#### **Newcastle Range Field Weekend**

The fourth Field Weekend held by Northern Gulf Resource Management Group's Wildlife Management Project in conjunction with the North Queensland Natural History Group was held at the Newcastle Range Nature Refuge on Oakleigh Station south of Einasleigh on the 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> June 2016. Fifteen people attended the event which actually spanned nearly 5 days. Highlights of the weekend included three Koalas (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) - a mother and joey at night and then a male the next morning about 100 metres away - and a small Freshwater Crocodile (*Crocodylus johnstoni*) that had made its way into a farm dam.

The field weekend is the 4<sup>th</sup> in a series investigating the flora and fauna of properties with Nature Refuges in the Northern Gulf region where on-ground works were established to improve habitat for the Black-throated Finch (*Poephila cincta*). On the Newcastle Range Nature Refuge, funding was provided to establish a fire break to protect the Nature Refuge from damaging wild fires. Six bird monitoring sites have been established and monitored in August 2014 and 2015 with no sightings of finches so it was hoped that looking at a different time of year using different methods might improve results. General observations of the flora, fauna and general condition of the We also performed mammal trapping over two nights at six sites and pit traps were put in at two of the sites. General observations of the flora, fauna and general condition of the refuge were undertaken by members of the North Queensland Natural History Group.



Luke Preece and Michael Anthony on the Newcastle Range. Photo by John Booij.

Located in the southern part of the Newcastle Range in the Einasleigh Uplands Bioregion, the bulk of Oakleigh Station is used for raising cattle. Part of the property covered by the rugged granitic, sandstone-capped range has been dedicated as the Newcastle Range Nature Refuge

The first group arrived on the Thursday evening to set up camp and get an early start digging the pit traps in the morning. Upon arrival at a campsite adjacent to the nature refuge, the first animal sighted was a Fire-tailed Skink (*Morethia taeniopleura*) active in ground litter & grass in riparian woodland at approximately 5pm. The riparian and adjacent woodland around the camp interestingly harboured seven eucalypt species - River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*), a bloodwood (*Corymbia* sp., possibly *C. ligans*), Molloy Red Box (*E. leptophleba*), Broad-leaved Carbeen (*C. confertiflora*), Georgetown Box (*E. microneura*), Narrow-leaved Ironbark (*E. crebra*) and Red Bloodwood (probably *C. erythrophloia*; otherwise *C. pocillum*).

A nocturnal walk along the station track towards the NR that night revealed a number of species active, including the mammals Rufous Bettong (*Aepyprymnus rufescens*), Common Wallaroo (*Macropus robustus*) and a Squirrel Glider (*Petaurus norfolcensis*). Three species of gecko were also observed, the Box-patterned Gecko (*Lucasium steindachneri*), Dubious Dtella (*Gehyra dubia*) and the Zigzag Gecko (*Amalosia rhombifer*). Calls of three nocturnal bird species were heard, the Tawny Frogmouth (*Podargus strigoides*), Southern Boobook (*Ninox novaeseelandiae*) and the Australian Owlet Nightjar (*Aegotheles cristatus*).

No specialist bird observers attended the weekend so unfortunately it was not possible to specifically target this group, however incidental observations were made over the 5 days that naturalists were present. Early morning observations of calls and sightings of birds were made at the campsite on two mornings, one of the springs present was staked out for an hour on two mornings, and all waterbodies were checked for bird activity each time we passed one. Conditions were not ideal for bird activity being often overcast and windy, however four new records were added to the list for the property: Australian Hobby (*Falco longipennis*), Brown Honeyeater (*Lichmera indistincta*), Yellow-throated Miner (*Manorina flavigula*) and a Hoary-headed Grebe (*Poliocephalus poliocephalus*).



