

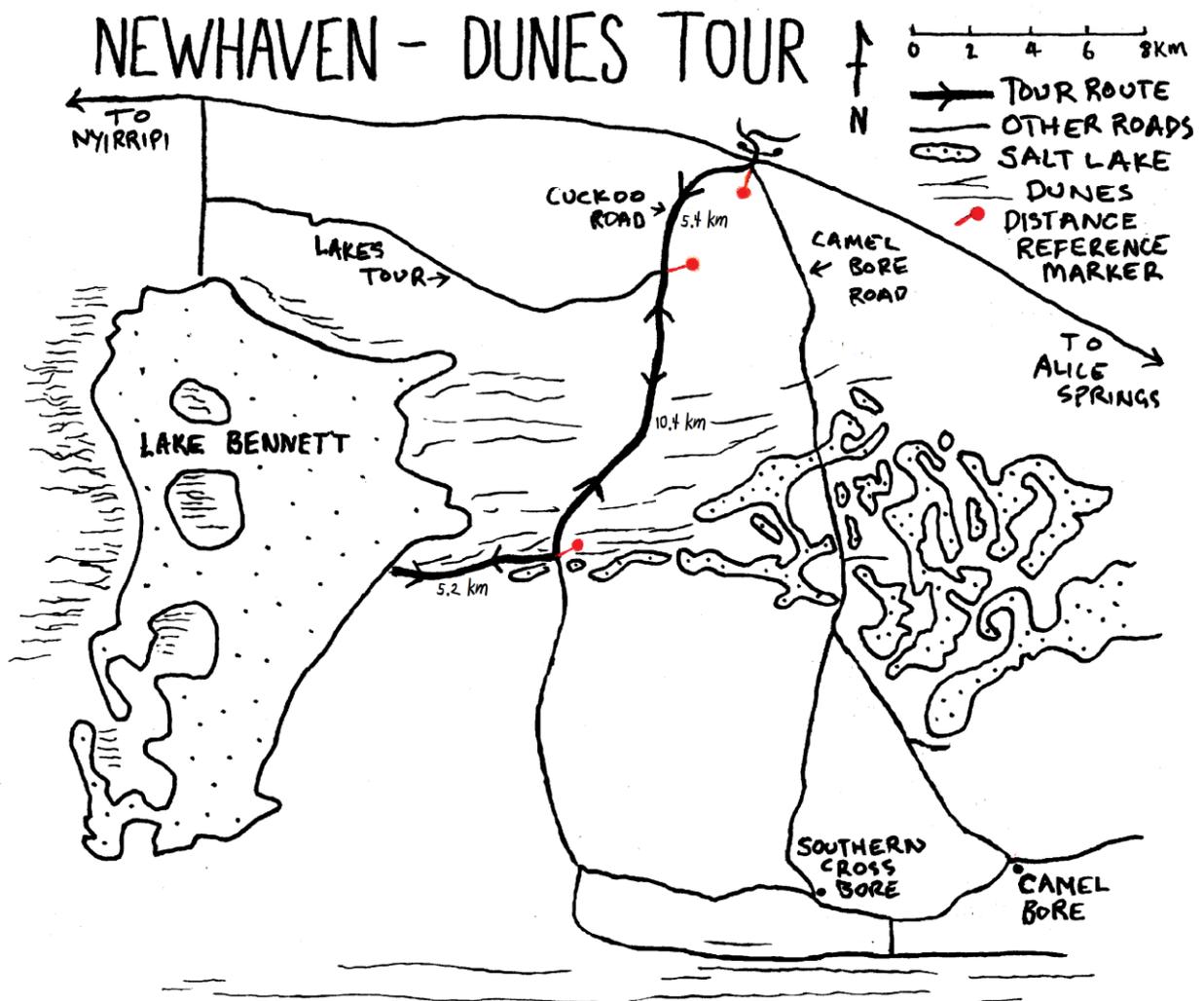
Newhaven Wildlife Sanctuary

Dunes Tour

Please Note: Newhaven Sanctuary has a vast number of tracks and firebreaks—not all these are open to the public. For safety please keep to designated tracks set out in the map showing all the Newhaven self-guided tours. These tracks include the six coloured tour routes, and the solid black roads marked “open” in the map legend. Always carry spare food and plenty of drinking water (20 litres per vehicle, with an additional 10 litres for every person above two). Whilst on Newhaven UHF channel 3 (duplex) can be used to contact others however this must not be relied on for emergency communications.

Dunes Tour Summary

This tour provides an opportunity to visit the eastern edge of Lake Bennett and explore a saline spring. It encompasses desert oak dune fields, vast semi saline spinifex plains and ephemeral freshwater lakes.. This tour is 42km in length (south of the campgrounds); and takes about 2 hours.



Dunes Tour Notes

0.0 km - Bird Box; S22°43.472' E131°10.044':

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. (Note: odometer readings vary slightly between vehicles and you may need to make allowances for this). Begin by heading south.

0.2 km - Y Junction; S22°43.591' E131°09.971':

Drive to the intersection with the main road, cross this road. Here the road divides. Take the right fork following the **DUNES TOUR** sign, this is Cuckoo Road. You now head into a patch of mulga woodland.

1.9 km - Airstrip; S22°43.926' E131°09.105':

The airstrip is on the right hand side. Continue straight ahead.

