

NORTHERN ADVENTURE

NOWAK TRAVELOGUE | APRIL, MAY | 2012

Land of Clouds

We have been here before. Twice in fact. Eungella is like that. Visit it once, as we did over 10 years ago, and it beckons you back. We came here to experience the sheer exhilaration of camping on the edge of the world and, just as importantly, to reunite with a monotreme (or two or three).

After leaving Paronella Park and passing through sad cyclone ravaged Cardwell we overnighted in Townsville where we went for a lovely long bike ride along the coast. The next day we briefly visited Tully (wettest town in Australia) and passed by the Whitsunday Islands, Proserpine and Bowen on our way Eungella National Park.

After a week of dreary overcast weather we turned into the secluded Finch Hatton valley inland from Mackay, and the weather gradually cleared. The closer we drove to Eungella the fewer clouds we saw. The long winding road concluded with a 4.5km steep climb to the Eungella bluff. The view from our van site is well worth the effort. The valley fans out to the distant coast and occasionally eagles soar in the valley below us. This place is as close to heaven as one can get. Beautiful. But COLD - in fact freezing. Without a heater in the van we piled on an extra doona (which we had thankfully decided to take with us). It was a very restful, very warm sleep. After an early morning alarm we rugged up and were reunited with platypus again. There is something fascinating about these strange creatures.



View from our van at Eungella

Freaky Creatures

The Broken River in Eungella plays host to an amazing array of freaky creatures that live nowhere else.

These creatures are here because the "land of clouds" is situated in the Clark Ranges - the oldest and longest stretch of subtropical rainforest (1280kms)- that has been cut off from the outside world.

Whilst we did not see any gastric brooding frogs (incubates its eggs in its stomach) or bright orange sided skinks, we did glimpse lots of platypus and some beautiful Azure Kingfishers.



WOT THA? Incubating your eggs in your stomach? We researched more. "Some biologists class them within Myobatrachidae under the subfamily Rheobatrachinae, but others place them in their own family, Rheobatrachidae. Crikey. A right royal mess.



WHO'S COLD? We figured we needed to travel light and would not need a heater or extra blankets on our trip up north. Big mistake. As we drive south and the evenings come on our teeth start to chatter and we roll up into a ball in bed.

BIRD WATCHING



Ever since Heather inherited her father's bird identification book she has been very determined to get to know birds better. Recently she purchased a pocket size volume which she can keep next to her for quick identification. Its been a boon. She takes her binoculars with her on the bike, on walks and in to bird hides. As a result we have both become avid bird watchers. This trip has demonstrated to us how widely varied our Australian bird population is.

Nature Lover



PATIENCE REWARDED

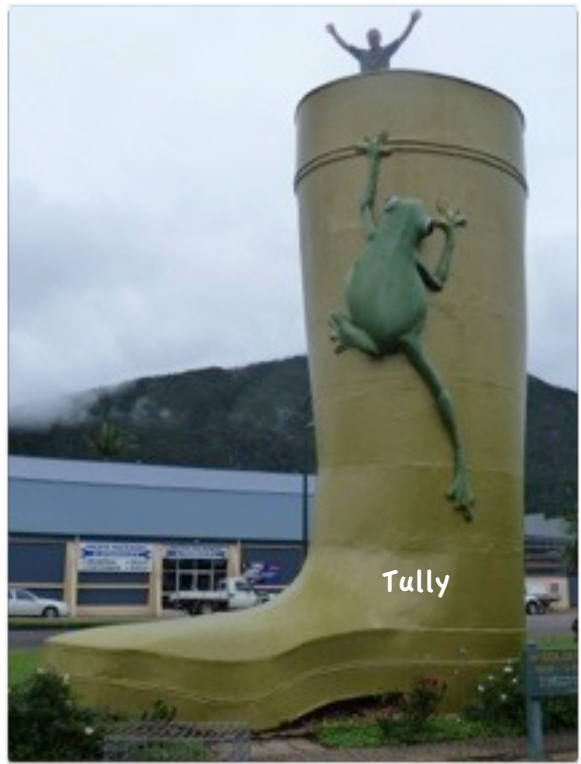
Eungella is definitely the place to view platypus. We have been here three times and each time we have seen them up close and personal. They are hard to describe. Much smaller than one would anticipate and immensely active. They spend a long time under water. This time around we arrived at exactly the right time to see a number of them together from the viewing platform AND in the river on our early morning walk. We feel very privileged each time we see them in the wild.



One of the many monotremes (platypus) we saw in Eungella



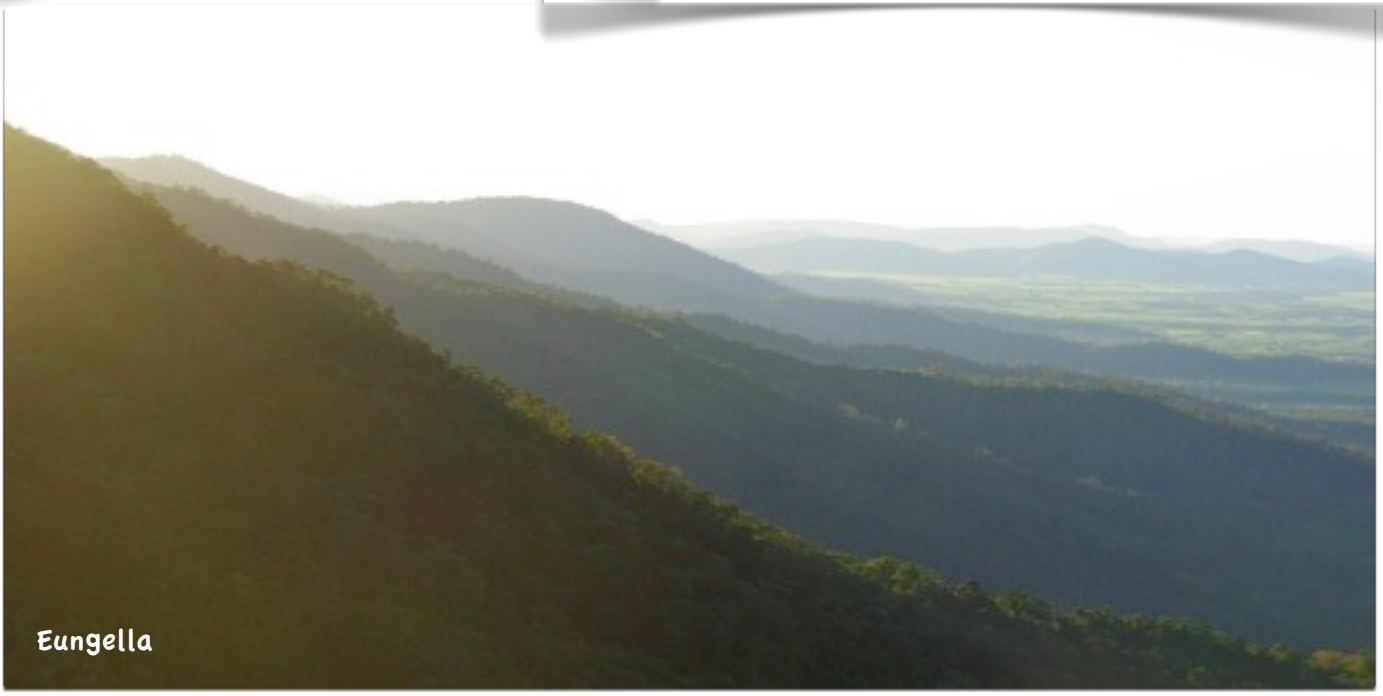
Proserpine



Tully



Townsville



Eungella