

a cultural landscape

This coastal walk follows part of the Dreaming Track utilised by Brinja-Yuin people prior to European development. The word Bingi means stomach in Dhurga — the Aboriginal language spoken south of Nowra to Narooma — and our use of this spelling is to show respect for the language. When repeated, as in Bingi Bingi, it indicates abundance.

Dreaming Tracks traditionally linked the places visited by local Aboriginal people, then extended to connect other places utilised by neighbouring clans so that all Aboriginal people in Australia were connected by these unique highways.

Song lines are another name for Dreaming Tracks and individuals had to know the songs to successfully navigate the area, particularly if they were visiting another people's country. At times, however, the dreaming tracks fulfill an entirely different function, particularly in ceremony.

It is the belief of Aboriginal people that their Spirit Ancestors created Dreaming Tracks in the journey of Creation across the land and therefore have a deep spiritual significance for them.

Historic journals have recorded European settlers using these tracks as trade routes and encountering groups of Aboriginal people in camps, or in transit gathering food and other materials.

The Bingi Dreaming Track brings you close to shell middens, stone quarries, knapping sites, camp sites and fresh water sources. There are also beacon sites for sending smoke signals and lookouts traditionally used to spot schools of fish and visitors (wanted or unwanted).

While enjoying this unique experience please respect the land and her dwellers for we are all one.

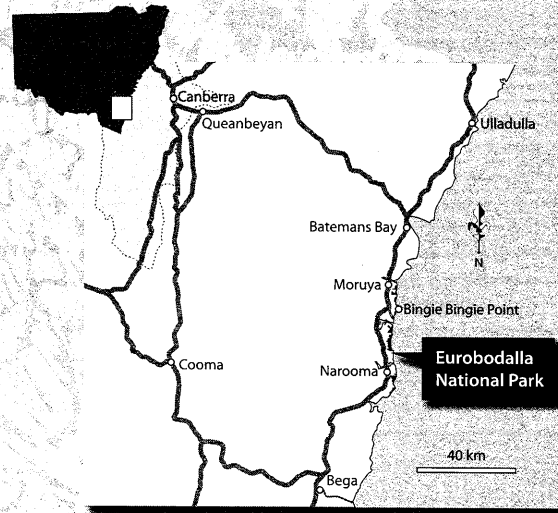
INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY PATRICIA ELLIS
COBOWRA LOCAL ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL



Above left to right: flaked stone; fish hook blank; shell fish hook.
Left: Aboriginal man tool making, using the skillful art of stone knapping.



Glossy black cockatoo



The Bingi Dreaming Track is an Australian Government Envirofund funded project instigated by Bingie Residents Association with the valuable help of Congo Landcare, Tuross Lakes Preservation Group, Cobowra Local Aboriginal Land Council, Eurobodalla Shire Council and NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.



Illustration: T. Ellis, L. Heywood and DEC

CONGO TO TUROSS HEAD

Bingi Dreaming Track

EUROBODALLA NATIONAL PARK



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EUROBODALLA NATIONAL PARK

This walking track is a Bingie Residents Association project that marks largely existing tracks over about 14 km of coastline south from Congo to Tuross Head. The track winds its way through many different and spectacular landscapes, providing an opportunity to appreciate the natural resources of the Bingie area.

forming a natural setting

Bingie Bingie Point and Grey Rocks Point have massive granites that formed about 350 to 400 million years ago pushing up through the oldest rocks in the area — metamorphosed shales and sandstones, that can be seen at Mullimburra Point. Gradual erosion since then has exposed these rocks. About 30 to 45 million years ago extensive basalt flows filled these valleys and extended east beyond the present coastline. You can see remnants of the basalt flows on the hills to the western side of Bingie Road, as you drive to Bingie Bingie Point. The headlands and cliffs between Meringo and Congo are all formed on these basalt flows.

Over the last 2 million years the earth has undergone cooling periods known as ice ages. During these cold periods the sea levels were lower than they are now and the coastline lay many kilometres out into what is now the sea. There were warmer periods in between, similar to the climate that exists today. The last time the climate was warm and the sea was at its present level was 120,000 years ago. During this period all the headlands between Congo and Tuross were formed. Remnants of beachridges and dunes formed at that time are preserved just south of Bingie Bingie Point headland. These are bleached to white sand with a brown hardened basal layer. Such sediments are uncommon south of the Shoalhaven River. One of the few Bingie wombat colonies east of the Princes Highway occurs here where the animals have burrowed into these hardened sands.

