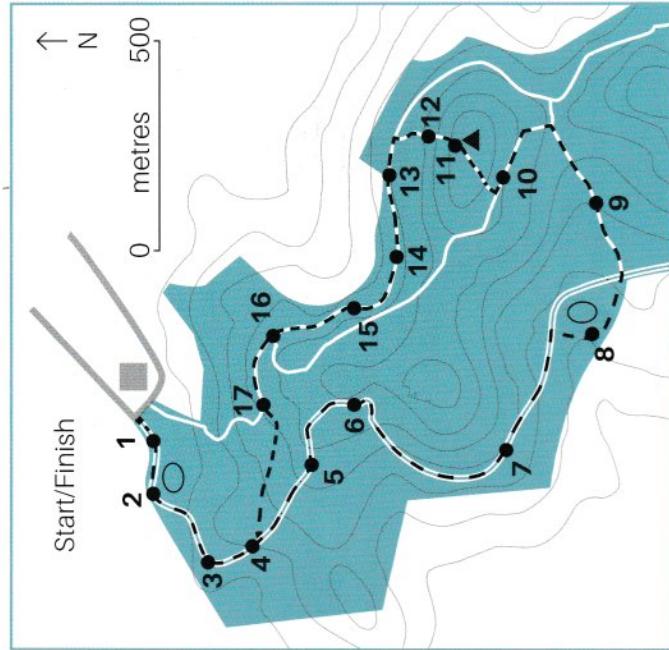




## COOLEMAN TRIG NATURE TRAIL



### COOLEMAN TRIG NATURE TRAIL

Cooleman Ridge Nature Reserve is part of Canberra Nature Park - a series of over 35 reserves scattered throughout urban Canberra. The Reserve protects Box Gum - Grassy Woodland, an iconic vegetation type which was once widespread across the plains and lower slopes of south eastern Australia.

The Murrumbidgee River flows through a broad valley to the west of Cooleman Ridge. The river corridor was an important resource for indigenous groups and a major route through to the mountains. Artifact scatters and scarred trees have been recorded within the reserve which would have served as a focal point for groups. Nearby, the area now known as Tuggeranong was once a camp and ceremonial site for numerous groups.

Prior to becoming a reserve in 1993, the ridge was part of the grazing property "Cooleman". In the devastating fires of 2003 the area was intensively burnt, evident in the mix of regrowth and dead standing timber.

The Nature Trail was opened in 1996. Most of the walk is an easy grade with some steeper stepped sections leading down from Cooleman Trig. Allow between one and two hours. The information in this brochure refers to numbered posts along the marked trail.

The Reserve is managed by Parks and Conservation Service with the help of the Cooleman Ridge Park Care Group. This group is made up of community members with keen interest in restoring Cooleman Ridge to its former open woodland condition. If you would like to take part in this work, contact [www.coolemanridge.org.au](http://www.coolemanridge.org.au)

### FURTHER INFORMATION

Canberra Nature Park 6207 2087  
Canberra Connect 13 22 81

**Access:** The trail begins at a parking area near the southern end of Kathner Street, Chapman. Dogs are permitted but must be kept on lead.

**Post 6:** Here many Silver Wattles line the trail. These are a common local species which proliferate following a fire. Beyond the wattles, a grove of Mealy Bundy trees can be seen. These are multi-branched, squat growing eucalypts which are fire resistant. The term 'Mealy' refers to the powdery white coating found on the buds and branchlets.

**Post 1:** The walk initially follows a short section of the Bicentennial National Trail, a 1000 km trail for horse riders and walkers that connects Cooktown (Queensland) to Healesville (Victoria). You may also notice occasional markers for the Centenary Trail which is a walking and cycling track established in 2013 to mark the 100th anniversary of the Australian Capital Territory.

**Post 2:** This dam is an important water point for a variety of wildlife. Birds such as Sulphur crested Cockatoos, Superb Fairy Wrens, Yellow-tumped Thornbills and Rosellas are common visitors. Turtles may be seen sunning on the logs within the dam. A patch of regenerating native grassland uphill of the dam is an indication of a landscape in recovery.

Behind the bench seat are two large Blakely's Red Gums. The skeletons of native mistletoe on the upper branches are indications of damage by a previous crown fire. On the far side of the dam is the stump and fallen trunk of a Red Stringybark. Young saplings have sprouted to replace it.

**Post 3:** On the western side of the track is a majestic, smooth barked Yellow Box tree. The hard wood of this species was eagerly sought for fence posts by early settlers. The flowers are targeted by apiarists to make good honey. Today the hollows provide an important habitat for nesting birds and arboreal mammals.

To the east of the trail is a fenced area with regenerating native trees, bushes, ferns and grasses. This patch is one of many regularly tended by the Coleman Ridge Park Care Group.

