



The wonders of Kinglake National Park

Extract from *Kinglake-350* by Adrian Hyland

And the town has one thing going for it that is unique, something that doubtless contributes to that sense of community: the Kinglake National Park, 22,360 hectares of luminescent fern gullies and waterfalls, kilometre after kilometre of walking tracks and nature trails.

Take a tramp along those trails and chances are you'll come across one of the subtle wonders of the bush: a ring of yabby holes that give away the location of an underground lake, or an orb weaver suspended in mid-air, a currawong call that is in fact a lyrebird mimicking a currawong.

The vegetation is as rich a display of nature's plenty as you'll find on Earth. On the lower, more exposed slopes, red box and narrow-leafed peppermint gums predominate. On the more sheltered south- and east-facing slopes, the magnificent stands of mountain ash up to seventy metres in height are common. There are specimens in the wallaby Creek catchment that, at over ninety metres, are among the tallest trees in the world. The understorey varies enormously, with patches of bracken and blanket bush, musk-daisy, hazel pomaderris, blackwood and silver wattle.

The locals are proud of their forest and inspired by it. Many of them make their homes along its shadowy perimeters, and on any day of the week you see people — ordinary joes, dads home from work, kids at hand, mums with four-wheel-drive prams — just wandering around, soaking it up. You might get seventy observers on a freezing winter dawn for the annual lyrebird survey, hundreds of visitors on a Saturday in spring. The National Park is what makes the district a unique, peaceful place to live. When it's not on fire.

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