

WILD FAMILIES

March 2017



Enjoying, learning and looking after nature with the family

WILD FUN: BUSHWALKING

We asked the experts - families who enjoy bushwalking - to share their tips on getting the most out of their walks. Their tips are shared here.

Bushwalking can be a wonderful family adventure with new discoveries, challenges, exercises and an opportunity to achieve together.

Apart from being prepared with the basics, such as ensuring the walk is appropriate for your family and being prepared for the weather, there are many ways to enhance or make a family bushwalk easier. Thanks to all those who bushwalk with kids (ranging in age up to 11) who shared their tips. Feel free to send yours to vnpa@vnpa.org.au



Walking with family friends is a great motivator for young kids.

Photo: Martin Griffith

Letting kids lead

Tip: Create as many opportunities for kids to be up the front of the walk, with no adults ahead of them. This gives them a great sense of adventure and ownership.

Tip: Nominate your eldest as the 'leader' and the younger as the 'assistant leader' and give them a special prop such as a walking stick, or hat. The leaders need to show the way, identify hazards. Ask them

questions and let them decide, e.g. "Leaders, which way now - up the steps or up the ramp?"

Using your imagination

Tip: Pretend to be explorers helping sick animals. "Look, I think there might be a dragon with a broken wing behind that rock up ahead. Let's see if we can help her out!"

Tip: Play statues. This is where the adults say "I wonder what sort of

statue I am going to see up ahead" and the kids run off ahead and make themselves into statues. Admire the statues as you walk past, repeating "I hope I see some more interesting statues ahead". Children come up with endlessly creative statues that interact with their surroundings and it keeps them moving.

• **More tips on page 4.**

And remember, make sure you consider safety on all outdoor adventures!

This edition of Wild Families was produced by the Victorian National Parks Association with support from Parks Victoria, City of Yarra and the City of Boroondara.





Photo: Pacific Black Duck, Amelia Easdale

WILD SPOT: YARRA BEND PARK

Yarra Bend Park is the perfect place to escape the city as a family. It is so close to the centre of Melbourne - around Fairfield and Kew. The open woodlands, steep river escarpments and remnant bushland paint a picture of what the city would have looked like more than 200 years ago. There is plenty of parkland, bush and the Yarra River. Popular family activities include:

- Jumping on bikes, riding along bike tracks winding through the park and even all the way into the city.
- Bushwalking along the riverbank or through bushland while listening and watching out for wildlife.
- Picnicking near the Studley Park or Fairfield boathouses or hiring a boat or canoe.
- Being geologists for the day and checking out fascinating rocky formations and land shapes along the river such as the cliff face at Dights Falls.
- Spotting wildlife such as birds and bugs.
- Watching thousands of Grey-headed Flying Foxes at the Bellbird Picnic Area. If you go at dusk you can enjoy the nightly fly-out event when they leave to feed.

For further information check out parkweb.vic.gov.au/explore/parks/yarra-bend-park



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FLYING FOX FAMILIES

If you were a baby in a Flying-fox family you would live in a colony of tens of thousands of other Flying-foxes.

During the first few weeks of your life you would be inseparable from your mum and cling to her for warmth and milk. Your dad would be busy defending the territory.

After about a month your mum would leave you at the colony's 'creche' while foraging for food at night and

bringing back breakfast for you at dawn. You would start practising your flying and at three months old you would be strong enough to join your mum on food trips.

By the time you were six months old your mum would be pregnant with your brother or sister and you would take care of yourself.

As a Victorian Grey-headed Flying-fox, you would have been brought up at Yarra Bend Park in Melbourne, Eastern Park in Geelong or Rosalind Park in Bendigo.



WILD FAMILIES

WILD ADVENTURE RECORD

KIDS ACTIVITY 1

This space is for a child to create a record of their adventure.

KIDS ACTIVITY 2

This space is for a child to create a record of their adventure.

ADULTS ACTIVITY 1

This space is for a grown up to create a record of their adventure.

ADULTS ACTIVITY 2

This space is for a grown up to create a record of their adventure.

RECORDING YOUR ADVENTURE

Creating a record of your adventure is a fun way to review and share your adventure with others. Some things you might like to include are:

- What happened when you stopped for a rest?
- Something that made you smile (e.g. when Ava jumped out from behind the bushes or when the sun emerged from behind the clouds).
- A place where your adventure was challenging (e.g. because Beau was

tired or the track was very steep).

- How everyone felt when you got to the end.

You could use words, drawings, muddy handprints, photos or maps to record your adventure.

Remember, the most important thing is to discover and discuss your adventures together.

SHARE YOUR ADVENTURE!

We would love to share your adventure with others. Email the record of your adventure to us at vnpa@vnpa.org.au to receive a Wild Families prize!



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CARING FOR NATURE

CREATING YOUR OWN WILDLIFE GARDEN

Creating a wildlife garden is a great way to look after nature with the family. A wildlife-friendly garden provides a home and food for native animals, which could be big, such as possums, or small, like butterflies. Even a pot of native flowers can provide food for insects.

Why not get the family together to make a wildlife garden everyone can care for. The whole family could be involved in:

- Researching wildlife gardens.
- Looking up your local indigenous nursery.
- Choosing your garden's location.
- Choosing plants from the nursery.
- Planting and looking after the garden.
- Installing fun features such as logs, rocks and little pools of water.
- Watching for visiting wildlife.

To make a perfect garden for butterflies plant indigenous or locally native daisies, such as the dainty blue Hairy Cut-leaf daisy or colourful Yellow Sticky Everlasting daisy.



A bowl of water is great for attracting birds and insects.

BUSHWALKING TIPS

Managing expectations and being prepared

Tip: Walking with family friends motivates kids. They will cover much greater distances with much greater excitement.

Tip: Take plenty of snacks and produce them at the first sign of complaining. Kids need a lot of energy when exploring new environments, but will often be so engaged they'll forget to notice their hunger.

Tip: Don't feel you must reach the end of the walk. My oldest child isn't very interested in scenic views, and will often find something more exciting along the way - a rocky overhang to play in, an ant's nest to observe or a tree to climb. Allow space for these to be stops, or even the destination.

Tip: Give older children a map to follow or involve them in planning the walk so they can learn, lead and gain a sense of what to expect.

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