



Where are the Riparian Zones?

A riparian zone is the area of land immediately adjacent to a body of water (such as a river, creek, lake or pond). Some examples of a riparian zone include:

- The land alongside small creeks and rivers including the riverbank
- Gullies and dips, which sometimes run with surface water
- Areas surrounding upland wetland areas
- Wetlands on river or creek floodplains which interact with the river or creek in times of flood

Why are the Riparian Zones important?

Riparian Zones generally have a great diversity of animals and plants compared to adjoining habitats. The vegetation found in most riparian zones ranges from aquatic plants to mature trees and understorey vegetation.

Stream ecology and water quality is greatly influenced by riparian zones. Riparian zones perform a number of important functions. Some of these include:

Habitat: Riparian zones are important to both aquatic and terrestrial animals. The vegetation also shades and buffers the aquatic environment against high temperatures in summer. Land based animals use the riparian zone to shelter, hunt and breed.

Channel shape and bank stabilisation: River and creek banks are vulnerable to erosion from fast flowing water. Riparian vegetation protects the river and creek channel from erosion.

Recreational and aesthetic values: Healthy creeks and rivers are peaceful and beautiful. They are important to keep for both us and future generations so we can enjoy them and learn from them.

The Uralla Creek and Rocky Creek catchments are located on the Northern tablelands of NSW and form the headwaters of the Gwydir River. They are relatively small in area being approximately 9.5km² and 8.0km² respectively.

Landuse in the area is predominantly grazing and urban development, although the area has been extensively shaped by historical mining activities.

Who is Uralla Rivercare Group?

The Uralla Rivercare Group (URG) formed following community concern over the condition of Uralla Creek and Rocky Creek. The group was made up of interested local residents and landowners who lived along both creeks. Uralla Rivercare Group held its first meeting on 29th January 2000. Together with the assistance of the former Department of Land and Water Conservation the group developed a river restoration plan for approx. 3 km reach of the Uralla Creek to guide rehabilitation efforts.

This plan aimed to address degradation issues and to remediate the creek into an aesthetically pleasing and environmentally friendly community asset.

Throughout the planning process issues at specific sites were identified and recorded on an aerial photographic plan and their severity ranked to help prioritise the works. The management criteria and recommended actions for each site were provided in detail for the URG to implement, which they have done over a 10 year period with the assistance of Uralla Shire Council and through many government and non government grants.

Now Uralla Rivercare Group and many community volunteers meet on the creek for working bees to carry out follow-up work to ensure that the improved condition of the creek is maintained.

Improvements that have been made to the creek since the plan was put in place include:

- Extensive removal and control of weeds
- Removal of rubbish within the creek
- Installation of gross pollutant traps
- The construction of a rock ramp in the creek to stop bed lowering and to restore pool riffle habitats for aquatic fauna in the stream
- Bank stabilisation works including planting of native trees, shrubs and grasses, construction of rock bed controls and rock riffle systems.



URALLA CREEK WALK



SANCTUARY

THE NATIVE WATER RAT

The scientific name for Australia's only native Water-Rat is *Hydromys chrysogaster* meaning "water-mouse with golden belly", although the colour of their coats ranges from dark brown with a golden underside to grey/brown with a creamy white underside. They are large animals, with males in local waterways weighing up to 760 grams. 'Gumaay' is the local Gamilaraay name for Water Rat.

Specialised aquatic animals

Native Water Rats are adapted for aquatic life, and with platypus are the most specialised amphibious Australian mammals. They have partially webbed hind feet, small ears, fur with a dense water-repellent underlayer, and a long tail with a prominent white tip that acts like a rudder when they are swimming or diving for food.

Diet and Distribution

Native Water Rats take most of their food from the water, eating large aquatic insects, small fish, mussels, and yabbies. Food is often carried to and consumed on a feeding platform close to the waters edge.

Flagship species for stream restoration

Native Water Rats are found throughout Australian waterways. Their distribution has been reduced by excessive hunting for fur in the past and poor health of our waterways.

During May 2011, researchers at the University of New England undertook a census of Native Water Rats in streams of the New England Region. They aimed to link Water Rat populations with stream and riparian condition to help promote stream restoration to local communities and target restoration projects for increasing the numbers of this charismatic and cryptic species.

