

Aboard Sengo

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December 2020

Gorgeous Globbs

Alien landscapes below the water

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Lady Musgrave Island

The Mary Valley

Exploration inland

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From below to above...

Moving the perspective of sea level.



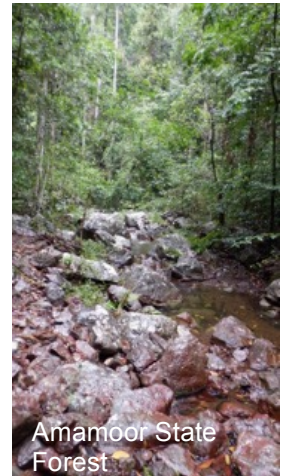
Pearson's Lookout



River Heads



Lady Musgrave Island



Amamoor State Forest

December 2020; the last month of a year that started so tragically for us, and then tuned into a zombie uncertainty - both for us *and* the rest of the World. We began the month off the east coast, at Lady Musgrave Island on the Great Barrier Reef, exploring the wonders below sea level. We ended the month inland, around Amamoor and Imbil, exploring new areas above sea level, enjoying the bush walks - even the 'up bits'— afterward, upon reflection at least, even if only to appraise the fact we coped with them quite well.

In between was not very exciting. A lot of December was either moving or, sitting out weather systems, which because of the season, were as expected, wetter and windier than earlier in the year. We got a few domestics done, a *lot* of reading and we took walks on land (interesting and otherwise) when we could.



Amamoor State Forest



River Heads

Great Barrier Reef: Lady Musgrave Island

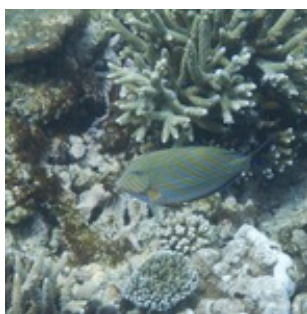
1st December 2020. The sun was well and truly up when I pulled myself out of bed at just after 0530. It was bright and it was hot. But there were cumulous clouds in the sky. Winds were light.

Andrew had lost his mojo again and got only a few feet way from boat when he decided that paddle boarding wasn't for him this morning. By this time however I was some distance away from boat, and worrying about the enormous ruckus that was happening just to my starboard side. It was clearly a fish feast but I was concerned it was being instigated by a group of sharks – the big, and clearly attacking, fish were big enough to be juvenile sharks, but there were no obvious fins sticking out of the water! So I didn't fall off, I got to my knees for more stability and balance – if this feeding frenzy was a worse case scenario, I didn't want to end up in the middle of it.

Getting back to boat we decided that perhaps Andrew was more up to an island walk this morning, except he didn't like the smell of the middle track and wanted to go around the outside. I on the other hand was on a mission – I had seen a chick and mother noddie that would make a great photo a week or so ago, and whilst I knew that chick would be gone, I was hoping to get others. Of course the best camera for this job would have been my good Olympus, but that is waiting for the doctor, so I was left with the new underwater unit. I did get a shot – but it was not the classic I'd hoped for. I met Andrew on the backside of the island – he had seen more wildlife than me, but then again he was looking for more than me. My tally was of course the noddies, a few terns, and a couple of banded rails! His tally included turtles, sea eagles, noddies, terns, and ruddy turnstones. Before getting back to the tinnie and heading back to Sengo, we admired a group of black tipped reef sharks and two blue spotted rays frolicking by the shore's edge, and had a chat to a couple of campers.

At 1300 we picked up the anchor, but it was down again at 1315. It wasn't as if we were on a dodgy bottom – we were holding beautifully, it was just that there was a large, prominent, bommie off to our port side that was at a perfectly respectable distance for the north or north-easterly winds that were expected in the short term, but not the easterly expected to come in on Thursday morning. Swimming to it would have been easy where we had been but we moved a bit further south. There was no wind at this stage, and only a smattering of cumulous, but it was very muggy and my hands were almost dripping with perspiration by mid afternoon.





Gorgeous Globbs: Snorkeling again.

2nd December 2020. With low tide at 1543 today we were never going to start snorkeling at slack water, instead we headed off boat around 1315 to see if we could find a better spot for snorkeling than we had sampled two days ago. It was hot. It was muggy. Tropical blue hues covered everything; from the water to the sky and the almost indecipherable line separating them. The blue refraction of the water turned the white bellies of a flock of brown boobies flying past a lovely turquoise. We have very little experience snorkeling here (or anywhere for that matter) but we headed to the outside of the lagoon today for a look. The first spot we tried was west of the lagoon entrance channel; the second, east. Although the start of this second exploration area didn't seem as interesting as the first, the end of it was amazing - globular coral on stalks looked almost alien, and I would have liked to explore more in this area as we got back into the tinnie. But it was time to head home - the sun had temporarily disappeared and grey skies were now about the island and its immediate surrounds; so much so that Andrew commented that they looked like rain clouds. The overcast sky made a difference to how the coral looked below and some sediment had a fuzzifying effect, particularly noticeable on the photos. We got back to boat around 1500 and whilst the sun did come out and the blues returned to the water and nearby sky soon after, the clouds released a few drops of rain over the adjacent Fairfax Islands.



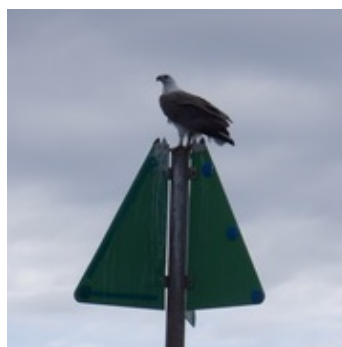
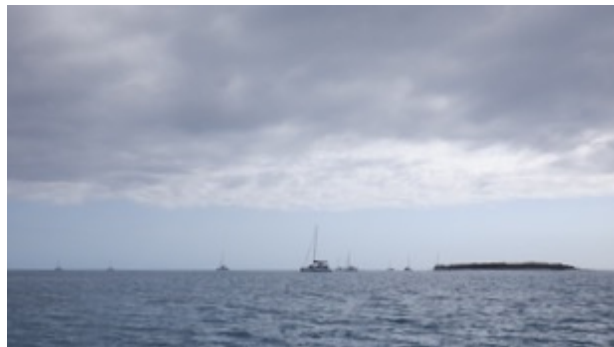
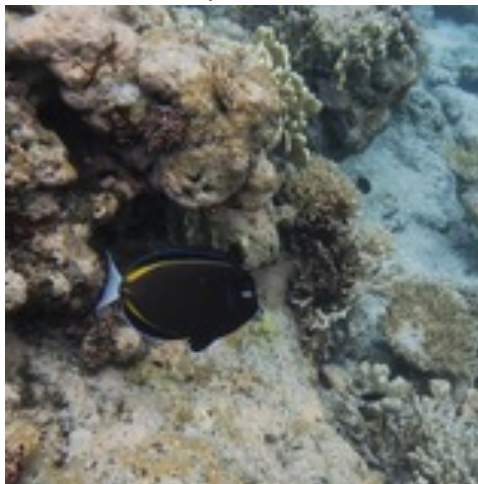


Some of the globular coral was huge



The spare time in the morning had been spent conducting a few small jobs; a metal polish of the Fawcett in C2 head, oiling a chopping board and the stove partitions, a bit of dusting, reading, bug squashing, wiping down the vinyl covers for the furnishings in the front cockpit, and wiping down some of the outer mesh covers for salt and dirt.

By sundown we had packed up the tinnie, closed most windows, put the vinyl covers back over the front cockpit cushions and beanbags, and made yoghurt.



