

Birding Coombabah

Coombabah Lakelands Conservation Area

Helensvale, Gold Coast, Queensland

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The Conservation Area

Coombabah Lakelands Conservation Area protects over 1000 hectares of one of the last remnants of lowland coastal habitat on the Gold Coast. It is part of the southern section of Moreton Bay Marine Park, and its international significance has been recognised by the United Nations, through designation as a Ramsar protected wetland. In addition to its diversity of bird and plant life, it is arguably the best place to view Koala and Kangaroos in the region.

This Conservation Area protects habitats ranging from coastal estuaries and mangroves to freshwater wetlands, flooded paperbark forests, eucalypt parkland, and grasslands.

A list of 125 species seen during 15 visits to the park in 2012 is at the end of this guide. This indicates the frequency of encounters of each species that you can expect on a typical visit.

There are no toilets or other amenities available.

Consider sharing the bird records from your trip by entering them into the [Eremaea eBird](#) database.



How to get there

Coombabah Lakelands Conservation Area is located just off the Gold Coast Highway, just east of Helensvale. An area map is at the end of this guide.

Visitors can reach either of two main sections of the park.

1. The **Western Section** is accessible from Shelter Rd, directly off the Gold Coast Highway. The main point of interest here is the Mangrove Boardwalk, which is wheelchair accessible.
2. The **Eastern Section** (Rain Tree Glen) occupies most of this guide, and this is where we recommend spending most of your time. It is reached by turning north off the Gold Coast Highway onto Pine Ridge Rd, and then after 1.3 km turn left onto Rain Tree Glen.

WESTERN SECTION

Shelter Road Mangrove Boardwalk

This is best visited at low tide. After entering Coombabah Lakelands Conservation Area via Shelter Rd, you will see the Mangrove Boardwalk sign on the left. You can park beside the road and walk in, or turn left down the short road to the carpark. Watch for **Forest Kingfisher** in this area. The start of the trail has an information board. As you walk through a forest of eucalypts and casuarinas, watch for **Striated Pardalote**, **Variegated Fairy-wren**, and **Leaden Flycatcher**. From the boardwalk you should hear the high-pitched, meandering songs of **Mangrove Gerygone** as they flit through the mangroves, and watch for **Collared Kingfisher**. At low tide an assortment of waterbirds are possible, including **White-faced Heron**, **Little and Great Egrets**, **White Ibis**, and **Royal Spoonbill**. **Black-necked Stilt** can often be found working along the shore, as well as **Bar-tailed Godwit**, **Eastern Curlew**, and **Whimbrel**.

EASTERN SECTION

Rain Tree Glen Routes

The northern section of the Park, accessible from Rain Tree Glen, is the best part to visit. It offers a large network of trails, ideal for walking or cycling. There is a good chance of seeing **Koala** here, and experienced birders can expect to see 60-80 species of birds. If it has been raining you will need to be flexible about your route as many of the smaller trails will flood. We have chosen two loops, which are usually passable even after moderate rain.

Boardwalk loop

After you pass through the gates of Rain Tree Glen, you will see a car park and signboard ahead on your right. Park there and take the right-hand asphalt trail (not the gravel trail past the gate). This leads to the boardwalk, which passes through a beautiful flooded paperbark forest. **Scarlet Honeyeater** are prominent in the canopy in winter, and **Variegated Fairy-Wren** can be found any time lower down.

Once you reach the end of the boardwalk continue on the track leading straight ahead, and after about 30 m you will come to a 4-way intersection. Turn left onto the sign-posted Wallaby Track. When you reach a T-junction, turn left and continue to another T-junction, then turn left again, and back to the car park (about 75 m). The casuarinas can be good for **Leaden Flycatcher** and **Rufous Whistler**.



Koala-Melaleuca loop

The numbered sections below correspond to numbers on the map at the end of the guide.

