

## Dandenong Ranges National Park

### End of Bird Feeding - Question & Answers

#### **When will bird feeding stop?**

Feeding will cease on Wednesday 12 February 2020.

#### **Why is Parks Victoria stopping bird feeding?**

- Bird feeding was previously permitted under a lease, Parks Victoria recognizes this activity is inconsistent with regulations around feeding wildlife [under the National Parks Act 1975] in a National Park.
- The decision to cease bird feeding is consistent with all other National Parks across the state where bird feeding is also not permitted
- National Parks are important areas that protect nature and wildlife with minimal human interference.
- Bird feeding at Grants Picnic Ground is not sustainable and its continuation will not be allowed under the new lease starting on 12 February 2020.

#### **Why is feeding birds a problem - why can't I feed the birds?**

- A moment's pleasure for you may result in future problems for animals and people.
  - \* Processed seeds, bread and other foods that are not part of an animal's natural diet can make them very sick.
  - \* birds that expect to be fed by people can become aggressive, harassing people for food when they are hungry, wild birds are more than capable to forage for food naturally
  - \* Hand-feeding can result in the transfer of illness: both to and from the animal
- Sulphur crested cockatoos were not traditionally found at Grants Picnic area and, as a result of their arrival in the last 15 years, cockatoos have displaced other bird species (rosellas, king parrots, kookaburras) and impacted native vegetation
- Sulphur crested cockatoos are known to compete with arboreal mammals, such as gliders and possums for nesting hollows. This can greatly impact upon the breeding requirements these mammal species.

#### **What will happen to the birds and will they suffer any harm from a lack of food?**

Parks Victoria used Wildlife Management Consulting to deliver a research report dedicated to providing important information on the impacts to the birds once bird feeding commences and ways to mitigate any negative outcomes while focusing on management of bird welfare issues like stress, alternate food sources and breeding patterns.

Findings from this investigation show:

- The cockatoos utilizing Grants picnic ground do not rely solely on the seed available within the feeding area.
- It is expected that upon cessation of public feeding, the Cockatoos will disperse, following their natural foraging instincts.
- It is expected that ending feeding will restore a natural balance and see a return of birds like crimson rosellas, king parrots and kookaburras
- Ending artificial feeding will restore a natural balance and see many of the species displaced by Cockatoo's return to their natural environments.

#### **What else can you do/see in the park?**

- See the world's tallest flowering tree the Mountain Ash
- Listen for and see if you can spot the Superb Lyrebird, famous for its appearance embossed on the Australian \$100 note and on the 10c coin. The lyrebird is an incredible mimic of sound and can be heard singing songs regularly.
- The Park is also home to wallabies, echidnas, wombats, and many more unique Australian creatures
- Rare orchids and a variety of ancient tree ferns
- The park hosts a number of walking tracks for all levels of fitness, from easy 20-minute strolls to 7kms trails leading deep into the forest.
- The all-terrain TrailRider wheelchairs are available with assistant from the award-winning volunteer Sherpa program, allowing visitors with significant physical disabilities to experience the activities available at Grants Picnic Ground.
- There are picnic facilities that include an accessible table, BBQ facilities, restrooms as well as a parking bay.
- The Grants on Sherbrook Café is open daily from 9am – 5pm. Enjoy food, ice-cream and coffee while relaxing on the deck or in the cafe overlooking the spectacular forest

#### **How will Parks Victoria stop bird feeding?**

Parks Victoria staff will have a regular presence to monitor the health of the birds and to educate visitors about the environment and the reasons bird feeding is no longer permitted.

Authorised Officers will also regularly patrol the area to ensure park regulations are enforced.

*Fines will apply to anyone found feeding birds within the National Park.*

#### **Will tour operators still bring visitors to Grants picnic ground?**

In March 2019, Parks Victoria notified all tour operators of the planned end to bird feeding. From February 2020, Park Rangers will be stationed onsite to assist any tour operators and visitors who wish to still visit and enjoy the many attractions the park has to offer.

Visitor research shows that many people come to the park to experience its unique environment. The tall trees, lush fern gullies and wonderful wildlife are big attractions.

Tours will continue to be a popular recreational activity.

## What's happening to the café?

The café is open for business from 9am – 5pm daily.

The current tenants lease expires on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 2020. An EOI went out in early 2019, which clearly acknowledged the end to bird feeding for the new lease.

The new lease agreement provided the opportunity to end bird feeding to align with the National Parks Act and to continue to be consistent with all other National Parks across the state where bird or wildlife feeding is not permitted.

EOI submissions were encouraged to develop a new tourism offering to align with National Parks values.

It is Parks Victoria's responsibility to enforce no feeding, this is not the responsibility of the café. Parks Victoria have implemented daily rostered rangers to the site for three months to help monitor, educate and provide informative information for visitors to the Park. Additional signage will be implemented, and VicRoads have updated crucial entry and exit signs and road markings to assist the visitor experience.

Parks Victoria will continue to monitor visitation and feedback from Licensed Tour Operators and the general public to contribute to the future success of the park.