Back to the Mainland

3rd December 2020. The south wind had disappeared from the forecast but not from reality, as a south wind seemed to be blowing whilst we raised the main sail shortly after we lifted the anchor at 0600. We put one reef in because the wind blowing when we started was 15-20 knots and not the 10-15 knots that was predicted. We motored out of the lagoon channel and west along the top of the Lady Musgrave Lagoon. The genoa was put out just as we turned south at 0700. Our initial speed had us traveling at 8' to 9' knots – and at one point reaching 10.1 knots. We managed to sail until around 3nm from the Burnett River shipping channel when our speed had dropped to 2.8 knots and the wind direction changed enough that tacking would take us several hours to reach our anchorage up river. The wind at this time was blowing below 10 knots – according to predictions it was supposed to be blowing 15-20 knots this late in the afternoon, but clearly that was not to be. So we put the engines on and motored into the anchorage past the sugar sheds. The anchor was down around 1630 – It was low tide.



A 'Utilitarian day.'

4th December 2020. We had considered, and indeed enquired about, the possibility of getting our anchor chain re-galvanised whilst we were at 'Bundaberg'. That exercise would involve booking a pen to take the chain off and staying on the pen until the chain was ready. The marina office had been closed when we motored past on the 3rd so we were going to ring this morning – if we could get our chain to the re-gal spot on Monday it should be back on Wednesday. But then we looked at the weather. The winds were picking up, and potentially gusting from the north until Wednesday when the direction would change and they'd be gusting from the south to the same uncomfortable strength. Not really the conditions you want to be in tied on dock –and potentially impossible to get off. So we changed our minds, decided to get the chain re-gal in Brisbane when we got there, and spent today's calmer conditions doing a food and a fuel run.



Thank the planet for the Burnett Heads IGA. After the 2 nm tinnie ride down to the Burnett Heads Boat ramp we walked into town, admiring the kangaroos who were sheltering under the tree in what may become a marina development (were will the roos go then?) and admiring the magnificent flame trees along the road. The shop wasn't overly extensive – indeed our shops are limited in IGA's as processed foods tend to include ingredients we don't eat. But loaded up on vegies and meat to last over a week we commandeered the IGA team to drive us back to the boat ramp (we had meat on board). They do a pick up service as well but we'd never take it – we need the exercise.

After getting fuel in gerry cans and decanting it into the tanks we readied the boat for a journey tomorrow. **Kool Sid II** came over for the afternoon catch-up.

The Great Sandy Straits

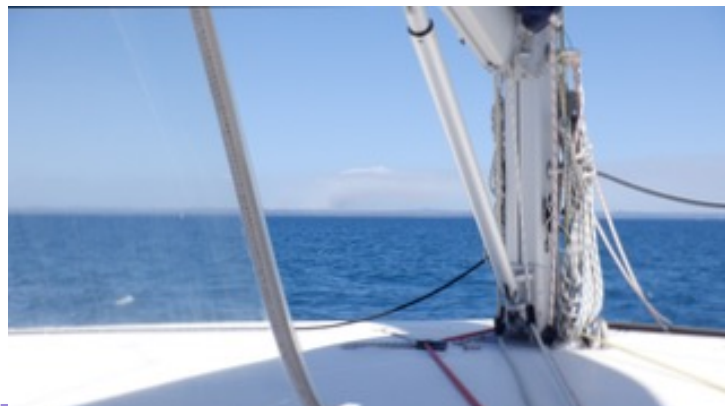
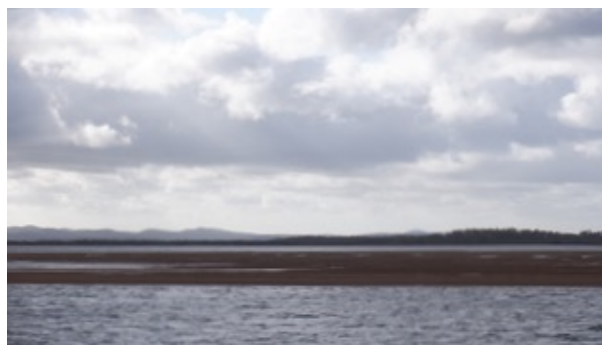
5th December 2020. We were up around 0500. The anchor was up and sails raised in the anchorage around 0540. One engine went off at around 0605 once we'd left Burnett Heads and turned south out of the shipping channel. But the forecast 10-15 knots (which would still have meant sailing at an angle away from the rum line) was not to be. There was occasional wind strengths of around 12-15 knots but we mostly got around 8 to 10 knot winds, and instead of being north-east, which we could have used, it was north to north west, which made it mostly, at those wind strengths, less than useless. Eventually the wind went to north to north-east and we were able to turn the boat to run parallel to the rum line. It wasn't until around 1215, just outside the Sandy Straits, around the Fairway mark that the wind strength got high enough that we could actually turn off the other engine. And we had four hours of a pleasant sail, even if it was coming from directly behind us - but it was strong enough to be useful. We were goose-winged for most of this time.

I never thought, after being on the edge of Back Saturday that I'd be deliberately travelling toward a bush fire. The fire on Fraser Island had three obvious 'fronts' each producing their own pyroclastic clouds. Helicopters and bombers went overhead, although we didn't see much as they got lost in the smoke, which gratefully stayed across the island, mostly, and didn't effect our visibility. According to the news on the internet, Kingfisher Bay's remaining residents were told to be prepared to leave today. We will see tomorrow the update to this tragic (man made) situation. Our original plan had been to get to Big Woody Island tonight and then move around to River Heads



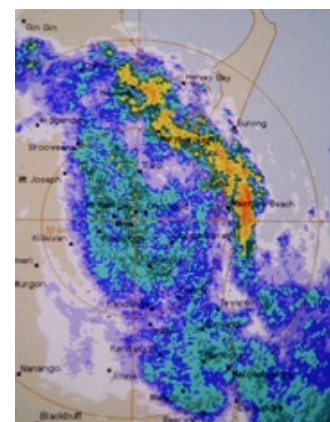
tomorrow to sit out several days of horrible weather. We were early enough however to get into our River Heads Anchorage today – on a dropping tide – over low water! The anchor was down around 1700.

6th December 2020: Sitting out horrible weather is not fun, but a regular part of this lifestyle. It means that there is no getting off boat. If one gets any enthusiasm in these conditions, it usually means domestics. Amongst other things we got the following done: wiped down vinyl sheets that cover the front cockpit cushions, packed away the main sail, dishes, rust run of dish drainer, newsletter, read a bit, slept a bit, started thinking about rescheduling 'provisionally,' our trip to Canada, and two short yoga sessions.



7th December 2020. After gusting into the high 20's yesterday this morning was quite a surprise. And in one case not necessarily a welcome one. No wind at 0500 meant I got bitten all over by midgies when I wiped down the bottom of the stanchions as my first job this morning. There was a layer of cloud hanging over Fraser but the rain radar showed nothing so I wondered if that was fire related.

During the day there were thunderstorm warnings south of here and the rain band was significant but it didn't seem to be coming anywhere near us. Later in the evening however that all changed. A different rain band was forming on the radar at bom.gov.au – it was long – and it was colourful. And we were hopeful. Thunderstorms are not something you really want in a boat but Fraser Island needed rain. The forecast for Hervey Bay was for minimal rain today – tomorrow's forecast was for 70%. However it all happened after dark. The new rain band was heading south but there was some east. Lights were flashing in the distance sky and rumbles could be heard for a couple of hours before we actually got wet. I found myself obsessed with checking the radar – would it get to us, and more importantly, would it get to Fraser Island? It seemed the bottom half of Fraser Island was going to get rain, would the rain band get to the top half - the half that was on fire and really needed

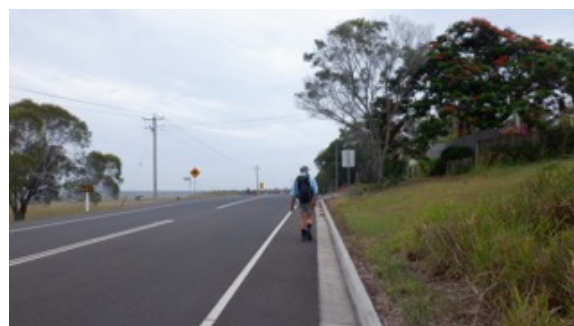


it. Happy Valley had been declared safe in the news earlier today – wouldn't it be nice if we woke tomorrow and Kingfisher Resort was in the same situation.

