

## AUSTRALIA: WESTERN COAST OF LAMINGTON NATIONAL PARK 1978 PART 2



*Lamington National Park South of Brisbane on the Great Dividing Range spanning from Melbourne north to Cairns. Lamington is the mixing area of Temperate forests with Wet Tropical Forests*



Ascending Cunongara Creek just above the subtropical forest of fig and evergreen brush box trees, I saw a flash of orange near a tree fern, then watched a satin bowerbird darting through the understory, then observed logrunners foraging on fallen tree trunks. I continued to ascend into a temperate forest above 900 meters (3000 feet) along a trail next to a tributary Toonoga Creek, a pure mountain stream filled with moss



*Cunongara Creek*



*Elabana falls*

and lichen covered boulders. Now in a canyon I stopped to rest at Elabana falls, a scenic horseshoe-shaped waterfall surrounded by ferns, vines and a green canopy of primary forest. Reflecting on the peaceful sound of the falls, I saw movement near the

trail amidst a forest of fig, hoop pine, eucalyptus, and tree ferns. In the shadows a red-legged pademelon came out of the shadows of a large buttressed Eucalyptus into the dappled light of the forest floor and stopped to feed on forest leaves. I wondered if it was a female with a joey. The red-legged pademelon is a marsupial rainforest



kangaroo, and typical of marsupials, her young is incompletely developed when born and are generally carried and suckled in a pouch on their mother's belly. The red-legged pademelon is the only ground dwelling wallaby that lives in Wet Tropics rainforests of eastern Australia. There are two species of tree kangaroos.

*Left red pademelon wallaby*

Leaving this beautiful side of the river, I continued ascending through Toolona Canyon passing numerous waterfalls, now immersed in a temperate forest of tree ferns and Antarctic beech with another 4 kilometers (2.2 miles) to go before I could get the mountain view from Wanungara lookout, I heard the melodious call of a bird, then caught a quick glimpse of the pheasant-sized ground dwelling Albert's lyrebird. Lyrebirds are among Australia's best-known native birds and have an amazing ability to mimic natural and artificial sounds from their environment. Male Albert's lyrebird courtship display is in some ways like the Argus pheasant lek I had seen in Sumatra. The male birds clear a flat area of forest



*Alberts lyrebird. Males clear the forest floor for displaying to attract females*

floor from which all debris has been raked for a stage or lek, rather than a mound of debris as used by the superb lyrebird. In display, the male initially raises his tail to arch forwards above the head, then gradually lowers and shimmers it forward until the bird is enveloped beneath the veil of fine bushy filaments that are silvery with the shiny white underside of the plumes facing above. The bird quickly darted off into the hidden forest understory.

Within another hour I reached the ridge of stunted Antarctic beech and grass, then Wanungara lookout where I could finally see a blue horizon of mountains and forests of Antarctic beech mixed with eucalyptus trees that appear to stretch on forever. I was enchanted by the natural beauty of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and had

come here to explore the mountains in Lamington National Park in the McPherson Range SW of Gold Coast, Australia. Following Lamington the next week my plan was to travel north to Cairns and the Atherton Tablelands, and join a natural history group taking the famous Kurunda train built almost 100 years ago, then visiting some of the remnant Wet Rainforest national parks and forests.

The Great Dividing Range is the spine of the east coast of Australia, a chain of highlands that extends from Cape York in northern Queensland to the southern seaboard of Tasmania. The mountain range is never far from the ocean, from 32 to 300 km (20 to 200 miles) distant that often appears as a bold range of peaks, though few of the mountains exceed 1500 meters (5,000 feet). This north-south mountain range resembles more of an escarpment of a giant plateau with gently rolling hills that slope imperceptibly down to the arid western plains. The Eastern Uplands are a complex series of high ridges, high plains, plateaus. UNESCO lists 20 Australian landmarks as World Heritage sites representing every state and territory of which the areas I visited in 1978 and in again in 1980's: Great Barrier Reef, the Blue Mountains, Kakadu National Park, and rainforest reserves in central-eastern Australia that include the Atherton Tablelands.



*Moogyinyinali molei Mt Razerback basalt flow from original ancient volcano Temperate Forest of Antarctic beech, and hoop pine Auracaria in the monkey puzzle tree family Auracaceae, a Podocarp or conifer*



Top, Antarctic beech/Hoop pine forest, Eucalyptus dry forest. Bottom: Bunya pine *Araucaceae*, and lower tropical forest tree white boomyan *malvaceae* family that includes okra duran fruit family Lamington

Lamington and south Borders Ranges National Parks are located in the Great Dividing Range on Lamington Plateau of the McPherson Range, the Queensland/New South Wales border. Lamington is part of the northern side of the ancient Tweed volcano, a large shield volcano over 100 kilometers in diameter at an elevation averaging 900 meters (3,000 ft) above sea level and only 30 kilometers (19 mi) from the Pacific ocean shores. Lamington is known for its rugged mountain scenery, waterfalls, caves, rainforest, wildflower heaths, tall open forests, creeks, and varied wildlife, and is the core of the Central Eastern Rainforest Reserves Australia World Heritage Area. It protects one of the most diverse areas of vegetation in the country with both the largest upland subtropical rainforest remnants in the world and the most northern Antarctic beech cool temperate rainforests in Australia (the roots of the oldest Antarctic beech trees dated over 5,000 years old). This landscape is a blend of both the Wet Tropical and the Northern extension of the Temperate forests to the south. Lamington protects one of the country's largest remaining forests of hoop pine *Araucaria cunninghamii* which are found on the drier slopes, and at lower elevations below 880 meters (2,890 ft) the white and black booyong in the malvaceae family of okra, cacao and Durian. In higher elevations the most common trees, some with large plank buttresses that include yellow and red carabeen *Sloanea* spp. of the Eleacarp family that are found all over the world, are pigeonberry ash, rosewood, and soft corkwood trees.

