



Bottom Lake - Mallacoota VIC

Gday...

After my wanderings around the south west of Victoria, I thought – why not ... let's go to the far east for a bit of a gander. I hadn't spent any time around Genoa and Mallacoota since the 1980s. I had driven through the area on the Princes Highway a few times heading up the east coast to warmer climes further north but hadn't stopped to enjoy the area.

The obvious place to base myself was the excellent camp area at Genoa. This used to be the old Genoa van park and while the brick amenities block still exists, it is only the flushing toilets that are operating. The 'caretaker' who turned up to clean the amenities block saw no problem that I stay for an extra night which was very good as that gave me plenty of time to soak up the area. It is definitely a camp worth staying longer than the quick overnighter.

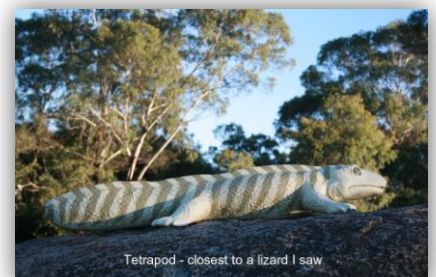


The tiny village of Genoa is little more than an historic hotel, a general store, an interesting historic bridge, the camping area and a pleasant walk around a small number of local houses. No one is sure how Genoa was named but in the early years of European settlement there was a property and a river both named Genoa.

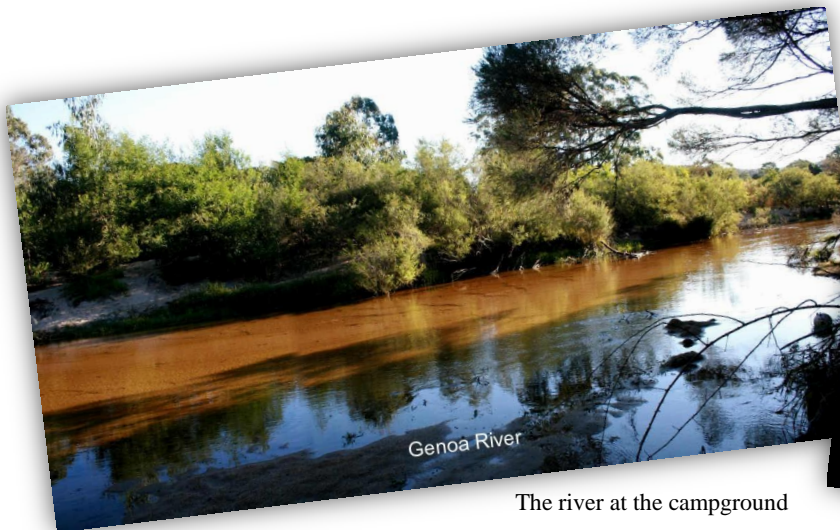


Near the camping area is a large rock which has a strange, large, striped lizard-like creature with a plaque commemorating the discovery by Norman Wakefield, and verified by palaeontologist James Warren, in 1971, of footprints laid down on sandstone of the upper Genoa River Gorge, Coopracamba National Park, in mid Devonian times, around 390 million years ago.

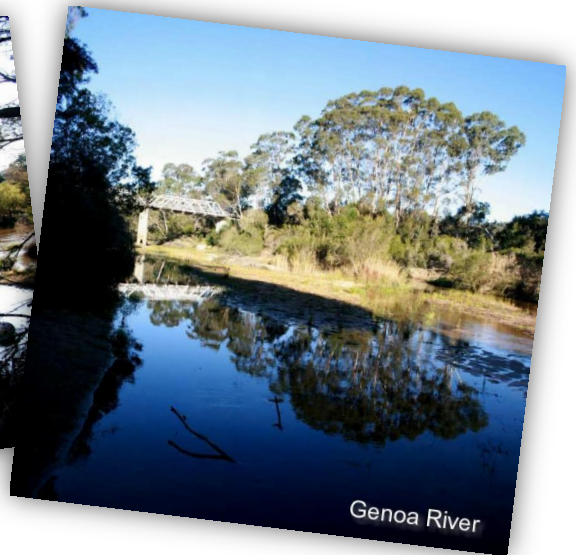
Tetrapods (animals with four feet) were the first animals to evolve on the land from water. There are footprints, believed to be created by the Tetrapod, set in concrete below the plaque, that were taken from a cast at the discovery site.