The earth entered another ice age 120,000 years ago, ending about 20,000 years ago. As the earth warmed and the continental glaciers melted, the sea level rose and 6,000 years ago it reached the level it is today. The sea continued to push sand up from the sea floor to form

the long creamy-yellow sand spit that runs from Bingie Bingie Point to Tuross.

As the sand spread across Coila Creek, Coila Lake was formed — an estuary known as an Intermittently Closing and Opening Lake or Lagoon (ICOLL). To the north of Bingie headland the track crosses four other much smaller ICOLLS — Kelly's Lake, Grey Rocks Creek, Mullimburra Lagoon and Meringo Lagoon.

Deeper sands store water, so to the west of the Bingie-Tuross dune system tall forests of red gums and bangalay grow, with dense banksia-shrubland closer to the south. Also west of the Bingie-Tuross track is a tall forest with trees such as woollybutt, and the contorted flowering angophora. This is one of the least disturbed patches of forest in the region and it includes a spectacular understorey with extensive patches of eleocharis (native grape) and geebung, over macrozamia palms and tall sedges.

At Congo and south towards Meringo the vegetation changes from stunted black ash and sparse ground cover with swathes of low sword grass on the plateau, to slopes and depressions of taller eucalypts. Parts of the cliff edges have coastal heath such as guinea flowers and purple native iris.

memorable meals and meetings

At the back of the cliffs between Congo and Meringo the basalt is covered with younger quartz-rich sandstone and gravels, and silcrete has formed where it has been cemented. Aboriginal people used silcrete for knapping stone tools. Over the 6,000 years since the long sand-spit formed that closes Coila Lake, Aboriginal people gathered to camp and feast, collecting fish and shellfish from the sea and the lake. Traces of shell middens from their campsites can be seen in disturbed areas along the walking track.

To respect and protect these places please do not disturb any objects in this area, as Aboriginal cultural practices continue.

There are some fascinating Aboriginal places to explore within easy reach.

early settlers

European farmers first settled the area in the late 1840s. By the 1880s the original rich forest vegetation on the granite headland at Bingie and the basalt hilltops in the west were cleared for dairy farming, cattle and crops. Timber such as woollybutt and blackbutt was shipped from Moruya and ironbark was milled for railway sleepers.



Illustration: S. Whitehead

Illustration: DECC

The Bingi Dreaming Track offers panoramic views of Gulaga (Mt Dromedary) and Baranguba (Montague Island). Brinja-Yuin people followed this dreaming track to campsites, sites for ceremony and trading, fresh water, and plentiful coastal food sources. Along the way you might see stone artefacts or patches of shell midden.

You will walk through many different types of coastal habitat with great opportunities for bird watching in the heaths, taller forests, headlands and on the lakeshores. Mammals such as wallabies and kangaroos may be seen relaxing in the understorey or at night gliders and possums may be seen in the canopy. During spring, the track is coloured with a variety of wildflowers.

Once you have finished your walk to Tuross Head you may like to enjoy a relaxing meal at one of the cafes.

distance: Congo to Bingie Bingie Point, 8 km one way • **time:** 3 hrs • **grade:** moderate

distance: Bingie Bingie Point to Tuross Head, 5.5 km one way • **time:** 2.5 hrs • **grade:** moderate to difficult (sand walk in parts)

getting there: From the Princes Highway, turn onto Bingie Road. The track is signposted and easily accessed from the following areas: just south of Congo village, Meringo, Bingie Bingie Point, and Coila Beach at the north end of Tuross Head. Parking is available at all these areas and you may consider doing a car shuffle.

interpretation trail

- 1 Bingie Bingie Point, a walk suitable for all levels of ability. Nearby is the rusting boiler from the wreck of the SS Monaro (29 May 1879). The SS Monaro was used to carry produce and stores up and down the coastal highway. Half way to the point is a fresh water pool with salt resistant plants and brown marsh frogs.

