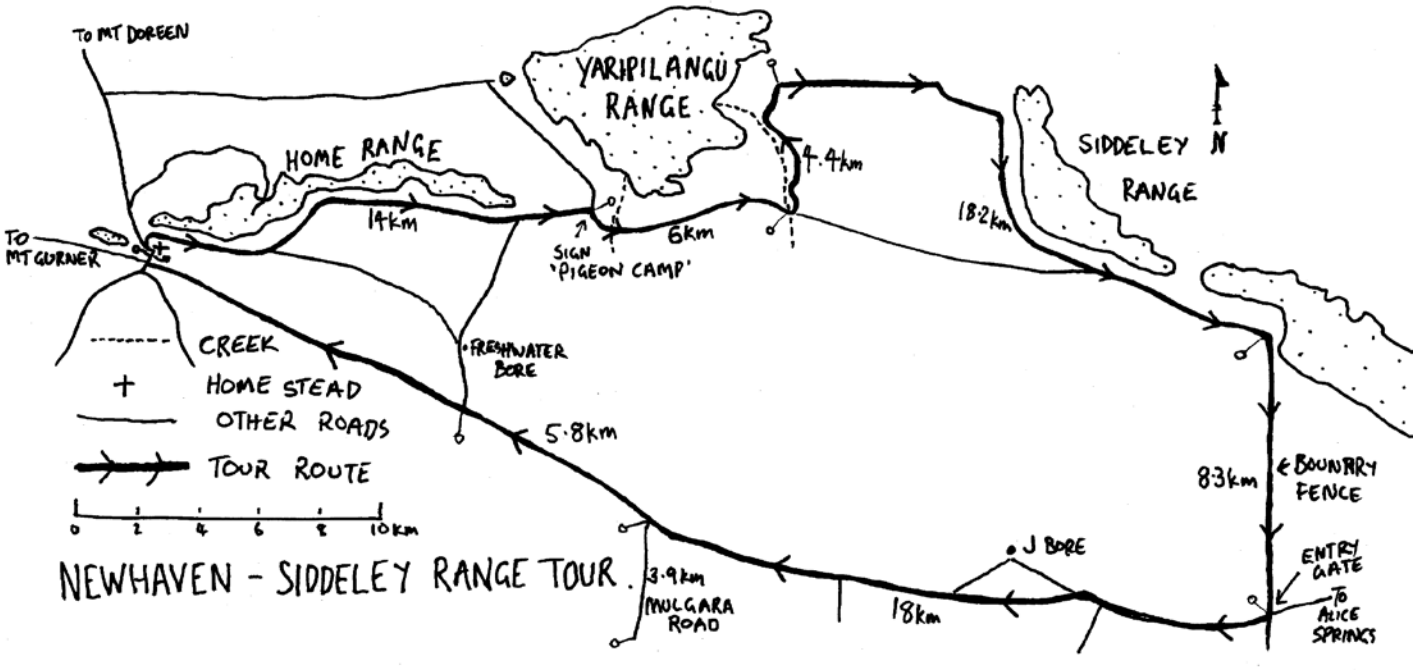
Newhaven Wildlife Sanctuary
Siddeley Range Tour

Please Note: Newhaven Sanctuary has a vast number of tracks and firebreaks. Not all of these are open to the public. For safety please keep to designated tracks. Always carry plenty of drinking water. Whilst on Newhaven please use UHF channel 3 duplex.

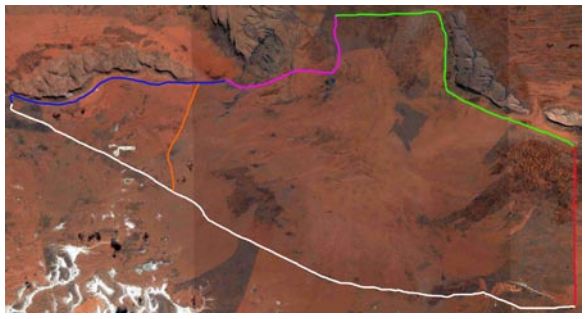
Siddeley Range Tour Summary
This tour goes to the Siddeley Range on the eastern boundary of Newhaven Sanctuary. The total distance is about 90 km. With several walks possible, allow 4-6 hours to complete it.

