Heyfield wetlands

The Heyfield wetlands are located in the heart of Gippsland in Victoria, near the town of Heyfield (see map on last page of this worksheet). Before the arrival of Europeans, they provided a natural holding area for overflow of floodwaters from the LaTrobe River. They also supported large populations of flora and fauna.

But, in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, European settlers began draining and clearing these wetlands. The reclaimed land was used as pasture, and the site for a race course (and later a public reserve).

Restoring the wetlands

In recent years, local volunteers have worked hard to help restore the Heyfield wetlands. The intention is to recreate a sustainable ecosystem, while allowing local communities to continue to meet their domestic and industrial water needs.

A series of ponds have been built to hold outflows of storm water and grey water (e.g. water used for washing up) from Heyfield. The water is progressively purified as it flows from one pond to the next. Pollutants are broken down, and the water is oxygenated. At the end of the process, the water is clean. This clean water encourages plant growth in the wetlands themselves, and is a welcome resource for local farmers. Further ponds are now being built to help process the pollutants that run off from adjoining farms (e.g. pesticides, fertilisers) and a nearby quarry, especially during heavy rain.

Additional actions being taken in the region include the planting of native trees to help lower the water table. The rising water table has made the soil very saline. Plans are still to be implemented for the removal of introduced plant species such as blackberry, which have become invasive.

Use information in this worksheet and in the source listed as a reference to complete the following activities.

1. How do wetlands form? Give four examples of different types of wetland.

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2. Explain how wetlands work as (a) Nature's sumps and (b) Nature's filters.

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3. Describe in your own words the location of the Heyfield wetlands in relation to some other prominent Victorian landforms and settlements. Use compass directions and estimated distances in your answer.

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4. Why were the Heyfield wetlands changed from their native state by the early European settlers? What does this tell you about farming practices and attitudes towards the land in this period?

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5. Use the sources listed in the references below, and any others you may wish to consult, to find out more about what has been done to restore the Heyfield wetlands. Write a letter suitable for publication in the Letters to the Editor section of your local newspaper explaining why you think this effort is worthwhile. Your teacher may select the best few letters to send to the newspaper.

References: *SOSE Alive Geograph 2*, pp. 130–1, 134–5, 140–1, 188–9 ▪ www.jaconline.com.au/sosealive/sageography2 and click on theHeyfield wetland web links for this chapter

