

Aboard Sengo

Aboard Sengo

January 2020

January's temporary
Tree Changes

Searching for
clean air to help
clear the mind



Water is falling...

Unfortunately not all of it is
over land

Sometimes life just isn't fair!

November started out as a normal month, with a little apprehension perhaps because we were going up on the slip and the last time we had done this had been an emotional (and physical, for the boat) disaster. On the whole however this episode on the hard went well. What didn't go well was Tiger's health; with trips to and from the vet to work out what was wrong. In the end it wasn't good news.

December was a quiet month on boat with our baby boy. Our plans to head to Melbourne for the pointy end of the year didn't eventuate due to treatment requirements so I spent my 50th Birthday in a marina with a sick cat. We did go out for lunch for a few hours on the day, thankfully the daytime maximum was only 25 degrees (and raining) otherwise I wouldn't have left him alone.

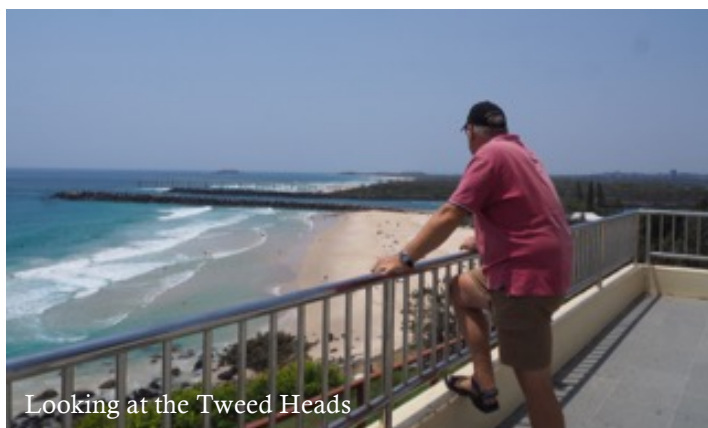
On 7th January we said good-bye to our darling boy. I am not going to discuss details here, the facts are far too painful and personal to be made public, and whilst I wouldn't have swapped giving palliative care to our darling boy for anything (except of course to have a nice healthy Tiger) it was time after this to look after ourselves. We'd had practically no exercise since late November, stealing a couple of hours here and there off boat when we could, ensuring we were back with the boy for most of each day.



Tiger Ebert

Tiger Ebert was a couple of months off being 16 years old (in human years) when he joined his sister in the great catnip garden in the sky. Apparently this is the 'average' age for an indoor cat. But he was far from being an 'average' individual. He was my love and my life. I will never forget him and am not sure how I am going to cope without him. Farewell my darling baby boy!

On the 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th January we got off boat for some day trips, took in some different scenery and did as much walking as we could, although the 'walk' on the 10th was a bit of a misnomer as there was a compulsory visit to an optometrist in the afternoon first, and the subsequent 'walk' was the wandering along the foreshore at Surfers Paradise through the Friday Night Market; the 8th, 9th and 11th wanders around Tweed Heads, Lamington NP and Springbrook however got the muscles working.



Looking at the Tweed Heads



From Greenmont Beach Surf Club

The Tweed. The first of many breaks! It is an understatement to say I wasn't coping on the 8th January and the best place for me was not on boat. So Andrew suggested a walk, and we both decided a walk along the beach would be lovely – something we haven't done for some time. We could have made our way to something local but we chose somewhere new, heading down to Tweed Heads NSW (where you can stand on the State line and confuse the timing on your mobile phone) somewhere we've not stopped before either in car or in boat. This also gave us a chance to check out the bar to head into the Tweed River, where it is apparently, we had been assured by other boaties, a lovely spot to stop. Initially we overshot our turn-off which put all our directions out, and we ended up south of our desired destination. However after turning around we found ourselves at the top of the lookout (at the top of Boundary Street) with a magnificent view both north and south along the coast. A stroll around the point had us lunching at Greenmont Beach Surf Club, before completing the loop. I took my shoes off to wet my feet but I had an odd desire to go swimming, which is very unlike me (to no effect - I hadn't brought my bathers).



Beree-Badalla Reserve



Beree-Badalla Reserve

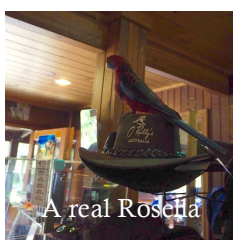
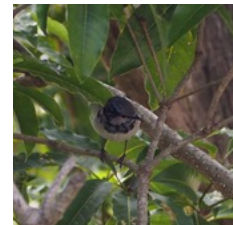
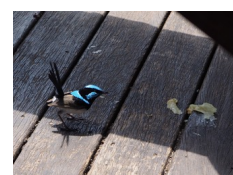


Lamington National Park
Lamington National Park was chosen as our next walking outing (we were embarking on a heavy program of exercise to help keep the mental and emotional burden in check) because it has been years since we'd been there and 30 years since my first visit. It is an hour and a half (ish) drive from the Hope Harbour Marina, where we were docked, and we stopped at Canungra on the way to get the 'touro walking information' that we required. As we drove up the mountain we were starting to get worried at what we'd find; the valleys to our west very dry and brown and overhung by a thin layer of smoke coming from the fires to the south.

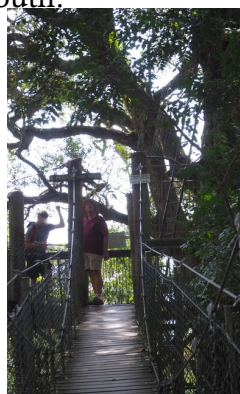
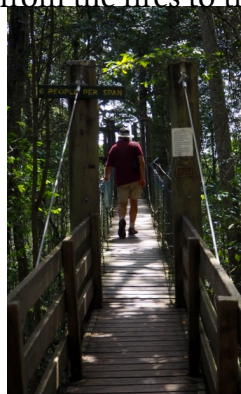


Right up the top however we were pleasantly surprised as we drove into rainforest several kilometres out from [O'Reillys](#) at the end of the road. We had many walking options and chose what might be considered one of the shorter paths – a 3.1 kilometre return track to Python Rock lookout and then, after lunch, the Tree Top Walk. This piece of engineering, according to the blurb on an interps board near the start of the walk, was the first such example in Australia (we have been on a few). But as well as walking along suspension bridges high above the ground there is an opportunity to climb even higher up into the actual top of one particular tree. The ladder consists of thin railing and it provided me with a challenge; concentrating on holding on was a good distraction from more sombre thoughts. We completed the suspension circuit and headed back to the resort via the Rainforest track; the link track of which has brushes and water to remove any unwanted dirt (and associated fungus) from your boots. *Phytophthora* was a problem in the '80s and '90s in sclerophyll forests in Victoria – I wasn't expecting it to be an issue in rainforest Queensland – then again hikers do travel and some aren't so vigilant in cleaning their equipment.

