

Queensland 2019 – Part 2 of 4 – Eungella to Ingham

This, the second section of the five week *Queensland* trip covers the week of travel from *Eungella* North to *Ingham*.

After the final night at *Taunton National Park* I made the five hour drive to *Eungella*, a town situated high up in rainforest in *Queensland's Clarke Range*. The primary reason for visiting the *Eungella* area was to view **Platypus**, and the beautiful *Broken River* 10km North of the township is one of the best places in *Australia* to see **Platypus**.

The Pioneer Valley seen from Eungella.



Whilst researching wildlife for the trip I made particular use of *Rohan Clark's* recent trip report in the *Australian Mammal Watching Facebook Group*. This report mentioned the *Eungella Dam Road*, West of *Broken River*, was good for glider species, and so I spent three nights in total in *Eungella* area in the hope of seeing gliders.

The first night I camped at *Eungella Dam Campsite* 36kms West of the town along *Eungella Dam Road*. The campsite was situated in a beautiful location right on the water with stunning views. After I had set up camp I explored the campsite and found a **Brushtail Possum** sleeping in a log on the ground.

Eungella Dam Campsite.



All three nights in the *Eungella* area I spotlighted *Eungella Dam Road* and the area was indeed rich in gliders, but also possums and owls. I found three species of glider common in this eucalypt woodland, the **Greater Glider** is the species in highest numbers with 36 animals seen over three nights.

The **Greater Gliders** were often high up in trees given away by lime green eyeshine, fortunately these trees were not as big as the forests South of *Sydney* where I had previously seen this species. The **Greater Glider** is *Australia's* largest gliding marsupial, about the size of a cat, and they can glide an impressive 100m between trees!

Greater Glider.



The other two species of glider seen along *Eungella Dam Road* were the **Sugar** and **Squirrel Glider** with a total of four and three animals seen respectively over three nights. I was unfamiliar with the **Squirrel Glider** prior to this trip, but I was happy to find they freeze obligingly in the spotlight!

Squirrel Glider.



Apart from the gliders the other arboreal marsupials encountered during the three nights in the area were 15 **Brushtail Possums**, 9 **Common Ringtail Possums** and a **Koala**.

Ringtail Possum.



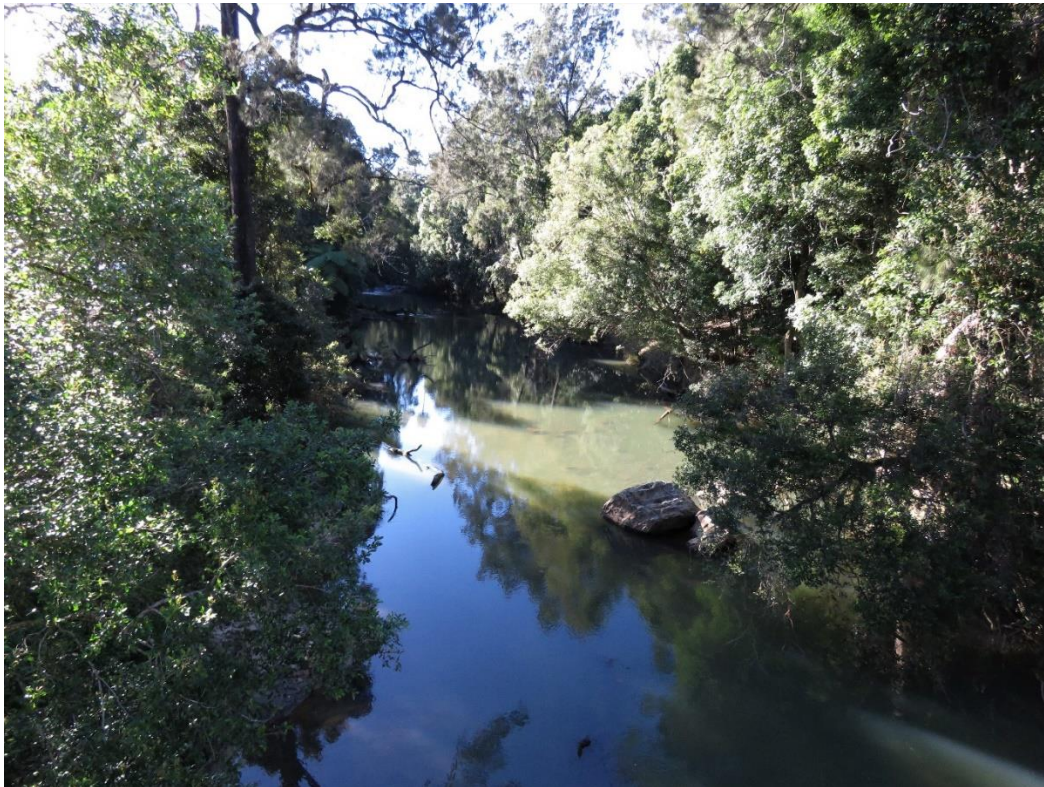
The two species of **Owl** seen spotlighting *Eungella Dam Road*, were **Boobook Owls** in eucalypt woodland, and **Eastern Barn Owls** seen adjacent to grass/crop fields.