The river at the campground



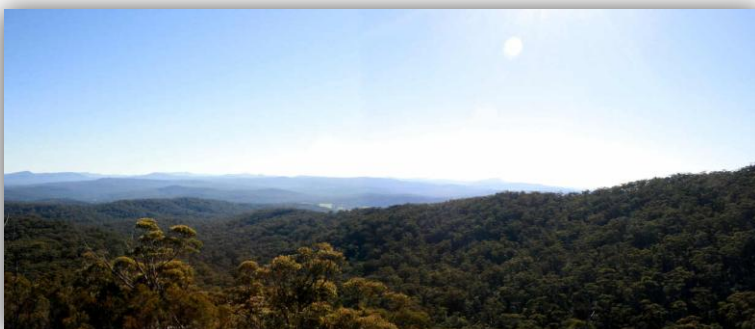
I was lucky to have excellent Victorian autumn weather – nippy mornings but fine sunny days. So I decided that my first excursion would be to head off to walk up to Genoa Peak which is a short drive away, up an 8Km well formed dirt road into the Croajingolong National Park. On arrival, I was greeted by a sign at the carpark that advised the walk was 1.5Km in length, to allow 2 hours and that there were steep inclines requiring moderate fitness – OH, and bushwalking experience.



Despite wondering just how ‘moderate’ my fitness would be I headed off up the track. I couldn’t call the track ‘well-formed’ as it was just a foot-worn path through the bush, and in places required clambering over and up rocky ground. There were some interesting formations on the way along the walk which gave me the excuse to stop, catch my breath and take a photo or two.



I made it to the viewing platform at the peak and gladly sat down and had a cool drink and a snack. The view was worth the walk and it is always great to be able to look across the tops of dense forest and mountains.