**Grey Teal** (*Anas gracilis*) in flight. Photo by john Booij.

#### List of all bird species recorded at Oakleigh Station, including the Newcastle Range Nature Refuge

Common Name	Scientific Name
Brown Goshawk	Accipiter fasciatus
Australian Owlet-nightjar*	Aegotheles cristatus
Grey Teal*	Anas gracilis
Pacific Black Duck*	Anas superciliosa
Red-winged Parrot*	Aprosmictus erythropterus
Wedge-tailed Eagle*	Aquila audax
Australian Bustard	Ardeotis australis
Pacific Baza	Aviceda subcristata
Hardhead	Aythya australis
Bush Stone-curlew	Burhinus grallarius
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo*	Cacatua galerita
Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo*	Calyptorhynchus banksii
Pheasant Coucal	Centropus phasianinus
Australian Wood Duck*	Chenonetta jubata
Great Bowerbird	Chlamydera nuchalis
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Coracina novaehollandiae
Australian Raven*	Corvus coronoides
Torresian Crow*	Corvus orru
Brown Quail	Coturnix ypsilophora
Pied Butcherbird*	Cracticus nigrogularis
Australian Magpie*	Cracticus tibicen
Grey Butcherbird*	Cracticus torquata
Blue-winged Kookaburra	Dacelo leachii
Laughing Kookaburra*	Dacelo novaeguineae
Plumed Whistling-Duck	Dendrocygna eytoni
Emu*	Dromaius novaehollandiae
White-faced Heron	Egretta novaehollandiae
Black-fronted Dotterel*	Elseyornis melanops
Blue-faced Honeyeater	Entomyzon cyanotis
Galah*	Eolophus roseicapillus
Australian Kestrel	Falco cenchroides
Australian Hobby*	Falco longipennis
Black Falcon	Falco subniger
Peaceful Dove*	Geopelia striata
Diamond Dove	Geopelia cuneata
Squatter Pigeon*	Geophaps scripta
White-throated Gerygone	Gerygone olivacea
Pied Mudlark*	Grallina cyanoleuca
Whistling Kite*	Haliastur sphenurus
Black-winged Stilt*	Himantopus himantopus
White-winged Triller	Lalage tricolor
Brown Honeyeater*	Lichmera indistincta
Pink-eared Duck	Malacorhynchus membranaceus

Yellow-throated Miner*	Manorina flavigula
Noisy Miner*	Manorina melanocephala
White-throated Honeyeater	Melithreptus albogularis
Rainbow Bee-eater	Merops ornatus
Black Kite	Milvus migrans
Leaden FlyCatcher	Myiagra rubecula
Southern Boobook*	Ninox novaeseelandiae
Crested Pigeon*	Ocyphaps lophotes
Olive-backed Oriole	Oriolus sagittatus
Rufous Whistler	Pachycephala rufiventris
Striated Pardalote*	Pardalotus striatus
Pelican	Pelecanus conspicillatus
Common Bronzewing*	Phaps chalcoptera
Little Friarbird	Philemon citreogularis
Noisy Friarbird*	Philemon corniculatus
Pale-headed Rosella*	Platycercus adscitus
Tawny Frogmouth*	Podargus strigoides
Hoary-headed Grebe*	Poliocephalus poliocephalus
Grey Fantail	Rhipidura fuliginosa
Willy Wagtail	Rhipidura leucophrys
Weebill*	Smicrornis brevirostris
Pied Currawong*	Strepera graculina
Apostlebird*	Struthidea cinerea
Australasian Grebe*	Tachybaptus novaehollandiae
Australian White Ibis	Threskiornis moluccus
Rainbow Lorikeet*	Trichoglossus haematodus
Masked Lapwing*	Vanellus miles

<sup>\*</sup>Denotes species present over this field weekend.

A shady, rocky creek at the base of the range was investigated for birds and butterflies attracted by the presence of three flowering tree species - River Paperbark (*Melaleuca fluviatilis*), Black Tea-tree (*M. bracteata*) and Yellow-barked Paperbark (*M. nervosa*). Fourteen species of butterfly were identified at this site, of a total of 20 species observed over the field weekend. Fourteen new records were added to the property list.

Also at this site four lizards were identified – Jewelled Rainbow-skink (*Carlia jarnoldae*), Robust Rainbow-skink (*C. schmeltzii*), Straight-browed Comb-eared Skink (*Ctenotus spaldingi*) and a Tommy Roundhead (*Diporiphora australis*).

# List of all butterfly species recorded at Oakleigh Station, including the Newcastle Range Nature Refuge

Glasswing*	Acraea andromacha
Lemon Migrant*	Catopsilia pomona
White Migrant	Catopsilia pyranthe
Caper Gull*	Cepora perimale

Tailed Emperor*	Charaxes sempronius
Clearwing Swallowtail*	Cressida cressida
Lesser Wanderer*	Danaus chrysippus
Scarlet Jezebel*	Delias argenthona
Narrow-winged Pearl-white	Elodina padusa
Spotted Pea-blue*	Euchrysops cnejus
Common Crow*	Euploea corinna
Scalloped Grass-yellow*	Eurema alitha
Large Grass-yellow*	Eurema hecabe
Pink Grass-yellow*	Eurema herla
Small Grass-yellow*	Eurema smilax
Black-spotted Grass-blue*	Famegana alsulus
Varied Eggfly*	Hypolimnas bolina
Blue Argus*	Junonia orytha
Two-spotted Line-blue*	Nacaduba biocellata
Lyell's Swift*	Pelopidas lyelli
Spotted Grass-blue*	Zizeeria karsandra
Common Grass-blue*	Zizina otis

<sup>\*</sup>Denotes species present over this field weekend.