8th December 2020. Morning skies were grey just before 0500 and the sun was peaking through the clouds to the east. Winds were calm. The forecast was still for 60% chance of rain but there was little on the radar. My first job was to make muesli.

At 0800 we headed to shore – up to 'town' through the bush pathway along the shore of the Susan River and then we kept going – discovering after we'd crossed the road that the basket off my walking stick had come off – again. But I wasn't going back for it then. We wandered along the main road toward Booral until we got to Cove Boulevard and turned into a 'new' (several stages) housing development, dropping down to almost sea level (the houses on the shore side of the road had views over the Straits) and then back up to the main road back to town, where we caught up with **Kool Sid II** before heading back to boat.

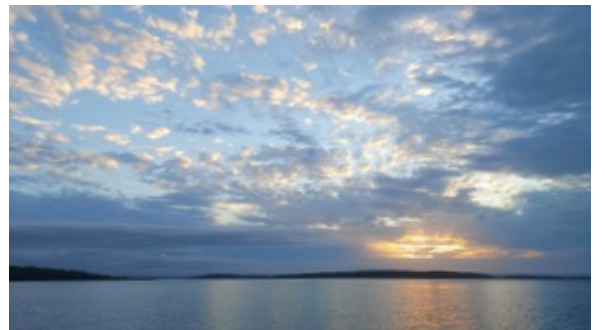
As I am in training the hike pack was pretty well packed as it would be on trail. The only thing I took out of my pack was the tent poles. I carry them on the outside and I didn't want them damaged on a training run. Of course to get full pack weight I am going to have to add a few more pieces of clothing, food and water – a weight we think is around 6 kilograms. But what I was carrying was a good start to get back into shape.



At the end we were a bit exhausted, covered in perspiration because the temperature was in the high twenties (or was a few kilometres away in Hervey Bay so can't see it would have been much different at River Heads) and it was muggy. I had a few niggles – the left side of my neck, my right foot was having the usual mid walk issues (I might try tying my shoelaces up differently to see if that help) and of course the latent issue with my hamstring (I hadn't taken any anti inflammatory tablets).

The walk gave us a bit of practice of road walking, sticking to the flattish grass area when we could, and using the concrete 'path' on the side of the road when it was available, but there were also sections where we had to walk on the other side of the white line – fortunately there are road signs asking cars to spare 1.5 meters and not hit cyclists so drivers were prepared to give a little room. I had expected the road back to civilisation to be along a ridgeline, and flat. It wasn't. Presented with this I was a bit frustrated at first, however thinking about it, a bit more work for the legs was probably a good thing. We walked 11.36 kilometres (plus a few more hundred meters – we found the basket on the bush path on the way back – at which point I put it back on my walking stick and it promptly came off again and we had to go searching for it a second time!).

It rained a bit in the afternoon – so the decision to go walking in the morning had been a good one. In fact one storm cell formed just north of us, developed to cover us and then moved east toward Fraser Island, crossing near Kingfisher Bay and then after raining on Eurong on the east coast of Fraser Island, headed north up the island coast. This rain would have been an extra bonus to the rain yesterday but it still, apparently, hasn't put the fire out.



9th December 2020. We didn't do much today. After yesterday's walk my leg muscles had come up very sore – Andrew's were fine – but then again I was carrying my hiking pack full of everything except tent poles, food and water. He was carrying his daypack with only a few items in it. The weather wasn't conducive to getting off boat anyway today – the southerly had come in overnight, as we expected it would – but we were very comfortable in our little hole on the north side of the end of the Mary River – the only slight jiggle (and I mean slight) was at high tide – otherwise at low tide the sandbank made the fetch very short.

We read a bit, researched on the computer and booked some accommodation for Canada – providing we can get there.

In the evening we did two new yoga sequences – choosing these primarily because they were mostly on the floor exercises, no balancing in the slight jiggle required.

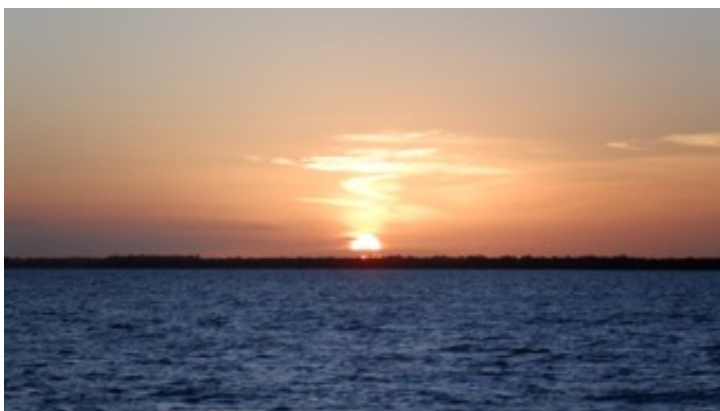
I made muesli for breakfast, chocolate muffins for lunch and we had a chicken concoction for dinner. We went to bed around 2130.



10th December 2020. Andrew had a conflict with the water maker today. It won several battles – however, fortunately, Andrew won the war. I did a small patch of polishing, secured a camp spot for the 30th December and arranged details for the night of the 31st December (and in this case the 1st of January 2021).

We went for a short walk this morning – just up the hill to the IGA – and down the road – meeting Gingie who was out for a walk, a fabulous rustic and white puppy. My legs were still a bit stiff and tight so I didn't want to over do it, but several minutes after starting the legs had warmed up and felt fine. Our shop was small– getting cheese, vegies and frozen fruit - so for a hot morning we couldn't dawdle coming back to boat for fear of the purchases spoiling – hence the exit down the road rather than the bush track.

The afternoon was spent idling around. My main activity of note was doing a bit of the newsletter. I did however have a bit of a panic when I saw that bom.gov.au had Sunday's forecast as the wind blowing from 15-20 knots up to 20-25 knots, yet windy.com had this spot gusting up to 55 knots! That is a significant difference.



11th December 2020. There was no walk today but there was one off boat activity. In the morning I published November's newsletter, made muesli, and did the dishes. The forecasts had changed - bom.gov.au had the forecast for Sunday to increase to 25-30 knots. Windy.com had the gusts reforecast down to mid thirties – much more manageable.

I made tahini biscuits to take to a party – **Kool Sid II** was turning 7 and we spent a lovely couple of hours on board before the owners had to pack up to head up river. It had been blowing around 17 knots when we headed across in the tinnie and I fully expected to get wet – we donned our wet weather gear in preparation but it wasn't needed; the only spray landing on my spectacles. When we left to head back to boat, the wind had temporarily lulled but was up again a few minutes after we'd put the tinnie back on the davits. We could see rain in the distance to the west, as well as the south-east where hopefully it would fall on the Fraser Island fire. As the rain predictions for the next two days were 90% with up to 15 mm each day, we spent the next few minutes pulling the cushions and the bean bags in from the front cockpit – putting them on the back cockpit table and covering them with vinyl. Hopefully that will keep everything relatively dry.

We saw over 25 knots on the gauges this afternoon but we suspect it got higher. I felt a little dull in the afternoon so didn't do much.