The view looking to the north

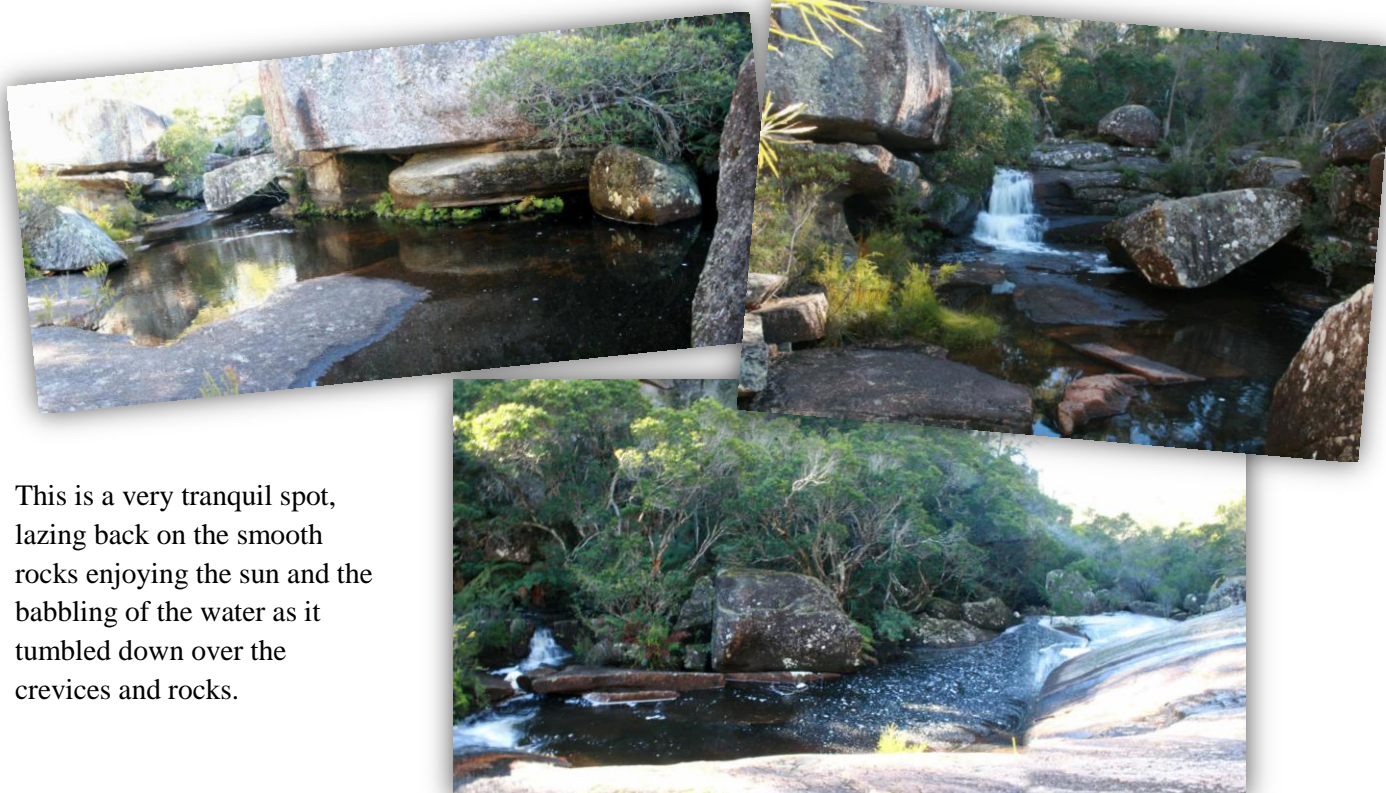


A rock formation at the viewing platform



My quest to reach Genoa Peak fulfilled, I headed back to the carpark to go and check out Genoa Falls. OH, by the way, my fitness must be at least “moderate” as I made the round trip to the peak in just under two hours – despite stopping for a few breathers and photos along the way.

The Genoa falls are hidden at the end of a short, unnamed and unsigned dirt road directly off the Princes Hwy about 5Km west of the Genoa campground – very easy to miss it unless you are aware of the falls’ existence. The falls consist of a wide open, moderately sloping basalt shelf interspersed with several small waterfalls of around 1-2 metres in height. Definitely not in the ‘spectacular’ category but you can walk over the length and breadth of the falls as long as you take care with your footing on some of the smooth rocks. The flow splits into two paths downstream of the first fall, with the far path mostly hidden from view behind boulders and brush.



This is a very tranquil spot, lazing back on the smooth rocks enjoying the sun and the babbling of the water as it tumbled down over the crevices and rocks.

Mallacoota is a very laid-back country town that is off the main track and enjoys being that way. It is a very welcoming town and I spent a day wandering around just soaking up the atmosphere. If boating, canoeing or fishing floats your boat, then Mallacoota is where you should head. Even in the cooler months it is a very attractive town.



Mallacoota township looking across the Bottom Lake from Lakeside Road



The history is of a pastoral run, called Mallacoota, which was taken up in 1841 and changed hands frequently until forfeited in 1871. From the 1880s, selectors reached the heavily forested area, many stripping wattle bark to supplement their living, given the excellent tanning properties of Wattle bark. Once collected, the bark would be dried and then crushed by a machine known as a “Bark Mill”. The milled bark was then mixed with water in tanning pits which enabled various styles of tannin liquor to be brewed.

Commercial fishers from Lakes Entrance and Paynesville visited the inlet seasonally from the late 1880s. Their catch was held in staked nets, awaiting collection by larger boats carrying ice.

