

HFNC Mt Napier State Park excursion – report for 19 March 2016

Rod Bird, John Cayley & Glenys Cayley

We started the day at 9 am from Hamilton with Rod, John & Glenys, Peter, Darryl, Roger, Reto & Yvonne in the party. The day was devoted mainly to the setting up of “remote” cameras at 9 sites, but an opportunity was also provided for anyone to walk up the scenic track to the top of Mt Napier.

The morning was overcast and cool but the 20 mm of rain that had fallen on Friday, the first for quite a while, and overnight had cleared away. The Cayleys and Darryl Delahoy walked up Mt Napier and admired the Manna Gums and Blackwood on the summit that HFNC planted from 1984-1994. They reported that it was good to see that the lower part of the original steep track to the summit had not been used for ages. The misty weather at the summit restricted the normally panoramic view. Two large Eastern Grey Kangaroos, a Black Wallaby and a soaring Wedge-tailed Eagle were seen. John, Glenys & Darryl then rejoined the main group setting up cameras further along the way, on Cole Track.



Mt Napier from Menzels scoria pit parking area



Top of MNAP, view east over trees planted by HFNC



North flank MNAP & HFNC trees



Darryl & John on MNAP summit



Crater of MNAP, looking SW

Mt Napier is looking good, with no fires in recent years (there has not been a fire over the summit and most of the old reserve area since 1972). The trees planted by HFNC have grown well, especially in the area just below the summit on the east side, which has some shelter. Goats had trimmed the trees in the early 2000s but they are now past that damaging phase. There is no evidence yet of natural regeneration of Manna Gum on the summit. Goat eradication is in progress now, after 20 years of inaction, and hopefully will be successful. Blackwood has regenerated in the crater over the last 25 years.

Installation of cameras at nine sites off Menzel's Track and Cole Track

Rod had scouted for sites to install cameras previously (13 Feb. & 6 Mar.) and marked the sites. Four goats were seen on the second occasion.

This is the second year of survey in the Mt Napier State Park. Information on previous fauna surveys, flora, fauna and the general camera equipment and usage was given in the excursion report for March 2015. The methods used in 2016 have varied a little from that in 2015, concentrating more on arboreal fauna (details are given in a separate report for 19 Mar 2016):

This year new sites have been selected to cover different areas of the park:

- 2 sites on Menzels Tk north of Menzels Quarry and 2 sites south of the pit (on the track around the west base of Mt Napier towards Harmans Rd), targeting large, old Manna Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) among Blackwood (*A. melanoxylon*) & Wild Cherry (*Exocarpos cupressiformis*). The understory is mostly dense Austral Bracken (*Pteridium esculentum*).
- 5 sites along Cole Tk, south of the E-W stone fence, towards Harmans Rd. The sites varied from tall Manna Gum, Blackwood & Wild Cherry forest with dense Austral Bracken understory, to open grassy woodland with Silver Tussock (*Poa labillardierei*) in rocky barriers. Thistles abound in most areas where bracken is sparse.

The location of sites is given in km from the Buckley Swamp-Byaduk Rd entrance (0.0 km) and from the Harmans Rd-Cole Tk junction (0.0 km). Site details are given in a separate report for 19 Mar 2016.

Site 1.

Track stop – 3.2 km from Murroa Cnr on Menzels Tk, near a parking bay.

Habitat – Manna Gum & Cherry Ballart with dense bracken amongst lava stone.

Site 2.

Track stop – 4.2 km from Murroa Cnr, just S of a rise, on a bend in view of Menzels Scoria hill.

Habitat – Tall Manna Gums, sparse bracken and lava stone.

Site 3.

Track stop – 5.0 km from Murroa Cnr, at an old stone fence/track.

Habitat – tall, huge Manna Gum and some Blackwood.

Site 5.

Track stop – 5.5 km from Murroa Cnr on an old parking area towards the corner of the old reserve.

Habitat – open bracken, Manna Gum, Cherry Ballart and stone.

Site 6.

Track stop – 0.3 km from Harmans Rd-Cole Tk junction near a parking area.

Habitat – Tall trees and sparse bracken and stone.

Site 7

Track stop – 0.8 km from Harmans Rd, on S edge of large open area.

Habitat – Tall Manna Gum and moderately dense bracken

Site 8.

Track stop – 1.4 km from Harmans Rd, near a parking bay.

Habitat – Fairly tall Manna Gum and moderately dense bracken, with barrier lava.

Site 9.

Track stop – 2.0 km from Harmans Rd in an open area.

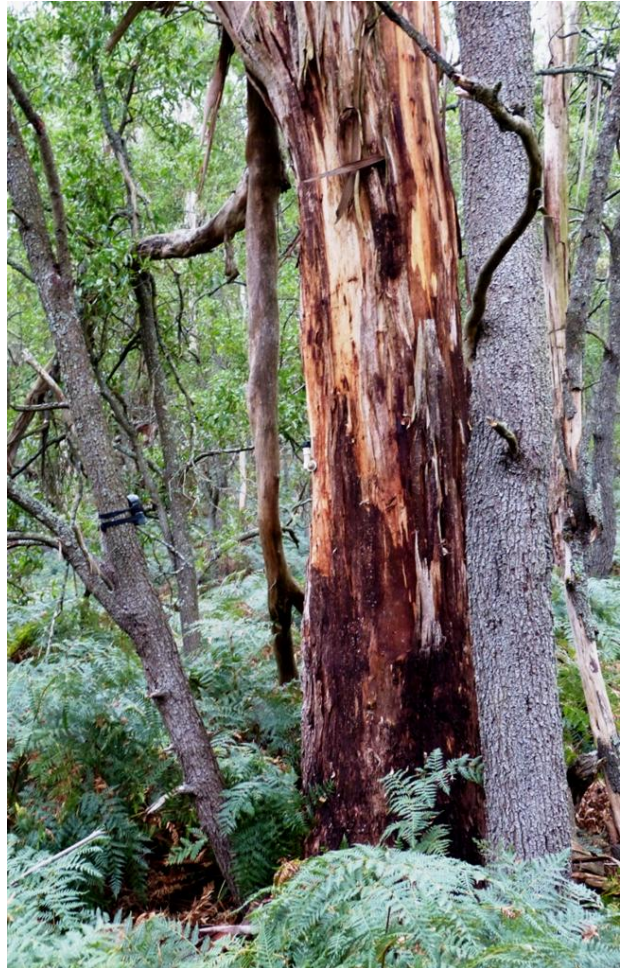
Habitat – medium and large Manna Gums in bracken but near a rather open site with barrier stone.

Site 10.

Track stop – 2.6 km from Harmans Rd at site where a large log has been cut up.

Habitat – medium-sized Manna Gum, Blackwood and dense bracken and barrier stone.

Installation of the cameras concluded at about 3.30 pm and we returned to Hamilton. Photos of the sites where cameras were installed are presented below.



Photos (from top):
Site 1
Site 2
Site 3
Site 5
Site 6



Photos (from top):

- Site 7
- Site 8
- Site 9
- Site10

Observations

Mammals seen today were 10 Eastern Grey Kangaroos, 4 Red-necked Wallabies, 1 Black Wallaby, 4 Koala and 5 Feral Goats. One isolated goat was heard bleating and subsequently located by Reto; the others were seen later on Cole Track, about 2.3 km from Harmans Rd.

Fungi were appearing but leeches were not yet making their presence felt. A very large Sticky Boobialla (*Myoporum viscosum*) was seen near Site 10. This is an unusual plant for this area but was recorded by Cliff Beauglehole in 1977.