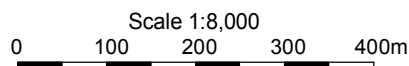
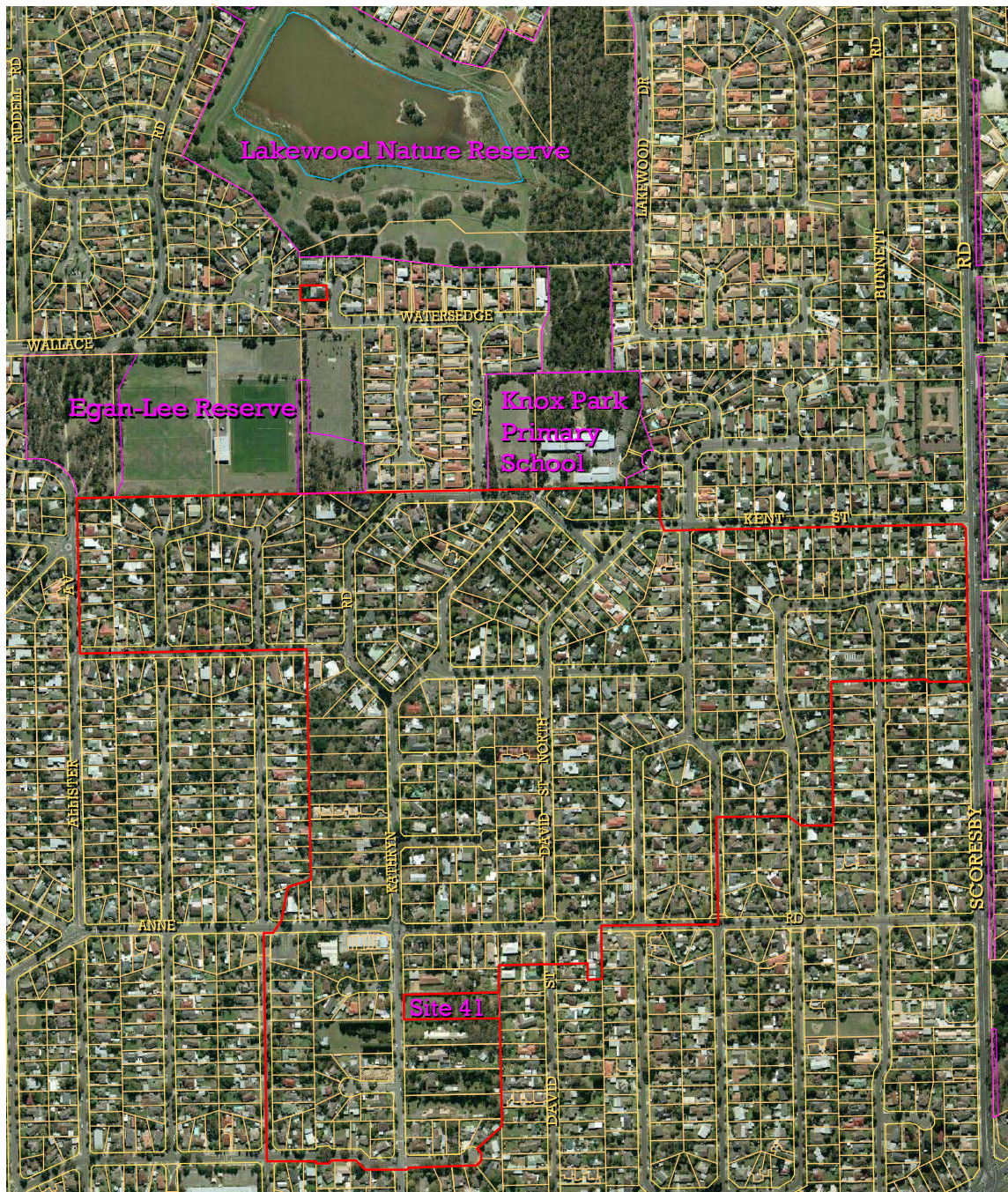


Site 107. Knoxfield Treed Precinct

A treed residential area, centred on Melway ref. 73 C4.

Site Significance Level: *Local*

- There are substantial numbers of mature trees, including remnant eucalypts, that provide rudimentary habitat for native birds, bats, possums, frogs and insects;
- The site provides habitat linkage between sites with higher quality vegetation.



*Aerial photograph taken
April 2003*

Boundaries

The site comprises a main section and a single lot (43 Watersedge Close) with an important habitat tree, as outlined in red on the aerial photograph. The site boundaries follow property boundaries, except for road crossings and segments that run down the middle of four streets. The precise location of the zigzags along the site's southeast is somewhat arbitrary. The main area of the site measures 52.88 ha and 43 Watersedge Close measures 0.063 ha.

Land use & tenure: Freehold residential land, shops and kindergarten.

