

Fact sheet

SNAPSHOT OF YARRA RIVER

HISTORY

- The Wurundjeri people called it Birrarung, meaning 'a place of mists and shadows'. It became known as the Yarra in the 1830s after a surveyor misheard local Aborigines saying Yarro Yarro, meaning 'it flows'.
- In 1835, Tasmanian farmer John Batman was the first white man to lay claim to the river.
- In 1851, gold was discovered on a tributary of the Yarra. Within 10 years, the discovery had pushed the region's population to more than 500,000.
- In 1890, city planners locked up 100,000 hectares of land around the headwaters of the Yarra to protect the source.
- The Western Treatment Plant began treating Melbourne's sewage in 1857, resulting in considerable improvement to the Yarra's water quality.

PLANTS AND ANIMALS

- 25 unique vegetation communities.
- Animal species including:
 - 22 fish
 - 190 birds
 - 10 frogs
 - 16 reptiles
 - 38 mammals

GEOGRAPHY

- Flows 242 kilometres from its source on the flanks of Mt Baw Baw, through the Yarra Valley and greater Melbourne into Port Phillip Bay.
- Average annual rainfall in the catchment ranges from 615mm at Burnley, near Melbourne, to 1080mm at Upper Yarra Reservoir.
- The Yarra catchment includes 40 rivers and creeks of high or very high significance. The stretch of the river between Warburton and Warrandyte has been a Victorian Heritage River.
- Seawater from Port Phillip Bay travels 10km upstream into the Yarra.

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