3.5 km - Semi-saline Spinifex Sandplains:

For the next few kilometres the vegetation community you are travelling through is semi-saline spinifex plains. This wide spread habitat occupies 13% of Newhaven and is typically dominated by **needlebush** (*Hakea leucoptera*) over **soft spinifex** (*Triodia pungens*) and a **daisy** sub-shrub (*Pluchea ferdinandi-muelleri*).

The term semi-saline refers to salinity features in the soil that are very subtle in comparison with the saline landscapes fringing the salt lakes and the hypersaline salt lakes themselves

4.0 km - Great Desert Skink Habitat:

A very significant population of **great desert skinks** (*Liopholis kintorei*) occurs on Newhaven. Great desert skinks on Newhaven are found within this semi-saline spinifex vegetation community. Indicator plant species for their preferred habitat include soft spinifex (*Triodia pungens*) with inland tea tree (*Melaleuca glomerata*), desert broombush (*Templetonia egena*) and a daisy bush (*Pluchea ferdinandi-muelleri*).

The great desert skink is listed as Vulnerable under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (1999). Several potential threatening processes have been identified as being the likely cause of population declines including; 1. habitat homogenisation caused by changes in recent fire regimes, and; 2. increased predation pressure caused by the introduction of cats and foxes.

4.5 km Mount Liebig:

On the southern horizon rises Mount Liebig, the highest point in the Amunurunga Range rising to 1267m above sea level.

5.6 km - Lakes Tour turnoff; S22°45.783' E131°08.603':

Continue straight ahead.

6.6 km – Ephemeral Freshwater Lake:

Ephemeral freshwater lakes, claypans and season swamps are common on Newhaven. The vegetation supported by these systems varies considerably depending on the underlying geology, depth and salinity. Freshwater lakes are often fringed by inland tea-tree (*Melaleuca glomerata*). This small ephemeral freshwater lake, on the eastern side of the track, supports the highest plant diversity of any of the ephemeral lakes surveyed on Newhaven.



14.3 km - Desert Oak Dunefield:

This is a good spot to stop and explore both the dunefield and the **desert oak** (*Allocasuarina decaisneana*) stands. The sand of these dunes is very red like that of the surrounding spinifex sandplain. In profile, the dunes are 3-5m high and symmetrically shaped. If you look along the dune crest, its long axis is far from straight, snaking around invisible obstacles. The dunes here are not very long, perhaps 2-3km before they break. In the dunefield on the southern boundary of Newhaven, individual dunes of more than 10km long and 10m high are common.

Here the desert oaks, and the understory shrubs, show signs of fire. Desert oaks are fire tolerant. With a corky bark to protect their trunk only sick and old trees are killed by fire. The degree of scorching and charring of the bark of mature trees is astonishing, yet the tree continues to live. Their woody fruits can form a thick carpet under a female tree.

Desert oak communities occupy about 6% of Newhaven. Desert oak vegetation communities appear to be intruding into and mingling with other communities. To remain in a healthy state, desert oaks appear to require relatively frequent fires.

A search for tracks usually reveals plenty of activity. If the weather is warm enough small lizard tracks or diggings may be present, along with the lace-like patterns of beetle meanderings. The biggest tracks you are likely to find belong to feral camels.

The **thorny devil** (*Moloch horridus*) leaves a delicate track without any tail drag. If close to nests of small black ants you may be able to spot a Thorny Devil as the small black ants are their staple diet.

16.0 km - Lake Bennett turn off; S22°50.604' E131°06.795':

Turning off to the right hand side is a 5 km track to the eastern shore of Lake Bennett that meanders parallel to the dunes. Here you will pass through thick stands of young Desert oak. These young Desert oaks have already had to withstand wildfire, however, they are re-sprouting vigorously.

You will return to Cuckoo Road via this track.

21.2 km - Lake Bennett; S22°50.881' E131°03.941':

The dune offers views of Lake Bennett to the north and west and the Andrew Young Hills to the west.

Lake Bennett was named after a pilot who was part of a search team looking for a plane crash within the Andrew Young Hills. The Warlpiri name for Lake Bennett is Yunkanjini, it remains an important site for Traditional Owners and is a registered sacred site—please do not walk on the lake surface.



To the south of the turn-around-bay is a small hypersaline spring. Looking south along the lake edge you can see where this spring flows the short distance into Lake Bennett during wet periods.

26.4 km - T Junction; S22°50.604' E131°06.795':

Turn left (north) to return to Newhaven campground via Cuckoo Road.

The track to the south is closed to manage the spread of Buffel grass.

Buffel grass thrives in central Australia and can withstand long periods of drought and frequent fires. As well as displacing native grasses and significantly reducing biodiversity it is also capable of changing fire regimes by increasing the intensity and frequency of wildfires.

Buffel Grass was actively sown throughout Newhaven for cattle feed. As a result it is common within the calcrete areas south of the lake and well established at most of the bores.

These notes, maps and photos were written, drawn and taken by Danae Moore, Josef Schofield, Dean Graetz and Margaret Graetz. They are regularly updated and were last reviewed in November 2012.

We hope that you have enjoyed this tour.

For more information about Newhaven Wildlife Sanctuary, visit www.australianwildlife.org