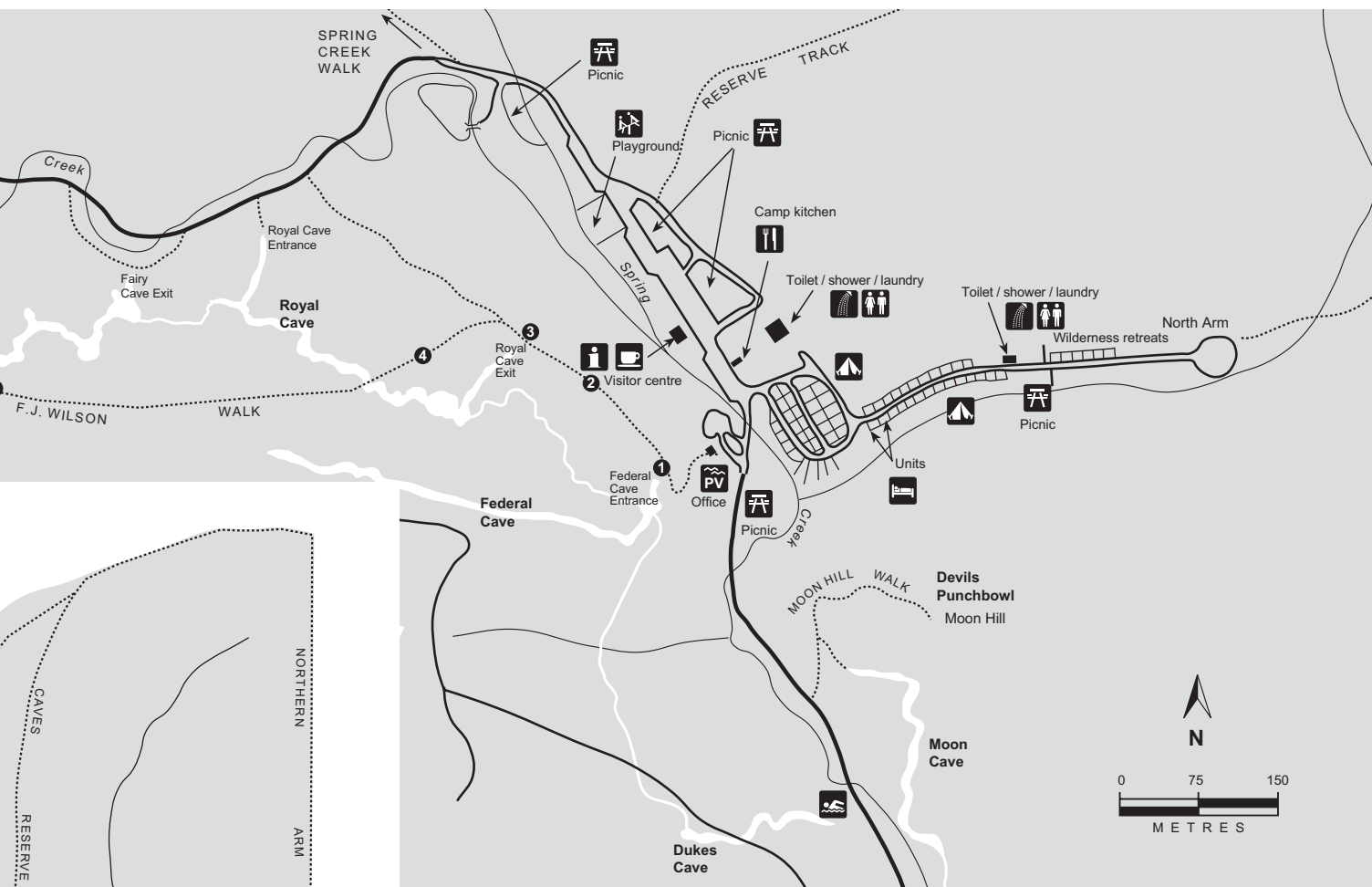
Turn left and you will meet up with the Spring Creek Walking Track and the Granite Pools Walking Track. Continuing along the Caves Reserve Track you will be able to return to the campground via the Northern Arm Track.

Granite Pools Walk (2.5 hrs, 4 km return)

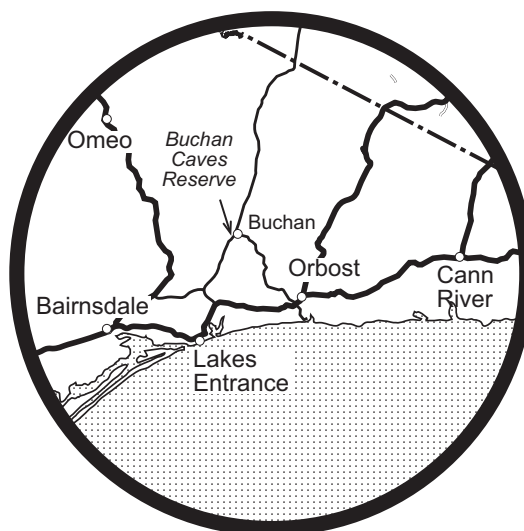
This is one of the steeper walks in the Reserve and makes its way through some tall timber and moss covered gullies. As you climb higher you will take in some wonderful views of the Buchan Valley. Look for Ringtail Possum nests in the tall Teatree. Lyrebirds are also often sighted along this track.



Superb Fairy-Wren © MT



Cartography by Nature Tourism Services 10/11



Buchan Caves Reserve			
Recreational Facilities			
	Highway		Toilets
	Major road		Picnic area
	Minor road		Visitor centre
	Walking track		Park office
	Buchan Caves Reserve		Camping area
			Camp kitchen
			Cabins
			Showers
			Playground
			Swimming
			Numbered post