

Wednesday Walk – Yankee Hat, Namadgi National Park – 22 March 2017

By the time we reached the Namadgi Visitor Centre, we'd left behind the fog enveloping parts of Canberra and emerged into a warm and sunny day. On the way to the Yankee Hat car park, we had a couple of interactions with the local wildlife. On the winding stretch of Naas Road a large male Wallaroo was standing at the edge of the road, but obligingly jumped over the low metal guard-rail and onto the steep slope below. Later into our journey, we passed a large mob of Eastern Grey Kangaroos scattered over a grassy slope and had a near miss with two of them who decided to cross the road.

From the car park, Yankee Hat Mountain towers in the distance. The beginning of the walk is across a wide expanse of grassland dotted with the occasional rocky outcrop of grey granite where we were lazily observed by a few groups of kangaroos resting in the sunshine. In the past, this area was extensively grazed by farm animals, so most of the surviving vegetation was nestled amongst the protective rocky outcrops. An exception was the Pale Everlasting Daisy, *Coronidium gunnianum* (previously *Helichrysum rutidolepis*) which was covering extensive areas with its silver leaves and lemon-yellow flowers. And all three species of the hardy local New Holland Daisies were also scattered through that area — *Vittadinia muelleri*, *V. cuneata* and *V. gracilis*.

Amongst the rocks, there were a few *Solanum linearifolium* (Mountain Kangaroo Apple), *Rubus parvifolius* (Native Raspberry) and Mat-rushes (*Lomandra longifolia* and *L. multiflora*). Capping the larger granite outcrops were neat canopies of *Eucalyptus stellulata* (Black Sallee) and *E. pauciflora* (Snow Gum). Most of the trees were multi-stemmed, possibly due to past grazing or some climatic event.

We eventually came to the little wooden bridge over the Bogong Creek which fringes Bogong Swamp, a large area of swampland covered in a thick growth of *Carex gaudichaudiana* and other sedges and rushes. A small patch of *Lythrum salicaria* was growing in the mud under the bridge.

Beyond the swamp the vegetation was in a better condition. There was Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*), Weeping Grass (*Microlaena stipoides*) and other native grasses. We found a single, robust *Olearia erubescens* growing in splendid isolation on an open area. Then, for a while, we walked through a remnant forest of *Eucalyptus pauciflora*, *E. stellulata*, *E. dives* and *E. viminalis* surrounded in places by substantial granite boulders, smoothed and rounded over the centuries by hot summers and freezing winter weather. *Mirbelia oxylloboides* was the most prevalent understorey plant, but there were a few *Cullen microcephalum* and *Leucopogon hookeri* and one or two Scaly Buttons (*Leptorhynchus squamatus*) beside the path. And, huddled close to a large eucalypt trunk, a small population of *Coprosma hirtella* was growing in the shade. Some of the rocks had split and moved over the centuries resulting in strange shapes, such as the huge stone koala we saw clinging to a rock and looking up at the sky.

The country opened out to another grassy area where we passed a huge multi-stemmed Ribbon Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) standing on its own. Then we were back amongst the trees, including some *Acacia melanoxylon* with a few *Cassinia longifolia* as understorey, as we approached the paintings on the under-cut of a massive granite boulder. The paintings are of humans and various local animals (kangaroos, dingoes, turtles and birds) in white clay and orange ochre — there are ochre (iron oxide) quarries at Michelago and Gungahlin. We sat under the wide curve of the overhanging rock for lunch, watching a drift of mottled cloud and absorbing the history of a site where people had camped for thousands of years.

On the return trip we found a few more plants that we hadn't noticed before — two *Ozothamnus thyrsoides* by the side of the forest path and, when we were almost back to the car park, some Gruggle Bush (*Melicytus dentatus*, previously *Hymenanthera dentata*) amongst some rocks. And, scrambling through the cracks in the same outcrop, was a carpet of the prostrate Beard Heath, *Leucopogon fraseri*.

On our way back to the car park, we were observed from high above by a Wedge-tailed Eagle, and earlier in the day we had been serenaded by a Grey Butcher-bird. Amongst the arthropods we saw were a female Wolf Spider carrying her large family of tiny spiderlings on her back, a very large Golden Orb-weaver Spider that managed to catch Brigitta in its silky golden web and a beautiful lime-green Praying Mantis. The sightings of wildlife didn't stop there either. On the way back along the road, Bill saw a Red-bellied Black Snake and Mike and Gail both managed to photograph a magnificent rusty-coated Dingo.

Yankee Hat could definitely be recommended as a walk full of history, wide views of the landscape and encounters with living creatures that share this land with us.

Text: Jo Walker; Photos: Brigitta Wimmer (BW), Gail Ritchie Knight (GRK), Mike Shihoff (MS)



Coronidium gunnianum (GRK)



Convolvulus angustissimus (MS)



Crossing Bogong Swamp (MS))



Morning tea (GRK)



Granite outcrop (GRK)



Solanum linearifolium (GRK)



Cynoglossum australe fruits (BW)



Eucalyptus pauciflora (GRK)



Leucopogon fraseri (BW)



Eucalyptus pauciflora (GRK)



Scribbles on *E. pauciflora* bark (GRK)



Eucalyptus pauciflora leaves (GRK)



Aboriginal rock art at Yankee Hat (GRK)



Looking back towards Yankee Hat (GRK)



Female Wolf Spider carrying her babies on her back (MS)



Eucalyptus viminalis (GRK)



Eucalyptus viminalis leaves (GRK)



Daytime moth feeding and obscuring a native daisy (MS)



We saw this beautiful dingo on the drive out of Namadgi National Park (GRK)