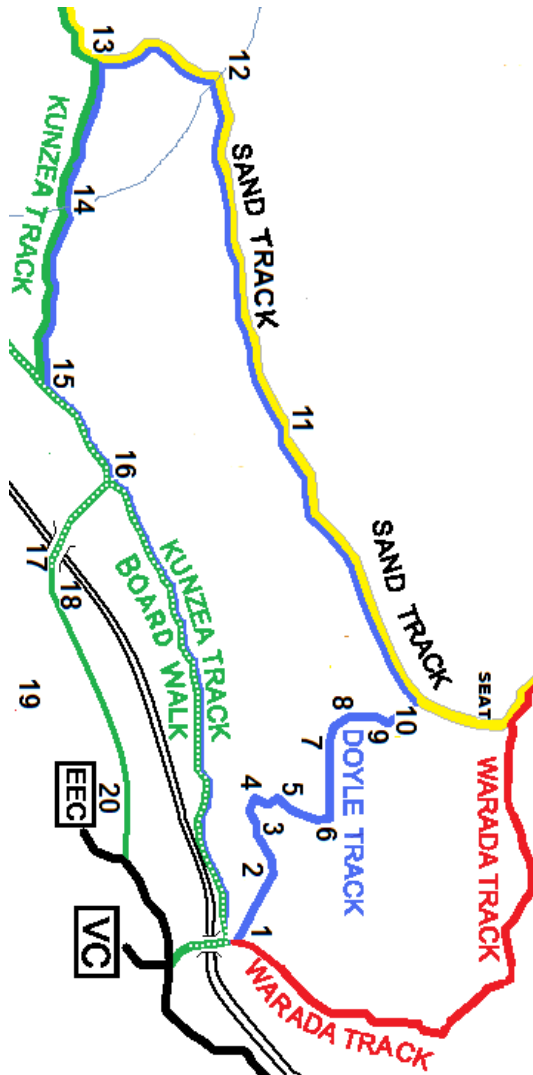


Doyle - Kunzea Loop

Track Notes –

Field of Mars Reserve



1. Cross the bridge near the Visitor Centre and the second track to the left, which leads directly into the bushland. In this wet sclerophyll forest, most trees are black wattle [*Callicoma serratifolia*] and pittosporum [*Pittosporum undulatum*].

This being the south side of the reserve, the understorey of bracken [*Pteridium esculentum*] extends some way up the hill. Young fronds of this plant may be used as bush tucker after first roasting in hot ashes to destroy toxins. Its sap has been used as a treatment for stings.

2. The track rises quickly through the exposed sandstone and there is a change in vegetation with the main trees being blackbutt [*Eucalyptus pilularis*], wattle [*Acacia spp.*] and Sydney red gum [*Angophora costata*].

This is a good area for water dragon lizards to sun themselves. Look around! They camouflage themselves on the rocks and tree trunks. You may also spot small birds among the bushes.

3. On your right is a small cave. This is one of many places in the reserve where you may find shelter.
4. Here the track turns right and climbs steeply up the sandstone rocks. Keep looking around for those lizards; they are sometimes high up on the rocks.

5. Notice how the angophora tree roots interact with the rocks, holding both the tree and the rocks firm but eventually breaking the rocks apart.

6. After the sharp left turn you are in dry sclerophyll forest, with scribbly gums [*Eucalyptus haemastoma*], red bloodwoods [*Corymbia gummifera*], banksias [*Banksia serrata*] and a variety of plants suited to the drier conditions. Angophoras grow well here, too.

7. You have completed the main climb up the hill. The track rises twice more over low rocky outcrops. Take time to look at the interesting shapes in the sandstone rocks, and colours added by lichens and various mosses whose growth depends on prevailing weather.

8. On top of the last rock ledge there is only a thin layer of sandy soil over the bedrock, but bushes including wattles and kunzeas [*Kunzea ambigua*] are growing here. Their wide foliage and spiky twigs and branches form a safe environment for small birds.

9. Near the impressive scribbly gum there are many mountain devil bushes [*Lambertia formosa*], named because of the shape of the seed pods. Notice their leaves each have a needle tip, and the flowers change from bright red when new to yellow-brown as they age.

10. If you'd like a rest, turn right – the log seat is not far! There is a colony of large-leaf bush pea [*Pultenaea daphnoides*], Woollsia [*Woollsia pungens*] and one of the many different species commonly named egg-and-bacon bushes [*Bossiaea scolopendria*]. Now follow the Sand Track which is fairly level for the next 400 metres.
11. This section of track is mostly out of sight of civilisation, yet we are only 10km from the centre of Sydney! It is mostly dry sclerophyll forest, with some clay soil sections giving rise to areas of Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest (STIF). Understorey includes wattles [*Acacia spp.*] *Zieria smithii*, mountain devils [*Lambertia formosa*], Woollsia [*Woollsia pungens*] and two of the several species known as eggs-and-bacon [*Bossiaea scolopendria* and *Pultenaea daphnoides*].
12. You will see a large sandstone rock on your right and then the track dips down to cross a small dry creek which runs down the hill from the cemetery. Beyond the creek, the track takes you through dry sclerophyll forest with angophoras, bloodwoods [*Corymbia gummifera*] and scribbly gums [*Eucalyptus haemastoma*]. Beside the track you will see some grass trees [*Xanthorrhoea arborea*].
13. After about 80 metres you come to the Kunzea Track junction. Turn left to go down the hill. The descent is rocky at first.
14. The dry creek crosses this track here; water flows only during rainstorms. As you descend further you will notice the dry gives way to wet sclerophyll forest. Main plants are now *Zieria smithii* with their 3-lobed leaves and tiny white flowers, hakeas [*Hakea spp.*], prickly Moses [*Acacia ulicifolia*], purple coral pea vines [*Hardenbergia violacea*] and more angophoras. Look also for black wattles [*Callicoma serratifolia*] and heath bush [*Phyllota phyllicoides*].
15. Turn left onto the boardwalk. This is part of a long section of moist gully vegetation. Plants with dark green soft leaves flourish in the cool, moist, rich soils and shade. Water gums [*Tristaniopsis laurina*], pittosporums and the understorey of bracken ferns [*Pteridium esculentum*] create habitat for animals like finches, wrens, whip birds and ringtail possums.
16. After 50 metres you come to a seat at the boardwalk junction. Look to your left at the hill above you. Most gum trees have rough brown bark, but the angophoras have orange trunks. Turn right and follow the boardwalk across the floodplain area of Buffalo Creek.
17. Handrails are on the bridge over the main channel of the creek. The many non-native plants and weeds here have grown from seeds and material washed down from residential gardens in the creek's upper catchment area.
18. The observation point here has interpretive signage... so now you know about riffles! Tall smooth-barked trees in this area are mostly Sydney blue gums [*Eucalyptus saligna*] which grow well in this habitat.
19. There was once an old house, home of the Handley family, in the open grassy area to your right... formerly facing the end of Westminster Road. You may view a photo of the house in the history photos in the computer kiosk at the Visitor Centre. All that remains now are a few foundations and a lone palm tree.
20. The native gardens were developed and are maintained by staff of the Field of Mars Environmental Education Centre, which is the large building to your right.

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