

Cooleman Ridge Nature Trail



Self-guided Walk

Welcome to Cooleman Ridge Nature Reserve, one of over thirty reserves that make up Canberra Nature Park.



Healthy Parks
Healthy People

The information in this brochure refers to numbered posts along the marked walking trail. Most of the walk is an easy grade with some steep, rocky sections and steps leading down from Cooleman Trig. The 2.7 km track explores the interesting features of the reserve including the woodland, the wildlife and the history of the area. Allow between one and two hours. Dogs must be kept on a lead.

Cooleman Ridge was grazed by sheep and cattle for over 100 years and consequently has many introduced pasture grasses and weeds and fewer trees. The main tree species are Yellow Box, Blakely's Red Gum, Apple Box and Red Box. The trail is the result of collaboration between individuals from Canberra Nature Park, Weston Creek Rotary Club and Cooleman Ridge Park Care Group.

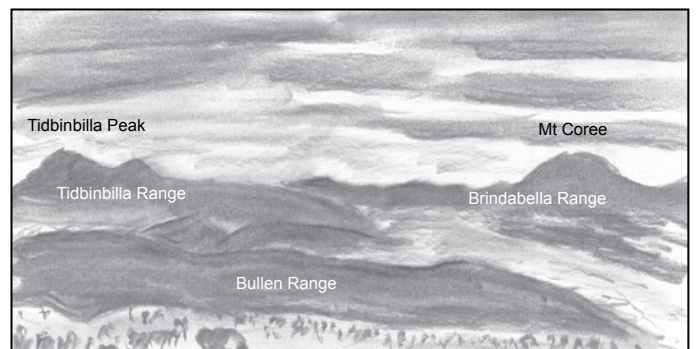
1. The first stretch of this trail follows part of the Bicentennial National Trail which winds its way between Melbourne and Cooktown.
2. When holding water this dam provides habitat for frogs and other wildlife including Maned Wood Ducks and White-faced Herons. The two large Blakely's Red Gums behind the bench have several native mistletoe skeletons on their branches. On the other side of the dam is the stump of a Red Stringybark which was burnt in the 2003 bushfires. A lot of seedlings are growing around it. The tree beyond it is a Red Box, a very common species of eucalypt in this area. Continue along the Bicentennial National Trail.
3. To the right, across the valley is a majestic Yellow Box tree. The hard wood of this species was earlier used for fence posts. Its flowers make good honey. The area with native grasses on the other side of the fence is tended by the Cooleman Ridge ParkCare Group while across the track the weeds have free reign. Notice the difference!
4. The big tree on the other side of the gate is a Scribbly Gum. On the southern slopes of this hill, called Fence Post Hill, the small Resurrection Fern and other native plants are regenerating as a result of cessation of grazing and weed removal.

5. Take a few minutes to look at the magnificent view to the west. Bullen Range is in the foreground and the high peak to the right is Mt Coree which is in the Brindabella Range. To the left is the Tidbinbilla Range with Tidbinbilla Peak.

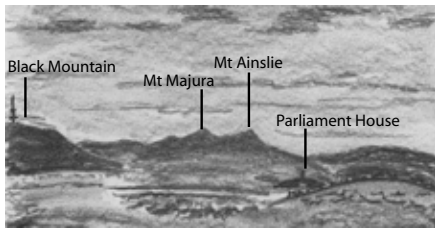
6. This is a grove of Mealy Bundy. A mealy or waxy white coating on the buds and small branches gives it its common name. Follow the track turning right.

7. The highest, isolated mountain to the south is Mt Tennent, which overlooks Tharwa. Mt Tennent was named after John Tennant (sic), a bushranger, who was arrested in 1827 by the manager of Duntroon, James Ainslie. Rumour has it that the bushranger and his gang had their hide-out in a cave on Mt Tennent.

8. Common Long-necked Tortoises can sometimes be seen swimming here with their long necks out of the water. Sit down and listen to the frog chorus



View to the west from Post 5. Illustration: Gosta Lynga



View from Post 14. Illustration: Gosta Lynga

around the dam. No two species of frog make the same call. How many can you hear? Shortly you'll re-join the Bicentennial National Trail. Then turn left through the gate.

9. The Coleman Ridge ParkCare Group plantings to your left and the one on the right-hand hill, known as Stonehenge, are from the early 1990s. Nowadays the group's conservation efforts are mainly in the form of weeding to create space for self-sown native seedlings. Walk up the track and turn left through the first gate.

10. Here you might see birds of prey such as kites, hawks or kestrels hunting nearby or maybe a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles gliding on the thermal currents.

11. The Coleman Trig point provides a magnificent panorama of Canberra's hills and of the surrounding mountains. The rocks are Laidlaw Volcanics, which were formed by a gigantic eruption 420 million years ago.

12. To the right of the track is False Sarsaparilla, a native creeper which has beautiful, purple pea flowers in late winter to spring.