12th December 2020. Whilst the forecast had changed yesterday's chance of rain to 30pc and we got some on and off after lunch, today's reduced forecast was to 70 pc and it was raining steadily when I first woke (it was dark) and when I got up at 0500. It probably hadn't stopped raining on and off all night. We are not complaining – although to give the boat a good clean I should be out there scrubbing it as well. And hopefully, again, this will put any lingering smouldering out on the Fraser Island fire, not that we have been able to get any information on that for the past couple of days – it seems to have dropped off the news cycle. Perhaps the resort will be able to do as it hoped – and open for xmas

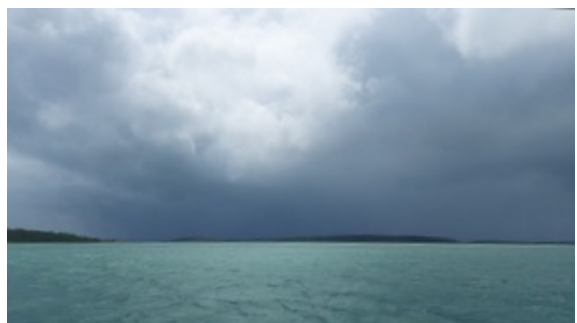
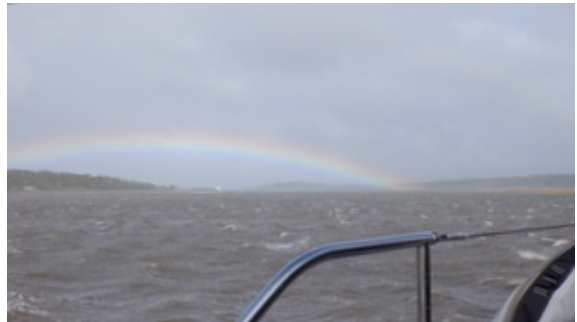
Whilst the morning was mostly wet, the afternoon was mostly dry and I managed to get three pieces of hiking clothing washed, and for all intents and purposes, dry. I also chased up some money owed to us from Melbourne City Council, chased accommodation in Canada, researched accommodation for a walk we have in mind, read Cold Comfort Farm, and did the dishes

13th December 2020. We were up around 0600 and the wind outside was nowhere near what was predicted. Hopefully then the predicted gusts won't reach 38! It had rained over night but was not raining when we got up – but scattered showers were on their way up the coast.

I had woken up with a fuzzy arm – therefore I suspect something is not right in my back. Yesterday I had emailed a local physio to see if they had time to see me for my hamstring, but I am now wondering, if I don't get a response this morning, whether I should be trying to organise a chiropractor.

The wind eventually picked up and for a while windy.com seemed spot on with its updated prediction of gusting up to 38 knots. Winds had been a constant 25-35 knots for quite some time and then they ramped up, and were blowing constantly over thirty knots for some time after that. In the end we got to 45 knots! Most rain, (95% predicted), came in the morning, although there was an evening breeze. The pad that was under the middle of the kayak blew out, which means the 27 kilogram kayak was bucking in the wind on the front deck!

We didn't do much - we read a bit, and I did the dishes, before making raspberry and macadamia muffins for lunch. Andrew ended up fixing the top drawer of our bed – A bit of over over-zealous closing by me had broken off the back of the latch.



Do we? Don't we? Do we? Don't we?

14th December 2020. What wind – well actually it was minimal, with a light drizzle at 0600 when we got up. At 0830 it started to grumble and some rain came across in waves. The rain radar however was a bit hard to read, so much so as that after lunch it was a little hard to tell if the rain off the east coast of, and over some of Fraser Island, was going to get to us or not. We hesitated. But we were desperate to get off boat to stretch the legs. In the end we made a decision, grabbed our hiking raincoats – we took our day packs rather than our hiking packs – and headed across to shore.

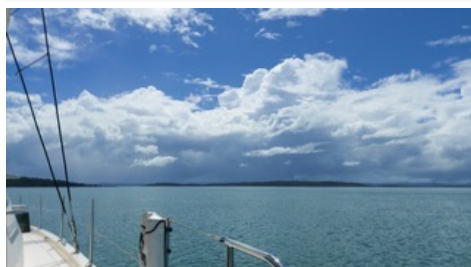
Due to the storms over the past few days, the water, relatively clear when we came to the anchorage a week ago, was now a croc hiding / Yarra River brown.

We took the walking track to the shops where a pigeon woop wooped and some small passerines peeped in the background. There were magpies in the open area below the houses, (an adult feeding a grown youngster) and there was a noisy minor very agitated by a monitor who was heading his way, balancing precariously near the top of a tree on a branch around a third of the animals' girth. We think he got stuck and we left him around 15 feet up a tree swinging his arms in the air and grabbing hold of nothing. Another monitor was

climbing a tree closer to the ground and we also left him to it so we didn't stress him too much. Crossing the main road, we headed down some of the local roads to the east of the settlement, past houses old and new and admiring the view some of them had over the Sandy Straits to Fraser Island. The sun was out enough and there was enough blue sky to mean we could define the shadows of trees along the asphalt of the road that we walked along. We dog-legged from Holmes St, down to Fraser Drive and back to the main road and the shops where we headed into the IGA for a quick top up. We were out of eating apples, carrots, beans, sweet potatoes and almost out of cheese.

We weren't wearing bright clothes but clearly we were conspicuous as one of the other customers asked if we were the couple walking in front of her house a short while ago – you can't go anywhere in these small communities and expect not to be seen!

We walked back to the tinnie via the bush track but the monitors we'd seen on our earlier pass had moved on. The noisy minor however was still whingeing, the magpies were still on the mown area below the houses and the spot of the walk was actually a bird we can't officially identify. (The closest we get is a possible female satin bowerbird).



15th December 2020. We would have loved to try to see the Geminids but the clouds were not going to give us that option, so there was no point getting out in the middle of the night. It was all domestics today, as well as the usual breaks for recreational reading. We were also looking at the weather forecasts to decide on the timing of our next move – ie when we can get out of this hole.



Pir'ri Reserve.

16th December 2020. I was looking for a walk. I was also looking for somewhere new – not easy when you are at the end of a peninsula. The destination chosen was Pir'ri Reserve, along the main road to Booral, and 8.6 kilometres from the boat ramp at River Heads. Had we walked back again this would have been a 17-odd kilometre plus journey.

We left boat ramp around 0800, which was unfortunately later than preferred. The day was due to be hot, and with the humidity here at this time of year, potentially very stifling. As we passed one driveway, the owner of the property, coming out in his vehicle hailed us. 'You must be Swiss,' he said. 'Who else would be walking in strange places with full backpacks and walking poles!' The irony of this location was that on our way back from a previous walk, this owner had been driving into his driveway as we'd passed – now he was driving out. Bless his cotton socks he offered a lift – but that would have defeated the purpose; if only we'd been able to take up that offer on the way back!

The first part of the today's walk was familiar having walked the 5-ish kilometres to Cove Boulevard along the main access road. The width of the verge was reasonable, plenty of room to accommodate a bike (two at a push side by side if you had to). The 4wd passing us the wrong way overtaking double lines with another coming the other way incited expletives from me – I don't swear often. Soon after the verge got thinner and it was prudent to step down on to the steep bank to get off the road with oncoming traffic.

