

SAPPHIRE, SCRUB LEAD, DIVIDE RUBYVALE AND REWARD DESIGNATED FOSSICKING LAND

Sapphire, Scrub Lead, Rubyvale, Divide and Reward are five of six areas of Designated Fossicking Land on the central Queensland sapphire fields where recreational and tourist fossicking is possible under simple Fossickers Licences without the need to contact the relevant landowners. However, certain types of commercial mining tenures are also allowed in these areas.

Five Fossicking Areas have also been established to allow fossicking away from competition from commercial miners. Generally the Designated Fossicking Land, and in particular these five areas, encompass mainly deeper wash of more commercial interest than the Fossicking Areas, and some parts have been extensively mined.

However, patches of ground suitable for shallow hand excavation occur in places. Other brochures describe the general background to the fields and individual areas.

Reward is a discrete area relatively remote from the main area of mining and infrastructure of the gemfields around *Sapphire* and *Rubyvale*, and its undeveloped open bushland setting is attractive to fossickers.

Access and roads

The sealed road from the Capricorn Highway at Anakie leading to *Sapphire* and *Rubyvale* townships passes through *Sapphire* and *Scrub Lead* to *Rubyvale*. *Divide* is 4km west of

Rubyvale on the partly unsealed Goanna Flat Road.

Reward is reached from *Rubyvale* by heading southwest along the unsealed Keilambete Road for 1km to the signposted *Reward* road on the left, then for another 4.3 km to the entrance of *Reward* on its eastern boundary (Sign 52). The track leads west through the 'Reward' diggings, to eventually rejoin Keilambete Road. At a further 1km on this road (Sign 54) a second track leads to the south to cross Retreat Creek before heading west to the 'Washpool' diggings. Alternatively for 'Washpool' stay on the Keilambete Road from *Rubyvale*. Other tracks leading from *Sapphire* to the southeast may require 4wd vehicles.

Facilities

Provisions, fuel, accommodation, caravan/camping parks and other tourist facilities are available in *Sapphire* and *Rubyvale*. Drinking water is available from the *Sapphire* water facility. There are no facilities at *Reward* except for a solar telephone and water needs to be carried from the public supply at *Sapphire*. Holes in Retreat Creek near the 'Washpool' track crossing may contain water suitable for washing gravel.

Requirements

Fossicking requires a **Fossickers Licence** under the *Fossicking Act 1994*. Individual, family, club, educational organisation and commercial tour operator licences can be obtained for periods between one and twelve months,

with fees varying accordingly. They can be obtained from the Mining Registrar at Emerald, selected local businesses, or the Department's other offices throughout the State. Hand tools only are permitted.

Camping

Camping is allowed for a maximum period of 3 months on any one area, except within 1.5km of the *Sapphire* and *Rubyvale* Post Offices. A **Fossickers Camping Permit** is required, which can be obtained for the payment of a small fee from the Emerald office of the Department or the local businesses that issue the Fossickers Licences. *Reward* is relatively remote, and visitors must be self-sufficient.

Sapphire occurrence

Sapphire

A diagonal strip of wash extends across the area from southwest to northeast. Shallow surface wash is best developed from the town towards the northern boundary. It is a red clayey gravel, with fragments of metamorphics and rare billy in a red-orange-brown sandy clay. It has produced large quantities of fine blue stones, although greens and yellows are not uncommon. Much of the area has been extensively mined by both old machine operations and small-scale workings. Although many have been abandoned, the area is still extensively held under mining claims and there are numerous residential tenures, limiting opportunities for fossickers.

Scrub Lead

The main wash here occurs in an arc around the eastern side of the area trending towards Rubyvale town. It consists of a gravelly sand at the base of friable to semi-consolidated sand and varies in depth from 3m to more than 12m. It has been extensively worked by machine mining under both mining lease and mining claim, and has yielded some of the best stones, especially blues, of the fields. There are few places to fossick because of the extent of the disturbed ground and excavations, the depth of the wash, and current mining tenures.

Rubyvale

Wash extends northwest, west and southwest from Rubyvale. However, much of the ground is deep, and shallower material has been extensively worked. Near the town the wash averages 2m in depth but may be up to 8m; it consists of boulders of billy and schist in a clayey matrix. Southwest of the town a black soil wash, up to 5m thick, contains good sapphires.

At Bedford Hill and Normans Hill, the depth to the sapphire zone is variable and can exceed 20m, but it has been worked extensively by shafts. The wash, composed of fragments of billy and metamorphics in a sandy clay matrix, is overlain by sand and clay and rests on a granite basement. The sapphires are found in narrow runs on the basement. Good quality sapphires have been recovered.

There appear to be few opportunities for fossickers because of the depth of the wash and extensive mining tenures. However some miners do not object to their dumps being

scavenged if requested. Some underground tourist mines are open to the public in this area.

Divide

This area encompasses a large area of wash south of Policemans Creek known as the 'Divide' and the old mining area of 'Goanna Flat'. Secondary wash occurs on the western side of the 'Divide', and varies from surface material to strata up to 6m thick; it is usually 2 to 3m. The sapphires occur at the base of this wash, amongst cobbles and pebbles of weathered basalt and silcrete in a granular to clayey matrix. Similar wash, 3 to 10m deep is found in the Goanna Flat area. Good sapphires have been recovered from this area, with small stones subordinate. Corundum is common. The best area for shallow ground for fossickers is on the western side of the ridge west from 'Divide'.

Reward

Wash around the 'Reward' diggings in the eastern part of the area is relatively deep and generally unsuitable for fossickers, although there may be some shallower material between there and the main road to the northwest. The most popular area for fossickers is the 'Washpool' diggings near the western boundary, where the wash can be shallow.

Code of Conduct

- Use only safe working practices.
- Holes deeper than 2m or undermined overhangs **are not permitted**.
- Workings should be left in a safe, tidy condition so as not to endanger other persons or stock.
- Dismantle any structures upon vacating a campsite.

- Remove all rubbish** and bury human waste at least 20cm deep.
- Do not interfere with any vegetation, stock or wildlife. Shooting is prohibited.
- Minimise inconvenience to others by limiting noise and control pets at all times.
- Be careful with campfires, particularly in dry times. Clear a 2m space around them.

Fossickers must be aware that fossicking or camping are not permitted on the numerous residential Miners Homestead Perpetual Leases etc, Mining Claims or Mining Leases which are present in these areas without the permission of the holders. Details of these tenures can be obtained from the Mining Registrar if necessary.

For further information:

*The Mining Registrar
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and Mines
State Government Building
99 Hospital Road
Emerald Qld 4720*

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