

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.

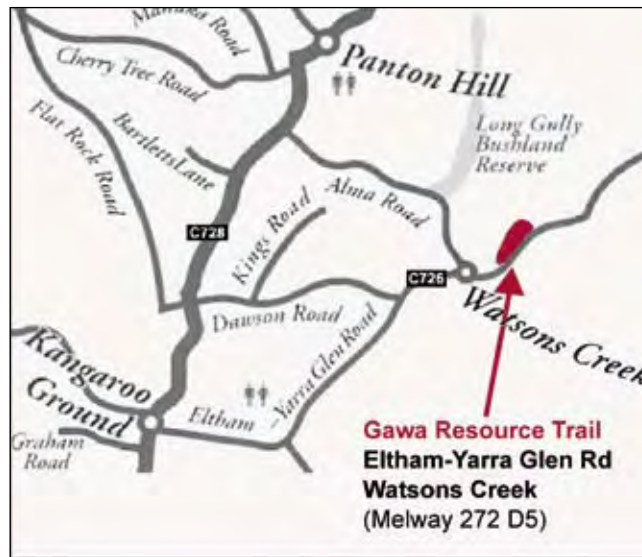
Walking the trail

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



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 3m 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. Bulbs, berries and other foods collected throughout the day were carried from place to place in baskets balanced on their heads. At camp of an evening the wild-foods gathered would be steamed in these same baskets and placed in pits surrounded by hot stones. Wurundjeri women were expert-makers of fine nets and basketry.

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 become rich in starch and this was ground to a paste and eaten.

4. Warendji (wombat)

A wombat burrow is near this marker – do not disturb! Wombats depart their burrows to browse at night. The Wurundjeri way of catching a wombat was to have a child crawl into the burrow to 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 and its stem to make fire. Fire could be created in a matter of minutes by rapidly twirling a wand of Coranderrk between the palms of the hands, pressed hard against a dried grass-tree stalk placed horizontally on the ground. The ash created by the friction was 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 remained the preserve of the elders. For others it was considered taboo. The egg-laying echidna is one of the last two remaining monotremes in the world. The other – platypus – can be seen

occasionally in nearby Watsons Creek. Gawa spines were drilled and made into necklaces.

7. Viewing Point

For much of the year Watsons Creek is simply a trickle – at other times a torrent. The tall white-trunked trees growing along the creek are manna gums. The Wurundjeri knew this tree as *urrun*, a part of their own name – *urrun* = manna gum; *juri* = grub – therefore *people of the white gums*. Streams such as this provided some of 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 large white-trunked tree in front of you is a manna gum, as are most of the large trees on this site. The Wurundjeri used the name of this tree to form part of their own name.

9. Stringy barks

The large rough-barked tree to your left is a stringy bark. The bark of this tree was used to make shelters (willams) that Wurundjeri people built whenever it was wet or cold. Cord and rope of every description could be manufactured by rolling its fibres on one's thigh to make lengths, then twisting two or more lengths together to make a strong rope. Cord was also used to make nets and catch ducks. These were set up between two trees on opposite sides of streams and raised whenever a flight was sighted. Ducks have a habit of flying low over water and to prevent them from flying above the nets a boomerang would be launched by a hunter lying in wait who would simultaneously utter a hawk-call to keep the birds low. At your feet is the native raspberry, with its 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.