A red car was parked at the side of the road as we headed down one hill. As we approached we realised that the front was staved in. Independently we both thought it was the result of a front on car crash – until we smelt the sickly sweet aroma shortly after. Not one, but two, dead eastern grey kangaroos lay by the side of the road – and they weren't small. One would have been considered a reasonable sized individual – the other was much bigger and probably the dominant male. We then



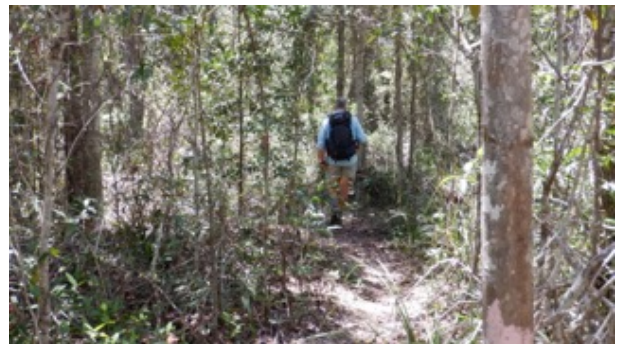
summed the car strike was probably the cause – an absolute tragedy for the animals. Other carnage seen on this trek – a dead magpie on the road

When we got to the reserve we had a rest at the provided seat and looking at the brochure provided at the shelter we decided on how we were to explore this little patch of greenery. There is a small dam near this entrance and we first headed down a not so obvious track to check it out. I had read a couple of reviews on the web of this reserve and the writers' disappointment at the width of the tracks so I wasn't concerned that the track we followed wasn't all that clear. We got to the dam – but we found out later it wasn't the official track.

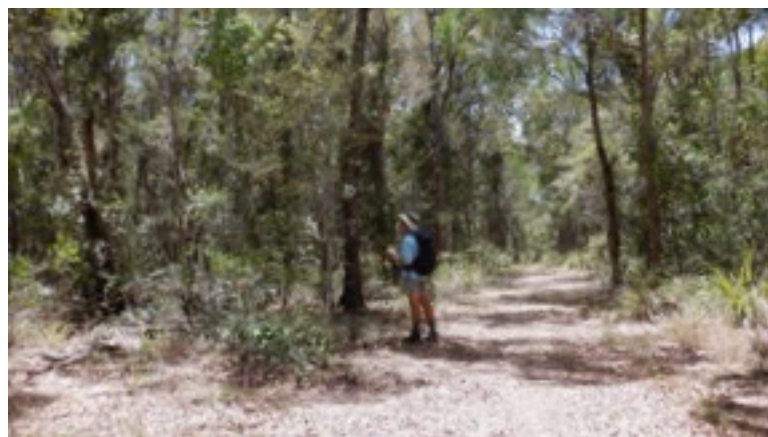
There wasn't much on the dam. The day was definitely getting hot and uncomfortable and I suspect most birds were probably sheltering from the conditions. There were some bird calls around however and the birds we did see flitting around the dam were a couple of gorgeous double-barred finches. But they were the only occupants. Getting back to where we started we then started following the official track.

At some point though we lost it. It is not that hard to lose – you follow the bollards, except that I hadn't worked that out at this stage and we headed off into scrub following a line of orange markers attached at regular intervals to trees. When we came out at what was an official road, but an unmade verge, we had no idea where we were, and having assumed one thing, we were corrected by a neighbouring local who hailed us with 'hello hikers' from his back fence. He had come to check the back of his ten-acre property after the storm. His directions got us to the road we were expecting to come out on, and we took the next track we saw back into the bush - which was in fact the track we thought we should have come out on in the first place. In this confusion we didn't get to walk the entire length of the tracks in the reserve. But due to our misdirection we did end up seeing a group of babblers - which meant the discourse was almost worth it. Babblers hang around in groups and if you watch them for a while it almost seems if they are playing and having fun – they always bring a smile to my face. They were definitely my spot of the day.

This reserve is supposed to have kangaroos and wallabies and koalas. We saw none of these. There is also a resident white-bellied sea eagle. We didn't see him either.



It was cooler in the bush than on the road but we were still feeling the heat. We came to a three-way junction – labeled the Alan Feeble's Rest (named after the man who inspired the reserve and did most of the work.). We took a rest, and I took the bottoms of my trouser legs off to cool off. Andrew, sensibly, was walking in shorts. My hamstring wasn't exactly playing up – but I could feel it, and my back and neck were starting to niggle. As a result I told Andrew I was prepared to get a taxi back once we got to the reserve's entrance. When we finally got back to the entrance we had another rest but Andrew wasn't prepared to wait a 'metaphorical hour and a half' for a taxi to turn up. It would be quicker to hitch, he said. I didn't want to stick my hand out. Don't worry, he said, 'I'll do it'. Hitching is something we may have to get used to doing in NZ (when we get there) so a practice run here and there won't hurt. We walked a short distance back towards boat until we got to the main road and then Andrew stuck his thumb out. The first vehicle past was a Woolies delivery truck – he was never going to stop. The second and third vehicles looked more promising - 4WD passenger vehicles and, in theory the most likely to stop. But they didn't. The fourth vehicle went past. It was a Mercedes sedan. That won't stop we thought. But it did. So a big thank you to the driver and her son, and a brave move in these days of Covid. She went out of her way to drop us back at the shopping centre at River Heads and we were grateful. Not the least reason of which being, now it was 1400 and the café was due to



close soon – and that we were in time to get a substantial lunch. Had we walked the café would have been long closed by the time we got there and our fare would have been *Clif Bars* for the midday meal.

Bird list: Magpie, babblers, noisy minor, common koel, willy wagtail, channel bill cuckoo (heard), fig bird, pacific black duck, great heron, double barred finch, cattle egret (flock in flight), pied butcher bird, wood duck, white eared honeyeater, forest kingfisher, eastern whipbird (heard), mudlark, rainbow lorikeets, peaceful dove, crested pigeon, scaly breasted, Indian minors, crows, white cockatoo-ish (too far away to determine whether a sulphur crested or Corella). There were lots of other bird calls and birds flitting through the forest but they were way too fast and too far away to determine their species.

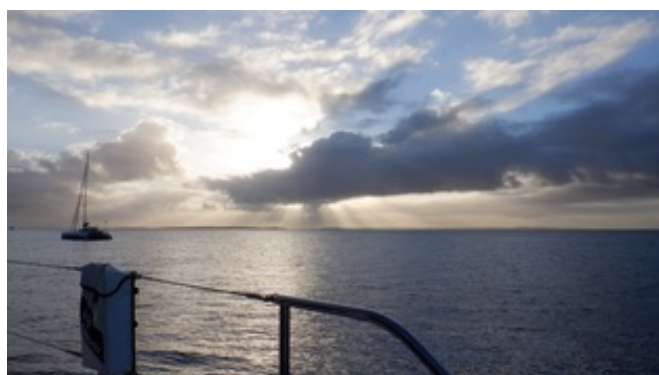
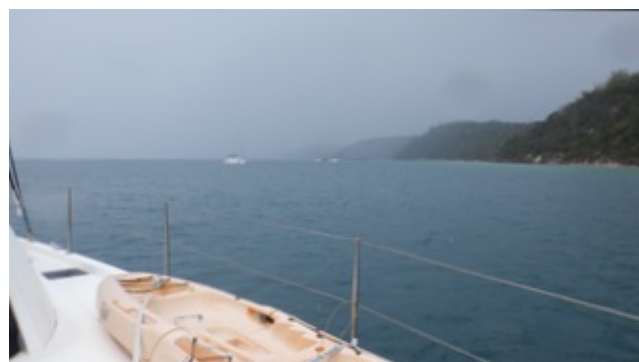
17th December 2020. Bright sunshine woke us up at 0500. But grey skies took over not long after. 80% chance of rain was forecast as was a potential thunderstorm but none of that really eventuated, not in our little patch anyway. We got a couple of drops of rain – light – on a couple of occasions during the day. Admittedly we did hear the thunder, to our north and west, and it started around 0830, re-announcing itself later in the day.