**Post 4:** The large dead Scribbly Gum on the other side of the gate has an odd shape that reflects its life history. The tree survived the catastrophic 2003 bush fire but its main trunk and branches were killed. This stimulated growth from epicormic buds beneath the bark at the base of the trunk. However the tree eventually succumbed to drought conditions. It now offers a refuge and nesting site for numerous birds.

**Post 5:** Take a few minutes to enjoy the magnificent view to the western hills. Bullen Range dominates the foreground above the Murrumbidgee River. Beyond lie the higher peaks of the Brindabella and Tidbinbilla Ranges. The dominant feature to the south is Tidbinbilla Peak whilst Mt. Coree sits proudly on the northern edge.

**Post 6:** Here many Silver Wattles line the trail. These are a common local species which proliferate following a fire. Beyond the wattles, a grove of Mealy Bundy trees can be seen. These are multi-branched, squat growing eucalypts which are fire resistant. The term 'Mealy' refers to the powdery white coating found on the buds and branchlets.

**Post 7:** Away to the south, above the village of Tharwa sits the high peak of Mount Tennant. The mountain is named after the bushranger, John Tennant who is believed to have camped in a cave there in the 1820's. Continue further along the trail and as you descend notice numerous Red Stringybarks below. These have 'coppiced' - the central trunks were burnt in 2003 but multiple trunks have replaced them.

**Post 8:** Constructed in the 1950's, this old farm dam is a pleasant place to rest and watch for visiting birdlife. Eastern long-necked turtles may also be seen and a variety of frog species inhabit the water body. You may hear frogs calling - only males are vocal and each species has a distinct call. The Swamp Lily occasionally flowers and a number of native water grasses occur.

**Post 8:** The granite soils in this area are prone to erosion. They do however provide excellent conditions for wombat burrows. Previous plantings by the Park Care Group have helped to stabilise the area and activities now focus on removal of introduced weeds to assist native seedlings. The adjacent open rocky areas, known locally as Stonehenge are important habitat for reptiles such as the vulnerable Pink-tailed Worm Lizard, Eastern Grey Kangaroos and Wallaroos are often seen sunning above the track.

**Post 10:** There are fine views from this vantage point to the west the Murrumbidgee River winds through the valley below. Beyond rise tier on tier of forested ranges. In winter, snow covers the far peaks. From such a high point you may see Wedgetail Eagles gliding on the thermal currents.

**Post 11:** Cooleman Trig was established as a reference point for Canberra's suburban survey works. There are magnificent panoramas of the city's hills, landmarks and surrounding mountains.

**Post 12:** The northern face of the ridge provides warm and dry conditions suitable for many reptile and smaller plant species. During the spring this area is festooned with the purple flowers of False Sarsparilla. Lower on the track, the small, bushy Tick Indigo is highlighted in season by its pink-purplish flowers. The

area is also good habitat for threatened Pink-tailed Legless Lizards which rely on sun warmed rocks to raise body temperature. Here stands of Drooping She Oak also occur and these provide food for the Glossy Black Cockatoos.

**Post 13:** Look carefully at the cut off drain wall. Below the numbered peg, a sloping vein of mineral aplite cuts across the grainy volcanic lava face. Aplite is formed as the last part of the magma cools. The saddle to the west of the Trig is the junction of the Deakin and Laidlaw Volcanics. Deakin rock types formed when hot volcanic ash clouds poured down the volcano sides. Laidlaw forms are more weather resistant and form higher, rockier hills.

**Post 14:** Above the trail is a stand of small, attractive trees with fine, pendulous branches. These are the Native Cherry which prefers the drier, rocky sites along the ridge. They are semi parasitic on the roots of neighbouring eucalypts. Aboriginal people and settlers used specimens

**Post 15:** Many of the National Capital's landmarks can be seen from this point. The Black Mountain tower is an iconic Canberra feature, clearly visible to the north west. Mount Majura and Mount Ainslie are prominent hills to the north. Lower on the horizon towards Lake Burley Griffin you may notice the flag mast above New Parliament House.

**Post 16:** To the north-west you can see Mount Stromlo; the astronomical observatory on the mountain's summit was badly damaged by the bush fire of 2003. Some older facilities still remain and new research centres have been opened. The mountain was once covered by plantations of Monterey Pines. Most of these plantings disappeared in the fires.

Canary Island Pines are one of the most fire resistant conifers in the world. Those which survived the terrible fire in 2003 are visible on the skyline to the left of the Observatory.

**Post 17:** Below the trail stands a solitary Kurrajong Tree. Roots of younger trees and the mature seeds were processed as food items by indigenous groups. The bark was also popular for making fish and bird nets. The shiny green leaves can be used as stock forage during drought periods. Follow the trail to the left back down the hill. Below the track, gabion baskets of rocks reinforce the gully. This prevents heavy runoff from storms scouring out the soil within the tiny watercourse. Follow the arrows to return to the trail's starting point by joining the main access trail.