



Flora and Fauna Reserve

What is the Flora and Fauna Reserve?

The Flora and Fauna Reserve is a small part of the surrounding bushland. It shows what the local landscape looked like here before the gardens were created. Its upper slopes are covered with Box and Ironbark trees.

Old rocks, old country

The higher sections in the reserve, above the flats of Barkers Creek, are dominated by sedimentary rocks formed between 443 and 485 million years ago, when most of eastern Australia was submerged beneath the ocean. This ocean basin was gradually filled with sediments eroded from mountain ranges near the present-day Flinders Ranges. The basin was later uplifted out of the ocean and folded and tilted and over time became the bedrock of the Castlemaine Group.

What's the bush doing here anyway?

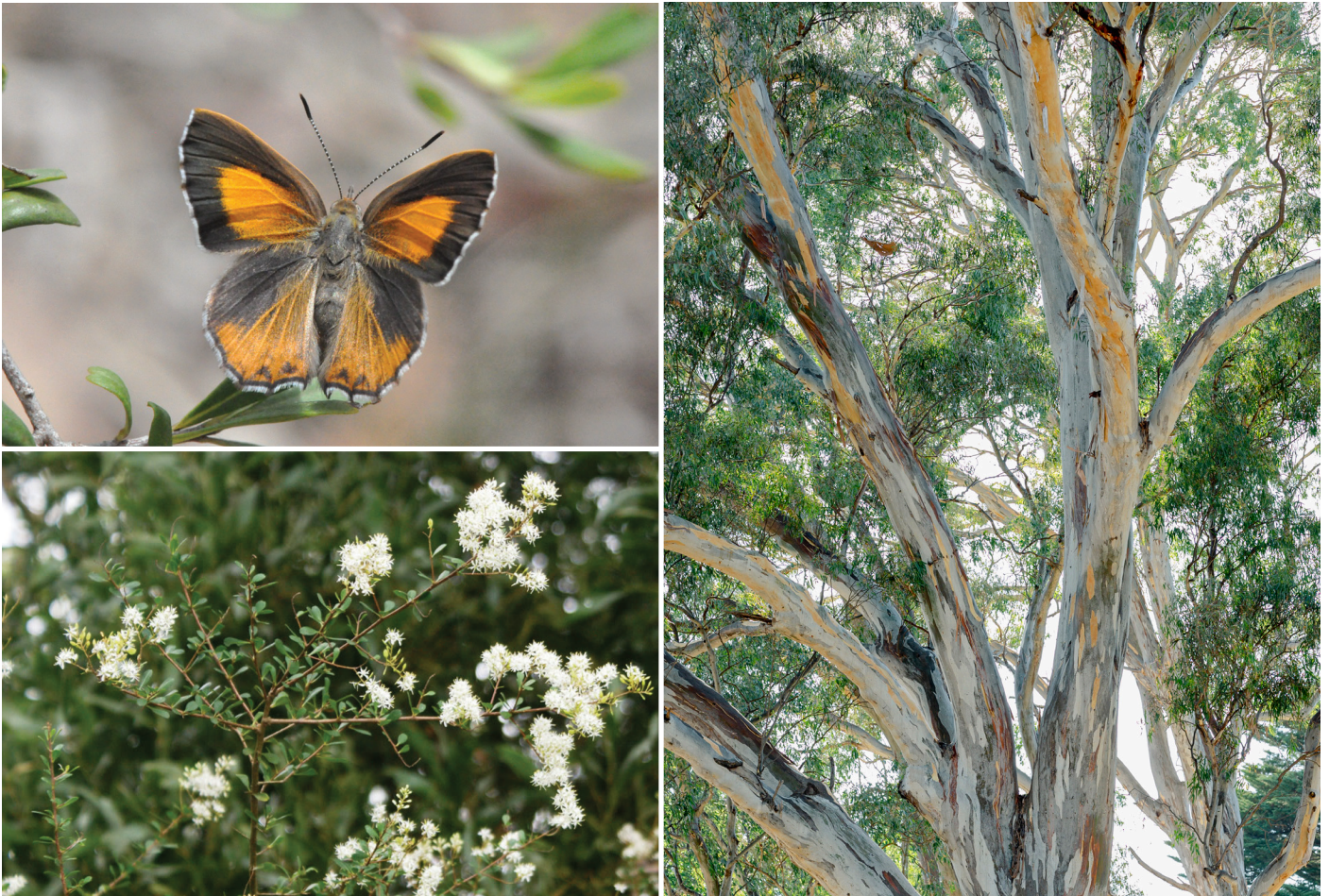
Nineteenth century botanical gardens were mostly established by Europeans new to Australia who wanted to create places that reminded them of home. They were keen to see how trees and plants they knew would grow in this country. It is unusual to have a bit of the surrounding natural bushland included in botanical gardens.

What lives here?

Ninety-eight indigenous flora species including at least one threatened species – the Late-flowered Flax-lily (*Dianella tarda*). The Reserve is also home to mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and invertebrates. This includes the Eastern Grey Kangaroo, the Black Wallaby, the Powerful Owl, the Brush-tailed Phascogale and several skink and frog species.



Fact sheet 5



Special beauty

This is one of the few places in Australia where the endangered Eltham Copper Butterfly lives. It's the perfect environment for this species because it's also home to Sweet Bursaria (*Bursaria spinosa*) shrubs and *Notoncus capitatus* ants. The butterflies, the bursarias and the ants live in symbiosis.

The butterflies feed on the Sweet Bursaria nectar and lay their eggs at its base. The ants collect honeydew from the newly hatched caterpillars protecting them from predators. The caterpillars also safely shelter in the ants' nest by day and pupate there to emerge as butterflies. The ants also spread Sweet Bursaria seed.

The future

It's hoped to establish a Central Victorian Goldfields indigenous plant collection in the reserve to build understanding of local flora, its significance and diversity and its values to traditional land managers. This would include 2000 flora species native to the Castlemaine area/Mount Alexander region, many of them rare and endangered.