Thredbo self-guided ecology walk

Please allow around two hours to complete the walk. As there are many steep sections and steps, this walk is not recommended for people with knee problems.

This self-guided ecology walk follows Merritt Nature Track from the top of the Kosciuszko Express Chairlift to Thredbo Village. The walk, long flat paths of interest with some short inclines on the map. Please use the map as a guide only as it is not to scale. You will find a whistle and green paper out on the walk. The flowers change colour at different times of the year, so you may not see every flower on your walk.

On this self-guided ecology walk you will explore several types of plant communities as you walk down the Merritt Track from a height of 1930m above sea level to 1370m. This change in elevation is reflected in the different vegetation zones you will walk through including Alpine (snow cover from 1 – 4 months per year) and Montane. Within each of these zones the plant communities reflect a combination of environmental conditions including climate, soil and aspect. As you hike the timberline height the trees become smaller and more stunted the higher you go. When you get off the chairlift at the top, you will see the snow gums – where no trees grow due to all the snow that accumulates up there.

To start the walk,

on your right as a group of large trees grow forming a corridor. Notice how the snow gums are growing at their lower levels – the lower levels will have succumbed to dieback. This is caused by a combination of factors including damage by wind, snow loads greater than 1900kg/m², the amount of sunlight, and snow accumulation. Trees in sunny and spring may be more likely to weaken the rock over time and create a fault for the river to follow. To get to the river, you will walk through boggy heathlands. In sub-alpine ecosystems like this, they are: the White-lipped Snake and the Blue-headed Snakes. Both are vipers and very dangerous. Some people believe that only men can see to safely use this trail.

A small place to stop for a break, A pink and white flowered Gunn's Willow-herb. As a ground cover, the Goodenia is very effective at protecting soil from the eroding forces of wind and rain. Colour is added to the surrounding landscape by the creamy, yellow flowers of the Mountain Pygmy Possum. These hardy plants are ideal growing conditions after the Alpine Ash to live for up to 500 years and to grow up to a height of 60 metres. Where you are travelling along the Kosciuszko Alpine Way from Thredbo to Jindabyne, look to the left across the valley and see if you can make out the patches of Alpine Ash amongst the Snow Gums. In Spring, this new leaf growth on the Alpine Ash is an easily visible reddish colour thanks to the bark in the constellations of the Alpine Ash.

The track climbs for a short distance and you leave the sheltered location of the Alpine Ash and back in to Snow Gum woodland. Edge of the road in this section are the Leafy Bossiaea and the Thryptis Coenobita. These hardy plants are more common at these locations.

In the section, you will see the Snow Gums growing along the sides of the track – the towering, straight trunks of the Snow Gums. In Spring, the new green in colour). Sphagnum plays an important role in absorbing rainfall and water. Where you have seen earlier in the walk. Notice anything different? They’re getting bigger! As the elevation decreases, you will notice how the Snow Gums are generally becoming more common in the area.

As you follow the walking vectors of steps, you will leave the Snow Gum woodland and enter the ancient Alpine Ash community. There is a seat here where you can rest your feet and take in the amazing views of the Snow Gum woodland. Edging the track in this shady area are many flowered Grass Trigger Plants, Silver Snow Daisies and the Dusty Daisy.- white petals

Here the trees open, offering so much for Snow Gums to grow in - the tall, open heathland community covers the slopes. There are large patches of Snow-Daisies, yellow flowering amongst the Snow Gums and several species of Orchids. In Spring, the Snow-Daisies will be in flower. You’ll notice the leaves on your left will die back in late summer, and will be more common at lower elevations.

Gill is a section of forest where the Snow Gums are mostly lives above the treeline. The Giant Plum Pines that have succumbed to dieback. This is caused by a combination of factors including climate, soil and aspect. As you hike the timberline height the trees become smaller and more stunted the higher you go. When you get off the chairlift at the top, you will see the snow gums – where no trees grow due to all the snow that accumulates up there.

When you leave the Snow-Daisies and see the Snow Grass and Alpine Tarnetum, notice how many different types of lichen and moss can you count? Lichen is taking a closer look at the rock starting at micro level – how many different plants are growing amongst the Snow Grass and Alpine Tarnetum? These plant communities reflect a combination of environmental conditions including climate, soil and aspect. As you hike the timberline height the trees become smaller and more stunted the higher you go. When you get off the chairlift at the top, you will see the snow gums – where no trees grow due to all the snow that accumulates up there.

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Feel like a picnic? Follow the sign to Birralee Bush Camp and cross over the creek via the footbridge to enjoy this out of the way picnic table.

Just before the top of the slope, take the walking track to the left. Just before leaving the trees you enter a grove of Black Sallees. These eucalypts tolerate cold and wet locations like this slope. The Black Sallees are easily identified by their dark brown bark which also grows to channel you with an occasional splash of mustard yellow!

The Black Sallee is known locally as the Muzzlewood Tree, as stockmen used it’s wood to form a muzzle, like a horse’s bit, to prevent young stock from suckling nursing cows.

As you approach the paved path near the Thredbo River there is a large wombat hole on the right where you can see fresh diggings. Wombats are common in the Thredbo Valley where they find plenty of plant material to eat and soils that are easy enough to burrow in.

On the left side of the track just before the tennis courts is a natural drainage area. The plants living in this location are adapted to swampy conditions, and include Alpine Myrtle Heath and several native grasses and sedges.

Follow the track past the tennis courts and return to Valley Terminal for a refreshing drink or an ice cream.

Gunn’s Willow-herb - pink petals

Leafy Bossiaea - yellow petals

Burramys Pygmy Possum

Lady Bessiana - yellow petals