Common Crow (Euploea corinna) and Blue Argus (Junonia orytha). Photos by John Booij.

While digging holes and trenches for pit traps at a woodland site on the Newcastle Range (Site 4) dominated by Narrow-leaved Ironbark (*Eucalyptus crebra*) and Corkwood Wattle (*Varichella bidwilli*), one further lizard species was observed at ground level, the Eastern Fat-tailed Gecko (*Diplodactylus platyurus*).

This pit trap was checked in the evening with no result, although a number of animals were observed driving back down the Range after dark including Eastern Grey Kangaroos (*Macropus giganteus*) and a Sugar Glider (*Petaurus breviceps*). A Bumpy Rocket Frog (*Litoria inermis*) was observed at a small spring.

Later in the evening a farm dam not far from the campsite was investigated with a further species of frog, the Little Red Tree Frog (*Litoria rubella*) recorded, along with a sub-adult Freshwater Crocodile (*C. johnstoni*).



Freshwater Crocodile (*C. johnstoni*). Photo by Jack Gamble.

The next morning a second pit trap was constructed at another site consisting of open forest located on an alluvial plain (Site 5). The dominant trees here are Poplar Gum (*Eucalyptus platyphylla*) and a bloodwood (*C. ligans*).

Site 4 was checked, offering three of the species observed the day before plus another species of striped or comb-eared skink, the Little Zebra or Southern Cape York Finesnout Ctenotus (*Ctenotus zebrilla*).

The activity for this afternoon was to hike from Site 4 at 690 metres elevation to a sandstone-capped plateau at a higher section of the range at over 770 metres elevation to look at the flora and fauna of the different habitat.

The walk involved walking down a shallow valley, crossing a couple of very small creeks and following three ridges back up to the plateau. At one of the creek crossings a tiny snake, a Lesser Black Whip Snake (*Demansia vestigiata*) was discovered on the track attempting to ingest a relatively larger frog, a male Little Red Tree Frog (*L. rubella*). It appeared to have been stepped on, unable to move out of harm's way due to the large meal it was trying to swallow. On the way up we observed a grove of flowering Bootlace Oak (*Hakea lorea*) growing by a rocky creek. From here it was only a short climb up to the first sandstone ridge. The hill consisted of at least four levels. We first reached a lower ridge mostly consisting of medium-sized sandstone boulders and scree with numerous Einasleigh Box (*Eucalyptus provecta*). The next level was a flatter, wider, more openly

vegetated level with the most notable trees being Newcastle Range Bloodwood (*Corymbia serendipita*) and Queensland Woollybutt (*Eucalyptus chartaboma*). The only tree observed in flower was a reddish-pink flowering Grevillea (*Grevillea decora*). The uphill edge of this level consisted of sandstone rock faces, caves and gullies leading up to the next level, which had similar mix of trees plus a variety of *Acacia* sp. and other shrubs. While climbing up to this level an Allied Rock Wallaby (*Petrogale assimilis*) shot past us down to the level below. A good view from this ridge was afforded across towards the Gregory Range in the west, and back towards the granite ridge we had started from in the east. One more level was investigated, once again mostly flat but with a slight uphill gradient; here Einasleigh Box (*E. provecta*) reappeared, mixed with Brown Bloodwoods (*Corymbia trachyphloia*) and Rustyjackets (*Corymbia peltata*) with a thick shrub layer. Fauna observations included more Jewelled Rainbow-skinks (*C. jarnoldae*) and a scat of an Echidna (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*).

List of all woody plant species recorded at Oakleigh Station, including the Newcastle Range Nature Refuge