- 2 Start of a short loop walk to Kellys Lake with beach return.
- 3 Old lillypilly tees and wedding bush can be found at the intersection. An abundance of bush tucker may be found on the short walk to Kellys Lake — a State significant wetland with an endangered swamp forest.
- 4 Keep to the west of this intersection. You will walk through a twisted red gum forest and orb spiders' webs may be spun across the track.
- 5 There are great opportunities for whale watching at Meringo Headland in autumn when they are travelling north to breed. During the southern migration in spring, mothers and calves tend to come in close to the coast. Cormorants may be found on Shag Rock in front of the headland.
- 6 You may choose to walk along the beach or take the track behind the sand dunes through a forest of bangalay and blueberry ash with an understorey of burrawangs.
- 7 Stay east of the fence line. Habitat regeneration has been undertaken by NPWS.
- 8 You may see nectar and insect feeding birds during spring in the flowering coastal heath. The grassy area to the west of the track is an Endangered Ecological Community. Clumps of Lomandra are found along the track, a very useful plant for Aboriginal people. Lomandra produces a female flower seed. The seeds are ground to make flour and the strappy leaves are used for basket weaving and cordage.
- 9 A coastal heath community featuring dagger hakea, small prickly wattle, hair-pin banksia, orchids and apple berry.
- 10 Infertile soil and prevailing off shore winds cause a dwarfing of black ash and rough barked apple gums.

highlighting Coila Lake

Coila Lake dominates the landscape along the southern section of the walking track. Like other ICOLLS, after heavy rain or high seas it can open and flush out fresh water as well as fish, eels, crustaceans and worms. The lake has opened to the ocean only 18 times in the last 32 years and lake openings are short lived.

Long periods of closure mean the lake acts as a natural sink for both pollutants and sediment washed off the catchment. As the lake volume is large compared to its catchment area it has the ability to dilute impurities. Landcare projects are in place to revegetate the lake foreshores, to prevent shoreline erosion and to filter nutrient-rich runoff from farmland and residential areas in the catchment.

Seagrass covers over 80% of the lake's perimeter indicating a healthy estuary. Dense growths of macroalgae, common in the bed of shallow sheltered bays, are a natural occurrence in warmer weather.

The southern part of the Bingi Dreaming Track runs around the Coila Lake foreshore. There are rare times after heavy rain when the lake is elevated and the track unusable. However, if you are in doubt you can take the beach walk option from Kellys Road access area to Tuross Head.

a changing landscape

Coastal wattle covers much of the area near Bingie as forest becomes re-established on land once cleared for dairy farming. On the basalt headland south of Bingie Bingie Point, coastal wattle is slowly invading an endangered community of kangaroo grass known as Themeda Grassland.

Coastal reserves have been created over the last thirty years and were incorporated in the new Eurobodalla National Park in 1995. Shortly before and since the establishment of park, plantings by landcare groups and NPWS park managers have restabilised the foredunes and controlled major infestations of the introduced weed 'bitou bush'. Sea-spurge and introduced fireweed remain pest weeds and need to be pulled regularly.

local wildlife

Eastern grey kangaroos, red-necked wallabies and swamp wallabies are common macropods using the refuges of the National Park and Council land near Coila Lake. Their tracks are often seen on the beaches and lakeshore or they can be disturbed napping under bushes.

Brush-tailed and ring-tailed possums and several species of gliders inhabit the thick scrub of the National Park and the dense forest near Coila Lake. Echidnas poke their noses into sandy places for ants and long-nosed bandicoots snuggle under casuarina debris. Marsupial mice (*Antechinus*) and native bush rats provide the staple diet for local goannas and snakes are common. You may also see the occasional pest animal such as a fox or rabbit.

Threatened species that have been seen in the area include the greater broad-nosed bat, grey-headed flying fox, glossy black cockatoo, gang gang cockatoo, powerful owl and the masked owl. Occasionally a barking owl may be heard.

Threatened shorebirds use the local area and migrating Siberian plovers spend some time in the area in late summer. Resident pairs of pied oystercatchers can be seen all year round combing the beaches and lagoon shores for shellfish. In the warmer months you may see the vulnerable sanderling or endangered sooty oystercatchers, or perhaps hooded and red-capped plovers. On and around the shores of Coila Lake the more common wading and fishing birds may be found - elegant egrets, white faced herons, spoonbills, masked lapwings, various cormorants and numerous ducks and swans.