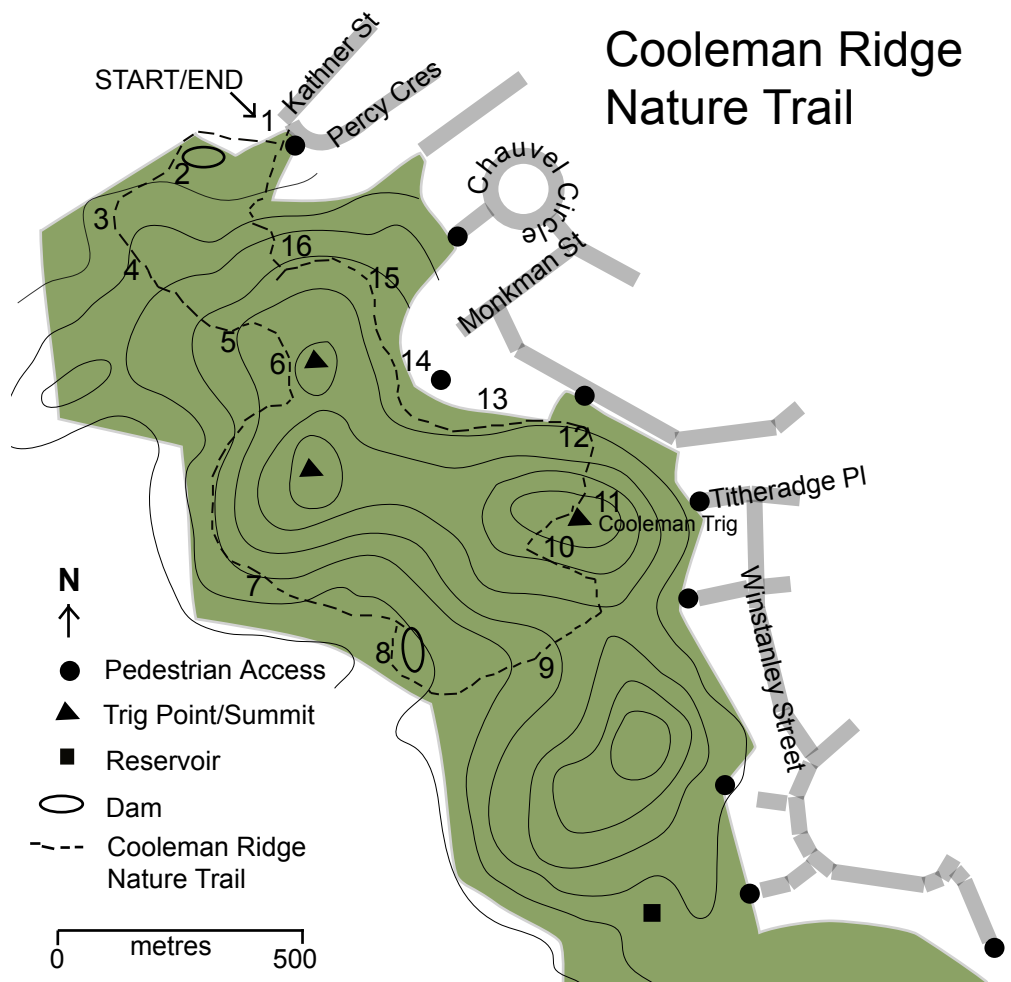
13. The bright green plants above the path are Native Cherries the 'berries' of which are an Aboriginal bush food.

14. From this point you can see the National Capital and some of its landmarks.

15. To the north-west you can see Mt Stromlo, the site of one of the major southern astronomical observatories.

16. The bright green trees are Kurrajongs. Although Kurrajongs look exotic they are actually native to this area and are often spread by birds dropping their seeds.

Yellow Box buds
Photos: J Baker



'Coolleman' is an Aboriginal word for shield.

You are now heading down towards Kathner Street again. Please leave the access road by following the footpath to the left. Have a look at the impressive Yellow Box and Red Box trees on the other side of the fence.

Scientific names for plants in this brochure:

Apple Box *Eucalyptus bridgesiana*
 Blakely's Red Gum *Eucalyptus blakelyi*
 False Sarsaparilla *Hardenbergia violacea*
 Kurrajong *Brachychiton populneus*
 Mealy Bundy *Eucalyptus nortonii*
 Mistletoe *Amyema* spp.
 Native Cherry *Exocarpos cupressiformis*
 Red Box *Eucalyptus polyanthemus*
 Resurrection Fern *Cheilanthes* spp.
 Yellow Box *Eucalyptus melliodora*

Cover photographs: (above) Yellow Box flowers
 (below) Blakely's Red Gum fruit. Photos: J Baker

Further Information

The reserve is managed by Parks and Conservation Service with the help of the Coleman Ridge ParkCare Group. This group is made up of community members with a keen interest in restoring Coleman Ridge to its former open woodland condition. If you wish to take part in this work, please contact:
 Canberra Nature Park 6207 2087 or
 Canberra Connect 13 22 81
 Websites: www.tams.act.gov.au
www.coollemanridge.org