

CROAJINGOLONG NATIONAL PARK (88,500 hectares)

Park overview

Croajingolong National Park encompasses approximately 100kms of Victoria's far-eastern coastline adjacent to the NSW border. The park includes coastal river systems, tidal inlets, estuaries, coastal sand dunes, rocky cliffs, lakes and ranges, with extensive remote and wilderness environments. Croajingolong National Park is bordered by State forest to the north, Cape Conran Coastal Park to the west and Bass Strait to the south, including the Point Hicks and Cape Howe Marine National Parks.

Park location and access

The park is located approximately 450 km east of Melbourne in Far East Gippsland. Surrounding towns are Bemm River at the western end and Mallacoota in the east. The park is accessed from multiple points along the Princes Highway between Cann River and the New South Wales border. Roads to Wingan Inlet, Mueller Inlet, Thurra River, Point Hicks lighthouse and Shipwreck Creek campgrounds are unsealed and access is weather dependant. A series of four-wheel drive tracks link areas in the park and provide access to remote locations in the park.

Conservation attributes

Significant vegetation in the park includes areas of Cool Temperate and Warm Temperate Rainforest, Coastal Heathland and coastal scrubs and woodlands. The park includes the Skerries, a small offshore rock stack which houses one of only four Australian Fur Seal colonies in the State and an important breeding site for penguins and other seabirds. There are 43 species of threatened native fauna, including the Little Tern, Ground Parrot, Eastern Bristle-bird, Eastern Broad-nosed Bat, and Australian Fur Seal. The park has four reference areas and two natural catchment areas.

Cinnamon Fungus occurs within the park and management aims to prevent spread of the fungus to uninfected areas. More than 30% of the park is a wilderness zone encompassing Sandpatch and Cape Howe wilderness, plus the Rame Head Remote and Natural Area, to be used for self-reliant recreation.

Recreation use

A diverse range of natural attractions form the basis of recreation activities such as nature study and viewing heritage sites, such as Point Hicks lightstation; camping, boating, fishing, and swimming at a range of coastal locations; short walks to key features of the park and remote multi-day walks along the wilderness coast; canoe touring of estuaries and inlets, and off-shore sea kayaking; four-wheel drive touring on a network of remote vehicle tracks. Approximately 65% of the park is zoned for conservation and recreation, and recreation development.

History

It is believed that the name Croajingolong is derived from 'Kruaetungalong', the Aboriginal clan of the Ben Kurnai tribe that inhabited this area of East Gippsland. The coastal and inland areas provided a rich and plentiful supply of food to resident Aboriginal tribes, evidenced by the abundance of artefacts and coastal middens.

Captain James Cook, on board the Endeavour, sighted sections of the Croajingolong coastline in 1770. The Point Hicks Lighthouse, built in 1890, is situated on the headland first sighted by Lt Zachary Hicks on this same voyage.

Early settlement in the area was largely associated with pastoralism. A number of leases began in the early 1800s under such names as Mallacoota and Genoa, which later gave way to closer settlement and the formation of townships in the 1880s. Gold discoveries in the 1890s inspired a short but prosperous mining industry led by the Spotted Dog Gold Mine, evidence of which still remains on the eastern shore of Mallacoota inlet. There are numerous shipwrecks off the Croajingolong coast. The Allans Head Cemetery contains graves of shipwreck victims and early settlers.