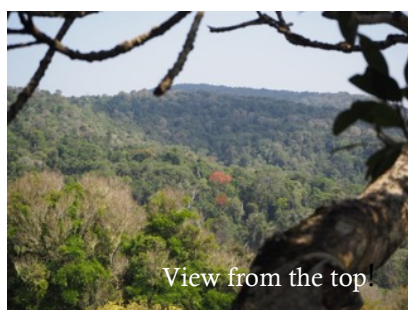
Birds abound here, both in the forest and around the resort (where many expect to be fed at the feeding station). The forest birds of course are more self-contained. We followed a pair of yellow-throated scrub wrens up the path toward the car park (I had the camera on the wrong setting unfortunately and didn't get any good shots). Other delights seen on this section were an Alberts lyrebird (both are here: we saw a



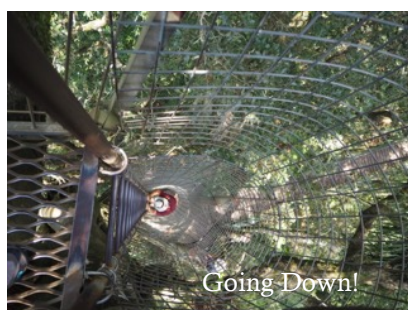
A real Rosella



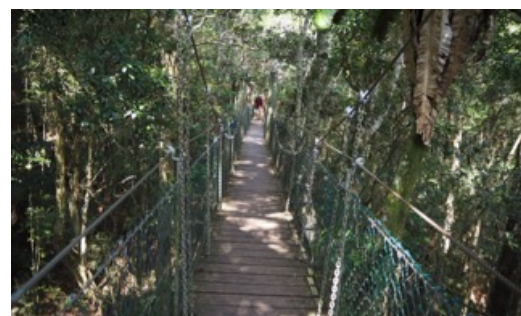
Going Up!



View from the top

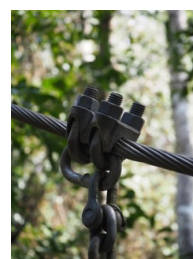


Going Down!



Superb lyrebird on the road on the way out), a satin bowerbird, and a gorgeous 'mouse.' Again the wrong setting was in place on the camera and I couldn't get too close in case I disturbed him. Locals seem to think it might have been a rat but it seemed too small for that; my 'guess' was a brown antechinus until I looked him up – the range specific Subtropical Antechinus is probably our beast (a subgroup previously referred to as brown antechinus in this area).

After leaving the National Park, and checking out the Kamarun Lookout on the way back down the mountain, we made a final stop back at Canungra at the Laheys Canungra Tramway Tunnel. I was hoping to walk through this but it has been blocked off. Reading about the extent of the original line it would make a great rail trail.

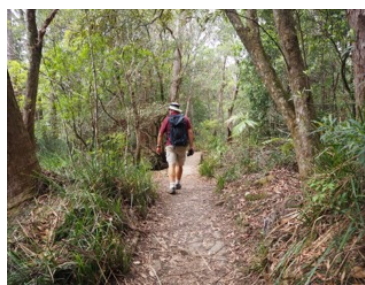


10th January 2020. Today's walk as such was very short, just the length of the Surfers Paradise Friday Night Market and back again with a detour to dinner. We weren't expecting to detour to dinner, we were expecting to get something from the market to nibble, however there was practically nothing on offer. The local touro brochures have 'Friday night market specials' in local fast food establishments, which admittedly we saw later but if we were going to buy junk food it would have been at the market, not at an established store. Having no real food on offer we headed back to *Shiraz* for dinner, the Persian restaurant we'd visited in November 2018. The market stalls were mostly junk, with the odd bit of jewellery etc, one stall selling tickets raising money for medical research and a couple of wildlife 'stalls', where you could pay money to get yourself photographed with either Macaws at one end of the market or reptiles at the other. The only stall of interest to me was a stall of no-tie shoelaces. One of their products offered a fix to my deck shoes, whose elastic tightening mechanism (shoelace equivalent) had disintegrated to non-stretch some time ago. I was not sure how I was going to fix them but I was reluctant to throw them out – I now have a solution.



This evening was of course pre evented by an afternoon visit to the optometrist in Southport to organise new spectacles; I had managed to lose my glasses case, along with my prescription specs, at Lamington National Park. Hence the majority of the day was still spent around boat.

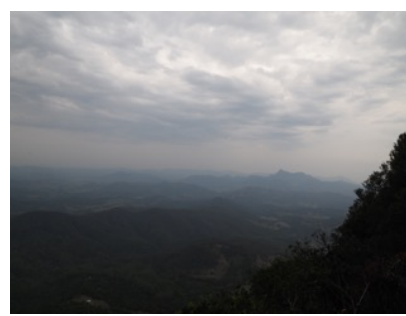
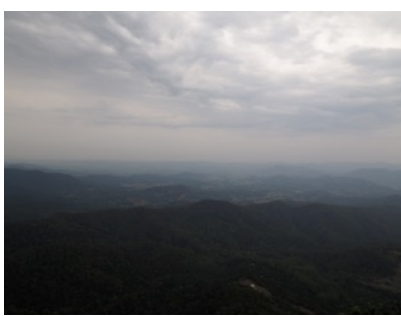
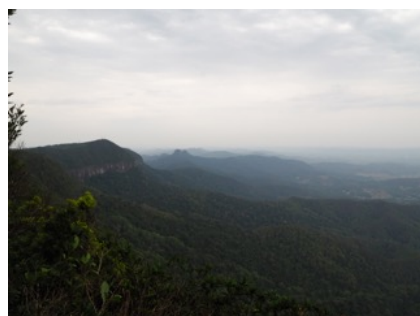
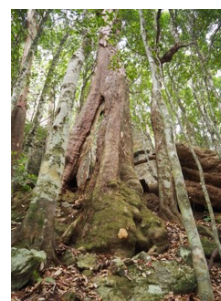
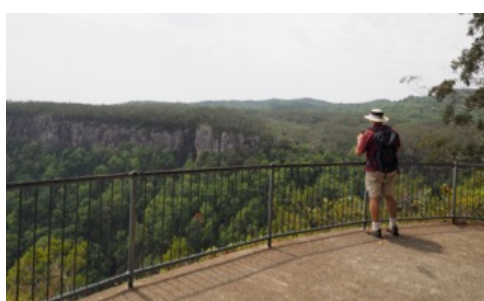




Springbrook

11th January 2020. Rain was forecast but not inland. In fact, there hadn't been much rain inland for some time and although the forecasts were changing we weren't expecting the gush of the falls at Springbrook to be as luscious as they were on the tourist brochures. After filling the car's fuel tanks we headed south on the M1 and got off at the Nerang exit. There are two ways to get to Springbrook and Springbrook National Park and we figured we take one there and one back. In the end it didn't quite work out that way.

The plan had been to walk the Purling Brook Falls Circuit but when we got to an interps centre (not open but there was a large fancy board on the veranda) we found the information suggested our intended walk around Purling Brook Falls would be very exposed and uncomfortable on hot days. Today was a hot day so we changed our plans and walked the Twin Falls Circuit instead. This 4 kilometre trail winds down into the valley past (the back of) two waterfalls and back up out again. We hadn't done a walk this long on this terrain for some time and not being track fit were a bit worn out at the end of it. Subsequently any other 'walks' for the day were minimal, and we only tackled the Goomooahra Falls lookout track and the Best Of All Lookout track because they were short (200m and 600m respectively). Instead of heading home the way we intended we headed south toward the NSW border toward the Natural Arch but found our feet were too tired for the length of the path. After crossing the border and winding our way down the range we turned left at Chillingham and back to Queensland via the back roads along the border ending up back on the M1 via Tallebudgera. This evening I found returning to boat was particularly telling and particularly stressful!