Common name	Scientific name
Conkerberry	Carissa spinarum
Milk Bush	Wrightia saligna
	Dolichandrone heterophylla
Canarium	Canarium australianum
Cooktown Ironwood	Erythrophleum chlorostachys
	Labichea nitida
Wild Orange	Capparis canescens
River She-Oak	Casuarina cunninghamiana
Yellowberry Bush	Denhamia cunninghami
Orange Boxwood	Denhamia disperma
Kapok Tree	Cochlospermum sp.
Yellowwood	Terminalia aridicola
Durin	Terminalia platyphylla
Tropical Cypress-pine	Callitris intratropica
Black Ebony	Diospyros humilis
Kerosene Wood	Erythroxylum ellipticum
Coral Tree	Erythrina vespertilio
Cocky Apple	Planchonia careya
Mistletoes	(Loranthaceae)
	Acacia nesophila
Club-leaf Wattle	Acacia hemignosta
Candelabra Wattle	Acacia holosericia
	Acacia julifera
Lancewood	Acacia shirleyi
Umbellata Wattle	Acacia umbellata
Gundabluey	Acacia victoriae
Corkwood Wattle	Vachellia bidwilli
Sandpaper Fig	Ficus opposita
	Calytrix leptophylla
Broad-leaved Carbeen	Corymbia confertiflora
Dallachy's Ghost Gum	Corymbia dallachiana
Red Bloodwood	Corymbia erythrophloia
Gilbert River Ghost Gum	Corymbia gilbertensis

Einasleigh Long-fruited Bloodwood	Corymbia ligans
Rustyjacket	Corymbia peltata
Newcastle Range Bloodwood	Corymbia serendipita
Moreton Bay Ash	Corymbia tessellaris
Brown bloodwood	Corymbia trachyphloia
River Red Gum	Eucalyptus camaldulensis
Queensland Woollybutt	Eucalyptus chartaboma
Narrow-leaved Ironbark	Eucalyptus crebra
Molloy Red Box	Eucalyptus leptophleba
Georgetown box	Eucalyptus microneura
Poplar Gum	Eucalyptus platyphylla
Einasleigh box	Eucalyptus provecta
Shirley's Silver-leaved Ironbark	Eucalyptus shirleyi
Northern Swamp Mahogany	Lophostemon grandiflora
River Paperbark	Melaleuca fluviatilis
Weeping Paperbark	Melaleuca leucadendra
Black Tea-tree	Melaleuca bracteata
Lemon-scented	Melaleuca citrolens
Paperbark	
Yellow Paperbark	Melaleuca nervosa
Screw Pandan	Pandanus sp.
	?Bridelia tormentosa
Currant Bush	Antidesma parviflorum
Fartbush	Breynia oblongifolia
Tracey's Puzzle	Margaritaria dubium-traceyi
Quinine Berry	Petalostigma banksii
Quinine Tree	Petalostigma pubescens
Mock Orange	Bursaria incana
	Grevillea decora
Bushman's Pegs	Grevillea glauca
Caustic bush	Grevillea mimosoides
Silver Grevillea	Grevillea parallela
Fern-leaved Grevillea	Grevillea pteridifolia
Yellow Hakea	Hakea arborescens
Bootlace Oak	Hakea lorea
Milky Plum	Persoonia falcate
?Grey Boxwood	?Drypetes deplanchei
Red Ash	Alphitonia excelsa
Breadfruit	Gardenia vilhelmi
Native Gardenia	Larsenaikia ochreata
	Pavetta granitica
	Psychotria daphnoides
Northern Sandalwood	Santalum lanceolatum
Whitewood	Atalaya hemiglauca
Mongo	Sersalisea sericia
Dog's Balls	Grewia retusifolia
Chillagoe Kurrajong	Brachychiton chillagoensis
Northern Kurrajong	Brachychiton diversifolius

Mammal traps were placed at six sites, including four of the sites previously surveyed for birds. Two of the historical sites could not be used – one (Site 3) because access to the site was unavailable and the other site (5) had a large group of cattle present. Another site was chosen to replace Site 3 and a location approximately 100 metres away from, and with similar vegetation, was used in lieu of Site 5.

As has sadly become customary in the Einasleigh Uplands region, no mammals were trapped in either Elliot or cage traps over the two nights. However the following morning a Short-tailed Mouse (*Leggadina sp.*) was caught in a pit trap at site 4, as well as a Northern Dwarf Skink (*Menetia maini*).

Both pit trap arrays were checked later in the day with no results.

On the way back from checking Site 4 a snake slough was spied in a dead ironbark tree. This was examined and scale counting showed that it was the skin of a Pale-headed Snake (*Hoplocephalus bitorquatus*). Plans were made to go back at night to spotlight for a live specimen.

Another snake, Common Tree Snake (*Dendrelaphis punctulatus*), was observed in a medium sized tree not far from the creek.