1. North of airfield

Continue along Rain Tree Glen 500 m past the Boardwalk car park mentioned above, and park on the right side, just past the far side of the airfield. Walk past the low gate and along the wide track leading north along the large field. Lots of **Eastern Grey Kangaroos** will be watching you as you watch for **Black-shouldered** and **Whistling Kites** overhead, and **Golden-headed Cisticola**, **White-faced Heron**, and **Great Egret** in the field. Take the 2nd track to the left, signposted Koala Track. You'll soon pass a beautiful Melaleuca swamp. **Azure Kingfisher** and **Rufous Whistler** can be found here.

2. Koala Track – Parkland section

This track is well-named: if you scan the tall eucalypts all along this track, you should be able to see one or more **Koala**. **Noisy Miner** and **Grey** and **Pied Butcherbirds** will keep you company as you search. The scolding of the Miners may help you find a **Pacific Baza**. Watch for a **Red-necked Wallaby** or two among the **Eastern Grey Kangaroos**.

3. Koala – Unnamed track intersection

When the Koala Track goes through a stand of Casuarinas you will see an unnamed gravel track leading to the right. Not a grassy track, which you'll pass before that one while you are still among scattered eucalypts and grassy fields. If you want to be back at your car in about an hour, turn right onto the gravel track, and continue to #4. Continuing to #3a, b and c, will add about an hour of extra birding to your trip.





3a. Koala – Spoonbill track intersection

When you see the Spoonbill Track signposted on the right side of the Koala Track, check the saltmarsh on your left for **Royal Spoonbill**, **White-faced Heron**, and **Mangrove Gerygone**. This can also be a good place for **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo**, which are easiest to find when they start calling in early spring. Stay on the Koala Track for some of the best birding in the Park.

3b. Koala Track right bend

As you continue along the Koala Track watch for **White-cheeked Honeyeater** and chattering **Little Wattlebird** near the Banksias, **Eastern Spinebill** and **Mistletoebird** in the more open areas, and **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** lurking in the shadows. You may also find **Little Shrike-Thrush** poking around the tree trunks, and **Spectacled Monarch** have been seen here on occasion in winter.

Continue on the Koala Track past the Jabiru Track. When the track takes a sharp right bend you will see a slightly smaller track leading straight ahead. You can go 300 m along this smaller track to have a look at the edge of the saltmarsh (3c).

Retrace your steps along the Koala Track. If it's not too wet you can add 20 minutes to your walk by taking the take sign-posted Jabiru Track to the left. This will loop back to the Koala Track, and after turning left onto the Koala Track you can then continue on to the unnamed intersection #3, where you should turn left and continue to #4.

4. Palm Forest

You are not lost. You have reached a T-junction of another unnamed track. Turn left and enjoy your walk through the most beautiful forest in the park, featuring Cabbage-tree Palms, big trees, and maybe even some birds. Watch for **Eastern Yellow Robin**. This track will bring you to the Boundary Track T-junction at #5.

5. Boundary Track

The Boundary Track runs along a canal. Turn right onto it and as you walk along the canal on your left, watch for **Little Black** and **Little Pied Cormorants**, as well as **Sacred Kingfisher** (especially in summer). **Azure Kingfisher** has also been seen here. Watch the tops of dead trees for **Osprey**. Continue to the Melaleuca Track.

6. Boundary Track – Melaleuca Track

The Melaleuca Track is a wide “highway” of a track leading to the right. You may need to skirt around some kangaroos along the way. Watch the skies for **Whistling Kite**, **Rainbow Bee-eater**, and **White-breasted Woodswallow**.