A (temporary) Tree Change

Heavy exercise is all well and good for the body and the mind but after four days of exhausting ourselves and still coming home to find no little furry friend to greet us, I'd had enough. I needed an emotional break away from boat, and away from the distraction of absent friends. In the end it didn't really work as on day two of our five-day break I was informed of the death of my tenant (expected) and the euthanasia of his darling feline companion (and asked to make decisions in relation to this, of which I wasn't capable) – I just couldn't get away from it!

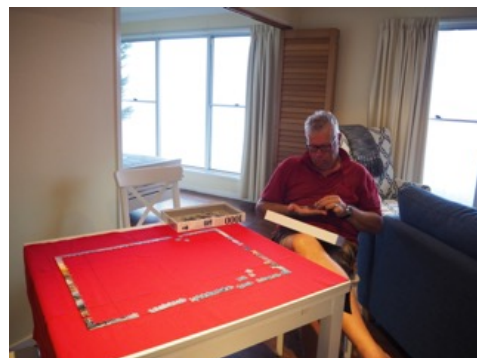
Apart from that news however we had a great couple of days inland, spending time in the Scenic Rim on the tops of mountains sides, visiting waterfalls (of various capacities and flows) bushwalking and bird watching.

The '*Spring Creek Café and Cottages*' is a 60-acre rural property north of Killarney (currently for sale) with a lovely outlook over the gorge and valley of the Condamine River.

O'Reilly's is a private resort that has been surrounded by, and integrated into the history, of Lamington National Park for over 100 years.



Siding overlooking Treviot Creek



12th January 2020. We came for the view but we knew before we got here we would have to wait, having spotted clouds hiding mountain tops from a distance and feeling water droplets when we got out at the siding overlooking Treviot Brook to admire the view of the valley behind us. The wall of white tantalisingly lifted a smidge just after we arrived but we needed to wait until the next morning until it seriously dissipated.

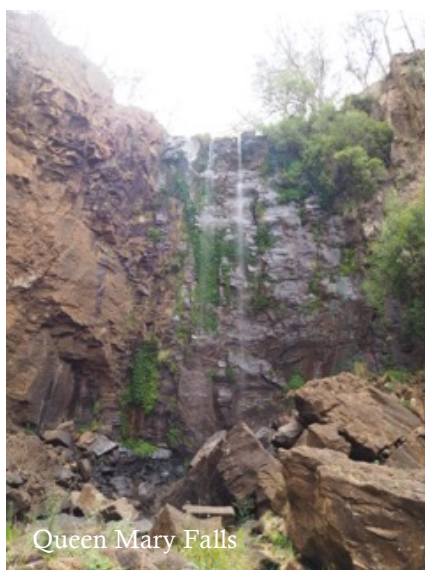
Travelling to the local lookouts from the *Spring Creek Café* this afternoon was going to be superfluous and indeed it would have been dangerous on the roads, the only vehicle we encountered in the fog on the way to our destination passed dangerously close, despite both vehicles having their lights on; visibility was practically zero. So the afternoon was spent reading and starting a jigsaw we had brought with us. Dinner was at the café before retiring to the ambience and warmth of a wood fired heater – a luxury we haven't had since moving on to boat.

13th January 2020. The first morning at Spring Creek Café. At 0500 ish we were still fogged in - although by the time we went to breakfast around 0800 the base of the cloud was threatening to break up, and we could see the other side of the valley from the breakfast table. We'd already had strawberries and yoghurt as a starter, for the simple reason the strawberries bought at the Surfer's Paradise market were not going to last. The official continental breakfast offered with the room was a choice of four cereals and two fruit compotes, yoghurt, milk, orange juice, toast (gluten free available on request) with homemade preserves of fig and ginger jam or tangelo marmalade, and a croissant. The croissants were

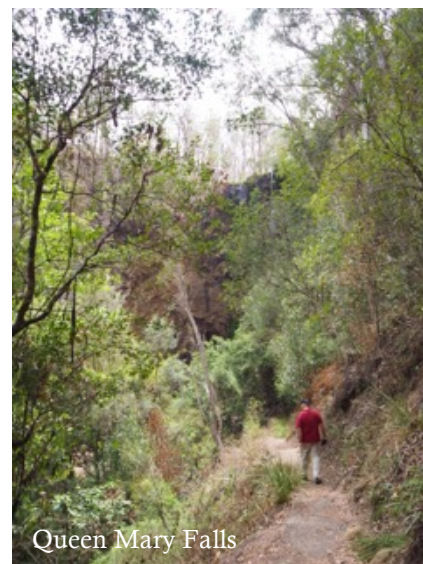




Queen Mary Falls



Queen Mary Falls

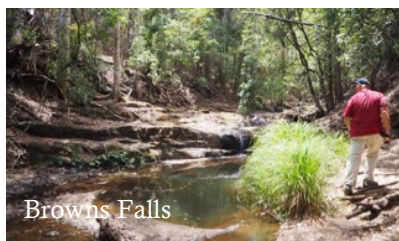


Queen Mary Falls

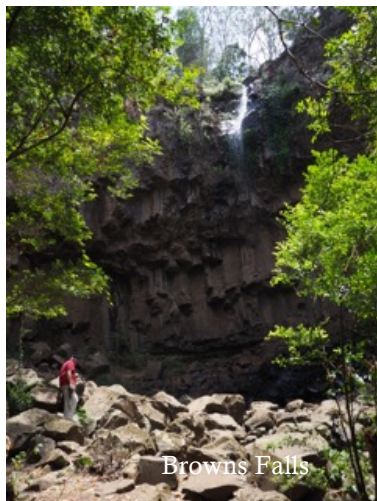
clearly not gluten free – Andrew got mine. The morning was still chilly but the thought of having to purchase a warm top at the Killarney St Vincent De Paul dissipated as the morning moved on. We visited Queen Mary Falls, Daggs Falls (lookout from car park only) and wandered the creek up to Browns Falls before enjoying a burger for lunch at Killarney. Killarney has an old history and is a town of scattered houses and shacks of varying styles and ages (apparently a lot of the town was flattened by a tornado in 1968). Monday was however clearly not the day to visit. The historical society was supposed to be open for a couple of hours – but wasn't, none of the interesting (non-essential) businesses were open, and neither was the hairdresser. The butcher was open, as was the pharmacy, pub, newsagent, motor mechanic, motorbike shop, and coop which housed the FoodWorks, Home Hardware and Betta Electrical outlets. And of course the op shop – which was mostly clothes but very well set out in colourful palettes.



