

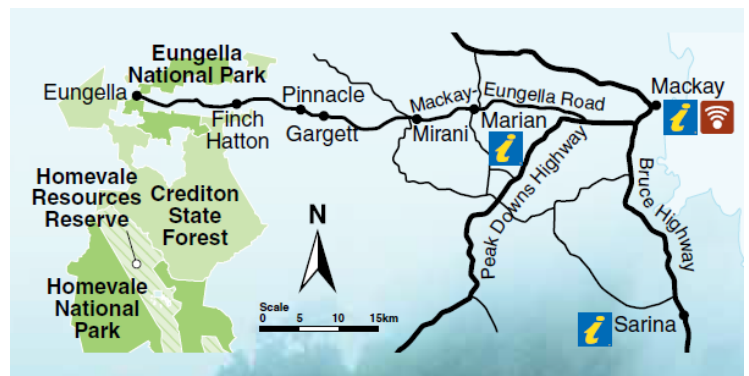
SLIDE 1 Mackay Hinterlands Excursion; 5 – 12 May 2026

We are preparing a report for the journal about the endemic and interesting species we encountered on this trip, so tonight I thought we would report in a different way and just run you through a day by day account of our adventures.



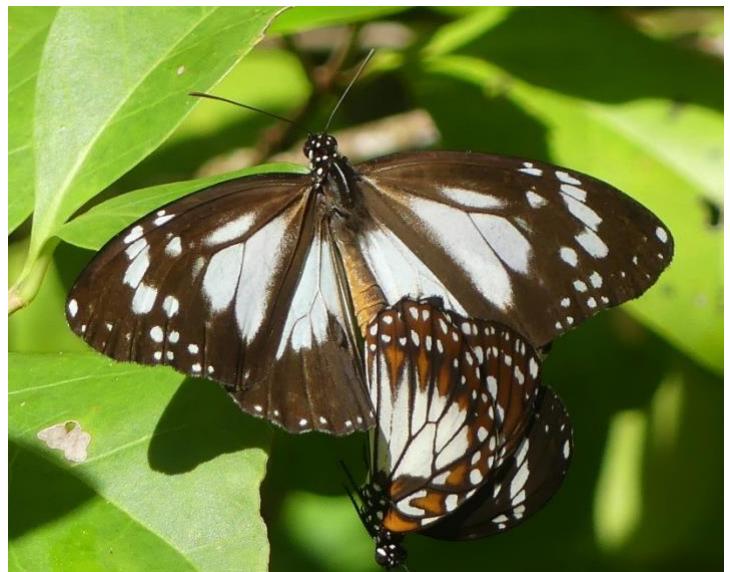
SLIDE 2 The main target areas

- Eungella National Park; a rainforest on the Clark Range, with sections of cloud forest – higher areas frequently covered by low level cloud
- Crediton State Forest covers lower altitude areas of the range with wet sclerophyll vegetation,
- Finch Hatton National Park is situated below the range comprising a pocket of rainforest along Cattle Creek
- Homevale National Park is on the western side of the Clark Range and lies within the Brigalow Belt
- De Moleyns Lagoon, is near Mirani in the Pioneer Valley. It was nominated by Birdlife Mackay as the best birding spot of the area.



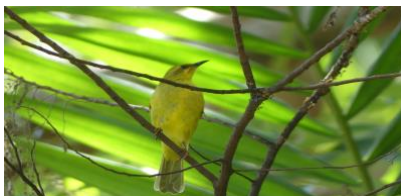
SLIDE 3 May 4

Since the excursion officially began on May 5, nearly everyone arrived in Mackay on May 4. However, six of us found ourselves arriving by accident on May 3. So, we did what bored Naturalists do – we looked for somewhere to investigate and explored Dunrock Conservation Reserve, a small area at the mouth of Sandy Creek. The area was alive with butterflies and we identified about 13 different species.



SLIDE 4 May 5 - Mackay Botanic Gardens

On the first official day of the excursion, we met at Mackay Botanic Gardens. You might remember that the gardens were designed by Lawrie Smith and officially opened in 2003. The gardens receive considerable support from Native Plants Qld, Mackay branch, and members joined our group to show us around. We were also joined by members of Birdlife Mackay, so a rather large group of approx. 25 people spent a couple of hours wandering, exchanging experiences and naturalising. Again, there were lots of butterflies on the wing with the highlights being the Zodiac moths, a large day flying moth, aka Noth Qld Day Moth; and the green spotted triangle. Naturally, there were also many birds present. The three local species featured in this slide are the shining bronze cuckoo, the yellow honeyeater, and the plumed whistling ducks.



SLIDE 5 May 5, 6, 7 - Eungella National Park, Broken River

The first three days were spent exploring Eungella National Park, and the greater Eungella area. The first stop for most of us was to see the platypus and the Eastern Saw-shelled turtle. The platypus were very active and there seemed to be couple of young, smaller ones in addition to an adult.



SLIDE 6 May 6 – Diggings Rd

On the first full day, everyone was really keen to get out and find the Jewell in the Crown – the Eungella honeyeater. Harry had done some pre-excursion rambling and identified their call in a couple of areas. Sure enough, we found one!



SLIDE 7 May 7 – Dalrymple Rd

Luckily, we had better visibility the next day and found three or four working in some flowering trees along Dalrymple Rd, so everyone was able to get a good look. Meanwhile, Annie got a great photo.



SLIDE 8 May 7 – Broken River

All the best excursions include spot-lighting. With Harry leading, we found frogs, of course, but also this spiny katydid with the delightful scientific name of *Phricka zwicki*. According to iNaturalist, this species is not widespread and has been recorded only in rainforests behind Brisbane/Sunshine Coast, Cairns, and now at Eungella.



SLIDE 9 May 7 – Broken River

Other species encountered at night included two molluscs, the Giant mid-eastern snail (a Eungella endemic) and the chameleon semi-slug (this is the first iNat observation south of the Atherton Tablelands). But perhaps the most spectacular species was the Eungella leaf-tail gecko. It was reasonably common but you can see how well camouflaged they are in Cathie's photo here.

Giant mid-eastern snail

Sphaerospirra informis

Chameleon semi-slug

Fastosarion brazieri

Eungella leaf-tailed gecko

Phyllurus nepthys



SLIDE 10 May 8 - Homevale NP

On the eighth of May we headed west past Eungella Dam and down the Clarke Range to Homevale National Park. Adjacent to the park is a special resources reserve surrounding the site of Mt Britton, an historic gold mining town, and, I believe, an Aboriginal massacre site. There are still gold mining leases being worked in the reserve. We met one resident couple, while other leaseholders are weekend hobby miners. After the rain and cold of Eungella, we spent a lovely day in the sun and found a fan-tailed cuckoo by following his persistent call.



SLIDE 11 May 9 -De Moleyns Lagoon

- The next day, Saturday, we travelled down to Mirani to reprovision, refuel, and buy a decent coffee. De Moleyns lagoon is a medium sized water body that is frequented by Birdlife Mackay because of its considerable range of water and land birds. Birdlife and Native Plants members joined us. We identified 24 bird species and two species of turtle although we may have a misidentification there.
- Australasian Darter
- Australasian Grebe
- Australian White Ibis
- Black Kite
- Black Swan
- Black-faced Cuckooshrike
- Blue-winged Kookaburra
- Chestnut-breasted Mannikin
- Cotton Pygmy-Goose
- Dusky Moorhen
- Fork-tailed Kite
- Great Egret
- Grey Fantail
- Little Pied Cormorant
- Magpie-lark
- Pacific Black Duck
- Peaceful Dove
- Rainbow Bee-eater
- Royal Spoonbill
- Sahul brush cuckoo
- Spangled Drongo
- Whistling Kite
- White-browed Robin
- Willie Wagtail

LIDE 12 May 9 - Finch Hatton NP

Lunch was at the Pinnacle pub, which is yet another pub claiming the best homemade pies in Australia. We all agreed that they were pretty good! Then we ventured into Finch Hatton Gorge. The scenery in the gorge is spectacular, with cascades and a granite stream, while the rainforest contains slightly different plants to Eungella. My target was the endemic Eungella Day-frog. Harry had surveyed the gorge a few days earlier and told me where and how to look so I found one!



SLIDE 13

Luckily Harry had earlier found half a dozen and got a good photograph.

Eungella dayfrog
Taudactylus eungellensis
Photo: Harry Hines



SLIDE 14 May 10 - Crediton SF

On Sunday, our new friends from Mackay who joined us at Eungella for the weekend, took us to one of their survey points in Crediton State Forest. The birds were a little quiet but Terry photographed a varied sitella while I found a grey goshawk.



SLIDE 15 May 11

On Monday, the weather closed in and the rain got serious; we were getting first-hand experience of the cloud forest. We ventured out briefly to look for the Eungella tinker-frog that calls in the rain but were unsuccessful. The rest of the day was spent drinking coffee and hot chocolate in the lovely old Eungella Chalet and catching up on iNaturalist. The next day, Tuesday, we decamped a day early; wet and tired but happy.



SLIDE 16 Statistics – a round-up

1152 Observations of 481 species

Insects 224

- 138 Lepidoptera
- 33 Odonata

Birds

- 73 photographed (iNaturalist)
- 117 seen and heard (eBird)

Plants 101

- 28 Ferns
- 10 Orchids
- 5 Mistletoe

Fungi 31

Arachnids 14

Reptiles 11

Mammals 8

Amphibians 7

Mollusks 3

Other 8

SLIDE 17 Endemic species observed

- Eungella Honeyeater *Bolemoreus hindwoodi*
- S-Spot Darner *Austroaeschna christine*
- Eungella Darner *Austroaeschna eungella*
- Eungella stick insect *Candovia eungellensis*
- Leaf-tailed gecko *Phyllurus nepthys*
- Eungella Day frog *Taudactylus eungellensis*
- Liem's Tinker frog *Taudactylus liemi*

SLIDE 18 (sunrise over Pioneer Valley)

