

CALLALA WETLAND WALKWAY is a 3km Round Trip (1 hour)

There are marker posts with hiker symbols every 50-100m along the path. Please keep on the walkway for your own safety and to protect the environment. Take drinking water, sun protection, and insect repellent (it is wetland!)

1) The beginning of the path is accessed over a low fence, and then continues on a boardwalk through the Swamp Sclerophyll Forest. This vegetation community is characterised by paperbarks (Melaleucas) and a variety of rushes. The boardwalk has been constructed to elevate the path in areas which are frequently inundated after rain. At the side of the path you can see kangaroo tracks where the rushes have been trampled.

2) 360m. The end of the boardwalk marks the beginning of the Bangalay Sand Forest. In addition to various banksias and wattles, the major species in this area is the Bangalay Gum. The epicormic sprouts of new leaves from their blackened bark show evidence of the recent bushfires of 2016, and the trees' remarkable powers of recovery. The sandy soils often have circular diggings from bandicoots, and echidna.

3) 900m. The path now runs parallel to the creek which initially is edged by Mangroves. The Mangroves play an important role in keeping the water clean, and providing a nursery for small fish. Their pneumatophores (spiked roots rising from the base of the trees) allow the Mangroves to "breathe" when they are inundated at high tide. Along the creek there are also Swamp She-oaks (Casuarina). This endangered species, adapted to brackish water, grows in estuaries and plays an important role in preventing erosion. It also hosts a number of beautiful local tree orchids, and its seeds are attractive to many bird species. Along this stretch of the path you can see evidence of early settler grazing in the form of the posts from post-and-rail fencing.

As the Mangrove and Swamp Oak thin out, the path now parallels the Saltmarsh. This is a very vulnerable environment which is only just starting to regenerate after years of damage from vehicle compaction. Like Mangroves and Swamp Oak Forests, the Saltmarsh also operates as a filtration system for water quality and, by storing and slowing water, it helps reduce damage caused by flooding.

4) 1660m. This is the best viewing point of the Saltmarsh, which is especially interesting during a King Tide. The path turns right up the old fire trail through more Swamp Oak, and Bangalay Sand Forest, and gradually into more rushes and paperbarks.

5) 1890m. A new stretch of boardwalk begins and is crossed by a low fence. This was the first project in the wetland undertaken by Council and Bushcare to restrict vehicles from the Saltmarsh.

6) 2130 m. From the fence take the first left after the end of the boardwalk and follow the path uphill to Cook St and the rear of Callala Public School. The vegetation community in this elevated area is called Dry Sclerophyll Forest. It boasts a variety of eucalypts, such as Scribbly Gums, Woollybutts and the beautiful orange and grey-barked Grey Gums. These are a favourite food source of the Yellow-bellied Glider, evidenced in the V-shaped scars on the trunks.

7) 2300m. To return to the head of the walk, continue 200m up Cook St to Emmett, turn R and continue 400m to Chisholm, turn R continue for 230m to head of walk.

This walkway was created by volunteers from Callala Bushcare Group and Shoalhaven City Council. We hope you enjoy the walk and help us care for this precious natural environment.

Lesley Oliver