

Nature's Sweet Shop

Explore some of rare, remnant forest that has now been protected along this raised boardwalk. As you go deep into the forest you will be in ecosystems that are recognised as regionally important in Queensland. For instance one ecosystem, the mesophyll vine forest with feather palms, is recognised as 'of concern' in Queensland and includes the rare Water Vine (*Rourea brachyandra*).

Paperbark swamp

Look up at the magnificent large, spreading Weeping Paperbark trees (*Melaleuca leucadendra*). Combined with other identifiable plants, such as Pandanus palms (*Pandanus slosslaubachi*) and ground ferns (*Lygodium microphyllum*) and the ephemeral creek, this is a fascinating habitat. However, be warned, it is an ideal habitat for mosquitoes and you should cover up and use insect repellent before venturing through this area.

Colourful parrots

At certain times of the year there is the smell of a sweet perfume in the air. This is when these large paperbarks produce copious amounts of flowers and nectar. Animals that feed on nectar, such as honeyeaters, lorikeets and insects, are attracted to this tree and can be seen amongst the foliage during the day.

Spectacularly coloured Rainbow Lorikeets visit in large numbers and their constant raucous chattering can be heard while they feed on the blossoms. Their tongues are modified brushes that help collect pollen and nectar, making them an important pollinator of these paperbark trees.

The night shift

Different animals feed on the paperbark's blossoms at night. While the flowers are constantly visited by insects, such as moths, it is the large fruit bats that are the most conspicuous. Using their highly developed senses, Spectacled Flying Foxes see and smell the sweet nectar while flying. During the height of flowering the tree is usually full of fruit bats throughout the night. It is an important food source for these flying mammals and they, in return, are one of the main pollinators of these trees.



Illustration: Tim Parker

Wild About the Tropics