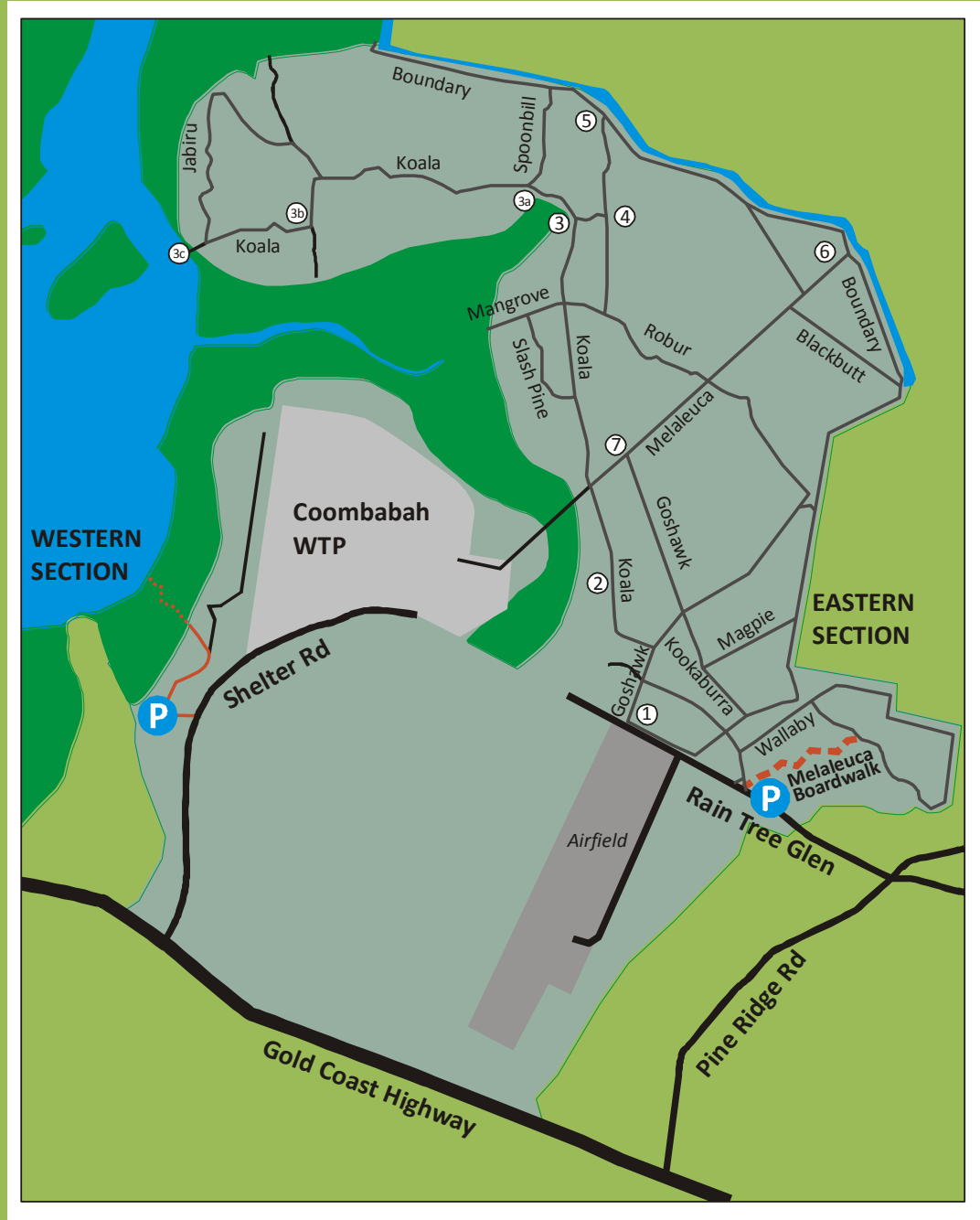
7. Goshawk Track

Turn left from the Melaleuca Track onto the Goshawk Track. Watch for **White-cheeked** and **White-throated Honeyeaters**. This track will curve to the right at a 4-way intersection (with the Kookaburra Track ahead of you). Follow the track to the right, and you are now heading back toward the big field and the start of this walk.





Coombabah Lakelands Conservation Area



Coombabah Eastern Section Checklist

% is percentage of visits with records (of 16 visits in 2012) [179 species have been reported to Eremaea eBird for all regions of Coombabah by Feb 2014]

