

The South Ridge Picnic/Creek Walk

Biodiversity Guide to Flora and Fauna



The following is a guide and checklist to some of the plant, bird and mammal diversity along the South Ridge/Picnic Creek Walk. This guide should be used in conjunction with the trail map. The arid zone is very unpredictable and stochastic. Thus plants germinate from seeds or other propagules according to rainfall, temperature and the run of the seasons. The checklist given here is indicative only and you may be able to add plant species during a good season and find few in a drought. Likewise few animals are sedentary on the scale circumscribed by the walk. The habitat is too

patchy and the resources too stochastic. Thus the diversity of mammals and birds may rise and fall with the run of the seasons. To make a positive identification of a plant or animal you may need one of a number of excellent field guides that we recommend at the end. Some of these are too weighty to comfortably carry so you may have to record your observations in a notebook with a photograph or sketch for later confirmation. Please record any new species in the Sighting Book available in the Quarters where the maps and guides are distributed.

The sections are numbered sequentially according to the trail map although more emphasis is placed on transitions between different habitats. Thus section 1 is the trail from the starting point to the first numbered marker or habitat transition.

Section 1 (Homestead to the First Ridge)

This large open stretch of shrubland is dominated by pearl bluebush and some scattered black bluebush. Grey copperburr is also abundant here. In small patches of shade provided by the larger bluebushes small green areas of New Zealand spinach, streaked poverty bush, square-fruit twinleaf and velvet potato bush can be found. A line of red gums can be seen to the right of the track extending from the homestead. Moving along, the track is cut by a number of small creek beds lined with belah and supporting patches of shrubby groundsel, clover and grasses. Straying off the track in places one can see some scattered camel melons. A

number of common bottle washers and niggerheads can be found along the trail.

Birds to be seen in this section include the crested pigeon in the belah along the creek bed and the Australian raven. A number of large anthills are also scattered about the area.

Section 2 (Quartzite Ridge)

Along the ridge there is a noticeable thinning of vegetation. The ridge is lined with twisted mulga trees. Pearl bluebush still dominates this region and small patches of velvet potato bush and silver tails occur. A small number of showy foxtails and paddy melons may also be found here. Grey copperburr can be found along with some wooly copperburr.

This area is a good place to look for euros as they largely feed in these upland hilly areas.

Section 3 (Drop to Picnic Creek)

As the trail drops down into the creek in the saddle between two peaks the atmosphere is more sheltered from the wind and sun than the ridge. A resurgence of New Zealand spinach and velvet potato bush can be noted, along with some flatweed and variable daisy. Pearl bluebush is still abundant mixed with some black bluebush and grey copperburrs. In this more sheltered section insect life thrives with large numbers of crickets, locusts, spiders, butterflies and moths. This section of the creek is home to insectivorous birds, such as willie wagtails and welcome swallows, with several species nesting

in the belah, dead finish and other wattle trees on the banks.



Section 4 (Crossing to the Tramline)

Moving across this rolling hilly area vegetation becomes sparse but large green patches of New Zealand spinach and pale and streaked poverty bush spring up in shade offered by belah and mulga trees. Pearl bluebush remains dominant here but as the trail climbs the steep slope to the two peaks of the second ridge a more diverse community becomes established. Plants to be seen on the slopes include London rocket, saffron thistle and some desert rice flower. This hilly ground also provides an excellent chance to see some Euros grazing on the slopes.

Section 5 (Following the Ridge to Picnic Creek)

Passing the interesting rock formations to the other side of the ridge, along the creek bed, belah and mulga are once again present. On the eastern slope of the ridge pop saltbush and showy foxtails become more common along with silvertails and common pigweed.

Crossing the open land to join Picnic Creek, pearl bluebush is abundant along with many silvertails, grey copperburrs and velvet potato bush. Scattered patches of kerosene grass along with common bottle-washers are also present.

Section 6 (Picnic Creek)

The Creek is lined with many large river red gums that provide shade for a heavy growth of New Zealand spinach, common heliotrope, gall weed and velvet potato bush. Some tufted bluebell can be found lining the banks of the creek as well as some pop saltbush, quena, fruit salad plant, square-fruit twinleaf and silvertails. The red gums are home to a large number of very noisy little corella along with a smaller number of galahs. It is also likely that the mulga parrot will be seen in this area as well as crested pigeon and yellow-rumped and chestnut-rumped thornbills. Large groups of chirruping wedgebill can be found amongst the low scrub on either side of the creek.

Section 7 (Fowlers Creek)

This section is dominated by river red gum, prickly wattle, fruit salad plant with some London rocket and New Zealand spinach. Black bluebush, pearl bluebush and thorny saltbush dominate further back from the creek bed. Saffron thistle and a few *Sclerolaena spp.* grow in small numbers on the left hand bank.



Many birds can be found here: mostly little corella, galah, chestnut-rumped thornbill, welcome swallow, willie wagtail and tree martin.

Mammals include euros and red kangaroos.

Section 8 (Roadside and Homestead Creek)

A surprising variety of plants can be found on the roadside including woolly copperburr, variable daisy, Mexican poppy and native thornapple. Homestead creek can be described much as Fowlers creek in the previous section.

Credits: This guide was prepared by John McEvoy (University of NSW and Institute of Technology, Sligo Ireland) with the assistance of David Croft and Enhua Lee (UNSW).



The guide is part of a UNSW research project in collaboration with the CRC for Sustainable Tourism and NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. The aim of this project is to develop and implement products to support a vibrant wildlife tourism industry in the rangelands of the Outback. Some more information can be found at our web site <http://www.bios.unsw.edu.au/rootourism/>.

