

Black Mountain Nature Reserve Woodland Walk Views and History

Black Mountain Nature Reserve is a special place in Canberra's natural and cultural landscape. The underlying rocks, including Black Mountain sandstone, are among the oldest rock formations in the ACT. The soils and complex habitat support hundreds of species of plants and animals.

For thousands of years Black Mountain was an important gathering place for the local Ngunnawal people and their neighbours such as the Wiradjuri (west), Walgu (south), Yuin (east), Ngarigo (south-east), Gundungurra (north-east) and Ngambri. Today's Ngunnawal people maintain connections to country as Traditional Custodians of the region.

Nestled on the south-western lower slopes of Black Mountain, the Woodland Walk at its highest point provides a panorama that takes in some of the natural and cultural changes to the landscape.

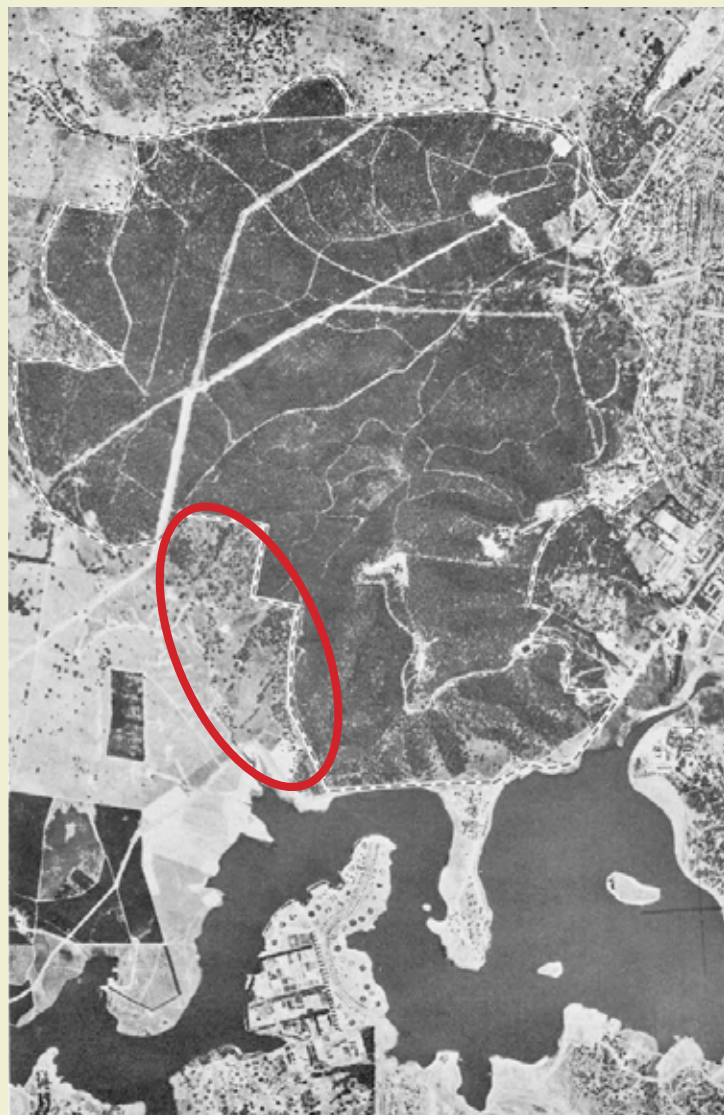
To the west is the Aranda Bushland and the Aranda Snow Gums (*Eucalyptus pauciflora*) which is listed as a Heritage Place.

On the south-western side of the Glenloch Interchange is the National Arboretum Canberra and two older forests, one of Cork Oak and one of Himalayan Cedar. Both forests were planted in keeping with Walter Burley Griffin's plans for the capital.

Further to the south are the Molonglo River, Scrivener Dam and the western reaches of Lake Burley Griffin, Government House at Yarralumla and Weston Park.

Government House was formerly Yarralumla Station, a large pastoral property from the 1830s. It was acquired by the Commonwealth Government in 1912.

The track from the viewing point passes through dry sclerophyll forest that includes trees more than 200 years old as well as significant younger regrowth.



Black Mountain, c1960s

Aerial photograph

in: *A List of Vascular Plants Occurring on Black Mountain and Environs, Canberra, ACT*

M Gray and H. S. McKee, Melbourne, CSIRO, 1969

This aerial photograph shows Black Mountain and surrounds after Lake Burley Griffin was filled by damming the Molonglo River in 1963, prior to the construction of the current network of roads and suburbs.

The area ringed in red clearly shows the straight fences and fewer trees in areas that were associated with farming on the lower slopes of Black Mountain. Most of the Woodland Walk is within the red ringed area.



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Edward William Searle 1887–1955

Molonglo River before Scrivener Dam was built, Canberra, ca. 1949

Courtesy of National Library of Australia, PIC P838/113a-b LOC Album 1124/1

The Molonglo River was finally dammed in 1963 to complete architect Walter Burley Griffin's plans for the lake as the centrepiece of the capital. The lake was named after him. Scrivener Dam was named in honour of the surveyor Charles Scrivener who in the early 1900s surveyed many of the sites considered for the future capital.



Glenys Ferguson 1943–

Looking towards Scrivener Dam and pine forests, also Government House, Yarralumla, seen between the trees to the left of the dam, Canberra, c1963.

Courtesy of National Library of Australia, PIC Online access #PIC/9969/6

The National Arboretum Canberra, now in the mid-distance, was created following the 2003 bushfires which burnt the managed pine forests. The plants growing on Black Mountain have evolved different strategies to survive fire. The majority of species produce vegetative shoots after being burnt. The eucalypts resprout from their bases along their stems and branches while most other woody plants, perennial herbs and grasses develop shoots from the base of their burnt stems, buried roots or other underground organs. Others produce seedlings from seed buried in the soil or released from burnt fruit.