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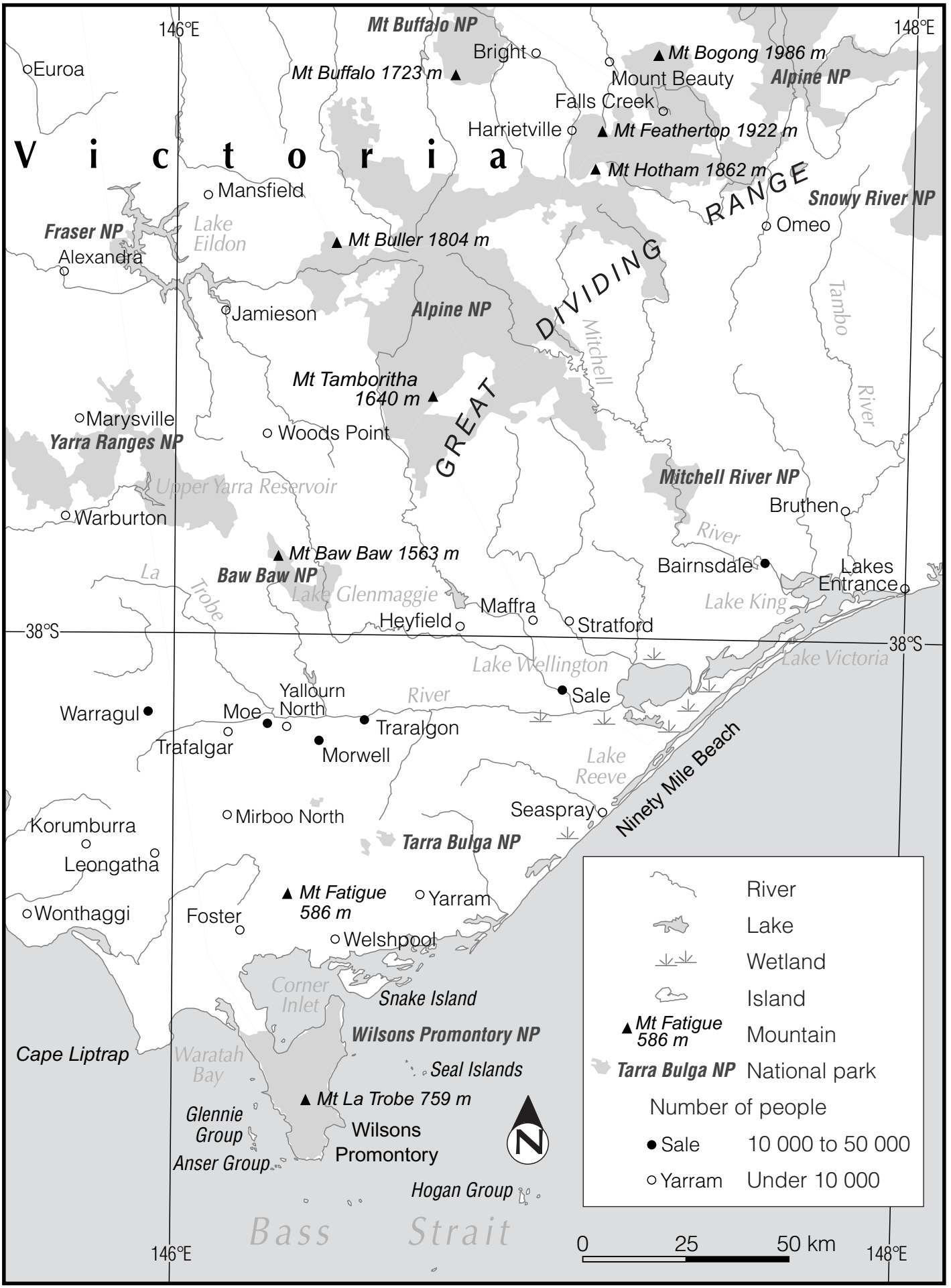
146°E
148°E
38°S
Victoria
Mt Buffalo NP
Mt Buffalo 1723 m
Bright
Mt Bogong 1986 m
Mount Beauty
Alpine NP
Falls Creek
Harrietville
Mt Feathertop 1922 m
Mt Hotham 1862 m
Euroa
Mansfield
Fraser NP
Lake Eildon
Alexandra
Mt Buller 1804 m
Snowy River NP
Omeo
GREAT DIVIDING RANGE
Jamieson
Alpine NP
Mitchell
Tambo
River
Mt Tamboritha 1640 m
Marysville
Yarra Ranges NP
Woods Point
Upper Yarra Reservoir
Mitchell River NP
Bruthen
Warburton
River
Mt Baw Baw 1563 m
Baw Baw NP
La Trobe
Lake Glenmaggie
Bairnsdale
Lakes Entrance
Lake King
Maffra
Heyfield
Stratford
Lake Wellington
Lake Victoria
Sale
Yallourn North
River
Warragul
Moe
Traralgon
Trafalgar
Morwell
Lake Reeve
Ninety Mile Beach
Seaspray
Korumburra
Mirboo North
Tarra Bulga NP
Leongatha
Mt Fatigue 586 m
Yarram
Wonthaggi
Foster
Welshpool
Corner Inlet
Snake Island
Wilsons Promontory NP
Cape Liptrap
Waratah Bay
Seal Islands
Mt La Trobe 759 m
Glennie Group
Wilsons Promontory
Anser Group
Hogan Group
Bass Strait
River
Lake
Wetland
Island
Mt Fatigue 586 m
Mountain
Tarra Bulga NP
National park
Number of people
Sale
10 000 to 50 000
Yarram
Under 10 000
0
25
50 km