

STATE WIDE

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A keen interest in big business

2. BENALLA

TO most drivers travelling on the Upper Lurg Rd, near Benalla, a particularly grand specimen of a mugga ironbark tree is just like any other roadside vegetation, with the same leaves, bark, limbs and trunk.

But thanks to the eagle eye of Upper Lurg resident Geoff Rowe, the ironbark is now officially Australia's tallest of its kind.

Down the road there is also a good-looking yellow box gum nestled in farmland that, despite its average gum-like appearance, is the tallest of its type in the country.

"To most people it's just a tree in the middle of the bush," says Mr Rowe, who farms beef cattle on 260ha nearby.

"But these trees are incredible, majestic. They belong in a Hans Heysen painting. The sheer bulk of them when you get up close is amazing."

Geoff has become the latest convert to the growing national obsession of spotting the tallest trees of a species, thanks to the National Register of Big Trees.

"I've lived in this area for 25 years and would drive past these trees all the time. When I saw the register, I went out there with a tape measure and found they were the biggest."



Tall tales: Geoff Rowe with the huge yellow box at Upper Lurg.