Browns Falls



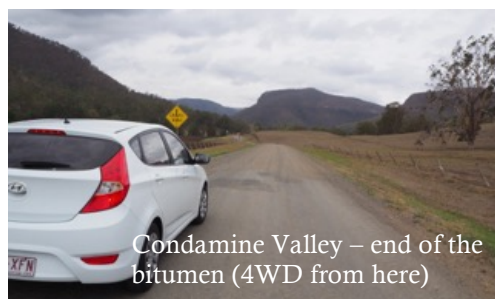
Browns Falls



Browns Falls

Our drive up the road to the Condamine Gorge was cut short (we stopped at the end of the bitumen) after which we turned around and went for a drive west, then south west, then north, crossing the NSW border at the Cullendore Gate. Afternoon cuppa was back on our balcony now that the cloud had lifted and we had a view.

The Spring Creek Café property has cows, donkeys, black chooks, guinea fowl and is visited by wallabies. There are plenty of birds and our balcony was a



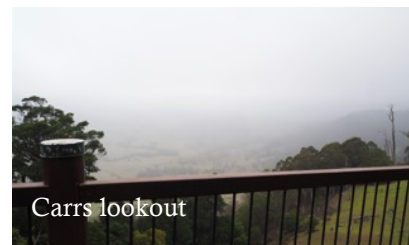
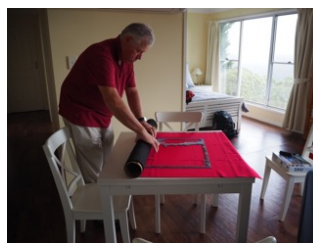
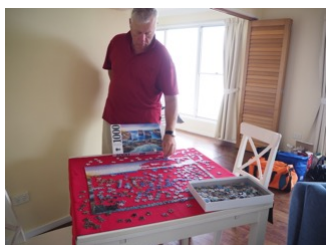
Condamine Valley – end of the bitumen (4WD from here)



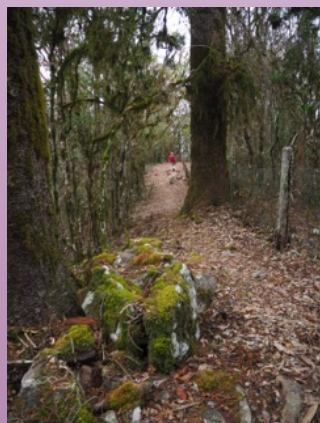
View from our cottage



View from our cottage



Carrs lookout



Path to Moss Garden Lookout with 100 year old rabbit proof fence.

good spot to sit and watch them flutter around.

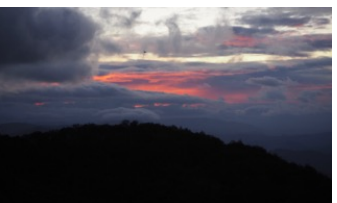
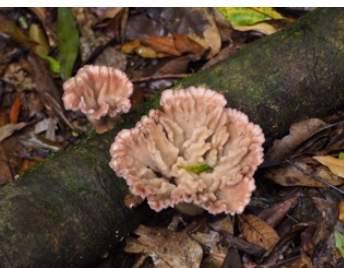
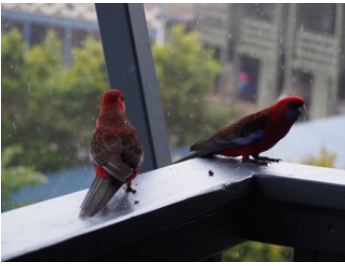
14th January. The morning presented again with a whiteout, which did start to lift but not much, so by the time we left (after a hot breakfast) all I could see clearly through the drizzly mist at Carrs Lookout was the cattle immediately below. It was a week since we'd said goodbye to Tiger and I wasn't ready to go home yet, so we were on the lookout for another night's accommodation. Secluded rainforest would have been nice but the preferred options were up dirt roads (and car hire agreement non-conducive) or one where the owners were heading off to Brisbane and we needed our own linen. In the end we bit the bullet and headed back to O'Reilly's in Lamington National Park, took a relatively expensive two-night summer package in a suite - with a spa and wood fire if we wanted it.

Travelling down from The Head (where the Spring Creek Café is officially located) we stopped for a walk to the Moss Garden lookout (with a 100 year old rabbit proof fence), had morning tea at Lake Maroon, and took a lunch stop at Rathdowney, where I realised that whilst I had a bamboo cutlery set with us, the knife wasn't going to be sharp enough to slice through cheese - so we had to satisfy ourselves with plain ham sandwiches. A quick diversion through Kooralbyn to check out the Ramada and decide it wasn't what I was looking for for the next couple of nights, and a fuel stop at Beaudesert (where a panel under the car came unstuck and rattled along the ground for 26 kilometres) before we got



to Canungra to organise our accommodation. I did a quick shop for clothes at the Canungra op shop - we weren't expecting to be gone this long - before the windy ascent to O'Reilly's. By the time we'd checked in and unpacked we'd missed afternoon tea (and the welcome champagne with management) so had cheese and crackers on our balcony instead, missing the afternoon film as well. Dinner was had early - with the birds - before enjoying last light with the view from our accommodation.

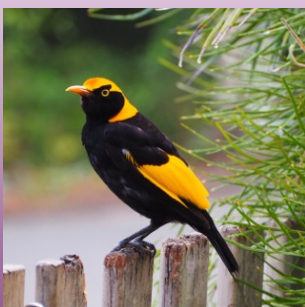
Bird list for the day: blue wren, pied currawong, black cormorant, royal spoonbill, pelican, pheasant coucal, rainbow lorikeet, king parrot, bassian thrush?, satin bowerbird, leuwin honeyeater, cat bird, lapwing, straw necked ibis.



Wed 15th January 2020. Our unit is the highest in the suites and whilst not highest on the hill, has a pretty commanding view down the valley. The morning vista threatened rain, and then it did, a crimson rosella temporarily stopping to shelter from the precipitation. The view is great for bird watching - if they don't visit you - across the lower reaches of the resort (we weren't in the upper-class hidden villas that are surrounded by trees). The rain had eased by 0615.

Question: What do a yellow-throated scrub-wren, an eastern yellow robin, an eastern whip bird and a pinch full of walnuts in my hand have in common?
Answer: The morning bird walk. We didn't need the binoculars and I only had the small camera, which of course was inaccessible when the yellow robin stayed for some time feeding from my fingers. Apparently they haven't had good rains here for some time which the guide noted may have upset the internal clock of the birds that usually come out for 'breakfast' at the start of this walk, and who were very obviously late! Bird list included eastern whipbird, white browed scrub wren, yellow fronted scrub wren, brush turkey, eastern yellow robin, crimson rosella, grey shrike thrush.