Site description

The residential neighbourhood in the main section of this site retains a substantial number of mature remnant eucalypts, particularly Mealy Stringybark (*Eucalyptus cephalocarpa* – an excellent species for fauna habitat), Narrow-leafed Peppermint (*Eucalyptus radiata*) and Messmate Stringybark (*Eucalyptus obliqua*). They occur mostly in residential gardens and are distributed very patchily through the site.

The combination of species of eucalypts found in the site indicate that the whole area once supported the Ecological Vegetation Class, Valley Heathy Forest, which is now endangered. However, there is almost no native understorey left within the site. Indications of the original understorey composition can be obtained from the adjoining sites of biological significance that are outlined and labelled in pink on the aerial photograph on the previous page.

The tree canopy, despite its fragmentation, provides basic habitat needs for native birds, bats, possums, frogs and insects. This augments the higher quality habitat in the adjacent sites of biological significance. Consequently, the area has substantially more native forest birds, such as Crimson Rosellas and Eastern Rosellas, than most of Knox. There are also birds that are uncommon in suburbia, such as Laughing Kookaburras.

The isolated lot, 43 Watersedge Close, is included in the site because it has a large habitat tree that is believed to fulfil a function as a 'stepping-stone' for birds or insects.

Many private properties in the site are of no biological significance. They would be unaffected by the schedule for the Vegetation Protection Overlay that is proposed for this site (Section 5.5 in Volume 1).

Relationship to other land

The boundary of the site has been specifically devised to encourage retention of trees that are located between the sites of biological significance shown in pink on the aerial photograph.

As can be seen on the aerial photograph, there is presently a marked dearth of habitat directly between R.D. Egan-Lee Reserve (Site 42) and Lakewood Nature Reserve (Site 43), two sites of State conservation significance. The isolated lot outlined in red on the aerial photograph (43 Watersedge Close) has a large habitat tree, and it lies midway between the two reserves, so it can be seen as an important stepping-stone for wildlife.

The alternative route for wildlife moving between the two reserves is via Kent Park Primary School and the site under discussion here. The author's observations of bird species and bird movements in the area suggests that this alternative is well used by birds.

It also appears that birds such as Musk Lorikeets move between this precinct and the Dobson Street treed precinct (Site 105), probably detouring on some occasions along the treed eastern verge of Scoresby Rd (Site 106).

Bioregion: Gippsland Plain

Habitat type

The patchy cover of remnant trees (mainly eucalypts and Blackwoods) and a very low density of native understorey plants are all that is left of the original EVC of the site:

Valley Heathy Forest (EVC 127, Endangered) dominated by *Eucalyptus cephalocarpa*, *E. radiata* and *E. obliqua*.

Fauna of special significance

No species of special significance were detected, but the author visited the site for less than one hour.

Significance ratings

Ecological Integrity and Viability

For the reasons discussed above, the trees in the site function as a habitat link. This link affects fauna only in the local area. Criterion 1.2.6 of Amos (2004) attributes **Local** significance to sites that it describes as 'Important at Local Scale - Link between individual remnant habitat blocks or within subcatchment'.

Locally Threatened Plant Species

The site's eucalypts belong to locally threatened species and they have viable populations in combination with neighbouring native vegetation. Such occurrences meet criterion 3.1.5 for a site of **Local** significance.

Threats

- Residential subdivision and development;
- Eucalypt dieback disease.

Management issues

The habitat value of the site could be enhanced by planting additional indigenous trees and understorey species (e.g. Sweet Bursaria or Hedge Wattle) that suit insect-eating birds. This applies particularly to properties that have little existing cover of native or indigenous trees.

Administration matters

- This site is worthy of inclusion within the proposed Vegetation Protection Overlay Schedule (Volume 1, Section 5.5) because:
 - It contains (in the words of the VPP Practice Note on Biodiversity) ‘scattered living food trees with an exotic understorey’;
 - It is a site of Local biological significance;
 - The properties involved are too small to be affected by Clause 52.17 of the Knox Planning Scheme, which might otherwise provide some of the trees with some protection; and
 - Some of the habitat trees are not native to Victoria and are therefore not protected by Clause 52.17.
- This site overlaps with an area covered by the existing Schedule 3 to the Vegetation Protection Overlay of the Knox Planning Scheme. The area described here does not extend as far south because of the absence of biological significance in that area, but it is larger overall than the existing overlay area so that habitat linkages between sites can be better protected.

Information sources used in this assessment

- Inspections of the area by Dr Lorimer in April and May 2004 for the specific purpose of finding sites of biological significance and determining the distribution of trees that represent reasonable habitat for native fauna;
- General visual inspection of the area’s vegetation by the author while surveying the other sites outlined in pink on the aerial photograph on p. 523, up to March 2008;
- Aerial photography from February 2001 and April 2003; and
- Satellite imagery of the district.