Given the forecast we thought we'd stay in our hole one more day and not potentially move in a tempest (which didn't happen). However we didn't do much - I did a bit of reading and we did a bit of planning for a land based trip next year. Breakfast was a tin of fruit (because we are not only out of muesli we are also out of the ingredients for me to make more of it) followed by raspberry muffins (when I eventually got around to making them)

To Kingfisher Bay

18th December 2020. It was light at 0500 when I got up and the sun eventually emerged from behind a cloud. Perhaps the forecast tempest was delayed – the rain prediction had gone up to 70 pc chance of rain today with potential thunderstorms again.

It wasn't raining where we were – but it was raining at Kingfisher Bay. I was expecting a bit of a hassle to get the anchor up, after all it had taken us 45 minutes previously on retrieving the anchor from this anchorage due to the twisting of the boat with the wind and tide. We had been here longer this time so the potential for swing and twisting of the bridle was so much greater. However, I was delightfully surprised. The anchor was up in ten minutes! Between 1210 to 1220. And we motored across to Kingfisher Bay. The anchor was down at 1340. The rain cleared and we had blue skies around 1500.



To Moon Point

19th December 2020. Hot. Muggy. My original idea of going for a walk and then lunch at the Sand Bar got changed just to lunch because I couldn't handle the heat. After one disaster at trying to anchor we eventually pulled the tinnie up the beach – which wasn't far as it was high tide. And as we didn't dawdle at lunch, we didn't have far to pull it back into the water.

You wouldn't have thought this place had been closed. The music was a bit too loud and the girls behind the bar weren't as efficient as they could have been but there were plenty of people there for lunch and in the pool on the first day of operation after re-opening. Cars were lined up on the street outside and the sun was shining through to the ground through the forest. What break?!

After lunch we decided to move. We'd been invited to call the marina tomorrow on the office opening to see if we could go in to the Great Sandy Straits marina a day early. If that was the case I wanted to be closer to the marina than we were at kingfisher Bay. We considered Big Woody Island but eventually moved to Moon Point – staying outside the shallow bits (and the better protection) because if we did get a chance to move tomorrow we didn't want to have to wait for the tide to come in. We were sticking out a bit but the swell was manageable. The afternoon was spent tidying the boat (although I had put 2/3 of the cockpit cushions on one of the beds before I realised that if I wanted to get the dehumidifier out I would have to move them again!). Andrew spent most of the rest of the day reading and watching the America's cup. He went to bed around 2230 – we hadn't done our yoga session – so after some further tidy-up of the cockpit I did half the morning session – there was a bit of a wobble so the balance poses would have to wait until the morning. I went to bed around 2330. There were blue skies all day except for a short stint when we left Kingfisher Bay – rain clouds seemed to be hovering north of us over Fraser Island but they were gone an hour or so later when we put the anchor down.



View north from Kingfisher Bay



and me being tentative on my still niggly hamstring. We did have a break in the middle, at the end of the pier, in the slightly warm breeze – there are no seats here but there are some further down the jetty. We chatted to a family who was originally expecting to spend xmas with their relatives in Sydney and the central coast of New South Wales! I don't think that is going to happen.

Sengo gets tied to dock

20th December 2020. The sun was shining brightly at 0545 when I got up. At 0945 however there was a grey cloud over Moon Point – with a prediction of 20% chance of showers. We had raspberry/blueberry and macadamia nut muffins for breakfast and spent the morning on some land-based planning. Most of the catamarans that were at Moon Point when we got here yesterday or had come in from various directions for the night, had already exited this morning.

We rang GSS at 1000 when the office opened. The dock was available today if we wanted it – and we took it. With the help of the incoming tide we took the shortest route possible and were on dock 1.5 hours later. By the time Andrew was happy with the ropes it was close to 1200 and we had lunch.

Logging into the marina at the office, we reacquainted ourselves with the management; we hadn't been here for any length of time for 5 years (1 day a couple of years ago). It was then a slow afternoon because of the heat – I decanted a couple of months of recycles into the comingled bin, and stripped the bed in order to wash the sheets. We took a nice land-based shower, went out for dinner and then had a walk in the evening (in the dark). From the marina to the end of the Urangan pier is not that far – just 4.7 kilometres return, and we took longer than expected, but I put that down to both the heat





21st December 2020. It was another hot day and we were hot and sweaty when we got back.. The morning walk was to Woolies – but given we were about to get off boat for ten days we didn't buy much. Apples however were a priority – and groceries to make muesli! Because of the heat we did nothing for most of the rest of the day, although we did do a fresh water flush of the water maker. I got a delivery of some 'local' olive oil just after lunch from a local business (too far for us to walk). I also managed two loads of washing late afternoon. The main priority of the day, which was left until the cool of the evening, was that we started packing for our break off boat.

The final rush.....

22nd December 2020. Again hot and muggy - which, of course, doesn't make for an efficient working day. We made sure we had no viable food left in boat (or packed the food we had to go with us) and put all the remaining damp washing to hang on the lines in the back cockpit, including the mattress protectors from the bed. These are big and cumbersome and because of their make up I hadn't been able to put them in the washing machines. Items that large are extremely heavy when loaded with water and to make the task more difficult, my makeshift plug didn't work in the laundry sink. I was glad when they were only damp and manageable – but as they weren't yet dry (and because of their nature wouldn't dry quickly) they had to be left out whilst we were away. We packed our backpacks so they were ready for the second stint off boat, and pulled the starboard blinds down.

23rd – 28th December 2020.

We had visitors come up from Melbourne over the 'Christmas' period and accommodation was in a hotel room in Maryborough. It was booked at relatively the last moment and wasn't the cheapest of those that had rooms left in town. It wasn't the newest either but it was comfortable with reasonable sized standard rooms and a good sized spa unit upstairs that had a separate bedroom to the lounge and kitchenette (microwave only). The spa however wasn't exactly what we were expecting – being a one person, rather than two-person, tub. Over the time we also discovered the walls were a bit thin – copping on the last two of the five nights with an international individual (she was yelling in an eastern block language) banging away at the cupboards in her room.

Activities over the five days included mainly driving trips that ranged from Gayndah (to see the lungfish), to Kilkavin, to the mainland coastal hamlets of the Great Sandy Biosphere. Being relegated to the back of the hire car was expected but not comfortable, the back seats of a 'Rav 4' are just not good for my back!



Threatening skies on the morning of the 23rd December



Lungfish. Grow up to 6 feet long and can be seen at the right time in clear water under the Gayndah Bridge



The hostess of the Gayndah Museum; she greets every visitor with a meow and a cat cuddle!



Wild brumbies roam in the Great Sandy Biosphere!



Maryborough: Christmas morning



The occupants of the Faraway Tree!



The Scrubby Creek walking trail south of Kilkavin is an easy grade two track, which is why I put it on the itinerary of our frail southern visitors. However, they decided they didn't want to walk it so Andrew and I potted around it casually instead, taking our time watching for birds and trying to hone in to the elusive call of the noisy pitta. A few hundred meters from the end of the circuit is the track to Pearson's Lookout – which is definitely not a grade two – and something for which I perhaps should have had better footwear on than adventure sandals!



Pearson's Lookout



Maryboough is full of gorgeous (and some not so gorgeous) historical buildings. When we last spent any significant time in Maryboough (two weeks: see *Aboard Sengo January 2016*) we didn't do any of the touristy things associated with Mary Poppins; but I do love the way they have incorporated the literary figure into the traffic lights!



The Thursday market wasn't as extensive as last time we turned up, and the man selling the buckets wasn't there: but they had a Covid log in for those who wanted to enter the area!



The Mary River Turtle, showcased here at Tiaro, can apparently breathe through its tail. It is endemic to the Mary Valley and endangered.