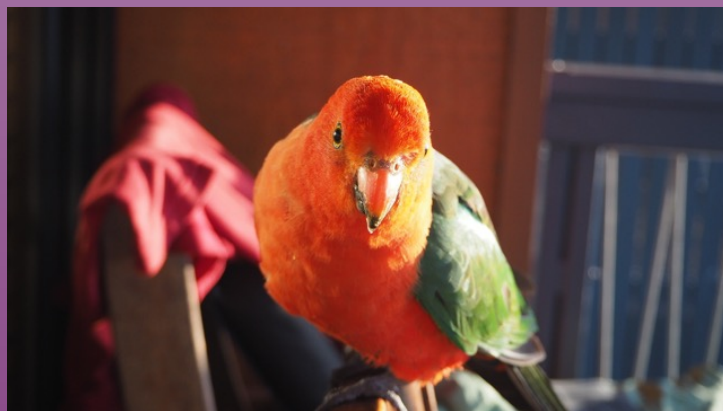
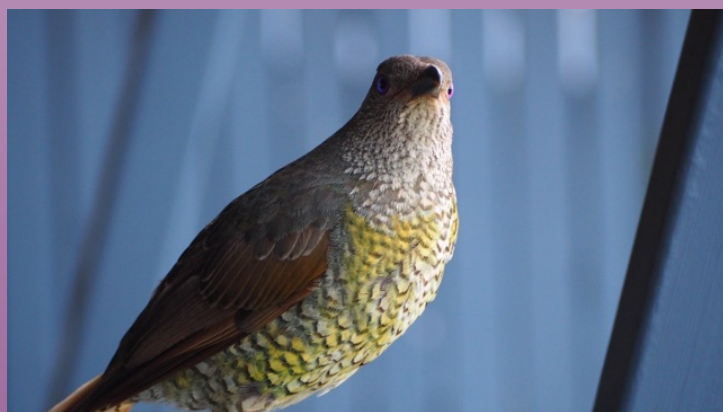
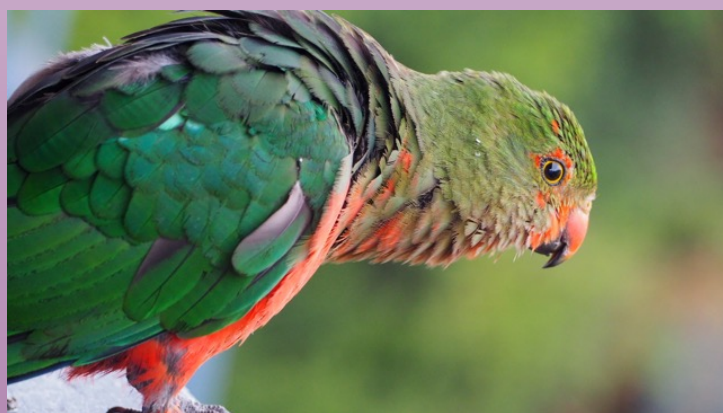
The hot breakfast held several options for me although the sausage casserole that I thought was 'gluten free' had capsicum in it and I put it back. The Wildlife Encounter was terrific; in the rain for some of it; and we left ten minutes before it's



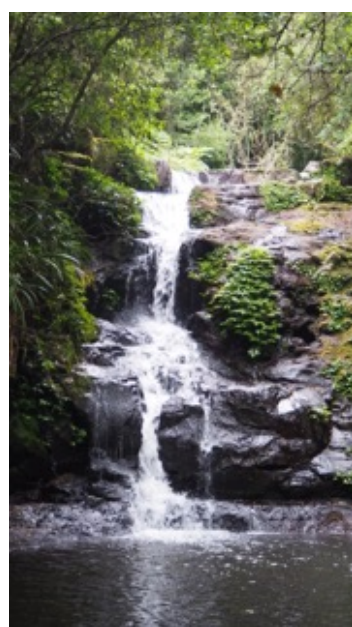
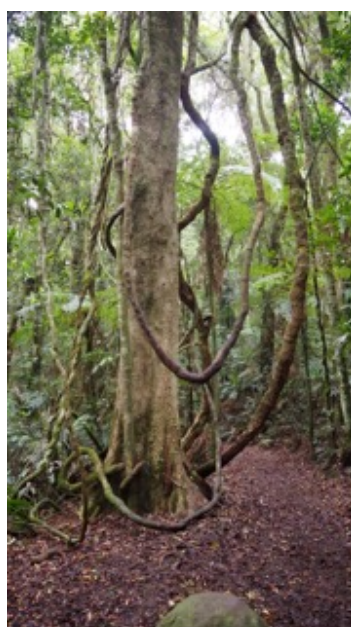
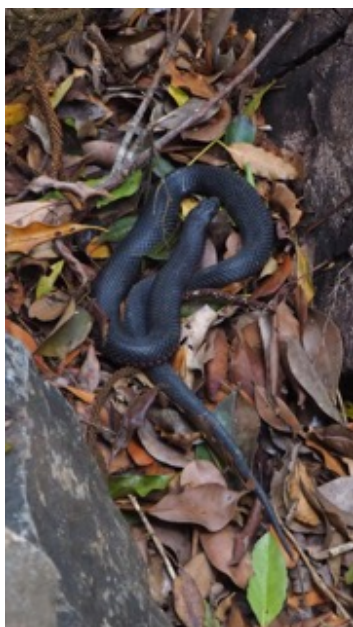
Morning bird walk visitors...

conclusion with a snake, the call of lamingtons for morning tea was just too overpowering for Andrew. I did however get to have my fingers licked by a sugar glider! The presenter was great; an ex Victorian who has been here for over two decades. This is clearly an educational show for kids but was enjoyable anyway.

After morning tea we headed down hill into the rainforest, up Mick's Tower (similar to the tower in the Tree Top Walk except smaller and only available to O'Reilly's guests) and through the Wishing Tree – through various intensities of rain - before taking the longer loop via the top of Morans Falls (over the creek above it) and back to the resort following a group of kids doing the Duke of Edinburgh medal. No photos were taken at the top of the falls, there were too many people. I was that focussed on getting back to base that I missed the short detour to the viewpoint to actually see the falls flowing over the cliff. Andrew bought his lunch at the kiosk. I had the left over ham on bread. We enjoyed the view from our suite for a while before heading down to afternoon tea, chatting with a guy who takes bird photos on the same camera as mine – and he fixed up the settings for me! – and then having a few drinks in the bar with an English couple on honeymoon. After enjoying the view from our balcony late afternoon we headed down to our last dinner here before retiring to our room (via a noisy frog and an inquisitive possum). I had visages of lighting the wood fire but a) it wasn't that cold inside (although it was getting chilly outside) and b) I went to bed early (I seem to be going to bed early these days - although two g&t's and a glass of marsane probably had something to do with that)!

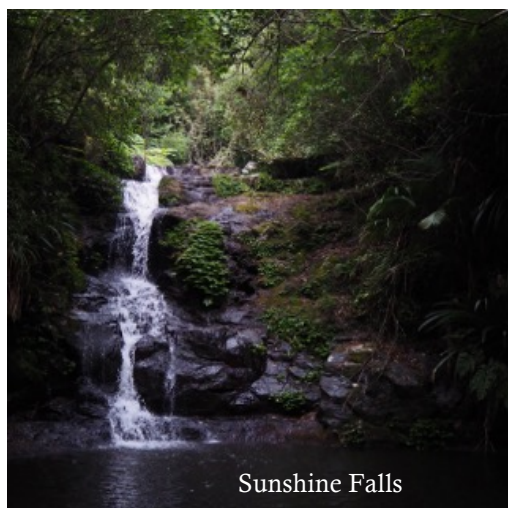
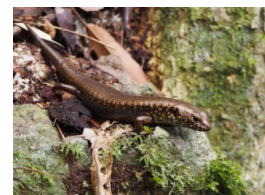


Morning balcony visitors to our room...