In the early 1880s Lake View Hotel commenced business on the eastern shore of Bottom Lake. Over the years many well known people patronised the hotel despite its extreme isolation. There were few tracks and access was mainly by boat. Gold was discovered around Bottom Lake in 1894 and some 50 claims were pegged in the area. The Spotted Dog was the largest mine, working for several years. In the 1890s, Gipsy Point, on the Genoa River which flows into Top Lake, became a trading centre for the area.

Settlers made little impact on the area and in 1909 a temporary reserve for a national park was set aside, mainly composed of lake foreshore. About 1909 a journalist and poet E.J. Brady established a camp at Mallacoota, visited by authors over the years, including Henry Lawson, and inspiring a number of literary works.

A town site was reserved on a point west of the entrance in 1897 but in 1918 a township was surveyed inside the entrance. During the 1920s a hotel and several guesthouses were established at Mallacoota. A road was cut to the township and gradually a few stores commenced business.



An aerodrome was built west of Mallacoota in the early 1940s and air force personnel were stationed there throughout World War II. A Royal Australian Air Force bunker in Betka Road has been developed as a museum. I had been told the museum was a worthwhile visit so I had it on my itinerary of things to see.

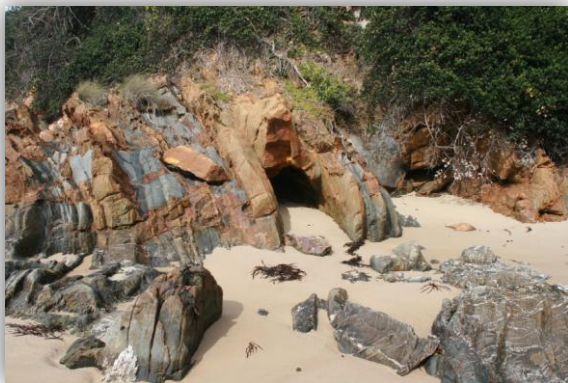




The Mallacoota area, including the adjoining Croajingolong National Park, have some fantastic beaches and at this time of year, they are almost totally unpopulated. Beaches are not my favourite place to visit but I do like them when there are no people around and I can enjoy their vista without the intrusion of crowds ... or groups.

Here are a couple of the beaches I visited.

Quarry Beach is named after a disused gravel quarry that now serves as a small car park toward the northern end of the beach. The sandy beach is 1,100 metres in length and is bordered by prominent 20 to 30 metre high jagged headlands, formed of steeply dipping metamorphic rocks. These rocks also outcrop along the beach and in the surf.



Secret Beach – it wasn't too secret because I found it very easily. The main feature is the beach itself is situated in a cove between headlands with a hard-to-find cave at the left hand end. This is a great spot if you like to be on your own with lots of space around.





Shipwreck Beach is accessed via a 13Km drive from Mallacoota along well-formed tracks through the Croajingolong Park. There is a short walking track from the camping area through a Bloodwood forest on the higher slopes, with a thick stand of Melaleuca on the lower slopes. The secluded beach features the picturesque Shipwreck Creek and is surrounded by spectacular rocky outcrops



I am very glad I had decided to reacquaint myself with this area and I may even revisit it in the near future. It was good to be based at the campground at Genoa as it was a very relaxing and quiet spot.

A highlight of the camp was the friendship afforded me by the local birdlife. When I arrived at Genoa camp, I was greeted by a few chooks ... oh how cute I thought .... but at 5am the following morning, I could have strangled the rooster .. as well as his mate in the farm just down the road. OH ... disappointedly I was not able to find their nest to see if I could score an egg or two.



That brings to a close my escapade in the far east of Victoria. The weather was ideal and the environment both relaxing and enjoyable. Even the hard trek up to the Genoa Peak lookout was enjoyable – especially after I had returned to the carpark.

I hope you have found this enjoyable and it has given some indication of how picturesque the area is.

Stay well

rockylizard

