Turpentine Forest

Sandstone woodland

As the track follows the valley upstream towards Mitchell Crescent you will notice the trees getting shorter. Instead of blackbutts there will be Sydney peppermints, a similar-looking tree in some respects, but lower and more branched. In fact, peppermints may hybridise with blackbutts and this cross was the first eucalypt hybrid to be recognised historically. Other trees you will see include black sheoaks, and Sydney red gums which are still present, but are shorter and more twisted. Red bloodwoods also put in an appearance.

Ridgetop woodland

The last section of the walk is along the ridgetop that links Mitchell Crescent to Howson Oval.

Here the trees are significantly shorter. They include peppermints, bloodwoods, red gums and black sheoaks, but scribbly gums become common with their characteristic wriggly bark patterns inscribed by moth larvae. Two other eucalypts occur here that are rare elsewhere in the Lane Cove Catchment. They are silvertop ash and whipstick mallee ash *(Eucalyptus sieberi and E. multicaulis)* characteristic trees of dry sandstone ridgetops. But as you follow the track down into a moist, shallow depression you will see blackbutts reappear accompanied by tall-growing Sydney red gums showing how important terrain and shelter are in plant distribution.

The shrub flora of the ridgetop is diverse, with several species of banksia, plus hakea and mountain devil, and many boronias, pea-flowered shrubs and ground orchids in season. In addition there are specimens of the threatened species *Tetratheca glandulosa*, plus *Acacia echinula*, a wattle uncommon in the Lane Cove Catchment. Being a fire-prone ridge top, the flora is in a constant state of evolution and change between fire events and the smaller species come and go with time.

Photo: John Martyn

Painted lady butterfly on tick bush flowers

Fauna

You will almost certainly see, or at least hear, a number of bird species. Blue wrens and white-browed scrubwrens inhabit the shrub thickets, as do whipbirds with their characteristic call and response notes. Golden whistlers sound a bit similar to whipbirds and are common in the valleys. Red-browed firetail finches like to feed on seeds of the weedy grasses that grow along the track edges. The iconic powerful owl has lived and hunted around the valleys for many years.

Remember:

- protect yourself from the sun;
- take drinking water;
- notify someone of your route and estimated time of return;
- wear appropriate footwear;
- take your rubbish with you when your leave the area;
- no dogs
- keep on the track to minimise impacts.

Further information:

A Field Guide to the Bushland of the Upper Lane Cove Valley by John Martyn

STEP Inc. 1994
Field Guide To The Native Plants of Sydney
by Les Robinson Third Edition published in 2003
by Kangaroo Press

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Environmental Levy
Ku-ring-gai Council

Printed 2010

Ku-ring-gai Council

Twin Creeks Reserve and Browns Field Walking Track

Campbell Drive to Twin Creeks Walking Track to Mitchell Crescent

Ku-ring-gai Walking Tracks

Ku·ring·gai Council

Browns Field

Browns Field is a small bushland area located in the sub catchment of Wahroonga. The bushland borders two creek lines that encircle a grassed oval which lies in the flat valley floor.

The valley is not a typical, steep-sided sandstone valley, being more open because it is formed from softer-weathering rocks. These rocks belong to a small volcanic diatreme, about 200-300 metres in diameter, of cylindrical or funnel shape and probably early Jurassic age. It broke the surface probably at least 300 metres above the present valley level, but the rocks above have been eroded away over time. It is one of around 150 such diatremes scattered across the Sydney Basin.

Most of the rocks that make up the Browns Field diatreme are concealed by deep soil cover, and the landfill that underlies the sports oval. We know from diatremes elsewhere, such as the one in nearby Hornsby Valley, that they usually consist of a mixture of volcanic breccia (shattered volcanic rock) and blocks and fragments torn from the adjacent sedimentary rocks belonging to the Sydney Basin succession. A large mass of shale exposed in the steep bank of the southern creek at Browns Field, just downstream from the second creek crossing, is the only diatreme rock that can be seen. It is probably part of a large block that collapsed into the crater from the overlying Wianamatta Group shales, or was blown up from a deeper shale layer by gas explosions.


Photo: John Martyn

Cortinarius violaceous (fungi)


Photo: John Martyn

Cabbage tree palm

Rainforest community at Browns Field

Rainforest trees, shrubs and ferns found at Browns Field but nowhere else in the Lane Cove Valley, include sassafras, jackwood or native laurel, guioa, koda, wilkiaea and fragrant fern *(Microsorium scandens)*. Cabbage tree palms, lillypillies. sandpaper figs and the large shrub *Synoum glandulosum* more common here than elsewhere in the catchment. Many of these rainforest plants can also be found deep in the sandstone valleys upstream and downstream having spread from the diatreme area into moist, sheltered sandstone gullies otherwise dominated by coachwood trees.

Tall eucalypt forest

The diatreme vegetation is bordered by tall blackbutt forest growing on the sheltered sandstone slopes and lower valley sides. Blackbutt is accompanied by Sydney red gum and turpentine, including one particularly large specimen of the latter growing close to the track downstream from Browns Field. You will be conscious of these tall trees with their open crowns towering above and beyond the low rainforest canopy. They afford the rainforest some measure of protection.

Map