16th January 2020. The end of today was always going to be tough... returning to a boat with so many memories and so many things to clean out. However the intention was to enjoy as much of the day as possible before hand. Although both of us were up early, Andrew elected not to do the morning bird walk – which was probably a reasonable call as the guide was no where near as dynamic as the day before's interpreter (mind you, her slightly reserved demeanor wasn't helped by a visitor who kept interrupting).

After breakfast and pack-up (and dropping our fridge items behind reception for minding) we headed off to the guided walk to Sunshine and Elbana Falls, included as part of the *summer package*. There were only four participants on this walk and we had a terrific guide; a botanist by training (perfect here, her love for these magnificent trees shone through), she seems to have spent her career so far touring the country and taking tours – made me totally jealous as had I had the confidence, that's what I would have done. The rain held off and the waterfalls were lovely – we got back to O'Reilly's for lunch about four hours after we'd left – just as the rain bucketed down! The drive back to boat was hard; the evening was harder.



Sunshine Falls



Elbana Falls

18th January 2020. It rained overnight. It rained that much that local roads underwent flash flooding, the 'famous' Gold Coast theme parks were closed, and a suburb within twenty minutes drive from us had around 300mm rain in a short period of time. Thankfully we only had a couple of very minor leaks (on overhead hatches that we'd just regreased – obviously we'd missed a bit) and everything outside was either cold or wet this morning. We had a couple of missions this morning - we needed to drop stuff off to the RSPCA op shop, a laundrette trip (to finally wash the floor rug) and Andrew wanted a trip to Whitworths. Two of these locations were in Southport.

Originally we had booked our pen until the 19th January but having pulled all our stuff out of the front bow we now had several piles to deal with; the op shop pile, the throw out pile, the wash pile and the restock pile, and far too much to deal with in one day. We informed management of a delayed departure and managed to clear some of the tasks out of the way. The crap towels and left over cat food were originally going to go to the VSS but that was in Carrara so we donated the items to the closer RSPCA op shop instead– the adoption centre at the site had several cats lovingly looking for a home. I couldn't look for long, my heart is still breaking, but looking at the audience at the time there was going to be at least one lucky cat going home today. With still a lot of clean up to be done we took a break and spent a lovely afternoon with *Free Spirit*. (The second boat we know with this name)



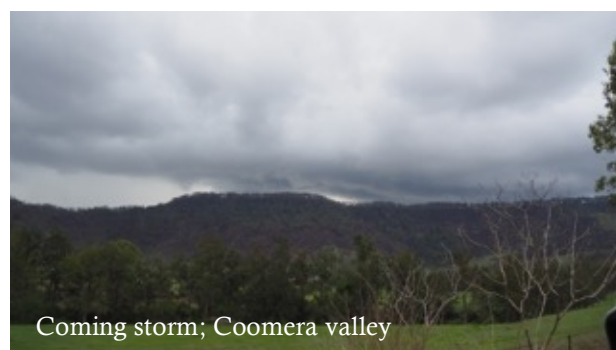
View opposite the Flying Bean Café; property owned by the local paragliding club!



I suppose we should have expected rain; this was before we got up the mountain!

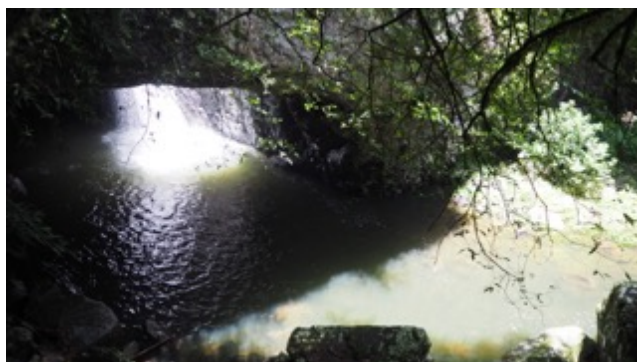
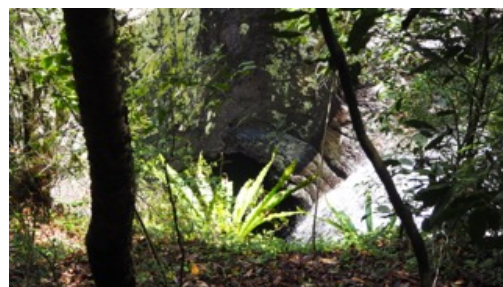
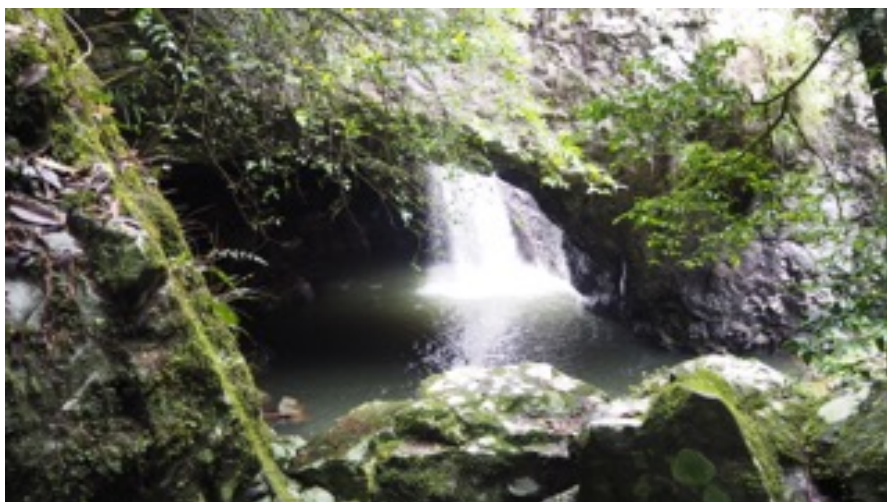


View from lunch table



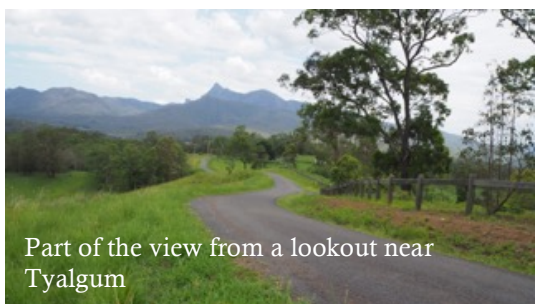
Coming storm; Coomera valley

19th January 2020. After two days of trying to sort out the boat and remove any unwanted and/or painful reminders of the life just left, I had had enough again and needed more exercise and a change of scenery. The idea had been to go back to the Natural Arch via the Natural Arch Café for lunch, having been too exhausted the last time we visited to actually walk to the site. But we changed our mind, and headed up to Beechmont for lunch instead, thinking that, as the masses weren't heading to Binna Burra because of the closures due to fires, maybe the businesses might like some support. We passed the café at Lower Beechmont and headed initially to the '*Binna Burra kitchen at Headmasters Café*', situated in an old school building. They are touting that their current profits will go to help re-building the lodge at Binna Burra; a good cause to support. We had however turned up on market day and not a free table was to be had, so we headed back down the hill to the *Flying Bean Café* and managed to grab the last free table inside; the outside tables under shelter were all taken and those with no shelter were not worth considering looking at the weather. The rain did come down as we enjoyed a light lunch so instead of heading to Natural Arch to do some walking, we headed instead toward Canungra, exploring the adjacent valley on the way, and following the path of the upper Coomera River. A coffee break was had at Canungra before we headed up to the top of Mount Tamborine, waiting for the traffic light to turn green to get up the hill (the notice says expect delays of up to 5 minutes) before getting eventually back to boat. We saw a bit of new country but we didn't get any exercise!



