

# Wingham Brush

## Nature Reserve



Fig tree along the boardwalk



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Wingham Brush is a beautiful subtropical lowland rainforest located at Wingham, 9km from Taree on the mid north coast of NSW. The Brush is one of only a few remnants of this rare rainforest in Australia, and is a significant roosting and maternity site for Grey-headed flying foxes (*Pteropus poliocephalus*).

### THINGS TO SEE AND DO

#### Boardwalk

Take a walk through the rainforest on the Graham Allen Walk. The boardwalk is ideal for people of all ages and much of it is suitable for wheelchairs. It meanders through the rainforest and on Flying Fox Circuit you will be right below the flying foxes' roosting site.

#### Fly Out

At sunset each day, thousands of flying foxes fly out in search of food. You can witness this spectacular event from the riverbank.



Calliteara pura

#### Photography

There are some great photographic opportunities - impressive tree buttresses, flying foxes and other animals such as the land mullet which is the largest of the skinks.

#### Wingham River Park

The adjoining council-managed reserve on the Manning River has barbecues, picnic tables, toilets, a boat ramp and open playing areas, making it ideal for a day out (see maps).

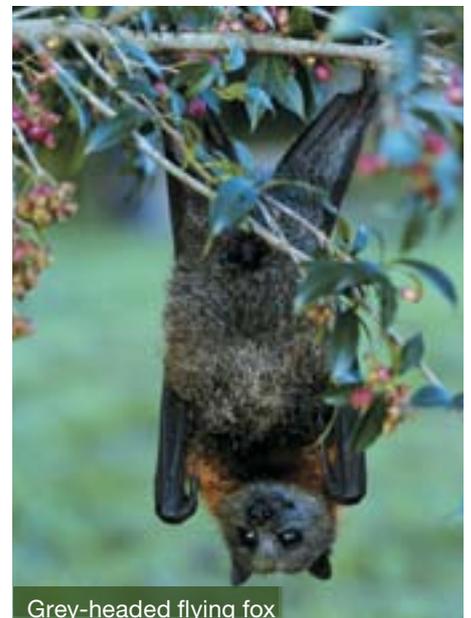


Wheelchair accessible

#### PLANTS

Wingham Brush is an endangered rainforest community, which, together with Coocumbac Island at Taree, represents 90% of the remaining subtropical lowland rainforest in the Manning Valley and 10% of this type in NSW. It has at least 195 species of native plants, including 76 species of trees and 32 different vines.

The most impressive trees in the Brush are the huge Moreton Bay figs (*Ficus macrophylla*), a type of strangler fig, and these are hundreds of years old. They are in a constant state of change, beginning as a tiny



Grey-headed flying fox

seed deposited in the fork of a host tree by a roosting bird or bat, and growing year by year, down to the ground, eventually taking over and strangling the host tree. Massive buttress roots support the weight of the trees in the shallow rainforest soils.

Other interesting trees include the giant stinging tree (*Dendrocnide excelsa*), white cedar (*Melia azedarach*), black apple (*Planchonella australis*), pepperberry (*Cryptocarya obovate*), shiny-leaved stinging tree (*Dendrocnide photinophylla*) and hairy rosewood (*Dysoxylum rufum*). The largest known blush walnut tree in Australia (*Beilshmiedia obtusifolia*) has been recorded in the Brush, with a height of 37 metres and a diameter of over a metre.

In 2002-2003, and again in 2010, a combination of drought and high winds resulted in damage to several older figs in the Reserve. This is a natural process - the dynamics of the ecosystem.

### ABORIGINAL HERITAGE

The traditional Aboriginal owners of these lands are the Biripi people who used the Brush to collect bush tucker, medicinal plants and for social gatherings by the river.

### EUROPEAN HERITAGE

In the 1830s, the colonial surveyor Clement Hodgkinson wrote of the rainforests of the Mid North Coast, 'the luxurious and vigorous character of the brush, on alluvial land in the northern part of NSW cannot be surpassed in any tropical region'.

By 1860 the Brush had been selectively logged, especially for red cedar (*Toona ciliata*) and the remains of two saw pits can be seen today. Fortunately, the area was not cleared because in 1909 it became a reserve associated with the now historic wharf on the Manning River.

By 1980 the Brush was infested with weeds such as madeira vine and cat's claw creeper, which smothered the rainforest canopy and threatened the Brush's very survival. Concerned locals, assisted by the Wingham Brush Society, Greater Taree City Council and National Parks and Wildlife Service commenced a program to return the Brush to its natural state. The 'Wingham Brush method', as it became known, is now internationally recognised, and has become a model for the restoration of other important rainforest areas across the country.

### FLYING FOXES

Flying foxes are native mammals that have adapted for life in the forest canopy. They roost by day and fly out at night to feed wherever they can find trees producing nectar, pollen-rich flowers and succulent native fruits. Guided in the dark by excellent eyesight and sense of smell, they forage for up to 40km from their roost. While feeding they do important pollination and seed dispersal work in the forest canopy.

Grey-headed flying foxes are classified as a vulnerable species under both NSW and Commonwealth legislation. Wingham Brush is the only known continuously occupied roosting and maternity site for these animals between Bellingen and the Hunter Valley, peaking at over 200,000 (40% of the total population).

Flying fox numbers build in spring as nectar and pollen supplies become more abundant. Around this time the females give birth to their young, each having a single offspring which clings to its nipple and fur, even during night flights. Young animals can fly at about 10 weeks and are weaned at around six months.

Little red flying foxes (*Pteropus scapulatus*) and black flying foxes (*Pteropus alecto*) also occur at times in the Brush.



Black and Grey-headed flying foxes



Flying fox

In Kattang, the local Aboriginal language, 'wingan' means 'where bats come to drink'. You may see the bats diving into the river for a drink whilst you are here.



Brush turkey nest

## OTHER NATIVE ANIMALS

Over 100 bird species have been recorded, including the osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), black-necked stork or jabiru (*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*) and wompoo fruit dove (*Ptilinopus magnificus*) as well as the green catbird, regent bowerbird and brush turkey. Commonly seen animals include the mountain brush-tail possum, brush-tail possum, ring-tail possum, land mullet and diamond python.

Little red flying foxes



Brush turkey



Green catbird



## WINGHAM BRUSH NATURE RESERVE



## PARKS OF THE MANNING AREA



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 Photography: Scott Calvin • Kevin Carter • Harry Creamer •  
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OEH 2011/0675 August 2011

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Land mullet