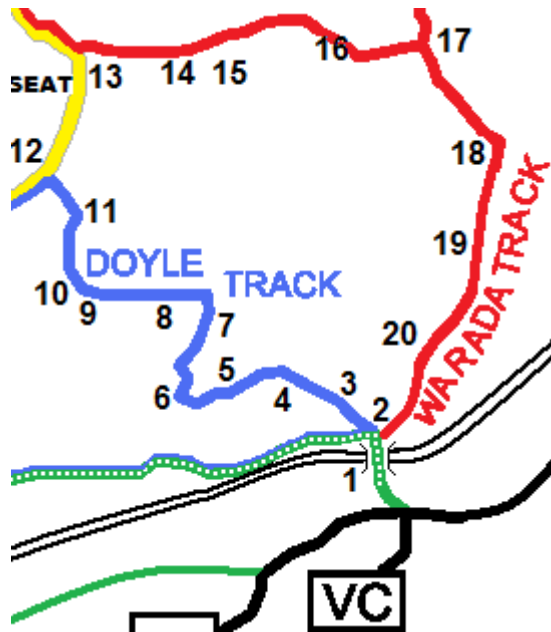


Doyle - Warada Loop

Track Notes –

Field of Mars Reserve



1. Start at the bridge near the visitor information centre.
2. As you cross the bridge, look for fish, waterbirds and insect life. The creek here is part of the tidal estuary.
3. Take 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 also been used as a treatment for stings.

4. 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.

5. On your right is a small cave. This is one of many places in the reserve where you may find shelter.
6. 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.
7. Notice how the angophora tree roots interact with the rocks, holding both the tree and the rocks firm but eventually breaking the rocks apart.

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. 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 cone-shaped flowers range from bright red when new to yellow-brown as they grow older.

12. Turn right onto the Sand Track. On this walk you only see a small part of the main track through the reserve.

In this area there are several colonies 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*].

13. Opposite the seat and in the surrounding bush are some boronias [*Boronia ledifolia*] which display impressive perfumed flowers each July. As you sit on the seat here, it is easy to imagine you are somewhere a long way from civilisation because all you see is natural bush... yet this is only 10km from the centre of Sydney!

Turn right again onto the Warada Track leading down the hill.

14. Among the red bloodwood and scribbly gum trees are wattles, hakeas [*Hakea sericea*], and grevilleas [*Grevillea sericea & buxifolia*]. If you look carefully in the predominantly sandy soil you can see some seams of clay. This transition formation enables a variety of plants to grow around here.
15. Over on the rocks to your right is a grass tree [*Xanthorrhoea arborea*].
16. There is evidence that the flat rock ledge was a significant meeting place for local aborigines, the Wallumadegal. They used to feast on shellfish gathered

from rocks of the nearby saltmarsh and along the Lane Cove River.

17. At the track junction signs, veer right to continue down the hill. You are now reaching the end of the natural bushland and will notice some invasive weeds towards the bottom of the hill.
18. As you exit the natural bushland you climb a few steps onto the flat area. Look to your right, just beyond the top of the stairs, for the Warada Track commemorative stone. All around you was once an extensive saltmarsh area but in the 1950s it was used as a garbage tip so the ground level is now about six metres above sea level.
19. When the Ryde Hunters Hill Flora and Fauna Preservation Society became managers of the reserve in 1966, volunteers removed weeds, brought in topsoil and planted native trees and shrubs throughout this area. You may look at the photos in the "History" folder when you return to the visitor information centre; compare the scene in 1966 with how you see it now.
20. To your right is a bush regeneration area where we are hoping to develop habitat for birds and other animals. Under the trees is a brush turkey mound which is often active but sometimes abandoned, depending on

the weather and seasonal conditions. Some exotic weeds add habitat value. This area has also been a hideout for snakes and swamp wallabies.

Along the creek to your left is a good example of how this area appeared with saltmarsh plants before the area was used as a landfill site.

Continue on to the bridge where you will have completed this loop walk. There's lots more information, as well as refreshments, available inside the visitor information centre which is opened by volunteers on weekends and at other times by arrangement.

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