For those visitors interested in plants and/or bird watching, this tour includes deep sand non-spinifex communities, old growth mulga and several larger watercourses and run on areas. This tour takes you to one of the remote corners of the Sanctuary. To ensure you have enough time for exploratory walks, it is best to travel clockwise. That way, the last leg along the main road can be completed with headlights if required.



Tour Notes

0.0 km - Bird Box:
This tour begins at, and is distance-referenced from, the Registration/Information Shelter ('Bird Box'). Start from here after noting the odometer or resetting the trip meter. Head west towards the western campground, then take the first right then left turns. This will take you past the tank stands and to a Y-Junction within 300m.



0.3 km - Y Junction:
Turn right here. **HILLSIDE DRIVE** is signposted both to the right and left. The first leg of this tour (blue) takes you on Hillside Drive along the southern face of Home Range.

Not long after you begin to travel east along Home Range you will pass a small, burnt area on your right. that. This burn was conducted in August 2007 to provide a fire-break through a patch of spinifex and mulga woodland that has not burnt since 1975. If fire does enter this patch of country now, the entire community will not be lost.

Driving towards the morning sun will highlight the recently burnt footslopes. In October 2004 wildfire came along the bluff, from the east. Typically, rocky hills are burned by wildfires coming in from the plains and quickly rushing up the footslope. The wildfire of 2004 burnt from the ridge to the road. This particular fire front was not intense; there was little following wind and fuel loads were green. The flora and fauna of these rocky hills recovers from fires such as this, however, fire tolerant species such as the Ghost Gum have started to replace less fire tolerant species such as the Bloodwood where fires are frequent.

14 km - Pigeon Camp sign:
Turn right here. This (pink) leg of the tour skirts the southern edge of the Yaripilangu Range. On the left the crests of the hills get gradually lower. Their impermeable surfaces shed water that is funnelled into drainage lines and carried out onto the sandplain. You can trace these intermittent watercourses by tracing lines of vegetation that are distinct from that of the surrounding sand plain.

16.7 km - A walk in the dunes:
At about this distance, the road is passing through a sandy plain which has a sparse scattering of longitudinal dunes. A pair of parallel dunes is within easy walking distance on the southern side of the road. This type of country is dominated by Feathertop Spinifex (*Triodia schinzii*) which is a common grass found within spinefex dunefields. Here there is a scattered over-story of Dogwood (*Acacia coriacea*) and Black Gidgee *(Acacia pruinocarpa).*

As you approach the dunes, note the diversity of plants, the type and abundance of animal tracks, scats, and diggings. This area was burnt during the 2002-2003 summer.

Commonly, when a wind-driven fire front encounters a dune side-on, it skips over the dune crest, leaving a ‘fire shadow’ of unburned vegetation on the lee side. On and around these two dunes, there are a few small fire shadows. If you walk across the dunes – up and over the crest, and then down the swale, you’ll see a distinct pattern in plant distribution.

Some plant species are more common on or near the bare sandy crest; others on the mid-slope, and some grow only on the swale. This plant pattern is a response to the redistribution of rainfall, whether it is runoff down the dune slopes, or water, which has infiltrated the dune soil. Depending on the rainfall preceding your visit, Desert Heath Myrtle (*Aluta maisonneuvei*) one of the mid-height shrubs may be in flower, and the focus of attention of the nectar eating birds and insects in the area. Desert Heath Myrtle dominates non-spinifex dune slopes. Desert Heath Myrtle is considerably less flammable than Spinifex and will only carry fire in extreme conditions.

While on the dune, keep an eye out for the tracks of the Marsupial Mole. These tracks are characterised by the regular waving of the dragging tail, often described as a ‘sine wave’ like marking. Sometimes a depression in the sand can be seen with tracks leading out of it. This is the ‘pop hole’ where the mole has come to the surface. Another sign is a little ‘puddle’ of sand at the end of some tracks. This is where the mole has dug back into the sand. This photo shows where the little mole popped out in the top left wriggled for sixty centimetres then dug back into the ground in the bottom right.

