

Please

- Stay on the defined trail
- Enjoy your visit and tell others about the area.

Please do not

- disturb plants, animals or soil
- allow dogs to enter the sanctuary
- smoke, due to the risk of fire
- drop litter, especially food scraps which add nutrients.

Why have a heathland sanctuary?

The eastern side of Port Phillip Bay from Melbourne through Sandringham, Cheltenham and Mentone, and on through Frankston, is known as sand belt country. This sanctuary has one of the largest remnants of the sand belt's famous and treasured 'Sandringham Flora'.

The sanctuary protects open heath vegetation with hardy low-growing plants that are adapted to sandy soils with low levels of nutrients—typical of that found on the crests of old sand dunes. The reserve is a part of a sand dune system formed during the last Ice Age 20,000 years ago when cold, dry winds swept sand from the dry sea bed onto higher ground. Between these dunes are low-lying areas, as in sections of Beaumaris, which supported swamp and woodland vegetation. Woodlands were also found locally on better soils on some older hills.

How you can help ...

Support Bayside's environmental/friends groups. One meets here monthly to weed, collect seed, revegetate and tidy the sanctuary. Volunteer to be a guide on Sundays in Spring. Grow local plants, available at the community nursery, and control environmental weeds.



To find out more, phone the Council on (03) 9599 4444 or see the latest Banksia Bulletin available free at Council libraries and on the website at <www.bayside.vic.gov.au>

History of the sanctuary

- 1939 City of Sandringham purchased two hectares of land for a technical school.
- 1973 Council proposed using the land for indoor recreation. 96 letters of objection received due to botanical significance of the site.
- 1974 Fire burnt about 1000 square metres in south-east of site.
- 1976 Bay Road Heathland preserved.
- 1979 Management plan and guidelines established (reviewed 1996).
- 1981 Sanctuary opened to the public.
- 1982 Special Conservation A zoning under the Melbourne Metropolitan Planning Scheme granted. This zoning usually applies to non-urban land
- 1985 Fire burnt nearly all eastern side of the sanctuary.
- 1994 Fire in south-western corner of the sanctuary burnt approx. 2000 square metres
- 1996 Management plan reviewed and published
- 2003 Controlled ecological burn conducted in the north of the sanctuary to stimulate soil-stored seed and regeneration of native heathland species.



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Hours of business 8.30am–5.00pm
Monday–Friday (except public holidays)
June 2003



BAY ROAD HEATHLAND SANCTUARY

Inspection Days

Thursdays 7.30am–2.30pm all year round
Sundays 2.00–4.00pm mid-August to mid-November
Entry opposite Marshall Avenue

Admission free

Time to complete walk: 20–40 minutes

Groups should book—guides and information sheets are available.
For further information please contact Bayside City Council on (03) 9599 4444



Nature Walk

Trail notes

Bay Road Heathland Sanctuary

The large prickly shrubs in the sanctuary are Hedge Wattles (*Acacia paradoxa*). Look at some younger ones and you will see why it makes a good hedge and protects small birds and other animals.

The walking track takes you on a loop through the centre of the heathland, and returns you to your starting point. Along the trail you will see a variety of native grasses, including Spear Grasses (*Stipa* spp), and Green Sheoak (*Allocasuarina paradoxa*). The male shrubs have rust-coloured pollen that covers the leaves and the older female plants possess woody cones, which can be seen flowering in late Spring.

In the centre of the heathland Silver Banksia (*Banksia marginata*) is a dominant shrub and an important source of nectar for honeyeaters. Eulalie Bennett, celebrated by the plaque on the benches, was a leader of the movement to save this sanctuary. The area to the south was burnt in 1994 and as you can see the regeneration is limited so far. Nearby are a variety of species, including Silky Guinea-flower (*Hibbertia sericea*), various lilies and mosses. Further off are Common Heath (*Epacris impressa*) and Sweet Wattle (*Acacia suaveolens*).

Coast Tea-tree invaded some sections of the sanctuary many years ago, outcompeting the heathland species. The Coast Tea-tree returned quickly after the 1985 fire. Intensive weeding of the 2003 burn site ensures that tea-tree does not outcompete native heath.

Along the firebreak on the western side are some of the variety of plants which occur elsewhere in Bayside. They

were planted here for educational purposes, but the area is gradually being restored to heathland. The platform provides an overview of the sanctuary. As you look around, observe the slope of the land and the changes in vegetation, some due to fire.

Keep your eyes and ears open!

As you walk along the path, look for the animals living here. Large and small skinks may be seen as well as many different spiders, birds and insects, including dragonflies and butterflies. Listen for frogs and crickets as well as bird calls. Look closely at the flowers with all their different parts. But flowers aren't the only interesting part of plants. Take a close look at the seeds and foliage—the leaves and stems change from species to species.



Fire—the heathland destroyer and creator

Burns are essential to heathlands. Without them there would be very few plants of some species, like Victoria's floral emblem the Common Heath, which need fire to regenerate and larger woody species would shade out the smaller flowers. But if burns happen too often they will eliminate plants which are not old enough to have set seed. Three accidental wildfires have occurred within the sanctuary and one controlled ecological burn was conducted in 2003, in the north of the sanctuary. In all cases, regeneration of heathland species has resulted.

Survival techniques!

Heathland species have several strategies for surviving fire. Some plants reshoot from underground organs when aboveground parts are destroyed. For example, the Chocolate Lily survives as fleshy underground tubers. Rushes and sedges have underground stems which reshoot after fire. The Sweet Wattle (*Acacia suaveolens*) and most other woody shrubs shoot back from rootstock after fire. New seedlings emerge when the heat cracks the hard protective coats on seeds present in the soil. Some plants hold their seed in protective seed cases until the heat of the fire opens them.

Some plants will not reappear immediately as fast-growing species often become dominant for years afterwards. Following the 1985 fire many heathland plants regenerated, but the Twiggy Daisy-bush with its delicate white flowers became the most dominant plant and bracken took over much of the sanctuary after the 1994 fire. In remnant areas like the sanctuary such species have to be managed.