Eastern Barn Owl.



The second and third nights in the *Eungella* area were at *Broken River Mountain Resort* situated right next to the tranquil *Broken River*.

Broken River.



Platypus were easily seen, not only at dawn and dusk but throughout the day, with up to three **Platypus** seen in the river at one time. Specially constructed **Platypus** viewing platforms are situated along the river, but I found the traffic bridge over the river was the best place to view **Platypus**, here it is possible to look directly down on the animals.

Platypus.



Spotlighting the grounds of *Broken River Mountain Resort* and paths leading to the **Platypus** viewing platforms produced good numbers of species, over the course of the two nights (when I wasn't spotlighting *Eungella Dam Road*,) I saw **Sugar Gliders**, **Red-legged Pademelons**, a **Northern Brown Bandicoot** and a **Fawn-footed Melomys**.

Sugar Glider.



Ever Northwards I drove two hours to the industrial town of *Proserpine*. I stopped overnight here to visit *Peter Faust Dam*, 25kms West of the town, reputed to be good for **Unadorned Rock Wallaby**. I set up the tent at *Proserpine Tourist Park* and drove West on what was a sultry humid day in the sugar cane fields.

Sultry day in the Sugar Cane Fields.



Peter Faust Dam was massive and in common with other such infrastructure these days was fenced off. Disappointed that any rock wallabies seen would be in the distance, I remembered a great recent trip report by *Valentin Moser* who mentioned the rock wallabies had been seen at a campground on approach to the dam.

The campground was *Kanga Lions Campground* on the right hand side of the road 500m before the dam. After seeking permission and advice from the helpful caretakers, I found out that the rock wallabies appear each day around 4pm to graze.

Right on cue at 4pm around ten rock wallabies emerged from the surrounding bush, these animals were unsurprisingly quite habituated to people.

Unadorned Rock Wallaby.



A second species of rock wallaby in the *Proserpine* area is called the **Proserpine Rock Wallaby**, and I spent the last hour of daylight unsuccessfully searching roads that passed through suitable habitat between *Proserpine* and *Airlie Beach* for this species.

After dark, I returned to *Peter Faust Dam* and warm humid conditions had enticed out an python, that sadly had become roadkill. I stopped to examine the python and flushed a **Boobook Owl** from trees adjacent to the road.

As the road traverses the dam wall there were several **Unadorned Rock Wallabies** grazing on the road verge and adjacent vegetation. A spotlight near the quarry to the left of the dam wall produced a singular **House Mouse** and **Sugar Glider** only, so I returned early to *Proserpine*. At the caravan park was a **Brushtail Possum** foraging in the tree above my tent.

Brushtail Possum.



The following day I continued North to *Bowling Green National Park* 25kms South of *Townsville*. The scenery at the *Mount Elliot* section of the park was magnificent with both rugged mountains and beautiful forest.

Alligator Creek and Mount Elliot - Bowling Green National Park.



Mid-afternoon temperatures were warm so I took advantage of beautiful *Alligator Creek* and had a cooling dip, watched on by a sunbathing **Saw-shelled Turtle**.

Saw-shelled Turtle.



Townsville and the surrounding area had suffered catastrophic flooding during the previous wet season and I had read prior to the trip that *Alligator Creek Campground* was closed for camping due to erosion, although the day use area was still open. **Agile Wallabies** were common late afternoon grazing at the campground and day use area.

Agile Wallaby.



Allied Rock Wallabies are another species reputed to be common at *Alligator Creek Campground*, although at the time of my visit they were scarce, possibly due to all the recent rain they had dispersed throughout the park now there was abundant graze.

Brush Turkeys however, were abundant here, as indeed they are along most of *Australia's East Coast*, and it was a real joy to watch their amusing territorial antics.

Searching the campground area I eventually saw an **Allied Rock Wallaby** late afternoon. Satisfied I drove to nearby *Sunbird Lodge Motel* where I was staying the night. I chose *Sunbird Lodge* because of its close proximity to *Bowling Green NP* and returned after dark for a short spotlight, seeing two **Brushtail Possums**.

The following morning, I returned to *Alligator Creek Day Use Area* and had great views of a single **Allied Rock Wallaby** grazing on the campground grass.

Allied Rock Wallaby.



It was a further hour and a half drive North to the town of *Ingham*, as far North as I would go on this part of the trip, before returning the hire car to *Rockhampton*. I stopped at magnificent *Jourama Falls* to break up the drive. *Jourama Falls* is one of the few sites known for Australia's rarest gliding possum, and I hoped to get back here after dark to search for this species.

Jourama Falls.



At *Ingham* I set up camp at *Ingham Tourist Park* then drove to the *Botanical Gardens* on *McIlwraith Street*. Here there is a flying-fox colony, which at one time had all four Australian species of flying-fox resident, but at the time of my visit contained two species, **Spectacled** and **Black Flying Foxes**.