20th January 2020. Plan A revisited. We did get to the Natural Arch today but didn't walk the entire track around the site as it was closed off. But first to breakfast. The plan had been to head across in the Springbrook direction (the Natural Arch is on the western side of the Springbrook range) via Mudgeeraba, a route we hadn't taken before, and have a stop on the way; morning tea for Andrew, breakfast for me. A 'Google'; search revealed three possible facilities. One was only open three days a week (not today), one was a café in a golf course, and the friendliest sounding location 'Polly's Country kitchen' was conveniently on the side of the road and listed as open. However, the link to the website took me to a page that was written in Chinese so I didn't know what to expect. Avoiding any complication with that site we headed to the private golf course instead. And we nearly got there.... but the ford to get to it was covered with water and we deliberated the risk of putting a hire care (non 4WD) through this. In the end we reversed back up the narrow driveway, and a water wall off the wheels of a 4wd crossing the waterway shortly after was a testament that we had made the right decision. So off to Polly's we went. It was open and... it hadn't been taken over by a foreign consortium. It turns out they closed their website down (which has clearly been taken over by someone else) and they now run on Facebook only. Personally I would have kept the website and linked it across – rather than have others give misinformation The coffee was good, the food was enjoyable and around 11am we were on our way again reaching the car park of the Natural Arch around half an hour later.

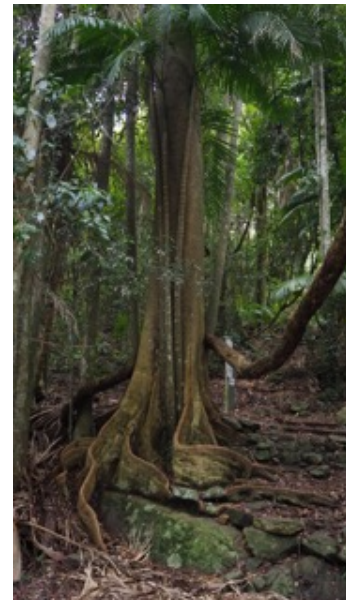
We spent around an hour here, appreciating the volume of running water (no swimming or walking off the path – fines apply) and admiring the micro bats under the overhang where the water tumbles down. The interps signs suggest for an easier traverse you take the circuit clockwise; unfortunately you couldn't take the circuit at all. I suspect all the recent rain has resulted in water and vegetation hazards on the path; like everyone else we took the same path to the bottom and back.



Part of the view from a lookout near Tyalgum



Tyalgum

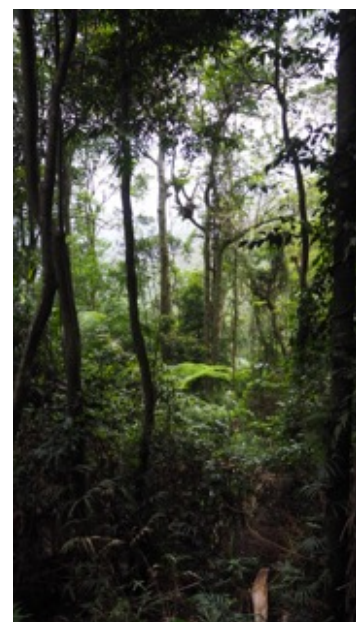


Leaving the Natural Arch we turned left and headed south, through the gorgeously green Numinbah Valley and across the Qld/ NSW border but instead of turning left toward Murwillumbah at Chillingham we turned right, visiting the delightful hamlet of Tyalgum before heading to Wollumbin National Park (Mount Warning).

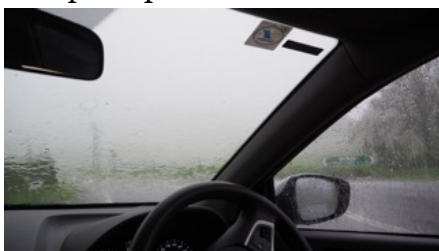
The last time we were at this National Park (20 odd years ago) we both had exceedingly sore feet so the summit walk was out. This time it was already afternoon so a bit late but I thought we could at least manage the 600 metre Lyrebird Walk – which is purported to lead to a lookout. The lookout however is back over the way you have come, into the rainforest – not out to the mountain you are on or the mountains around you. Disappointed in this, Andrew proposed a ‘stroll’ up the summit track – the entirety of which there was no way we were going to achieve today.

There is a lot of ‘up’ on this track and some rules now apply. Whilst the local aboriginal tribe would prefer you don’t go to the summit, the walk is not banned as such, but you are not allowed to stay overnight (so seeing the sunrise over the coast – you can see to Byron Bay from here on a clear day – might have to be done with a guide). There are also warnings at the start of the track that you shouldn’t start the walk after lunch in winter, and not to start it at all if there are thunderstorms about. I hadn’t read about the Thunderstorm Warning for the Scenic Rim today... our timing was perfect.

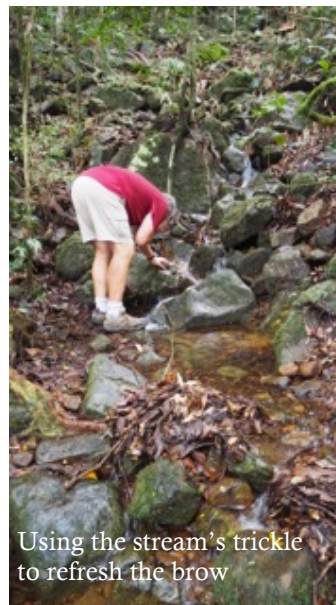




We started our ascent at around 2.30pm and we stopped about 1.5 kilometres from the start of the track around 3.30pm where there is a lovely little waterfall that crosses the track. We spoke to a descending father and daughter who had reached the 3 kilometre mark; they'd seen no views but they stated they had been in the cloud line. A guide at O'Reillys had advised us that 3pm was probably the time it started to get dark quickly in high rainforest areas of the Scenic Rim and that one shouldn't be caught out. And she wasn't wrong. As we started our descent I felt the odd rain drop, and the thunder started to roll. It growled loudly over us all the way down to the car park, although we got minimally wet due to the heavy rainforest canopy. By the time we got in the car the light on the track was marginal and the rain was really starting to come down. Because of the intensity of the rain, ordinarily we would not have moved until it was over, but to get to this spot you cross several fords with signs that advise you to go no further if there is water over the concrete. We needed to get to the other side of these, stopping before we joined the main Kyogle road to wait for the storm to pass. It was reasonably intense; several bouts of lightening lit us up with immediate thunder back -up on the way down. The Tweed River at Murwillumbah seemed to be up and a longer sojourn in this very green valley would have been nice. However a) we were not prepared for it, b) we didn't have the time anyway (in two days time we were expecting to be hanging off anchor), and c) the river looked high on its banks, with several signs along the road suggesting road subject to flooding, it was perhaps not the best time to stick around. After a short stop at Carrara there was only a stop for groceries on the way back to boat.



