



# Foster Flora Reserves

## Visitor Guide

Foster, once a bustling gold mining town known as Stockyard Creek, is one of a few Victorian country towns that have substantial areas of public land within their boundaries. Numerous walking tracks link together to lead you through Flora Reserves. The area features a rich diversity of plants and animals, and pays homage to our gold mining history.

### Location and access

Foster is located approximately 160kms south east of Melbourne, and can be reached via the South Gippsland Highway. The walks begin very close to the centre of town, from the carpark behind the main shopping area, or from McDonald Street.

### Remnants of history

In 1869, James Northey, in company with James Palmer found a small patch of gold near the mouth of Stockyard Creek. News of the discovery spread quickly with favourable reports in the press sparking a rush of miners. A settlement of tents and makeshift huts quickly sprung up along the banks of Stockyard Creek. Four years after the opening of the diggings there were over twenty hotels within the township. Supplies were brought in by the little steamer 'Tarra' to the landing at the mouth of Stockyard Creek. The surrounding hills were soon cleared to provide mines with timbers and fuel.

Many of these gold mines were situated within what are now Foster's Flora Reserves.

- Victory Mine

Victory Mine was the deepest mine in Foster, operating between 1887 and 1908 and producing 26000 ozs of gold throughout its productive life. Drives went under Kaffir Hill, the current shopping centre and Stockyard Creek. The mine was worked 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for many years until water seepage and the fall in gold prices contributed to its closure.

- Ophir Mine

The Ophir Mine (named after the Ophir Mining Company) was situated on Ophir Hill, just above Cody Gully (refer map). This claim had a shaft to a depth of 150 ft and created a yield of 0.5 to 1.5 ozs per ton, whereas Victory mine produced a yield of up to 5 ozs to the ton.

- New Zealand Hill Claims

New Zealand Hill heralded another run of gold, with the gold being located in rounded quartz gravel which was not suitable for sinking deep shafts. However there was an adequate supply of water available making the site ideal for sluicing. Jonothan Williams mined the Excelsior mine on New Zealand Hill with a tramway carrying the wash dirt to the Bennison Creek battery. Other New Zealand Hill claims include Stars and Stripes, Pot Luck, Chance, Northern Star, Kensington and Last Chance. All these claims were registered between the 1870s and 1890s.

Commercial mining ceased in Foster early last century, however, individuals continued the search for gold for many years. Their exploratory diggings mark this area, with trenches of variable depth that were dug by old and young men alike still hoping to strike it rich.

### Plants and wildlife

The flora reserves support Lowland Forest and Swamp Scrub. As extensive clearing has occurred, the vegetation regrowth is quite young. Lowland Forest is dominated by Messmate, Narrow Leaf Peppermint and Mountain Grey Gums, with an understorey of shrubs including Narrow-leaf Wattle, Prickly Mosses, Prickly Tea-tree and Common Heath, and a ground cover of Wire Grass and Bracken. Swamp Scrub consists of dense thickets of Swamp Paperbark, with an understorey of Mat Rush, Bidgee-Widgee, mosses, lichen and Geranium species. These reserves are home to echidnas, koalas, wombats and Ringtail Possums. Wallabies, Pygmy Possums, and the Antechinus (native mouse) also live here. Birdlife to watch for are Grey Fantails, Crimson Rosellas, Pardalotes, Wrens, Grey Thrushes and Golden Whistlers.



Brown Antechinus

### Enjoying the reserve: Walking

Walking is one of the best ways to explore these reserves. There are a number of different walks which you can choose to do separately, or link them together to form a longer walk.

1. Hayes Walk – 900 metres, 15 minutes return

Hayes Walk will take you from close to the heart of Foster over Kaffir Hill and past the site of Victory Mine, Foster's largest gold mine. By crossing McDonald Street, you can continue on to the Cody Gully Walk, which forms part of the Bratuaulong Walking Track.



**Parks Victoria Ranger**

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For further information

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Please help us care for our parks and reserves by remembering these guidelines:

All native plants and animals in the reserves are protected.

Please keep to designated walking tracks to avoid becoming lost.

Bins are not provided within the reserves, please take your rubbish home.

Dredging and gold fossicking are not permitted.

Vehicles including trail bikes may only be driven on formed roads open to the public, and must be fully road registered. All drivers and riders must hold a current licence.

Horses may only be ridden on formed roads open to the public, and are not permitted on any walking tracks within the reserves.

Dogs must be restrained on a lead at all times.

