

Mulbabidgee (Keatings Lagoon Conservation Park) has been set aside to conserve the integrity of its freshwater wetlands and surrounding habitat.

For many thousands of years the area has been a source of food and medicine for the Gungarde people of this locality.

Numbered stations along the trail will introduce you to some of the plants which are of value to the Aboriginal community.

The facilities have been constructed and are maintained by the Gungarde community, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and the Cook Shire Council.

1 Cooktown ironwood (*Erythrophleum cholrostachys*)
The hard timber from this tree is used to make shields and spear tips. The roots also produce a tar like substance which can be used as an adhesive. The scar on the side of this tree shows where wood has been removed to make a woomera. Woomeras are implements used to aid spear throwing.

2 Paperbark tree (*Melaleuca spp.*)
The bulges on these paperbark trees contain water. When cut, drinkable water runs out. The bark is also used to make watertight carrying baskets or 'coolamons'.

3 Native cherry (*Exocarpus latifolius*)
Also known as 'Doughboy', this semi-parasitic plant produces small tasty orange coloured fruit. The wood and leaves are used as a mosquito repellent and the wood is utilised for making yam sticks.

4 Rock fig (*Ficus platypoda*)
This fig is growing as an epiphyte on a dead tree. As with all figs, the fruits are edible and are a favourite with many birds and fruit bats. The original seed from which this plant germinated was most likely deposited on the host tree within a bat or bird 'dropping'.

5 Screw pandanus (*Pandanus spiralis*)
An extremely useful plant. When ripe, the small nutritious seeds from inside the kernel are extracted and eaten. The pulp at the end of each kernel is also edible after being briefly roasted in the fire to destroy a throat irritating property. The 'cabbage' ends of each branch under the fronds are edible and the leaves are used for weaving baskets.

6 Sugar bag
This is the name given to the honey produced by small stingless native bees. These bees nest in hollows and their

honey is considered a delicacy. Also, their lemon tasting eggs are used as a medicine for colds and flue.

7 Soap tree (*Alphitonia excelsa*)
The leaves of this important tree are used for treating sores, aches and pains, and along with the fruit, are crushed to make a fish poison. The active component, saponin affects the oxygen supply passing through the fish's gill. It makes the fish drowsy and then easy to grab or spear. The crushed leaves mixed with a little water also make a very good soap substitute.

8 Cabbage tree palm (*Livistona muelleri*)
As with all palms, the central 'heart' is edible and eaten raw, but harvesting in this way will kill the plant.

9 Cheese fruit (*Morinda citrifolia*)
Also known as 'Noni', the strong smelling fruit of this plant is an important food with associated medicinal qualities and is used in the treatment of colds and diarrhoea. The leaves are also used to cook as well as to wrap up food.

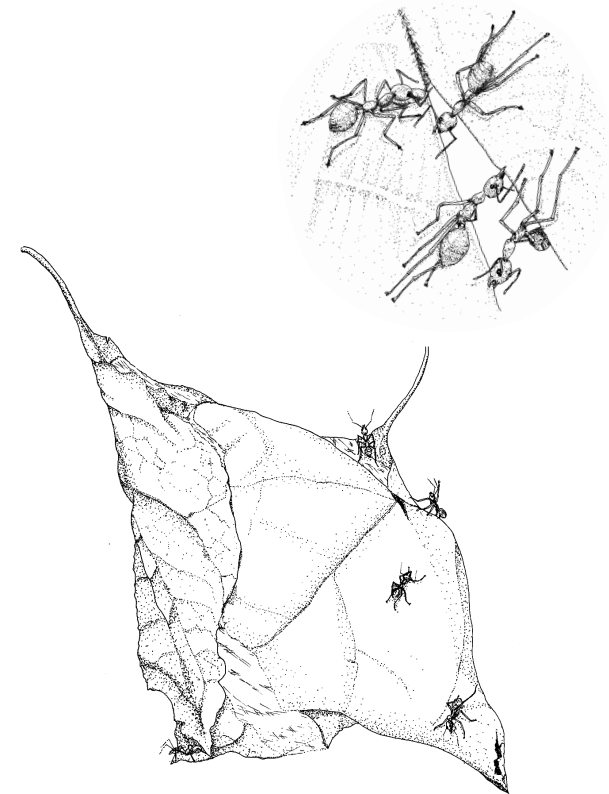
10 Foam bark (*Jagera sp.*)
Like the soap tree (number 8), the leaves of this tree are crushed and used as a fish poison. It is also used as a very efficient soap.

11 Wrinkle pod mangrove (*Cynometra iripa*)
Although this tree has no known Aboriginal uses, it is an important botanical feature of the area. The plant only grows where the water is predominantly fresh and it produces an unusual 'wrinkly' coated fruit.

The following features are not numbered, as seasonal changes can influence their location.

- Supple jack (*Flagellaria indica*)
This attractive vine produces edible fruit. The stems can be used to make canoes, baskets, and fish traps. An infusion, produced through crushing the inner stems and growing tips, is also a treatment for sore teeth, eyes, and throats.
- Yams (*Dioscorea sp.*)
Both the hairy yam and long yam were important staple foods of the Gungarde people. The hairy yam is poisonous and requires treatment before eating. The yam plant is actually a vine with an underground tuber. It grows during the wet season. In the 'dry' the vine dies off, a signal that the tuber is now mature and ready to dig. Finding the spindly remains of the vine stems can be very difficult and takes considerable skill.