As the road continues east, Honey Grevillea (*Grevillea eriostachya*) becomes more frequent. If it is in flower, it cannot be overlooked. The flower heads of this Grevillia often drip with sweet nectar. When full of nectar the flowers are soaked in water by Aboriginal people to make a sweet drink. The flowers are also just sucked, while still on the bush, to get a mouthful of the sweet nectar.

17.5 km - Steep Gully:

19.9 km - Creek Crossing:
This drainage line is the largest on Newhaven Sanctuary. Its origin is the middle of the eastern side of the Yaripilangu Range. It first flows east and then south. To reach this point, the water will have flowed some 8 km, mostly over sandy country. Its surface flow is obviously intermittent. Subsurface flow,

however, continues for a longer period. Where a drainage line has a coarse sand bed, water (very slowly) flows through the sand above a deeper rock basement.

This creek is of particular interest due to the abundance of the Batwing Coral Bean Tree *(Erythrina vespertilio).* Bean trees grow in areas where underground water is accessible. They are often leafless during the winter and spring and flower in early summer. Their seeds are bright red beans that are sought after due to their ornamental value for making necklaces. The wood from the Bean Tree is very light and was important for Aboriginal people as one of the tools for making fire as well as being used for shields. The Bean Tree is highly favoured by camels as a food source and is therefore threatened due to the rising number of wild camels in Central Australia.

The road sharply turns north and roughly follows the drainage line, which you will see on your left. Between here and the next point of interest, the sand depth increases. Along this sandy stretch you pass through a grove of Beefwoods *(Grevillia striata)*, these are medium sized trees with long grey strap like leaves.

24.4 km - Newhaven boundary:
The road makes a 90° turn to head east. On both sides of the road, the sand is deep and there is relatively dense stand of Desert Heath Myrtle. With good timing, you will see their flowers and their animal visitors.

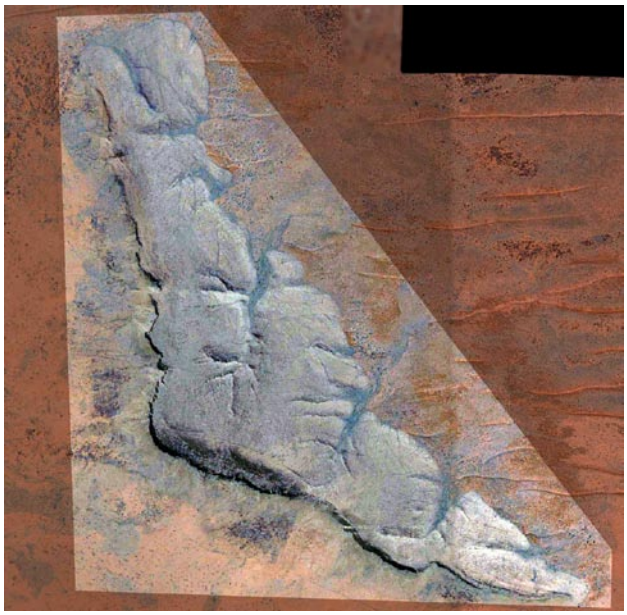
The next leg of the tour is straightforward, literally. For the next 6-7 km the track is straight due east, paralleling Newhaven's northern boundary. Apart from a small patch of mulga woodland, you will be travelling through mixed acacia sand plain. This area is relatively untouched by fire.

28.8 km - Road veers right (south).
Where the road heads to the south there is a fire management road heading due east. The mulga that you are now entering is the most significant patch of unburnt old growth mulga on Newhaven. When the mulga opens up you will be travelling south along the foot slope of the range. On the right you can see where the spinifex is so old and unburnt that it has nearly died out under the mulga. This is an important habitat that needs to remain untouched by fire to prevent the regression towards spinifex dominance.