## Enjoying the reserve: Walking (cont'd)

### 2 Cody Gully Walk - 1 km, 20 mins return (part Bratuaulong Walking Track)

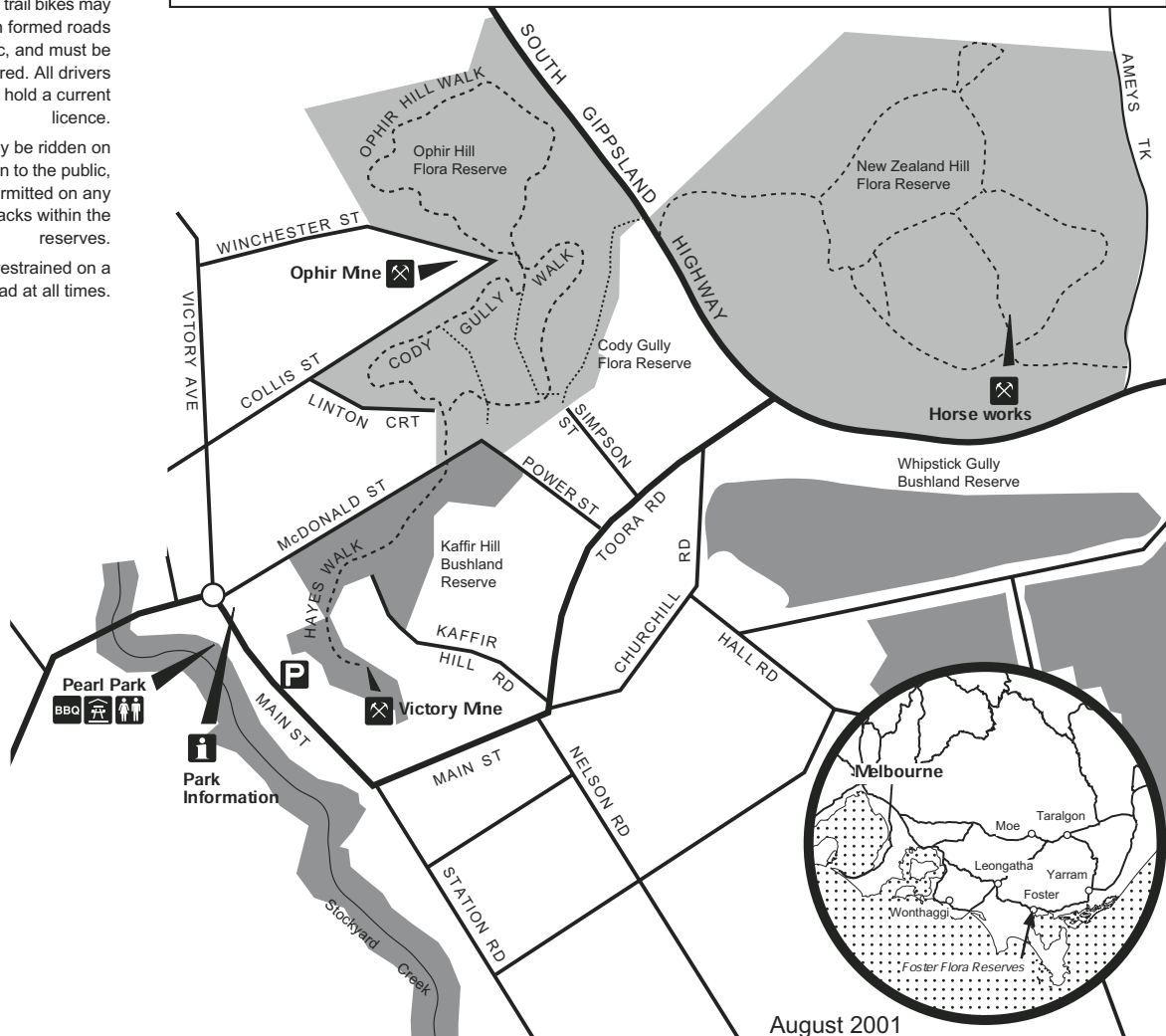
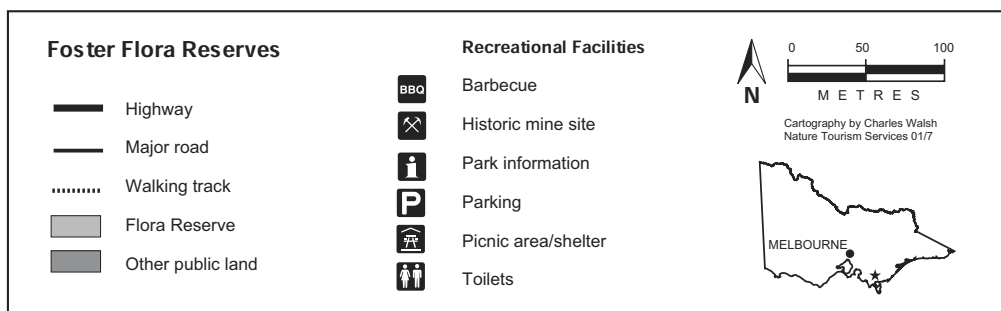
Entering from McDonald Street, this walk has only a gentle slope and is suitable for walkers of any fitness level. It will take you through Peppermints, banksias, tea-tree, paperbarks and ferns. Cody Gully was named after Michael Cody, who worked one of the claims here in 1871 with Francis Doran.

### 3 Ophir Hill Walk - 0.9 km, 20 mins return (part Bratuaulong Walking Track)

Continuing on from half way around Cody Gully Walk, Ophir Hill Walk will take you past remnants from the days of gold mining such as hand dug trenches and through forests of eucalypt species including Stringybarks, Mountain Grey Gum, and Peppermints.

### 4. New Zealand Hill

New Zealand Hill is situated to the north of the South Gippsland Highway and can be accessed opposite the Flag Motel or off Ameys Track. Several tracks meander through the reserve which are ideal for a gentle stroll, cycling and horse riding; with many tracks taking you past historic gold mining features. One of these is the Horse Works, which is a horse drawn wheel that was used to crush quartz. New Zealand Hill was named after five New Zealand miners who worked one of the gold claims on the Hill.



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