Many of Lamington's plants are found nowhere else on earth, such as pittosporum, the Lamington peach myrtle, the everlasting daisy which are subalpine relics from the last ice age, and the Lamington underground orchid *Rhizanthella omisa*, which has no chlorophyll and depends entirely upon a symbiotic fungus for survival. It is also one of only four flowering plants on Earth to complete its life cycle entirely underground. And there are more than 100 fern species. Lamington temperate forests is one of the few

places where Antarctic beech *Nothofagus* and Hoop Pine *Araucaria* in the Monkey puzzle tree family seen in Chile and Argentina stand together.

I enjoyed my stay at the famous O'Reilly's Guesthouse, where you are greeted by masses of Crimson Rosellas and Australian King Parrots. I was hoping to discover and observe its incredible variety of wildlife that include red-necked pademelons (wallaby) that can be seen near the edges of the rainforest, platypus in the larger tributaries and deeper rock pools, the Regent and Satin Bowerbirds, Eastern Whip-birds, pairs of Australian Logrunners, Noisy Pitta and Paradise Riflebirds. But Lamington preserves some rare and threatened species including Coxen's fig parrot, eastern bristlbird, Albert's lyrebird, and the large Richmond birdwing butterfly. The blue Lamington crayfish is found only on the Lamington plateau in pools and streams above an elevation of 450 meters (1,480 ft). The vulnerable large-eared pied bat is found in the park. Other rare species include the rainforest cool-skink, elf skink and numerous frog species including the giant barred frog and the cascade treefrog.



*Oreilly's lodge Lamington National Park*

For the Aboriginal Bundjalung people, the huge erosion caldera Mt Warning is named Wollumbin, which means "cloud catcher". The mountain dominates a landscape that includes Lamington that contains a complex network of cultural landmarks including creation places, ceremonial sites, traditional pathways and camps. They believe that in the Dreamtime, while the ancient warriors battled, great storms raged: thunder shook the land and lightning forked across the sky. The mountain still bears the scars of those battles, its sides marked by landslides. The Mount Warning volcano also played a crucial role in preserving a living botanical link with the past ice age following a biblical flood, creating a unique convergence of the tropical and temperate Gondwana rainforest. The ice age impacted vegetation with temperature and vegetation has been able to move up and down the mountain to find a niche to survive. The volcano created the topography and soil for optimum biodiversity survival and for refugia.

I explored the drier woodland ridge east and walked the short trail from Oreilly's lodge to the Moran falls overlook. The trail wove through open grasslands of eucalyptus, and here I saw a pair of Antilopine wallabies in the open woodland. The male was reddish-brown in color expressing sexual dimorphism from the lighter tan colored female, and both were sitting under a large Eucalyptus. They are elegant looking with long faces, and both watched me with their doe-like eyes. The trail goes along the Castle Crag ridge, and one can view the primary forest of Mt Razorback and the Albert River. Moran River is a tributary of the Albert, and it afforded an amazing view into a remnant of Wet Rainforest and Temperate forest biomes. Lamington National Park proved to be a wonderful retreat of waterfalls, unique forests and wildlife.



*Alberts lyrebird on leck, crested berrypicker*



*Satin bowerbird, display, Crimson Rosella's near Oreilly's lodge*



*Diadem masked parrot, Double eyed fig parrot*



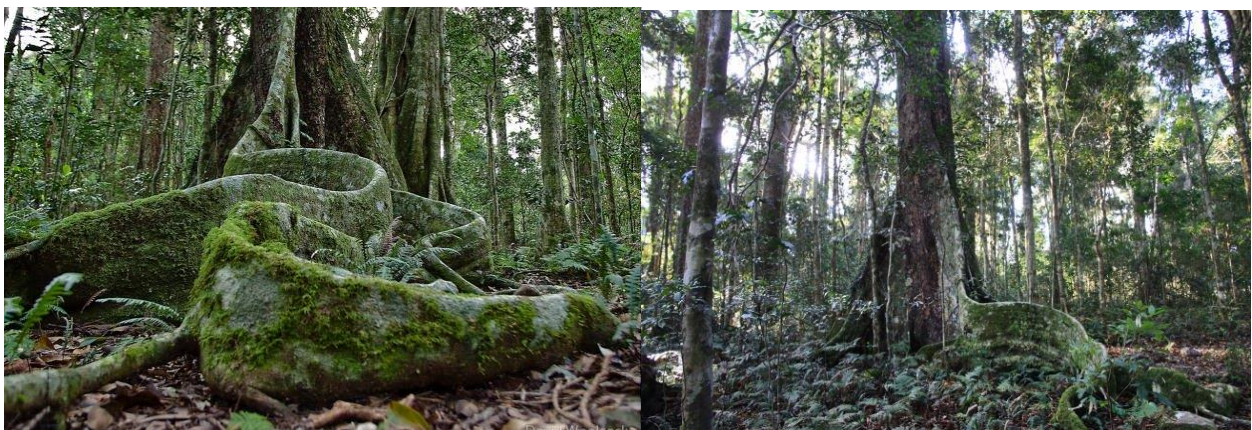
*King parrot, brush turkey or mallee fowl that lays eggs in mounds, now extinct in Lamington NP*



*Red pademelon, possum*



*Bunya pine, Bunya pine trunk, Hoop pine Araucaceae Podocarp conifer in southern hemisphere*



*Wet rainforest tree white boomyan*