The Siddeley Range is aligned NW-SE and its bluff faces are on the western side. Only the two northern-most outcrops of the range lie within Newhaven's boundaries. The geological structure and rock material here is the same as Mt Gurner, Home Range and

Yaripilangu Range, that being the Vaughan Springs Quartzite formation. Consequently, it can be expected that the flora and fauna will also be similar. However, fire history, local geography and water availability all play a part in determining the flora and fauna of these ranges.

As the road turns south and skirts the footslope of the outcrop, the highest bluff (800m) forms a right-angled triangle. It is a spectacular face of the capping rock, with many caves apparent. Much of this section of the Siddeley Range burnt in a hot summer fire during the summer of 2006-07. If you wish to climb and examine the footslope and bluff face, then the only way is to walk in from this road. Unlike Yaripilangu Range, there are no large drainage lines running between the footslope and the road. Therefore, you will have to choose your landmarks carefully and leave your vehicle on the road in a clearly visible spot for the return walk.



Next, the road passes the sharp cornered bluff, and then bears south-east heading for the next bluff-faced outcrop about 7km away. You are still travelling in mixed acacia sand plains and the road moves through a number of different aged fire footprints. Just after the easterly turn, the road served as a break stopping a large 2002-2003 fire.

42.6 km - The Sanctuary's eastern boundary fence:
The track (red leg) now turns south following a decrepit fence for about 8 km until it meets the main road. Even though the road is now ruler-straight, it is not without interest.

Firstly there is the dilapidated boundary fence on the LHS. It is remarkable because the three barbed wires have been pulled off the steel fence posts and dragged across the road. You will also notice that many of the steel posts have been pulled out of the ground or bent. These two signs, the dragged wires and the bent steel posts, demonstrate the damage that can be done to infrastructure by wild camels.

Secondly the presence of the outcropping Siddeley Ranges influences the distribution of soil types and runoff. The result is a mosaic of four different vegetation communities. At the turn south, you are in mixed acacia sandplain that is recovering from recent fire, followed by mulga woodland then a patch of blue mallee sandplain. Just before the gate a one kilometre-wide patch of Desert Oak grows.

50.9 km - The Sanctuary's eastern entrance:
If you continue along the main road (white leg), it is 35km to the campground.
The main road through this part of Newhaven traverses prime Brush-tailed Mulgara (*Dasycercus blythi*) habitat. The Mulgara is a small carnivorous marsupial whose conservation status is recorded as vulnerable due to altered fire regimes, grazing pressure and introduced predators.

If you are lucky you may find evidence of them on your drive home. Brush-tailed Mulgaras prefer to live in medium and mature aged spinifex grasslands, especially *Triodia basdowii* and *T. pungens* with more than 20% ground cover. Location of mulgara colonies may also be influenced by the presence of ancient drainage systems. This central eastern area of Newhaven is ideal Mulgara habitat and there appears to be a healthy population living here. Their tracks are commonly found on or near the road through this area. Mornings are the best time to find tracks as, like many small marsupials, the Mulgara is nocturnal and the wind of the day will often cover their tracks.

69 km - Mulgara Road:
A detour down Mulgara Road might be a good place to look for some tracks. 3.9 km each way this drive takes you to a small dune near a salt lake edge. Mulgara tracks are almost guaranteed in the sand at the end of this drive and the view from the dune to the south is well worth the detour.

82.6 km - Freshwater bore turnoff:
(This will be 74.8 km if Mulgara Road is not visited)
If you have time you can return via Freshwater Bore (orange leg) for bird watching and beautiful evening light. A repeat visit may discover things that were previously overlooked. The image below of the bore shows one item that may be of interest. To the east of the cattle yards, in the treeless area, there appears a regular pattern of circular bare bright patches. These are surface expressions of below ground termite nests. Surprisingly, the termite nests are more difficult to detect from the ground than they are from satellite images.

A walk in the mulga woodland to the north east of the bore is recommended.

Please remember to avoid walking through any areas of buffel grass this will help to reduce its rate of spread.

We hope that you have enjoyed this tour.