1	Black Swan	6%
2	Australian Wood Duck	75%
3	Pacific Black Duck	100%
4	Chestnut Teal	13%
5	Australian Brush-Turkey	13%
6	Australasian Grebe	13%
7	Little Black Cormorant	56%
8	Pied Cormorant	38%
9	Little Pied Cormorant	50%
10	Australasian Darter	56%
11	Australian Pelican	63%
12	White-necked Heron	6%
13	Great Egret	56%
14	Intermediate Egret	38%
15	White-faced Heron	88%
16	Little Egret	63%
17	Cattle Egret	6%
18	Striated Heron	13%
19	Australian White Ibis	100%
20	Straw-necked Ibis	19%
21	Royal Spoonbill	63%
22	Osprey	44%
23	Black-shouldered Kite	6%
24	Pacific Baza	25%
25	Brown Goshawk	13%
26	Collared Sparrowhawk	13%
27	Whistling Kite	94%
28	Brahminy Kite	31%
29	White-bellied Sea-Eagle	38%
30	Purple Swamphen	56%
31	Dusky Moorhen	63%
33	Black-winged Stilt	38%

34	Masked Lapwing	94%
35	Whimbrel	6%
36	Eastern Curlew	6%
37	Bar-tailed Godwit	19%
38	Gull-billed Tern	19%
39	Caspian Tern	6%
40	Crested Tern	6%
41	Rock Dove	6%
42	Spotted Dove	50%
43	Brown Cuckoo-Dove	6%
44	Crested Pigeon	63%
45	Peaceful Dove	13%
46	Bar-shouldered Dove	81%
47	Fan-tailed Cuckoo	56%
48	Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo	6%
49	Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	25%
50	Tawny Frogmouth	6%
51	White-throated Needletail	6%
52	Azure Kingfisher	13%
53	Laughing Kookaburra	100%
54	Forest Kingfisher	13%
56	Sacred Kingfisher	56%
57	Rainbow Bee-eater	50%
58	Dollarbird	13%
59	Australian Hobby	6%
60	Galah	25%
61	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	13%
62	Rainbow Lorikeet	100%
63	Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	50%
64	Pale-headed Rosella	25%
65	White-throated Treecreeper	31%
66	Variegated Fairy-wren	88%

67	Superb Fairy-wren	6%
68	Red-backed Fairy-wren	81%
69	Eastern Spinebill	13%
70	Lewin's Honeyeater	56%
71	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	19%
72	Mangrove Honeyeater	19%
73	Noisy Miner	100%
74	Little Wattlebird	50%
75	Scarlet Honeyeater	56%
76	Brown Honeyeater	100%
77	White-cheeked Honeyeater	75%
78	White-throated Honeyeater	25%
79	Blue-faced Honeyeater	19%
80	Little Friarbird	6%
81	Noisy Friarbird	81%
82	Striped Honeyeater	38%
83	Spotted Pardalote	38%
84	Striated Pardalote	94%
85	White-browed Scrubwren	69%
87	Brown Thornbill	81%
88	White-throated Gerygone	31%
89	Mangrove Gerygone	69%
90	Grey-crowned Babbler	6%
91	Eastern Whipbird	69%
92	White-breasted Woodswallow	31%
93	Grey Butcherbird	81%
94	Pied Butcherbird	100%
95	Australian Magpie	100%
96	Pied Currawong	94%
97	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	75%
98	Varied Triller	6%
99	Cicadabird	13%

100	Rufous Shrike-thrush	38%
101	Grey Shrike-thrush	94%
102	Golden Whistler	56%
103	Rufous Whistler	88%
104	Olive-backed Oriole	63%
105	Australasian Figbird	19%
106	Spangled Drongo	94%
107	Willie Wagtail	100%
108	Rufous Fantail	25%
109	Grey Fantail	100%
110	Black-faced Monarch	6%
111	Spectacled Monarch	13%
112	Magpie-lark	88%
113	Leaden Flycatcher	44%
114	Torresian Crow	100%
115	Eastern Yellow Robin	94%
116	Welcome Swallow	69%
117	Fairy Martin	38%
118	Australian Reed-Warbler	6%
119	Tawny Grassbird	69%
120	Golden-headed Cisticola	25%
121	Silveryeye	100%
122	Common Myna	13%
123	Mistletoebird	38%
124	Red-browed Finch	81%
125	Double-barred Finch	13%

Additional species seen in the Western Section of the reserve include Hardhead, Eurasian Coot, Brush Cuckoo, Collared Kingfisher, Large-billed Scrubwren.