

Swan Lake

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Swan Lake is remnant of an ancient lagoon enclosed by Y-shaped tie-bars and is the largest and most permanent lake on Phillip Island.



The history of Swan Lake

Due to the presence of middens, Swan Lake is likely to have been an important site for the Boonwurrung. Several middens (a Dutch word for kitchen) containing charcoal, shells, and bone have been found in the Swan Lake area. It is thought that the abundance of food in the area would have been utilized during the summer months. Foods such as wetland birds, short-tailed shearwaters, eels, fish and plants would have been eaten by the Boonwurrung people. Plants in the area were used for medicine, for example, the milk from the bracken fern was used to soothe insect stings. Plants were also used to make shelters from weather, baskets, bags and personal adornments. These bush tucker and medicinal plants can still be found around Swan Lake today, but as it is an important habitat and conservation site, these plants are no longer harvested. Since the 1960s the Phillip Island Conservation Society has planted many trees in the area after removing gorse and boxthorn weed infestations. Some of this vegetation is now being removed, as although the plants were native to Australia, they were not native to the special ecology of Phillip Island and do not provide appropriate habitat values.

An important ecosystem

As the walking track approaches Swan Lake it passes through the surrounding paperbark swamp. The swamp paperbark trees have special features that allow them to survive during flooding events. Losing their leaves reduces energy used by the tree and the production of natural oils prevents excess water penetrating into the tree.

Wildlife on Swan Lake

Swan Lake is home to numerous birds. Keep your eyes open for black swans, Cape Barren geese, several species of ducks, swamp harriers, cormorants and black-fronted dotterels. Other common birds include Australian white ibis, spoonbills, white-faced herons, purple swamphens and masked lapwings. The Swan Lake area also supports a large colony of short-tailed shearwaters. These migratory birds leave the Aleutian Islands near Alaska and make the long trip to Phillip Island for



their breeding season which is from late September to April. They nest in the surrounding sand dunes and return to their burrows at night to incubate their single egg or feed their chick. When Swan Lake is full, it provides a breeding area for the endangered growling grass frog.

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- Swan Lake walking trail
- Earlier ocean drainage
- Present ocean drainage



Protection of the wetland is ongoing. Introduced species such as rabbits and weeds are a threat to the Swan Lake area and rangers at Phillip Island Nature Park are very effective in reducing the numbers of these pests. Helping Swan Lake is as simple as making sure that you always put your rubbish in the bin. When you drop your rubbish in the street, it will wash into a drain and end up in our waterways, choking the creatures that call the water home. Also keep to the tracks, observe the signage and avoid disturbance of wildlife.

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