

EVANS HEAD CAMP REPORT June 6-11, 2010

OVERVIEW

Evans Head is a sleepy little seaside town just 35 km's south of Ballina, NSW, boasting long unspoilt beaches, fantastic wild life, National Park walking areas and great water ways for those who enjoy all types of water sports.

Twenty-four people attended the camp (four non paddlers) staying in an assortment of accommodation. Nine people enjoyed the comforts of the Evans Head Caravan Park, three rented a beautiful house and the other twelve were all in together, so to speak, sharing an upstairs area and 'dorm' area below and situated right on the banks of the picturesque Evans River, just a few steps from the shops, parkland and river mouth. Apart from the daily paddles many of us went on walks, watched the dolphins playing at 'the wall', watched Martin kayak surf and on occasions, some folk caught sight of the migrating whales out at sea. The restaurant situation however was a little limited, but it did not seem to bother anyone at all.

A few members arrived earlier so took advantage of the beautiful days by exploring around the waterways near the township and along the winding fresh water creeks. We were very fortunate with the weather, enjoying warm, sunny days and slightly cooler evenings than we are used to on the Sunshine Coast and best of all no rain!



Evans Head - Courtesy of B Plenkovich

Monday 7 June EVANS RIVER PADDLE

After all the kayaks were launched from the paddock opposite the golf course, we set off downstream, to investigate all the hidden estuaries and bird life along the way, while of course catching up with each others news. It was wonderful to have two new members (Lorna and Hazel) join us on this trip. Of particular interest to everyone was our paddle over the remains of the Iron Gate, a natural ironstone wall originally running across the river, until it was destroyed, approximately 22 yrs ago. The area is rich in aboriginal spiritual and cultural heritage and many took advantage of the beautiful walks to see the 'wedding tree', the native vegetation and the abundance of wildlife.



Happy hour was held each night at the house known as the 'Surf Shack', which proved an enjoyable way for everyone to finish the day's activities.

Evans River

Tuesday 8 June ROCKY MOUTH CREEK PADDLE (off the Richmond Road at Woodburn)

After parking our cars on a grassy patch opposite the busy township of Woodburn we set off across the mighty Richmond R to the smaller Rocky Mouth Creek, travelling parallel to the Pacific Hwy for a while. We meandered passed farms and dwellings along the riverbanks and were surrounded with pink and purple water lilies most of the way. An easy paddle until we arrived at what we thought was the end of the creek, but no our scouts found a way over and beyond, and before we knew it we had carried all the kayaks up the muddy bank where we sat down to our morning tea break but we were not alone! Some very inquisitive cows came to join us. Many thanks to those guys who helped everyone through the deep mud to get us up and over both sides of the embankment.

Wednesday 9 June TUCKEAN BROADWATER / RICHMOND RIVER PADDLE

As just a few days earlier the Woodburn area had had approximately 200 ml of rain in a few hours the Tuckean Nature Reserve canals were flowing very swiftly, so we had to change our original plans of paddling up stream. Instead we went 'with the flow' downstream to the Richmond River and on to the quaint little pub at Wardell, where we had a counter lunch outside in the sun. John & Brie offered to do a car ferry so we could all leave our cars at the pub and save the hassle of the two-way commuting.

We slid our kayaks over the grassy embankment, into the canal at the Barrage (built in 1971 to prevent the salt water reaching the farmlands up stream) and moved quickly with the tide, passing hundreds of purple and pink water lilies lining the sides of each bank. Some of us were fortunate in observing some of the prolific bird life in the reserve (black swans, whistling kites, spoonbills and pelicans) but not lucky enough to see any brolgas. A peaceful relaxing environment until we ventured into the more built up area of Wardell.

Happy hour that night was followed by a meal at the local Chinese café at the Evans Bowling Club.

Thursday 10 June JERUSALEM CREEK PADDLE

Approximately 18 cars, with all the brightly coloured kayaks on their roof, travelled in tandem, out along the Evans road to the Pacific Hwy then onto the Bungalong Rd to Jerusalem Creek (south of Woodburn.) Many used their trolley to transport the kayaks over the sandy bush track. Everyone was set to go when a conscientious member realized we all had to pay a parking entry fee so out we got, filled out the form, popped the \$7 into the envelope and once again we were away. A very picturesque paddle down stream to where the brown flowing waters of the creek met the beautiful aqua of the ocean. Morning tea was a little windy but the view was worth the stop there.

On the paddle back several of the 'tail enders' stopped to look at the waterfall and the beach track walk, which took us up and over the sand dunes, opening up to a glorious scene of toffee lava arms gently sloping down to the waves cascading in along the beach. One lone air force figure, from the nearby airbase, was occupying the beach. Looking south we could see all the way down to Yamba and north up to Evans Head. A very tranquil paddle, well worth doing.

Later that afternoon John (our host at the Surf Shack) taught us how to do plastic welding on our kayaks, set up a beautiful outdoor fire and bought pizzas to thank us all for coming to his little part of paradise at Evans Head.



Jerusalem Creek

Friday 11 June OCEAN & EVANS RIVER PADDLE

As it was the beginning of the Queen's Birthday weekend we made Friday our last day and for most that meant moving out by 10 or 11 o'clock but a few however paddled one last time. Three adventurers went out at the crack of dawn and paddled out in the open waters to Chinaman's Beach and back again, then the second group ventured off to explore more of the interesting little creeks down stream from the 'Iron Gate'

Thanks to all the folk who participated, and to the ideal sunny weather, I feel this was an enjoyable 'Seniors' camp at Evans head.

Sue Alcock