

# Ukerebah | Ukerebagh Nature Reserve and Tweed Heads Historic Site

**Ukerebah, place of shellfish and sand goanna, remains a site of strong cultural and family connection for Aboriginal people of the Tweed. Ukerebagh encompasses the Tweed Heads Historic Site and Ukerebagh Nature Reserve, which includes Ukerebagh Island. Ukerebagh Nature Reserve holds both contemporary and historical significance for Aboriginal people. The Tweed Heads Historic Site incorporates the Minjungbal Aboriginal Cultural Centre and Museum as well as a bora ring. It is recognised as a meeting place and a place of ceremony.**

Ukerebagh Island was declared an Aboriginal Reserve in 1927 and remained so until 1951 when it was gazetted as “reserved from sale for future public requirements”. Many families lived on the island during the 1920s and 1930s; most were sent there in an attempt to segregate Aboriginal people from the general population. People



living there were reliant on government rations, but supplemented their diet with fish, oysters, mud-crab, pippies, wallabies, lizards and birds. People remained on Ukerebagh until the 1970s. Many community members alive today were born on the island and memories of gatherings, of swimming in the blue hole, of fishing and gathering food remain strong.

Ukerebagh Nature Reserve, including Ukerebagh Island, supports Critically Endangered Littoral Rainforest, the Endangered Ecological Communities Saltmarsh, Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest, Subtropical Coastal Floodplain Forest and mangrove forest. These plant communities

provide valuable habitat and refuge for a broad range of fauna and are a stopover point for migratory shorebirds.

Mangroves and saltmarshes are particularly fragile environments providing an important inter-tidal zone buffer between the land and the sea. Mangroves contribute nutrients, provide nursery ground and refuge for an incredible web of sea life and provide critical nesting sites for many birds. Saltmarsh comprises low-growing salt-tolerant succulent herbs, grasses, sedges and rushes. The largest area of saltmarsh in the Tweed is found on Ukerebagh Island.

Photographer Dean Tresize