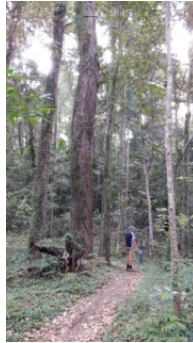
The motel bought a brand new BBQ for us: Apparently the old one hadn't been requested for years and was a bit worse for wear.

The Mary Valley

To Amamoor

28th December 2020. The 28th December was a bit of a mad rush. We dropped off our interstate visitors to the Hervey Bay Airport and headed back to Hertz to swap cars. The hire car Andrew had been driving for the past five days was hired by the interstate visitors. We needed one for the next five days but we weren't prepared to pay the cost of a Rav 4. Instead we took a punt, paid for a 'mystery' car and hoped that Hertz might just extend the hire of the bigger car through to us for the next five days. They did, which it turned out was just as well, because we ended up travelling with a fair bit of gear, and there were times we had to shelter in the vehicle as well (during the odd downpour of rain).

Our trip to the camping store in Maryborough early in the morning had been unsuccessful –they were clearly not going to open on a public holiday, so as soon as we got our car hire organized we rushed off to BCF in Hervey Bay. Unfortunately beggars can't be choosers and as everything was done at the last minute, the freeze dried food we picked up had a couple of allergens in it for me – even the gluten free stuff. For a couple of days I was just going to have to live with it. We then headed back to the marina for a brief swap over for some of our gear



(civilized land based gear dropped off and hiking gear and equipment picked up) before finally heading off to our booked campground in Amamoor State Forest – south of Gympie, around two hours away. We arrived at camp around 1500.

After choosing a camp spot – sites were not allocated here, we started the process of the inaugural erection of our new hiking tent. We probably took longer than needed but we were being tentative with our 'new' purchase – bought in the first half of last year but due to Covid and other circumstances, this is the first opportunity we have had to use it.

Tent set up and cup of tea had, our evening stroll was the one-kilometer 'rainforest walk' past the swimming hole.



Not usually an exciting activity...but this was the first time we had put up our new tent....

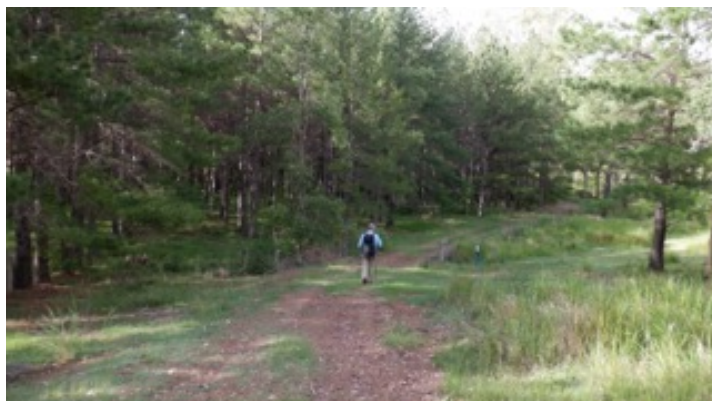
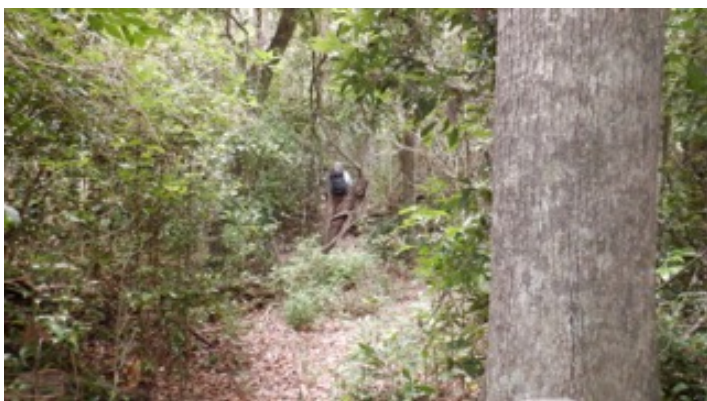


Stretching the legs

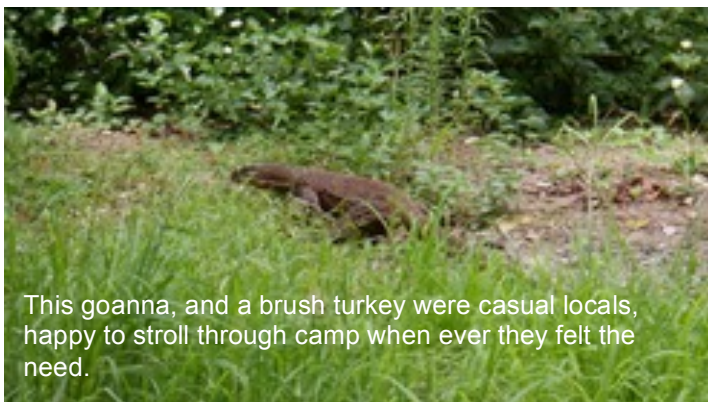
29th December 2020. *Water and Fitness Req!!* If it had been a Grade 5 walk we wouldn't have touched it. We learnt our lesson climbing Mount Walsh in April 2017... but we seem to have the habit of taking on a bit more than we can chew, and a 'take your own life into your own hands' walk does come up occasionally.

However, this was a Grade 4 walk - according to government literature. And it was meant to take 4 hours for 4.6 kilometers, so based on that, it was going to be a reasonably tough challenge anyway. Parks tend to over estimate time required for walks but it only took us 2 hours. We were back at camp around 0800... which made a bit of a mockery of packing lunch!

The Sun was far enough over the horizon when we returned, and was peering over the trees, which meant our car and tent were not in the shade. So we put the camp chairs in the shade of an adjacent tree instead until the sun moved far enough over for us to move again. In the end we spent the next two hours resting and watching birds, and moving with the shade around the campsite.



The walk: The first kilometer was steep! Really steep! And I can see why they noted the word 'fitness' (as in 'required') on the sign at the start of the walk. We stopped to take a breath at one flat-ish spot with a pleasant view over the adjacent hills. But I didn't take a photo. I had figured on a more extensive view further up. There wasn't! There was eventually a seat, in the forest...at the top of the up, and a sign back to the campground of 3.6 kilometers. All that effort for only a quarter of the way around the track! The rainforest seemed to get more 'viney' as the altitude went up. And the insects! They were deafening in places....perhaps above the 80db (usual OHS accepted standard) noise levels, or maybe that was just my imagination. Lots of birds were calling at certain altitude levels and where they weren't, the insects took over. Sometimes the noise was a relentless constant, sometimes it came in waves. At the 2.5 kilometer mark, after travelling predominantly downhill from the peak (thankfully), the track turned into an old road which we followed through long grassed cleared country, past drying cow pats, until we turned onto a track less travelled that eventually merged into a foot track back into the lower rainforest. I probably had a slightly heavier pack than Andrew and considering the night I had had, waking up with a grizzly back (probably a combination of sugar, capsicum and the disturbance due to the deflating and inflating my mattress overnight), and a sudden mid air twisting of the ankle late in the walk, I think I did reasonably well. Andrew got through with no issues. I turned down Andrews offer to do it all again and opted to return to camp and a cup of tea.



This goanna, and a brush turkey were casual locals, happy to stroll through camp when ever they felt the need.



Birds seen or heard for the morning

Catbird

Wompoo pigeon

Bronze wing pigeon.

