

Mammal Watching Report – Northern New South Wales

January 2022

34 mammal species

Isaac Clarey (isaac.clarey@gmail.com)

Trip Report: Central & Nth New South Wales (2 Jan 2022 – 30 Jan 2022)

During January 2022 I set off on a family holiday, mostly through coastal north and central NSW. Travelling from Victoria, we drove up through inland NSW before hitting the coast at the Hunter region north of Sydney (strategically placed to enjoy the Watagans NP). From here we set up at a range of bases along the north coast; Lennox Head, South West Rocks, Gloucester Tops, Port Macquarie & Hawks Nest. This allowed access to plenty of family-friendly areas, plus proximity to some of the significant bioregions and national parks of the east coast. General summary as follows.

Inland NSW: in transit only, we had overnight stops at West Wyalong and Dubbo. A night spotlighting at Lake Cowal near West Wyalong was good for ubiquitous Common Brushtail Possum, also a few common macropods in the area; Eastern Grey Kangaroo and Red-necked Wallaby.

Watagans NP: one night spotlighting here only, but a location with reputation for exciting nocturnal diversity. My main target was the elusive Parma Wallaby, and acting on info/sightings from the last couple of years I searched and road cruised a section of the park along Watagan Forest Rd. I don't think there's any real way to target this species, just hours in the field and a dose of luck go a long way. It was a damp night and mammals aside it was pretty incredible for 11 spp of frogs! I called it quits at around 2am, and as luck has it, finally stumbled upon a Parma Wallaby as it idled onto the track in front of the car headlights; reasonable binocular views but it quickly sprinted off as soon as I opened the car door. ID points included: light footed gait when hopping, long dark tail and dark vertebral line, prominent pale muzzle stripe, red shoulder. Structure appeared 'in-proportion' - reasonably long tail like a kangaroo/wallaby and unlike squat, compact appearance of pademelon. Very stoked with this one! A smattering of other mammals for the evening included Southern Long-nosed Bandicoot, pademelon sp. scampering into the understorey and Swamp Wallaby.



Image: Yellow-bellied Glider – Barrington Tops NP, NSW

Nightcap NP: most of my mammal watching opportunities from the Northern Rivers region were up in the Nightcap Ranges, part of the Gondwanan rainforest world heritage area. The Nightcap NP comprises a few disjunct areas, I focused mainly on the Protestor Falls and Minyon Falls sections. Protestor Falls is situated in a damp rainforest gully bordering Terania Creek; rock-hopping along the creek I stumbled upon a Rakali (Water Rat) hastily foraging along the creek bed and it actually ran between my legs. The rainforest had Fawn-footed Melomys, Short-eared Possum and what turned out to be a Black Rat as I disturbed it from the undergrowth and it climbed high into the treetops in escape. Large-footed Myotis were winging their way along the creek at bridge crossings. The Minyon Falls section with some areas of drier forest had a similar range of wildlife, I also added Red-necked Wallaby, Echidna and a very photogenic Bush Rat.



Image: Bush Rat – Nightcap NP, NSW



Image: Southern Long-nosed Bandicoot – Myall Lakes NP, NSW

South West Rocks: I was opportunistic in exploring Hat Head NP while in this area – a network of tracks through remnant forest along the coastline near the township. Exciting to find a Brush-tailed Phascogale near Gap Beach, unfortunately also a Red Fox only moments afterwards.



Image: Brush-tailed Phascogale – South West Rocks, NSW

Barrington Tops NP: Unfortunately I knew leading up to this location that the road to the top of Barrington Tops was closed, flooding from late last year has impacted one of the low lying bridges and no traffic can pass. It's been like this for the last 10 months or so with no update/repair in sight, hopefully sometime soon. We stayed down the bottom of the range at Gloucester Tops, still with access to the foothills, mostly around Gloucester River campground and adjacent walks. The habitat was dominated by eucalypt forest with rainforest patches along the wet gullies. A few spotlighting nights revealed Yellow-bellied Glider, Brown Antechinus, Short-eared Possum (nearing the southern extent of range), a selection of the common microbats on the bat detector, Brown Antechinus, Southern Long-nosed Bandicoot, Red-necked Pademelon and Koala, now endangered for NSW.



Image: Red-necked Wallaby – Barrington Tops NP, NSW

Myall Lakes NP: staying at Hawks Nest, we had good access to the southern portion of the national park. I spent every night around Mungo Brush area, it was fantastic. Long-nosed Potoroo were in really good numbers through there, you could hear them in the dry understorey but getting views and photos was very tricky. I saw both Southern Long-nosed and Northern Brown Bandicoots, Grey-headed Flying-fox were everywhere in flowering trees, Little Forest Bat was the common microbat and a Brown Antechinus posed for a brief second. I was hopeful of a chance encounter for one of the cryptic rodents and was pretty excited after picking up two small rodents in the thermal foraging adjacent to the track. After staking for a couple of hours I eventually ended up with a few photos to ID New Holland Mouse – thanks to Phoebe Burns for her valuable insight!



Image: New Holland Mouse – Myall Lakes NP, NSW



Image: Brown Antechinus – Myall Lakes NP, NSW

Total species list (approx. cumulative total for trip):

1. Short-beaked Echidna (2) – Nightcap NP & Barrington Tops NP
2. Brush-tailed Phascogale (1) – Hat Head NP
3. Brown Antechinus (2) – Barrington Tops NP & Myall Lakes NP
4. Northern Brown Bandicoot (1) - Myall Lakes NP
5. Southern Long-nosed Bandicoot (9) – Watagans NP, Barrington Tops NP & Myall Lakes NP
6. Long-nosed Potoroo (8) – Myall Lakes NP
7. Koala (2) - Barrington Tops NP
8. Short-eared Possum (~10) – Nightcap NP & Barrington Tops NP

9. Common Brushtail Possum (~15) – Lake Cowal, Barrington Tops NP & Myall Lakes NP
10. Yellow-bellied Glider (1) – Barrington Tops NP
11. Common Ringtail Possum (8) – most locations
12. Parma Wallaby (1) – Watagans NP
13. Eastern Grey Kangaroo (lots)
14. Red-necked Wallaby (lots) – West Wyalong, Barrington Tops NP & Nightcap NP
15. Swamp Wallaby (1) – Watagans NP
16. Red-necked Pademelon (~20) – Barrington Tops NP
17. Grey-headed Flying-fox – all coastal locations
18. White-striped Freetail Bat – heard at most sites
19. Gould's Wattled Bat (~20) – various
20. Little Forest Bat (~10) – Myall Lakes NP
21. Large Forest Bat (1) – Barrington Tops NP
22. Large-footed Myotis (5) – Barrington Tops NP & Nightcap NP
23. Eastern False Pipistrelle (20+) – Barrington Tops NP
24. Fawn-footed Melomys (2) – Nightcap NP
25. Water Rat (1) – Nightcap NP
26. House Mouse (3) – inland NSW, Myall Lakes NP
27. New Holland Mouse (2) – Myall Lakes NP
28. Bush Rat (2) – Nightcap NP
29. Black Rat (3) – Nightcap NP
30. Red Fox (3) – inland NSW, South West Rocks
31. Dingo (5) – Port Macquarie, Gloucester Tops, Myalls Lakes NP
32. Feral Cat (1) – inland NSW
33. European Rabbit – I didn't take notes, but lots at various sites
34. European (Brown) Hare (4) – inland NSW, Hawks Nest