## List of all reptile species recorded at Oakleigh Station, including the Newcastle Range Nature Refuge

Common Name	Scientific name
Freshwater Crocodile*	Crocodylus johnstoni
Zigzag Gecko*	Amalosia rhombifer
Eastern Fat-tailed Gecko*	Diplodactylus platyurus
Dubious Dtella*	Gehyra dubia
Bynoe's Gecko	Heteronotia binoei
Box-patterned Gecko*	Lucasium steindachneri
Northern Spotted Velvet Gecko	Oedura coggeri
Tommy Round Head*	Diporiphora australis
Jewelled Rainbow-skink*	Carlia jarnoldae
Shaded-litter Rainbow-skink	Carlia munda
Robust Rainbow-skink*	Carlia schmeltzii
Ragged Snake-eyed Skink	Cryptoblepharus pannosus
Snake-eyed skink sp.	Cryptoblepharus sp.
Straight-browed Ctenotus*	Ctenotus spaldingi
Little Zebra Ctenotus*	Ctenotus zebrilla
Northern Dwarf Skink*	Menetia maini
Fire-tailed Skink*	Morethia taeniopleura
Lesser Black Whip Snake*	Demansia vestigiata
Common Tree Snake*	Dendrelaphis punctulatus
Pale-headed Snake*	Hoplocephalus bitorquatus

<sup>\*</sup>Denotes species present over this field weekend.

The evening turned out to be cool with a light drizzle so conditions were less than ideal for snakes. On the drive up, spotting only the occasional Common Wallaroo on the track and shining the torches into the trees, our attention was drawn to an eye reflection about 20 metres up in an Ironbark (*E. crebra*). Alighting from the vehicle and walking towards the eyes it soon became apparent that they

belonged to a Koala (*P. cinereus*), and we soon realised that there was a second pair of eyes belonging to the joey. The location was recorded and we continued on up the hill to check the Paleheaded Snake (*H. bitorquatus*) location. By the time we arrived up there, the precipitation had increased, to the extent that two species of frogs were heard calling. These were the Laughing or Northern Red-eyed Tree Frog (*Litoria rothii*) and the Einasleigh Uplands Toadlet (*Uperolia littlejohni*), both from near the edge of the dam and only the one frog of each species appeared to be calling. Another frog the Common Tree Frog (*Litoria caerulea*) was sighted on a small log on the ground, along with a Tawny Frogmouth (*Podargus strigoides*) on a tree branch and a group of Squatter Pigeons (*Geophaps scripta*) on the ground.

## List of all amphibian species recorded at Oakleigh Station, including the Newcastle Range Nature Refuge

Common name	Scientific name
Common Tree Frog*	Litoria caerulea
Bumpy Rocket Frog*	Litoria inermis
Laughing Tree Frog*	Litoria rothii
Little Red Tree Frog*	Litoria rubella
Einasleigh Uplands Toadlet*	Uperoleia littlejohni

<sup>\*</sup>Denotes species present over this field weekend.

The following morning we set out to check and pack up all the traps, but first went to the Koala location to see if they were still there. No sign of the two from last night but a third specimen, this time a male, was located in a River Red Gum (*E. camaldulensis*) approximately 100 metres away.

# List of all native mammal species recorded at Oakleigh Station, including the Newcastle Range Nature Refuge

Common name	Scientific name
Dingo	Canis lupus dingo
Short-tailed mouse*	Leggadina sp.
Rufous Bettong*	Aepyprymnus rufescens
Eastern Grey Kangaroo*	Macropus giganteus
Common Wallaroo*	Macropus robustus
Allied Rock Wallaby*	Petrogale assimilis
Sugar Glider*	Petaurus breviceps
Squirrel Glider*	Petaurus norfolcensis
Koala*	Phascolarctos cinereus
Echidna*	Tachyglossus aculeatus
Common Brushtail Possum	Trichosurus vulpecula

<sup>\*</sup>Denotes species present over this field weekend.



Short-tailed Mouse (Leggadina sp.). Photo by Michael Anthony.

Small numbers of feral animals – Rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) and Cane Toads (*Rhinella marina*) – were present. Six weed species were noted, none of which were in high concentration, and usually restricted to roadsides and around areas of high cattle use.

# List of all feral animals and weed species recorded at Oakleigh Station, including the Newcastle Range Nature Refuge

Feral animals	
Common name	Scientific name
Cat	Felis catus
Rabbit*	Oryctolagus cuniculus
Pig	Sus scrofa
Cane Toad*	Rhinella marina
Weeds	
Common name	Scientific name
Rubbervine*	Cryptostegia grandiflora
Flannel Weed*	Sida cordifolia
Sida sp. acuta? (died off)	
Hyptis*	Hyptis suaveolens
Coffee Senna*	Senna occidentalis
Grader Grass*	Themeda quadrivalvis

<sup>\*</sup>Denotes species present over this field weekend.

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