

Carnarvon Gorge: April 2021

An account of a trip I took to Carnarvon Gorge over the course of several days in April of 2021. The gorge is located in the ranges of Central Queensland and is known to be home to a wide variety of mammal species. At this point of time I was rather new and inexperienced to wildlife watching but I was enthusiastic to find as many species as possible. Known for its sandstone cliffs and ecological diversity I was very excited to go searching for as many species as possible. We stayed at the caravan park that is located right next to the entrance of Carnarvon National Park. This allowed me to readily observe species at any time of day or night.



An **eastern grey kangaroo** (*Macropus giganteus*) at the caravan park near Carnarvon National Park. The eastern grey kangaroo is likely the most common large mammal in the region.

The first species I found were also perhaps the most readily sighted in the region the **eastern grey kangaroo** (*Macropus giganteus*). These are the second largest species of kangaroo alive today and it was possible to get some great closeup shots due to their familiarity with humans visiting the caravan park. The kangaroos are most easily found in the early morning or afternoon in the open grass of the caravan park itself rather than within the national park itself as this large species prefers to feed on the fresh green shoots that can be harder to find in the denser forest. This

species was easily spotted every day of the trip in and around the caravan park both at day and night.



A male **common brushtail possum** (*Trichosurus vulpecula*) looks down at me from a tree. I was able to find several brushtail possums most nights I went out spotlighting.

The first night of the trip also provided some good conditions for spotlighting which allowed me to find my second species, the **common brushtail possum** (*Trichosurus vulpecula*). This species of possum is potentially the most commonly encountered mammal in Australia due to its tendency to live in urban areas. However, it is actually less common in a number of national parks than in the cities due to the logging of old trees with hollows. There were several individuals I found around the caravan park including this male pictured above.

The next morning was our first day of bushwalking within the national park and although I was able to find quite a large number of **whiptail wallabies** (*Notamacropus parryi*) the mammal finding on the walks themselves was rather unsuccessful as most Australian mammals are nocturnal. That being said I did have a good time birdwatching, finding some incredible species of note. Pictured below is a mother and joey whiptail wallaby, this species is quite common at Carnarvon National Park as they tend to live in hillier habitats. It is also known as the pretty-faced wallaby due to the remarkable pattern on the face.



A female **whiptail wallaby** (*Notamacropus parryi*) with her joey at the trailhead for the main walking track at Carnarvon National Park.



Carnarvon Gorge is a well-known **platypus** (*Onithorhynchus anatinus*) sighting hotspot. I was lucky enough to find what was likely the same individual numerous times throughout my trip.

After exploring a fair amount of the bushtrails and returning to the caravan park in the afternoon we were able to find one of Australia's most iconic mammals. Carnarvon Gorge is a well-known hotspot for **platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*)** and on a previous trip up there when I was a kid, I was lucky enough to spot one early in the morning at a part of the creek in the caravan park they are known to frequent. On this trip I was lucky to see the platypus on three different occasions. This was definitely the highlight of the trip, especially as platypus are known to be shy and elusive animals. They are also incredibly unique, not only laying eggs but also being a venomous mammal. Platypus are mostly nocturnal but the best chances of seeing it were in the morning and afternoon where I found it nearly every time I went to check at those times.

Night quickly approached after the platypus sighting and after dinner it was time for some spotlighting. Some of the species I found out on that night were the **eastern grey kangaroo**, **common brushtail possum** and several **swamp wallabies (*Wallabia bicolor*)**. Swamp wallabies are quite common at Carnarvon Gorge and can be readily found at night or in the morning/afternoon feeding near dense forest. I was also lucky enough to find another less common species that Carnarvon Gorge is well-known for, a **rufous bettong (*Aepyprymnus rufescens*)** which surprisingly was unbothered by my presence as it continued to forage for fungi in the undergrowth.



A very shy **swamp wallaby** (*Wallabia bicolor*) observes me from a distance as I spotlight. Swamp wallabies are rather numerous around the Carnarvon region.



A **rufous bettong** (*Aepyprymnus rufescens*) as it forages for food around the campsite. Although bettongs and potoroos are typically shy animals, this individual appeared to be not at all bothered by my presence.

Mammal List:

- Platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*)
- Eastern grey kangaroo (*Macropus giganteus*)
- Whiptail wallaby (*Notamacropus parryi*)
- Swamp wallaby (*Wallabia bicolor*)
- Common brushtail possum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*)
- Rufous bettong (*Aepyprymnus rufescens*)

Other Animals of Note:

- Green tree frog (*Litoria caerulea*)
- Eastern stoney creek frog (*Litoria wilcoxii*)
- Eastern stone gecko (*Diplodactylus vittatus*)
- Wedge-tailed eagle (*Aquila audax*)
- Southern boobook owl (*Ninox boobook*)