Black Flying Fox



Later that afternoon I made the long drive to *Mt Claro*, West of *Mt Fox* a site where there had been previous sightings of the **Sharman's (Mt Claro) Rock Wallaby**. The first 40km of the drive is flat terrain through sugar cane fields, before the road becomes incredibly narrow and windy for 15kms as it passes up into the *Seaview Range*. The final 20km on top of the range was sealed as far as the township of *Mt Fox* but past that the road is unsealed, although it was in good condition at the time I visited.

I had unsuccessfully tried to obtain the phone number of the *Kilclooney Station* at *Ingham Visitors Centre* prior to my visit, so I had resigned myself to driving the 8km past *Mt Claro* to the homestead to seek permission from the landowners. Fortunately, I came across the owner on the road shortly after passing *Mt Fox* who was happy for me to view the rock wallabies.

After parking the car I made the 1km walk to *Mount Claro* where immediately I saw **Sharman's Rock Wallabies**. I saw around ten rock wallabies over the course of an hour, although these animals were flighty compared to other rock wallabies I had seen previously in *Queensland*.

Sharman's Rock Wallaby.



It was dry Savannah country out at *Mt Claro* and on the walk back to the car I saw both **Common Wallaroo** and **Emu**.

The following day I explored the excellent *Tyto Wetlands* in *Ingham* and was impressed by the sheer numbers of birds at this fantastic location, including remarkable species that had long been on my to-see list like the **Comb-crested Jacana**.

In addition to the prolific birdlife there was an impressive **Saltwater Crocodile** resident in the wetland and a good reason not to get too close to the water!

That night I visited *Jourama Falls* 24km South of *Ingham* to look for the **Mahogany Glider**, but first I called in at *Tyto Wetlands* for a quick spotlight and saw both **Agile Wallabies** and a **Northern Brown Bandicoot**, as well as numerous **Microbats** hawking in the insect rich environment.

At *Jourama Falls* it was a still, moonless night and I couldn't believe it when within five minutes of spotlighting I found a **Mahogany Glider**. It was low in a tree between the river and carparking area. The glider froze in the spotlight with its tail hanging low allowing clear views, aiding identification.

The geographical range of the **Mahogany Glider** is a mere 122kms along the *Queensland Coast* between *Crystal Creek* and *Hull River*. It is endangered due to habitat clearance of lowland rainforest. I was very lucky indeed.

Mahogany Glider.



Shortly afterwards I disturbed a **Giant White-tailed Rat** feeding on the fallen fruit, up into a vine thicket, where I got excellent views of this *Australia's* largest rodent.

Giant White-tailed Rat.



Despite lots of rustlings in the undergrowth I saw nothing more, and decided to quit while I was ahead to make the short drive back to *Ingham*.

Returning South, my final stop on the *Central Queensland* leg of the trip was the fabulous *Hidden Valley Resort* West of the *Paluma Range*, and 91km North of *Townsville*. The road West of *Paluma* township was unsealed and a little rough in places, especially the dry creek crossings, but I managed to get through in my little hired sedan.

The owners at *Hidden Valley* have marked a couple of walk trails near the property, and after arriving I walked to the *Pine Creek Rock Pools*, where I saw both **Agile Wallabies** and **Sharman's Rock Wallabies**, the latter on rocky outcrops near where the trail crosses the river.

Both nights I spotlighted around the property, and also along the access road and down the main road to the river, and I found mammals plentiful.

Around the *Hidden Valley Cabins* after dark over two nights, I saw **Sharman's Rock Wallaby** (six animals on the first night alone,) **Brushtail Possums**, a **Sugar Glider** in a grevillea and a **Bush Rat**.

Spotlighting the access road and down the main road to the river, I saw all of **Sugar Gliders**, **Greater Gliders** and a **Squirrel Glider**, around 30 **Brushtail Possums** over the two nights, as well as **Northern Brown Bandicoots** in creek lines.

Greater Glider.



During my first night at *Hidden Valley* the owners trapped a **Bush Rat** that had been causing mayhem in the kitchen, and I was delighted to be tasked with releasing the little bandit. After release I managed a few photos of this usually camera-shy mammal before it disappeared into a rockpile.

Bush Rat.



Golden Grevillea was in flower at the time of my visit, and while at night it was attracting **Sugar Gliders**, during the day they were appealing to the nectar eating birds, including both **Scarlet Honeyeaters** and **Rainbow Lorikeets**. Another bird found at *Hidden Valley* was my favourite bird of the trip, the beautiful **Pale-headed Rosella**.

Hidden Valley is a very special place and I would highly recommend visiting, not only for the wildlife and location but also for the best cooking in *Queensland*!

I now had the unenviable task of driving 10 hours South to *Rockhampton* to return the hire car. From *Rockhampton* I was flying North to *Cairns* and the *Atherton Tablelands*, and ultimately *Cape York Peninsula*.

This and other information on Australian Wildlife can be found on my blog www.quollingaround.wordpress.com