Golden whistler

Fig bird

Mistletoe bird

Honeyeater with big yellow cheek patch and small yellow streak under base of bill

White cheeked honeyeater

Grey bird black head orange front buff belly

Koel

Gibbon

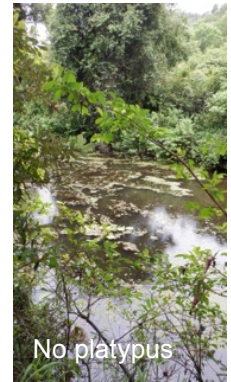
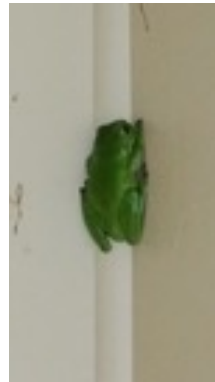
Lots of butterflies

Kookaburras

Morepoke heard overnight



Wet and foggy morning on the drive to Imbil



No platypus

To Imbil

30th December 2020. It rained overnight. In large tropical drops! With the sound they made, you could picture them impacting the surface of the tent's fly, and imagine the splash coming up and out several millimetres. Our new tent (like most, but not all, new tents) has a vent at the top of the fly to allow heat to escape to help reduce condensation inside. It is an overhanging vent – with a mesh barrier toward the inside. With the size of the raindrop splash last night however, the overhang and mesh was not enough to stop all of the 'water' from getting inside and we felt a light mist settle down onto our faces during the heaviest of the falls. When we got up this morning everything was wet. This meant that the 'first pack up' of our tent was not as we expected and we ended up storing the wet fly in a folding bucket I had bought along on the off chance we might need one – although I was expecting to use it to transport water, not keep a rain affected tent fly from getting other stuff wet. The tent underneath was of course, lovely and dry.

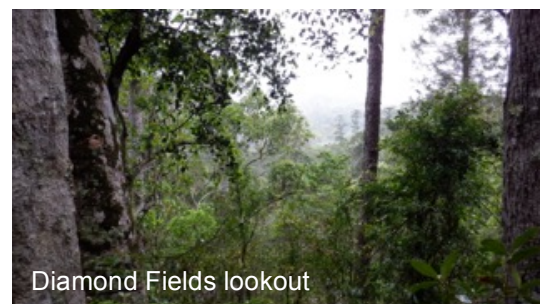
My ankle wasn't perfect after the glitch at the end of yesterday's walk, and I rejected the suggestion of the 2.5 kilometre walk at the other campground at Amamoor State Park – it is also listed as hard, the given time to complete the 2.5 kilometres is 2.5 hours. Instead we headed toward the picnic day area, donned our raincoats and went for a short stroll along the creek – where apparently at dusk and dawn platypus can be seen. We were a bit later than dawn and no monotremes were spotted. Listed



on the info board at the main campground (where they hold the Gympie Muster) there was a 1.5 kilometre walk at this day area. Once we got here however the distance listed to the falls was 800 metres (I assume this is the 1.5 kilometre that was mentioned). There is also a circuit walk from here of a couple of kilometres. We haven't seen this walk listed before. We decided to try it.... Brave since we didn't know the terrain (but should have guessed based on the circuit walk at our campground) and that we didn't have anything with us but the keys to the car. We didn't even have any water. This walk was up, up, up – for a great extent up the creek, crossing over boulders and the waterway several times. It lead officially past two lookouts – one across to Diamond Fields (named fore the richness of the timber reserves, not the presence of the gemstone), and the other across to Happy Valley Lookout which wasn't all that extensive as the trees have grown up a bit. With mist and rain in the air we didn't see much in the distance anyway.

Our booked camp this evening was at the Borumba Deer Park and so we got on the road and headed south. Before heading to that establishment however we had lunch at a picnic table overlooking Borumba Dam just a little further up the road. The mist and rain was still prevalent.

Of course, the original idea for today had been to get to the Deer Park early and then grab one of their kayaks and go for a paddle down Yabba Creek. However, the idea of paddle in the rain after we'd put the tent up (in a camp site called Cats Claw which almost made me cry) just didn't appeal, so we went for a country drive instead, tuning around at the tourist town of Kenilworth. When we got back we ended up having an early dinner before retiring around 1930; the rain was on and off, we didn't know anyone at the campground and we had brought no shelter with us – next time we will pack a tarp. The camp sites in the non-powered sections where we were are vey large – but being Christmas holidays the patrons cram as much as they can into them, and most sites were a tent city of several families. It wasn't quiet, and before I went to sleep I was hearing snippets from next door - which sounded like 'so and so's mate's brother and his marijuana crop' – should he even be discussing this in public!



Diamond Fields lookout



Borumba Dam

Back to Amamoor

31st December 2020. It wasn't raining when we got up but it had rained most of the night, which meant the tent was wet. We contemplated leaving the tent to dry whilst we were having breakfast but a check of the rain radar suggested it prudent to pack it up now. Of course a light shower came upon us as we pulled the tent down. By 0520 the tent was packed up and we'd made our way to the camp kitchen for toast, cold meats and cheese for breakfast. We didn't rush and it was still only around 0620 when we'd finished. I did two small yoga sessions (on the wooden stage) before we headed off. We were on the Mary Valley Rail Trail at 0705. It took us just over an hour to walk the 4.7 kilometres to Brooloo – this included slowing down for wildlife (small macropods and birdlife), and stopping to put our rain gear on at 0750. We'd been warned of a snake lying across the track of Stage 2 of the trail but we didn't see it. What we did hear in this stage was a bell minor or two – a bird we haven't heard for a long time, and shortly after came to an information board on the species. This area is the top extent of the species range.

We had planned on having lunch in Imbil but we were far too early so had morning tea instead, before taking untraveled roads back to Amamoor and having lunch at the Click Clack Cafe adjacent the Mary Valley Railway. It had a small but reasonable menu and we asked if they were going to be open the next day. Unfortunately they were going to be closed – but the tourist train would be arriving around 1100.

We turned up at Amamoor Lodge, (www.amamoorlodge.com.au), our accommodation for the night, around 20 minutes early, to be enthusiastically greeted by Chester the dog, and after a quick shower, spent the afternoon relaxing on the balcony.

Amamoor/Imbil bird list:

Brown cuckoo dove

Emerald dove

Fire tail finch

Grey butcherbird

little egret

Royal spoonbills

Pheasant coucal

Common joejl

Kookaburra

Dollar bird

Red backed fairy wren

Noisy friar bird

Little corellas

Golden whistler

King parrot

Galah

Grey crowned babbler

Ling parrot

Mistletoe bird

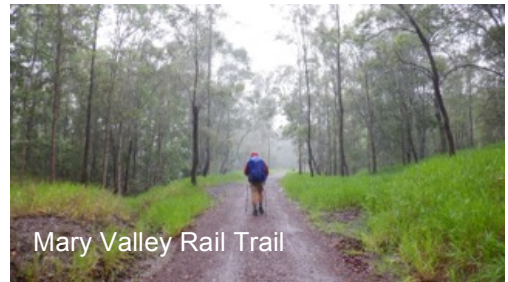
Catbird (green?)



View from Amamoor Lodge



Mary Valley Rail Trail



Mary Valley Rail Trail

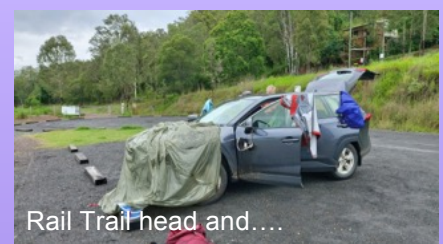


Mary Valley Rail Trail

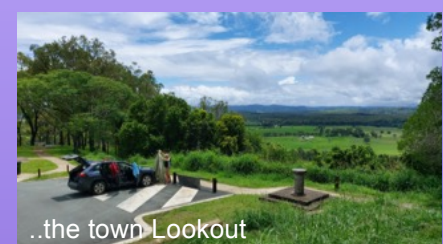


Mary Valley Rail Trail

Drying the tent...at Imbil



Rail Trail head and....



..the town Lookout