

About the Gawa Trail

Welcome to the Gawa Wurundjeri Resource Trail.

This trail is designed to provide visitors with a deeper understanding of how the Wurundjeri used the land to provide themselves with food, medicines, implements, shelters and the clothes they wore – all seen as created for their enjoyment and use by their Dreamtime spirits. The people who saw this part of the Yarra Valley as their homeland were the *Wurundjeri-willam*. This clan of about 50 closely related individuals of all ages moved across the land on a seasonal basis, hunting and gathering its rich resources of wild foods as each came on stream.

In 1840 the land on this side of Watsons Creek became part of James Murray's Watsons Creek Station. This made it difficult for Wurundjeri people to continue their former hunting and gathering strategies. In 1854 gold was discovered in the streams flowing into Watsons Creek and this saw hundreds of diggers crowd in, making life for the Wurundjeri even more difficult.

This site is now jointly managed by Nillumbik Shire Council and Parks Victoria, who have kindly permitted the Nillumbik Reconciliation Group to construct the walking trail.

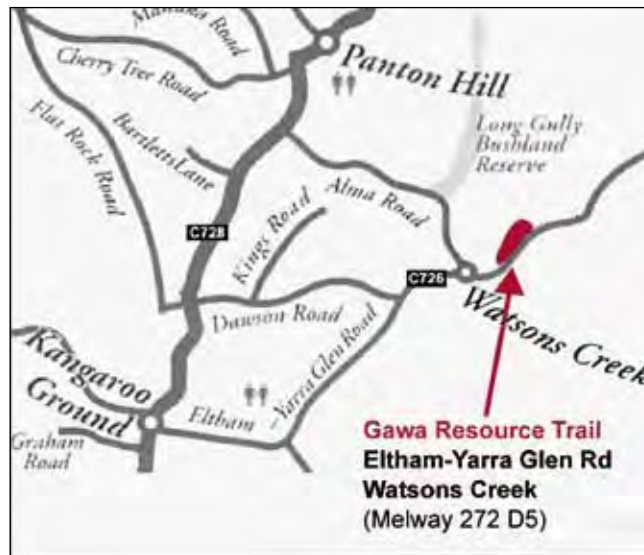
Walking the trail

The 340m trail consists of a main track with a loop. The main track leads to a lookout area over Watsons Creek. The loop track takes you through the diverse and interesting vegetation of the Gawa Reserve.

The self-guided trail is designed to be travelled in a clockwise direction. Each number on this brochure corresponds to a marker along the trail.

To help preserve this area for future visitors please read the following important information:

- stay on the walk trail at all times
- do not collect, remove or damage any plants – they are all protected
- dogs to be on leash at all times
- take all rubbish with you.



For further information about the Gawa Resource Trail write to:



Nillumbik Reconciliation Group
PO Box 1017, Research VIC 3095

ABN 61 506 201 828 www.vicnet.net.au/~nrgp

The Gawa Resource trail is proudly maintained by the NRG in partnership with



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Gawa Wurundjeri Resource Trail



Gawa Resource Trail
Eltham-Yarra Glen Road,
Watsons Creek (Melway 272 D5)

A self guided tour

1. Burgan

Widely known today by its original Wurundjeri name, the word burgan is connected with war – the Wurundjeri used burgan to make spears. A suitable straight stem would be selected and pared down with a stone scraper then made perfectly straight by heating over fire. Wurundjeri hunting spears were about three metres long and could be hurled with great accuracy using a throwing stick or *garrik*. Lighter spears, made from reeds, were used for fishing.

2. Lomandra (spiny headed mat-rush)

This grass-like plant was used by Wurundjeri women to make baskets for carrying bulbs, berries and other foods collected throughout the day. In the evening the wild-foods were steamed in these baskets, in pits of hot stones.

3. Bracken fern

The young stems of this plant were used by Wurundjeri people to ease stinging and itching caused by insect bites. At certain times of the year its roots became rich in starch; these were ground into a paste, then baked and eaten.

4. Warendji (wombat)

A wombat burrow is near this marker, do not disturb! Wombats depart their burrows to browse at night. The burrows can be many metres deep, so the Wurundjeri way of catching a wombat was to have a small child crawl into the burrow, locate the wombat, then call out to the hunters above so that they would know exactly where to dig.

5. Coranderrk (native mint bush)

Leaves of this tree were used for seasoning: its stem to make fire. Fire could be created in a matter of minutes by rapidly twirling a wand of Coranderrk between one's palms, whilst pressing hard down against a split grass-tree flower-stalk placed horizontally on the ground. The hot ash created by the friction was then allowed to trickle into a ball of dried tinder which, when blown into, burst into flame.



Photography by Susie Walker
www.livingwithnature.com.au

6. Gawa (echidna)

Echidna meat was considered the best eating and as such remained the preserve of the elders. For others it was unreservedly taboo. The egg-laying echidna is one of the last two remaining monotremes in the world. The other – platypus – can be occasionally seen in nearby Watsons Creek. Gawa spines were drilled and made into ornamental necklaces.

7. Watsons Creek Viewing Point

For much of the year Watsons Creek is merely a trickle, at other times, a raging torrent. Streams such as this provide the richest resources of all – blackfish, eels, yabbies, mussels, platypus, water-ribbon bulbs, river mint, water cress, cumbungi and water fowl.

8. Urrun (manna gum)

The tall white-trunked trees growing in this reserve and along the nearby creek are manna gums. The Wurundjeri knew this tree as the 'urrun', a part of their own name: *urrun* = manna gum; *djuri* = grub – therefore the *caterpillar people of the white gums*.

9. Stringy barks

The large rough-barked trees are stringy barks, many of which have died during recent droughts. The bark of this tree was used to build the shelters (*willams*) that Wurundjeri people used whenever it was wet or cold. Cord and rope of every description could also be made from it by rolling its inner fibres into long lengths on one's thigh, then twisting two or more lengths together to form a strong rope. Cord made from it was also used to make nets for catching ducks. These nets were then set up between two trees on opposite sides of a stream and raised whenever a flight was sighted. Ducks have a habit of flying low over water, and a hunter lying in wait could keep the birds low by launching a boomerang whilst uttering a hawk call. At your feet is a native raspberry, which has deliciously sweet fruit.



About the Nillumbik Reconciliation Group

The Nillumbik Reconciliation Group (NRG) grew out of an advisory committee which was formed by Nillumbik Shire Council in 1997. The purpose of the committee was to arrange a ceremony to promote reconciliation. As a result of its recommendations, a formal document of Acknowledgement, Apology and Commitment was presented by Council to the Wurundjeri Elders at a *Gayip* (an inter-clan gathering) held in May 1998, at Wingrove Park.

Ten years on, in 2008, Council unanimously passed a Reconciliation Charter, which underpins all Shire initiatives and activities. The NRG continues to work in partnership with Council and other community groups promoting reconciliation in Nillumbik.

The Gawa Trail reinforces our commitment to acknowledge Wurundjeri heritage and the traditional ownership of this land.

NRG supports justice and full equality for Indigenous Australians. Other activities conducted by the NRG include flag-raising to commemorate events of significance in Wurundjeri history, awareness-raising talks for schools and community groups and special events to recognise Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC.