



Ngunnawal people welcome you to

Namadgi National Park

Yankee Hat



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Rock Art Site & Walking Track



The Rock

The shelter at Yankee Hat is a granite boulder which has been rounded off and under-cut by weathering. The rounding effect is sometimes called 'onion-skin weathering' caused by repeated heating and cooling. The painted surface can crumble—one important reason not to touch it. The cream coloured streaks on the rock are feldspar deposits washed down by rain. The black to grey deposits are probably organic in origin which may in future allow a more precise dating of the paintings.

The Paint

The white paint used at Yankee Hat is clay. The red paint is based on iron oxide or 'ochre'. The nearest known ochre quarries are at Michelago and Gungahlin. The different shades of red in the paintings may be the result of paint weathering or may have been deliberately caused by mixing some white clay with the ochre. Clay and ochre were normally mixed with a binding agent such as water, sap, blood or animal oils.

The Art: an appreciation

Some of the Yankee Hat figures represent animals but there are many abstract and human-like figures. Their meanings may have varied according to the viewer's level of initiation into tribal tradition.

Some figures were painted in groupings which may describe relationships between the different figures. One example comprises the four white figures on the left resembling a kangaroo, a turtle and two dingoes. Can you see any other groupings?

We will never know the precise meaning of the paintings but we can be fairly certain that they were not random works of individual expression. The strict conventions in style over a very long period of time and across all sites in the area indicate great cultural importance attached to the art.

The Art: style and age

Aboriginal rock art style is consistent throughout the Southern Tablelands and is similar to sites in central western NSW.

The figures at Yankee Hat were painted over a period of hundreds or possibly thousands of years. The earliest paintings are faint dark red/brown. The most recent are the well-preserved white and orange/red ones.

Carbon dating of the camp-site deposits in the Yankee Hat rock-shelter show that Aboriginal people began using the shelter earlier than 800 years ago. Evidence from nearby sites suggests that people were camping in the area, and presumably painting, as long as 3700 years ago.

A Fragile Heritage

The Yankee Hat rock art is vulnerable. Make sure that you do not touch the art or the rock surface because:

- the oils from your skin will damage the painting;
- loose particles of paint will dislodge; and
- small flakes of rock will dislodge.

All Aboriginal sites and artefacts in the ACT are protected by law to ensure their long-term survival.

The names on the figures are based on the work of modern researchers, not on direct information from the people who painted at Yankee Hat. Traditional lifestyles in the Namadgi area were destroyed in the mid-1800s by European settlers taking the land and introducing diseases.

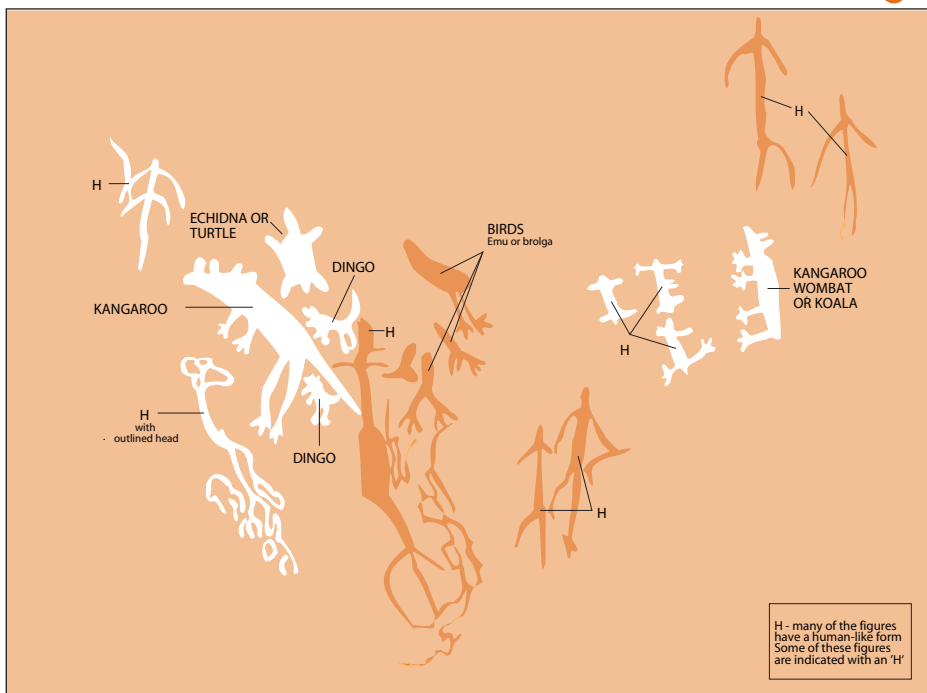
'Namadgi' is the Aboriginal name for the mountains south-west of Canberra. Namadgi National Park was declared in 1984 protecting all animals, plants and cultural sites. The name 'Yankee Hat' comes from the mountain to the west which is shaped like a colonial American hat.

Native Raspberry

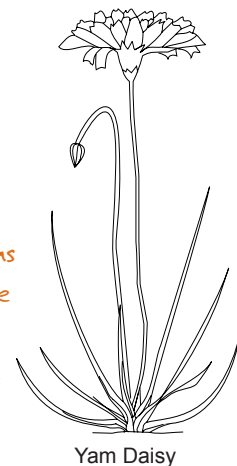


Mat Rush

Yankee Hat Rock Paintings



The close grouping of art and ceremonial sites in the central Namadgi ranges suggests this area was of special significance to Aboriginal people. The Yankee Hat rock shelter is one of the area's major sites.



Yam Daisy

Bogong Creek

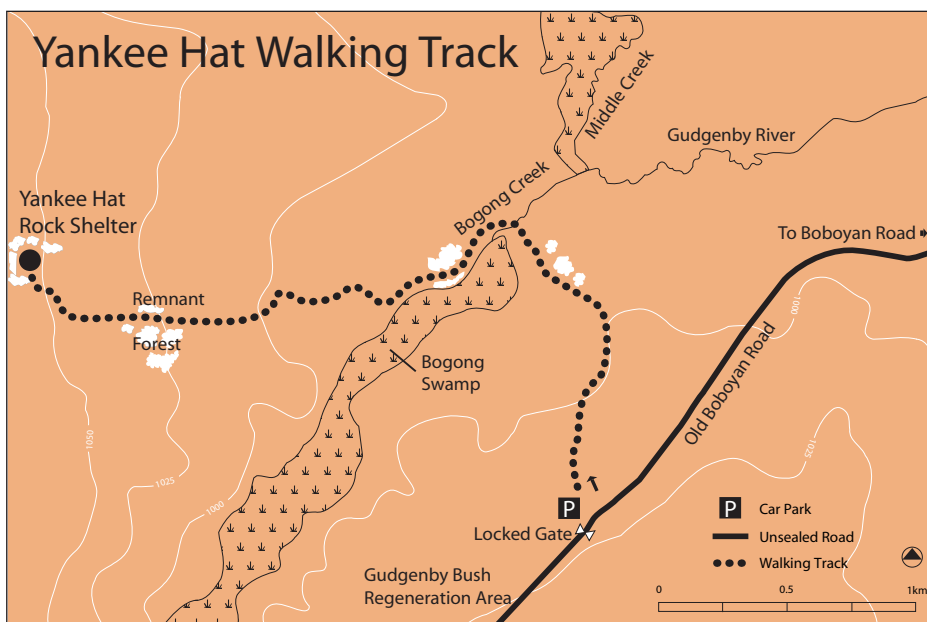
Flowing, open water within high banks provides a habitat for Platypus which were hunted by Aboriginal people. Maned Ducks and Pacific Black Ducks were caught for food and their eggs were collected.

Bogong Swamp

The thick rush vegetation and permanent water-logging has formed peat which is the black soil-like material. The swamp provided Aboriginal people with food such as waterbirds and snakes.

Remnants of a Forest

The forest has been cleared by Europeans for grazing cattle and sheep. This has increased the number of kangaroos in the area but has meant a loss of habitat for other animals such as wallaroos, possums, gliders, wallabies and bush birds. Some of the plants used by Aboriginal people still occur around the groups of large boulders. These include:



Walking Track

Yankee Hat Walking Track is an easy, 6 km return stroll. From the car park at the locked gate on the Boboyan Road, the track heads north through expansive grasslands and past mobs of Eastern Grey Kangaroos. It then veers west, skirting around Bogong Swamp and ends at the Yankee Hat Aboriginal Rock Art site.

Evidence of Aboriginal Life

Some of the high mountains that can be seen from the start of the track were visited by Aboriginal people. On Mt Namadgi there are arrangements of stones believed to be part of the ceremonial life of the Aboriginal people. On Mt Kelly there is evidence that Bogong Moths were collected for food. Bogong Moths migrate in late spring to rest or 'aestivate' in the rock clefts of these high mountains. Aboriginal people feasted on these moths, probably using the Yankee Hat area as a base camp and meeting area.

Aboriginal people lived in the area around Yankee Hat until the 1860s. Some evidence of this culture is still visible in this area.

Yam Daisy

swollen roots are edible

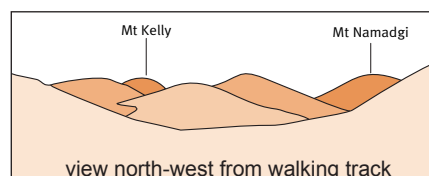
Native Raspberry

small, sweet fruits are edible

Mat Rush

leaf bases cooked and eaten

An 1885 map of 'Gudgenby' records the second half of the track as 'timbered with gum, peppermint and apple'. The remaining woodland is now providing seeds which are helping to return some of the cleared land back to forest.



view north-west from walking track

Further Information

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