- Native grapes (*Cissus sp.*)
Native grapes are closely related to cultivated species, however the skin of the native species needs to be peeled back to remove an irritating property before eating. The plant also grows underground tubers which although edible, may be bitter tasting. The native grape vine dies back in the dry season, but shoots again with the onset of the early summer storms.
- Weaver ants
These remarkable ants construct nests by gluing together green leaves, using a secretion squeezed from the bodies of their pupae. Aboriginal people make a 'medicine' drink by squeezing and mixing handfuls of ants and their eggs with water, enduring the many bites in the process.



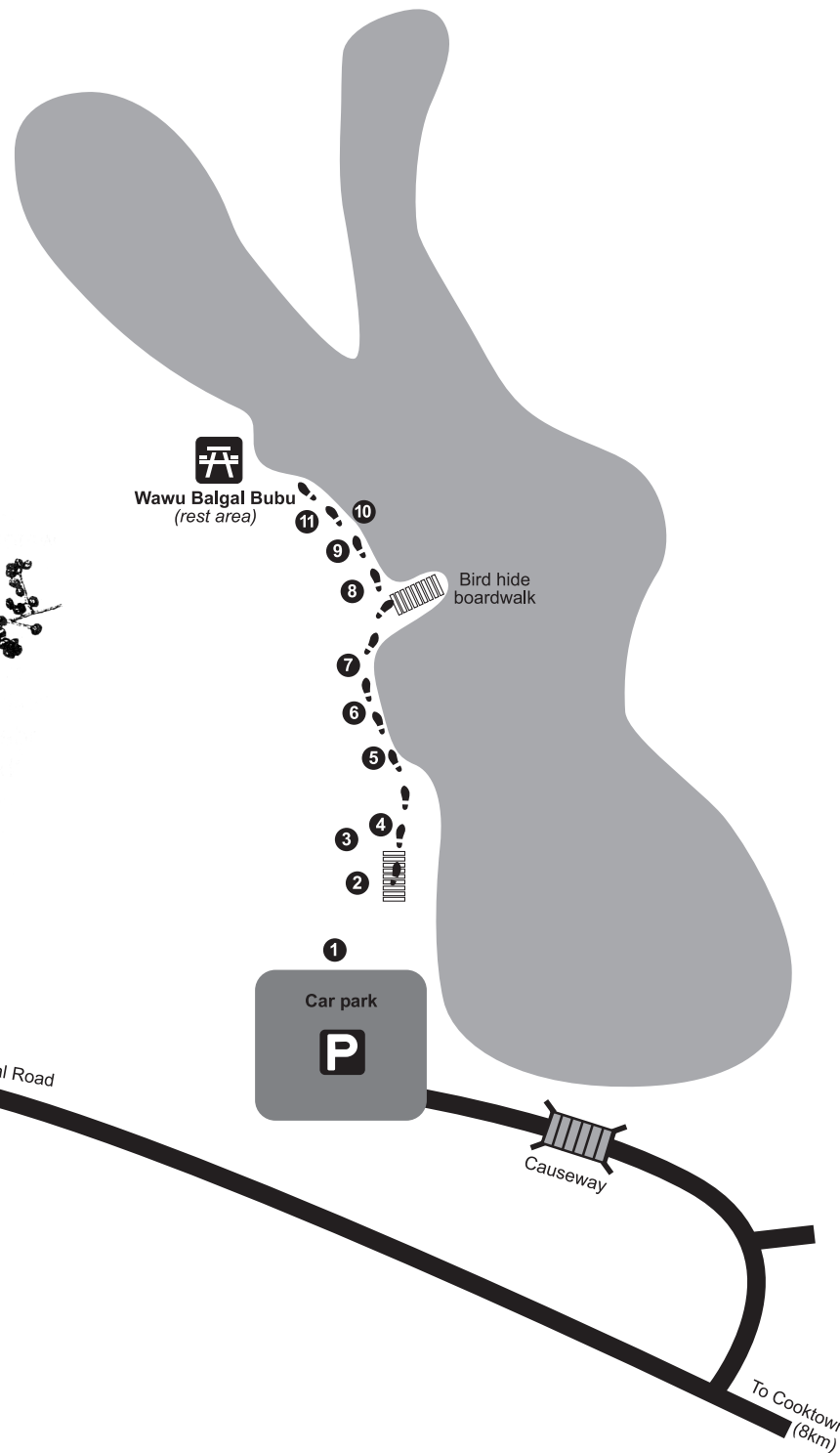
Guided tours by Community Rangers can be arranged by contacting the Gungarde Community Centre, Charlotte Street, Cooktown.
Phone: 4069 5412 or 4069 5622

Mulbabidgee

Keatings Lagoon
Conservation Park



Figbird (*Sphecotheres viridis*)
are often seen in the park.



Self-guided trail

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