Gnaala Mia Woodlands



Our first trip away since just after Christmas – a nasty little (well, maybe not so little) thing called work got in the way.

After ANZAC Day, with the pressure off, we took our time travelling down to Dryandra Woodlands and stayed at Gnaala Mia in Congelin, off the York-Williams Road. It’s a fabulous spot to stay.

As a DPAW – Department of Parks and Wildlife, now renamed as DBCA (Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions) site, it’s not quite free but close to it – $11 a night per person, $7 for concession card holders, with clearly marked sites. 27 for caravans and campers and a dozen tent sites.

Peaceful, only the sounds of the occasional bird. No cockateels, no galas, no rainbow lorrikeets. Just small little cheeps. However, bees are abundant. Probably not for everyone; as it is so quiet you can almost hear a pin drop, but to us it was heaven.



The campground has drop toilets (clean) and a campers kitchen area – no water onsite through. No pets, and you can’t book in advance like many DPAW sites; it’s strictly first in, best dressed.

We’re in a designated area for large vans, room to have a fire pit, table and bench seats, both provided, and almost enough room as well to hold a dance! An intimate dance, but nonetheless, a dance.

From their website, “Non-bookable campgrounds operate on a first come, first served basis. Be aware that this campground may get busy, especially during weekends and holidays. Identify alternative accommodation in case there are no campsites available when you arrive.”

You’ll have to bring your own firewood and each night we’ve had the open fire going in one of the provided round metal firepits – great for cooking. For warming up? Not so much.



First night we sat quietly near the warm fire and looked into the trees closest to us, with a small clearing. We were taken by surprise to look up and see a chuditch, or Western quoll. I thought it was a spotted quoll, but different name here.



Next day we went off to Barna Mia Nocturnal Willdlife Experience. We had to be there for 6.15pm for 6.30pm start on a pretty rough, corrugated road but so worth it. First was a talk on what they do there, how they look after certain species, and how they are working to control feral cats and foxes, without hurting the wildlife.

Very interesting, and gives an insight into the workings of the Parks and Wildlife Service.



We were told by the camp hosts to watch out for wildlife on the roads, particularly at dusk. On the way to Barna Mia, on that badly corrugated road, we came across an echidna, curled up in the middle of the track! Put the spotlights on him and he got the message, slowly got up and ambled off to the bush on the side of the road.

Barna Mia is home to 5 species of marsupials, most of which I'd never heard of … other than bilby (the Easter rabbit replacement), there were boodies , chuditches, woylies, quendas and Malas. All of which they were feeding, as well as a couple of 'ring-ins', two ring tails possums, who just dropped climbed the fence and in for a feed.



Later in the night, we sighted our first bilby, very shy and didn’t come in for a feed.

The facility is really informative and well worth a 5 star rating.

That night after the 2 hour tour, we sat and lit the fire (this time in our portable Darche), enjoying the stars, and the quiet of the woodlands.

Pop! Another surprise. A woylie quietly crept into our camping area, and hopped around us, under our chairs, around our feet, just to have a look. Wow! We were like kids at Christmas time!



Tuesday we took a drive through the surrounds and onto Williams and the Woolshed for lunch. As always, a very popular spot for travellers, as they have opened a drive-through for coffee since we were there last.

Returned to camp, had an early dinner, then light the fire and settled in for the night with drinks and nibbles. Cameras were ready in case we had more visitors. Alas, the woylie came, but ran through the camp so quickly we couldn’t focus on him for a photo. Did that twice and that was all the excitement for the night.



Next day we reluctantly packed up and slowly drove home.

Gnaala Mia is well worth the visit and we would recommend it without hesitation. We'll be back! Gnaala Mia is located on Godfrey Road, 1km west of the York-Williams Road. Garmin couldn't find it, but Google Maps did.