Field Guides

- Cunningham, G.M., Mulham, W.E., Milthorpe, P.L. and Leigh, J.H. (1981). *Plants of Western New South Wales*. NSW Government Printing Office, Sydney
- Dawson, T.J. 1995. *Kangaroos: Biology of the largest marsupials*. UNSW Press, Sydney
- Simpson, K. and Day, N. 1999. *Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*. 6th Ed. Penguin Books, Melbourne.
- Strahan, R. 1995. *The Mammals of Australia*. Reed New Holland, Sydney

Checklist of mammals and birds

MAMMALS

Marsupials

- Red kangaroo (*Macropus rufus*)
- Euro (*Macropus robustus erubescens*)

BIRDS

- Crested Pigeon (*Ocyphaps (Geophaps) lophotes*)
- Galah (*Eolophus (Cacatua) roseicapilla*)
- Little Corella (*Cacatua sanguinea*)

Australian (Mallee) Ringneck (*Barnardius zonarius barnardi*)

Mulga Parrot (*Psephotus varius*)

Variegated Fairy-wren (*Malurus lamberti*)

White-winged Fairy-wren (*Malurus leucopterus*)

Chestnut-rumped Thornbill (*Acanthiza uropygialis*)

Yellow-rumped Thornbill (*Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*)

Striped Honeyeater (*Plectorhyncha lanceolata*)

Yellow-throated Minor (*Manorina flavigula*)

Singing Honeyeater (*Lichenostomus virescens*)

White-plumed Honeyeater (*Lichenostomus penicillatus*)

Chirruping Wedgebill (*Psophodes occidentalis*)

Hooded robin (*Melanodryas cucullata*)

Willie Wagtail (*Rhipidura leucophrys*)

Australian Magpie (*Gymnorhina tibicen*)

Australian Raven (*Corvus coronoides*)

Welcome Swallow (*Cheramoeca leucosternus*)

Tree Martin (*Hirundo nigricans*)

Fairy Martin (*Hirundo ariel*)

Checklist of plants

POACEAE

- Kerosene Grass (*Aristida contorta*)
- Small Flower Wallaby Grass (*Austrodanthonia setacea*)
- Common Bottlewashers (*Enneapogon avenaceus*)
- Niggerheads (*Enneapogon nigricans*)

CASUARINAE

Belah (*Casuarina cristata*)

CHENOPODIACEAE

- Bladder Saltbush (*Atriplex vesicularia*)
- Green Copperburr (*Sclerolaena decurrens*)

Grey Copperburr (*Sclerolaena diacantha*)

Pale Povertybush (*Sclerolaena divaricata*)

Silky Copperburr (*Sclerolaena eriacantha*)

Woolly Copperburr (*Sclerolaena lanicuspis*)

Pearl Copperburr (*Sclerolaena limbata*)

Streaked Povertybush (*Sclerolaena tricuspis*)

Black Buebush (*Maireana pyramidata*)

Pearl Bluebush (*Maireana sedifolia*)

Thorny Saltbush (*Rhagodia spinescens*)

Pop Saltbush (*Atriplex holocarpa*)

Bitter Saltbush (*Atriplex stipitata*)

AMARANTHACEAE

Silver-tails (*Ptilotus obovatus* var. *obovatus*)

Showy Foxtail (*Ptilotus exaltatus*)

AIZOACEAE

New Zealand Spinach (*Tetragonia tetragonioides*)

PORTULACACEAE

Common Pigweed (*Portulaca oleracea*)

Large Pigweed (*Portulaca intraterranea*)

PAPAVERACEAE

Mexican Poppy (*Argemone ochroleuca*)

BRASSICACEAE

London Rocket (*Sisymbrium irio*)

MIMOSACEAE

Mulga (*Acacia aneura* var. *aneura*)

Broad-leaf Mulga (*Acacia aneura* var. *latifolia*)

Umbrella Mulga (*Acacia brachystachya*)

Needle Wattle (*Acacia rigens*)

Dead Finish (*Acacia tetragonophylla*)

Prickly Wattle (*Acacia victoria*)

ZYGOPHYLLACEAE

Square-fruit Twinleaf (*Zygophyllum prismatothecum*)

Gall Weed (*Zygophyllum apiculatum*)

EUPHORBIACEAE

Caustic Weed (*Euphorbia drummondii*)

MALVACEAE

Malvastrum (*Malvastrum americanum*)

Twiggy Sida (*Sida instricta*)

THYMELAEACEAE

Desert Rice Flower (*Pimelea simplex*)

MYRTACEAE

River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis* var. *camaldulensis*)

River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis* var. *obtusa*)

Silver Leaf Ironbark (*Eucalyptus melanopholia*)

BORAGINACEAE

Common Heliotrope (*Heliotropium europaeum*)

Paterson's's Curse (*Echium plantagineum*)

SOLANACEAE

Velvet Potato-bush (*Solanum ellipticum*)

Native Thornapple (*Datura leichardtii*)

Quena (*Solanum esuriale*)

PLANTAGINACEAE

Small Sago-weed (*Plantago turrifera*)

CUCURBITACEAE

Camel Melon (*Citrullus lanatus*)

Paddy Melon (*Cucumis myriocarpus*)

CAMPANULACEAE

Tufted Bluebell (*Wahlenbergia communis*)

ASTERACEAE

Shrubby Groundsel (*Senecio sp.*)

Fruit-salad Plant (*Pterocaulon sphacelatum*)

Saffron Thistle (*Carthamus lanatus*)

Bogan Flea (*Calotis hispidula*)

Variable Daisy (*Brachycome ciliaris*)

Fuzzweed (*Vittadinia triloba*)

Flatweed (*Hypochoeris radicata*)