

POINTS OF INTEREST

1. CRANES BRIDGE

The bridge was originally built in 1925 by Douglas' Sawmill and used by bullock teams and log trucks to haul timber from Gulpa Island State Forest to the mill in Mathoura. Mr Grey, a local building contractor who built many of the local bridges, drove the piles and mill staff constructed the bridge. A cutting approximately 2.4 meters deep was scooped from the top of the Cadell Fault to allow large loads of logs to be hauled to the mill. Although previously called Douglas' Bridge, it became locally known as Cranes Bridge because George Crane had charcoal kilns along the creek and also built a house nearby. The bridge has recently been reconstructed thanks to the support of State Forests of N.S.W., Murray Shire Council, National Heritage Trust and volunteers from the Mathoura Community.

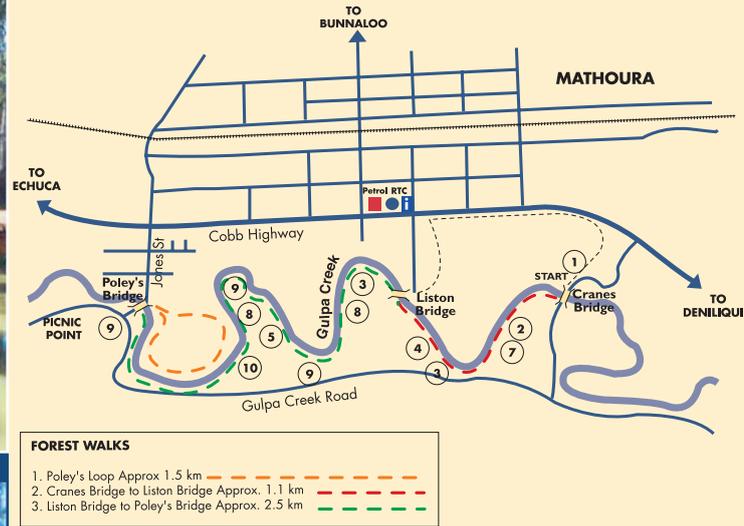


2. MARKET GARDENS AND POLICE PADDOCK

A market garden was established along this section of the creek during the 1930s and a variety of vegetables were grown to be sold locally. The narrow strip of land was privately owned and was irrigated from the creek by small channels, which were dug by a horse and single furrow plough. The local police leased another paddock upstream of the market garden and Constable Brown was the last known policeman to graze his horse there between 1925 and the early 1930s.



G U L P A C R E E K



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Information in this brochure provided by N.S.W. State Forests Environmental Officer, community representatives, Colin Walker of the Yorta Yorta, Jim Crump and Allan Edwards.



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Gulpa Creek is host to a diverse range of native flora and fauna. Explore this trail and discover the wonders of Gulpa Creek

W A L K T R A I L

3. ABORIGINAL OVEN MOUND

This raised area is the site of an Aboriginal oven mound. While the men prepared the food, women would construct an oven by digging a large hole and moulding the excavated clay into balls, which would act as heat retainers in the absence of stone. The clay was preheated in the hole and removed prior to cooking. The uncooked food was packed at the base of the oven between layers of damp grass and reeds and covered by the clay balls, bark and earth. The debris of the used oven became the nucleus of the mound and the same oven was re-used when the families returned to the area. Approximately a barrow load of fresh clay was used for each firing, therefore increasing the size of the mounds with each cooking event. Fish, shellfish, birds and small mammals were not cooked in the oven but thrown onto a fire and cooked briefly. Today this midden is of important cultural significance to the Yorta Yorta people, as it was once an area of central focus to their ancestors daily lives. Please stay on the walking track and do not disturb any part of the oven mound.



4. DWARF CHERRY EXOCARPUS STRICTUS

A traditional bush tucker plant from which the local Aborigines ate the tiny sweet fruits that ripen in summer. It is also an important food source for the Superb Parrot (a threatened species), which are known to forage Dwarf Cherry seed during the fledgling period. It is a common native shrub of the River Red Gum forests, which grows to 2.5 metres tall and usually forms a dense understorey at the base of sandhills.



5. RINGBARKED TREES

Ringbarking was an early form of silviculture used in the forest from the late 1800s until 1976. Unmerchantable trees were ringbarked to promote the regeneration of younger more vigorous trees. Ringbarking was not completely successful in all areas, as living "ringers" are still common in most treated stands. The practice has not been used since 1974 and modern forest harvesting methods include retaining large, hollow trees for native fauna habitat.



6. BURLS

Burls are large abnormal plant growths found on many River Red Gums, which result from feeding activities of insect larvae or nymphs that block the flow of sap. The tree grows around the effected area, creating the unique black growths, which are widely sought after by wood turners and furniture makers due to the attractive appearance of the twisted wood grain. Burls do not appear to have any adverse effects on the trees health or growth. Burls are not permitted to be removed from live trees.



7. MISTLETOE

You can find species of mistletoe high in the crowns of the River Red Gums and many other trees and shrubs. Mistletoes are parasitic plants that are commonly spread by the Mistletoe bird, which is able to pass the sticky fruit through its modified gut onto branches of suitable host plants. In extreme cases the host plant is killed by the infestation, but this is rarely a cause for concern.



8. BUSH TUCKER

A number of native plants that were traditionally used by Aborigines for food are found in this immediate area. See if you can identify them, but please do not attempt to eat the plants:

1. Butterbush *Pittosporum phylliraeoides* is a small tree to 6 meters high. Although the fruits resemble small apricots they are not edible, but the seeds were ground into flour.
2. Water Ribbons *Triglochin procera* is a water plant growing in the shallows of the Gulpa Creek. The tubers were a source of food for the Aborigines.
3. Cumbungi *Typa orientalis* is a water plant, 1-2 meters tall. The starch was once a staple food for the Aborigines.
4. Yellow Wood Sorrel *Oxalis sp.* is a soft herb, and the sour, lemony leaves were eaten.
5. Cranesbills *Geranium sp.* are small trailing plants with thick edible taproots.



9. CANOE TREE

The large scars in these trees have been identified as sites where a bark canoe was possibly cut from the trunk by Aborigines. Bark canoes were primarily used to fish from or transport across flooded streams and could last for months. The ease of removing the bark depended on the season – late spring/summer was the ideal period. After being cut from the tree the canoe was turned upside down and a fire was lit under it to toughen the bark and help mould it onto the desired shape. The canoes were paddled with a rowing pole and a large vessel could hold up to six people.



10. THE GULPA CREEK

This section of the Gulpa Creek is host to a diverse range of native flora and fauna. The beds of Giant Rush *Juncus ingens* and Common Reed *Phragmites australis* that intermittently line the banks form habitat for many bird species such as the Australian Reed Warbler, which can be heard calling continuously over spring and summer. The creek is home to tortoises, water rats, yabbies, frogs and a number of native fish species. Platypus have also been observed along the creek, although illegal fish netting has significantly decreased the local population.



BIRDS AND ANIMALS OF THE CREEKSIDE



Superb Parrot



Wood Duck (Maned Goose)



Tree Goanna



Tiger Snake



Dusky Antechinus