Looking for catbirds at the emergency helicopter pick up site



Using the stream's trickle to refresh the brow



21st January 2020. Final clean up - sort of. There are still items on the boat that no longer need to be here but we spent our last full day in the marina tidying up as many loose ends as we could. A final load of stuff went to the RSPCA op shop, we purchased a mattress topper to spoil ourselves (much much cheaper than an individually made mattress and anything was going to make a difference to the 'hardish' surface we'd been sleeping on for the past few years). On a whim we headed down to Pacific Fair Shopping Centre at Broadbeach, where the 'food court' areas are 'outside' and the 'Resort Area' is an outdoor resting area with resort seating, palm trees, low pools and a boab tree! Our final shopping visit was to Just Watches at Westfield Coomera. This mob just does watches and their service has been fabulous; when everyone else wouldn't touch Andrew's dive watch because it needed a 'specialised' operator with a tiny allen key' to change the band, the owners here were smart enough to realise this was all for show, swapped the old broken strap in a matter of seconds for a new temporary strap until we could get the proper one in, and then let us know that the pins looked too light to hold the strap long term so ordered some heavy duty pins for a long term solution. Without cost! We got home a few minutes before the afternoon storm sent a deluge down on Sengo's decks.



Paddling at Paradise Point.

22nd January 2020. We were off dock before 0700. We'd been up early and there was minimal final clean up required before departure but we did fill the water tanks from shore, using a filter to clear up 'town' water. Waking up *Free Spirit* we convinced them to assist us off dock before we made the short trip around to Paradise Point. Yesterday whilst we were traveling around in the car we had noted there was only one boat here, but by the time we got here this morning however there was really only one spot left if one wanted to ensure putting out a decent amount of chain; several other boats having arrived overnight. Anchor down, breakfast had we then had to work out what to do with ourselves. For the past few months we'd been concentrated on one thing. Now we had to get back to life.

Paddle boarding in roughish weather. The current was strong and whilst I tried to lead us north, Andrew headed south so I turned around and followed. We got to the public jetty and found, as we were not used to this, the current was just too strong to paddle back into. Instead we led the paddleboards back up along the beach, north of where we were anchored, and drifted down onto Sengo. I missed at the first grab, struggled to get hold of something and then had to grab Andrew's paddle as he drifted at a large rate of knots past me. Oh for calm conditions!

23rd January 2020. The weather was 'calmer' this morning, but not 'calm' and we paddled against both the tide and wind north from boat, under the Sovereign Islands' bridge to rest at the third jetty in the anchorage to the north of us, just south of the Coomera River. It had taken 25 minutes of solid push, and after chatting to the locals we used the tide to help us paddle back again.



The 24th to 29th were variations on a theme. We spent some time on the water each day, swapping to the kayak and traveling around Ephrim Island when it was just that bit too windy to stand up. We also did some walking, as a change of scenery. We are in training for a holiday later in the year and it involves day hiking so the legs as well as the arms need to be got into shape. The first walk was very fortuitous; we ran into other walkers who had been to where our end of year holiday is going to be and the subsequent discussion was very useful (thank you). Our second walk was in the company of *Arrabella*, a boat from the other side of the country, and who we had not seen for two years!



Bat migration 27th January across Paradise Point

Crab Island

29th January 2020. Nothing is ever as easy as it is supposed to be. This morning we had to move. But we didn't need to go far. With the restrictions on anchoring in the Broadwater we are only allowed seven nights in some places and our time at Paradise Point was up – we had been photographed so we couldn't hang on any longer. After an early morning paddle with *Arrabella* (Andrew stayed on board with his coffee) and some breakfast, it was time to move. But the short trip across to Crab Island was interrupted by a complication with the anchor – which had come up horizontal with the chain wrapped around it (I didn't take a photo and we have no idea how this macramé of metal could have happened). It took us some time, using the spinnaker halyard, and a stretch of Andrew's patience, to free the mess. Chain sorted we anchored between two boats on the western side of Crab Island, only venturing across to Runaway Bay Centre once we were

satisfied the anchor was holding in the change of tide. The evening brought the Wednesday evening yacht race. Having watched it from further south previously we weren't expecting to see it this far up but it seems this particular race was around Crab Island, the finish line just to our north off the Runaway Bay Marina wall; we had some great sail-bys.



30th January 2020. There was no exercise as such today. But we were on our feet most of it. After a podiatrist appointment for me this morning, it was off to Harbour Town (an outside shopping outlet) to get some new shoes. Andrew's hiking boots had survived and escaped mould on the boat (they were in a box packed away) but the soles had completely disintegrated. My hiking shoes were more exposed under the step of one of the beds and so the hooks for the shoelaces had corroded, fusing the shoelaces to the metal. Andrew suggested I clean these with a toothbrush and vinegar, which worked, and the shoelaces freed up. But the metal had corroded to the extent it broke off. The result: we were both looking for new hike boots. My light weight hike boots that

I used as everyday walkers were also in need of replacement (they'd 'had it' in the poddy's words) so we were essentially looking for three pairs of new shoes. It has been years since either of us bought new shoes and we both severely dislike the process. I think I tried all that the Macpac Outlet had to offer, then most of what the Kathmandu Outlet had to offer and then ended up the search in North Face. My 'daily' walking shoes were actually North Face light weight hiking shoes and the model is still current. Which means I knew they would fit - the only hitch was the price – this particular model wasn't on sale – and I am sure I didn't pay the current asking price for them last time. In the end I swapped brands, got myself a pair of light weight hiking shoes for my daily walkers (as per before) but a cheaper brand (which happened to be the brand of my older full hiking boots) and a mid sized hiking boot in another brand. Andrew also managed to get himself a new pair – his only disappointment was they were black! By the time we'd run around for shoes, tried on warmer jackets, inspected an inordinate amount of bags for travelling and wandered across the road to BCF for some canoe paddles we'd spent five and a half hours in the area and we were a 'little' fatigued. The bus ride home was uneventful and a pre-cooked chook was bought for the basis of a salad back on boat.



Wearing in rather than worn out

31st January 2020. New boots need wearing in and this takes time. And a lot of miles - but not all at once. I convinced Andrew to put his new hikers on and we trundled up to the Runaway Bay Marina, via a slight detour that led us to a grassed area adjacent the waterway and opposite Sengo's anchorage. Being 1030 before we started it was hot, and decidedly humid although there was minimal chance of rain. After a cool drink at *Kleins* café at the marina it was time to walk back, straight down Bayview Street this time for a slightly shorter run. Lunch was on boat and the afternoon was spent resting. We got out of it with no blisters but I had one very small and minor rub mark that I expect to be able to avoid the next time by tying the shoelace up in a different way.