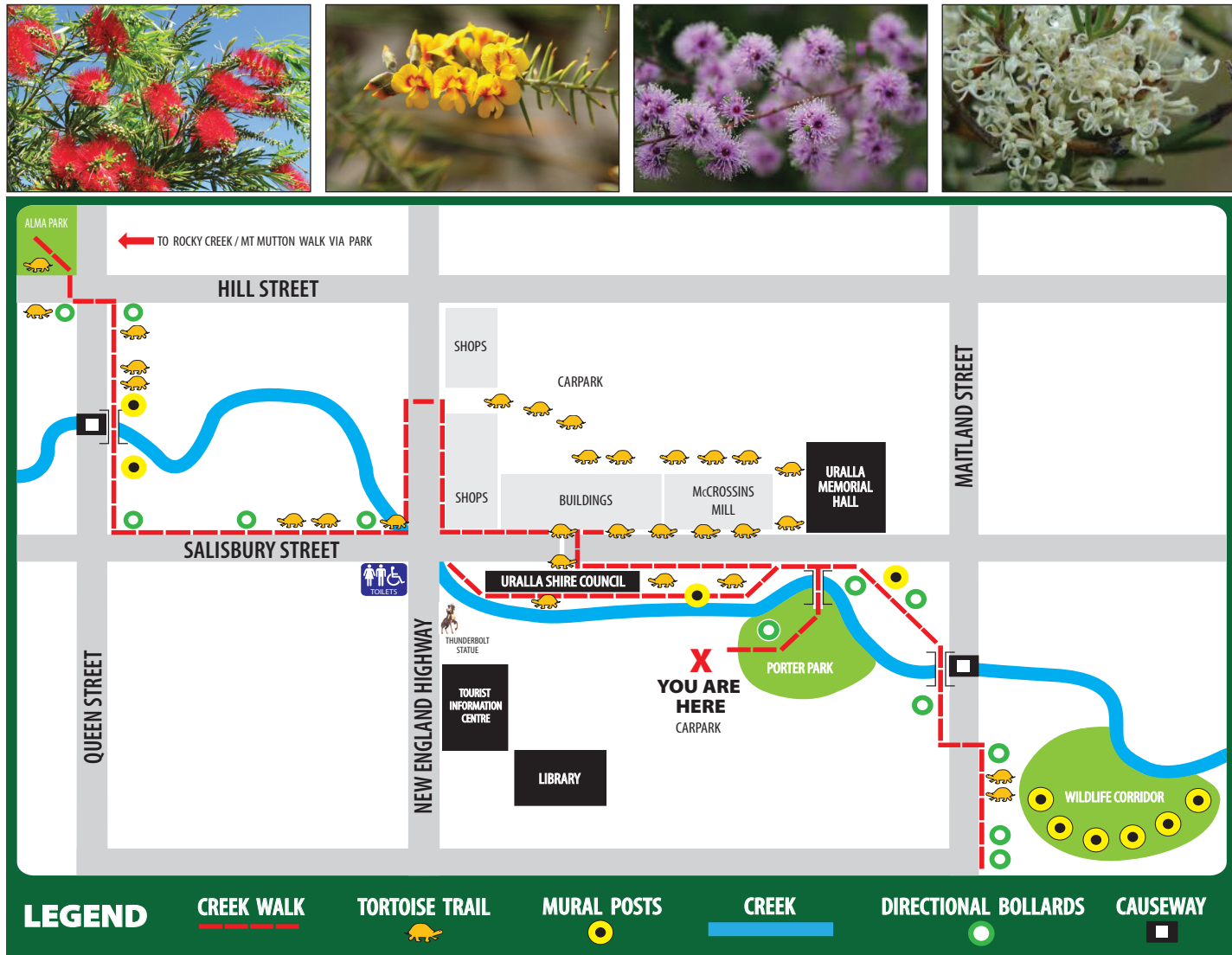


Native Water Rat

LEGEND

-  The Tortoise Track represents the local indigenous people and their connection to the land and water
-  The Mural "Totem" Posts painted by local artists represents some of the animal species found in Uralla and Rocky Creeks
-  The directional bollards mark out the walking track for you to follow

URALLA CREEK WALK SANCTUARY MAP



Uralla Creek Walk would like to thank the following organisations



Catchment Management
Authority
Border Rivers-Gwydir

