

## Coffs Harbour Group NEWSLETTER No.154: February 2022



### 2022 COMMITTEE

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### APS Coffs Harbour Membership

We warmly welcome our new members: Rose Treilibs, Chris Bayley, Sue Butler, Stephany Frances, Nikola Gray, Susan Searle and Russel Costin.

### APS NSW Website

[www.austplants.com.au](http://www.austplants.com.au)

Keep up-to-date with news, program of outings and meetings via our pages:

[www.austplants.com.au/Coffs-Harbour](http://www.austplants.com.au/Coffs-Harbour)

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## Coramba Nature Reserve: Sunday 6 February 2022

### Rob Watt

Over the years, Coramba Nature Reserve has been one of our more popular areas to visit by the Coffs Harbour Branch and this occasion it was easy to see why. But to make sure I got my facts right and in control of the Outings Book – listing all our outings with signature back to 2005, I checked the last time we visited – 22 May 2016 and the opening words reporting our visit in the *Newsletter* were interesting to our visit: “At the start of the walk is a huge White cedar (*Melia azedarach*) with dark grey deeply fissured bark”. The White cedar is a little less impressive, with almost half of the tree collapsing only days before our visit. Hopefully it will survive.

Many other trees are impressive and a remarkable testament to this 9 ha site that is botanically rich and relatively close to Coffs Harbour city. Originally a camping reserve, the area was set aside to protect the native flora in 1900. The Ulitarra Conservation Society advocated for the area to be formally established as a Nature Reserve, which it was in 1982, preserving one of the few remaining stands of subtropical lowland rainforest along the Orara River. This also had the benefit of creating a regional habitat corridor, known as the Orara Valley Corridor, linking the Bagawa, Nana Creek and Lower Bucca State Forests.

I have obtained from John Ross a document that was written by Alex Floyd, Research Scientist, in which some of the history of the area is given, together with a species list authored by Harold Hayes and Alex Floyd. That list shows some of the vegetation when they first visited in March 1957, and no doubt updated on a return visit in April 1977. Since that list was given to John some time ago, and it has also been added to by him. **The whole list is being re-typed with inclusions for the next Newsletter.** Some botanical name changes since made have also been included.



**Participants on the Coramba Nature Reserve Field Trip (Photo by Jan Whittle)**

However, before looking at some of the trees, lets look at the floor of the Reserve. The ferns are a standout. Of particular interest is *Blechnum nudum*, commonly known as the fish bone fern, with long creeping rhizome, often forming a thick trunk to 40cm. Found in shaded areas and areas that can flood.

As often happens on our walks, **Fiona Duggan** went in search of fungi and has provided the following images of some she identified:



**(L) *Marasmius* sp. ; (R) *Auricularia* sp.**



(L) *Xylaria* sp. (?) *longpipes* (Dead Man's Fingers); (R) *Xylaria* sp. with (?) *Trichia* or *Hemitrichia* (orange)

Now looking upwards, the Reserve is also ideal for the Prickly tree fern (*Cyathea leichhardtiana*) that can grow to 8 m. Scattered throughout the Reserve is *Tradescantia fluminensis*, now known as wandering trad. Rowan McCabe spent time indicating where it had been the subject of a great deal of work to physically remove and subsequent growth of the similar native *Commelina cyanea*. As most people know the difference between the weed with white flowers, from the native with blue flowers. But a new twist has been the subsequent growth of the native *Aneilema biflorum*, which also has a blue flower on a stem. But *A. acuminatum*, which is also there, has a white flower. While *Pollia crispate*, a native whose flowers can be white or blue, but has quite distinctive lanceolate leaves vs. fleshy rounded leaves of *Tradescantia fluminensis*. A minefield unless very careful when weeding!

However, it has to be the larger rainforest trees that make this a special place and the Reserve is noted for the magnificent plank buttressed Yellow Carabeen, (*Sloanea woolsii*). In the same genus Maiden's blush (*S. australis*) is recognised from the many coppice shoots at its base. The tree's common name refers to the colour of the heartwood when cut.

Near to the river Rowan points out a Turnipwood (*Akania bidwillii*) a narrow, unbranched tree, that could be easily overlooked; Native pomegranate (*Capparis arborea*) named after the fruit but maybe a better common name is brush caper berry, again referencing the fruit – a green berry on a long stalk 2-6 cm; Muskwood (*Olearia argophylla*) a tree to 9m, pronounced veins on back of leaf silvery, flowers cream or pale yellow; Socketwood (*Daphnandra micrantha*) small to medium tree, flowers in June to October but species name from Greek 'mikros' small and 'anthos' a flower. So, may not be visible? But is creamy-green to pinkish green. Snow wood (*Pararchidendron pruinosum*) a small tree up to 8m, with dense, lacy pinnate foliage and ornate orange, twisted and flattened seedpods, red inside. Flowers are whitish that darken to orange in globular clusters. Water gum (*Syzygium francisii*) a medium to large tree to 20m, usually with buttresses at the base. Flowers spring and summer, white in branched clusters. Upper leaves are dark green and glossy with under side paler. Its berry fruit is purplish blue, 10-15 cm diameter and flattened. Black Apple (*Pouteria australis*) can reach 30m, with a distinctive fluted trunk up to 120 cm in diameter. The fruit is plum-like and succulent up to 5 cm in diameter. Fruit astringent but edible although can be maggot-ridden but when not suitable for jam. White Booyong (*Argyrodendron trifoliolatum*) can grow up to 45 m tall, and a distinctive feature is the buttresses of the trunk, which can reach 200cm in diameter. The leaf, as the name suggests is a compound leaf of three leaflets. Because of the density of the canopy, leaves can appear brownish or copper coloured. The dispersal of the seed is via one wing that allows it to flutter down up to 1.5 the height to distance travelled. White Bolly Gum (*Neolitsia dealbata*) grows to about 12 m with 20cm diameter. The white-back leaves particularly noticeable when young and hang limply. According to the Hayes/Floyd list, is very common. Certainly, tends to be a pioneer in some areas, particularly near water. Rough-leaf elm (*Aphananthe philippinensis*), with the additional common name of axe handle wood, it is a medium sized tree to 35m and stem diameter of 85cm, an attractive shade tree with dark leaves rough to the touch. Male and female flowers are separate and flowering period September to November. Use does not stop with axe handles but also include hammer handles, mallets and baseball bats. (Floyd). Oliver's sassafras (*Cinnamomum oliveri*) a large rainforest tree grows to 20m. Because of its fragrance when cut, it is also called camphorwood and it is closely related to the Camphor Laurel. This is not a weedy

tree principally because the fruit is highly prized by pigeons. The flowering period is October to November. The fruit is drupe, ovoid, up to 12 mm long. One seed. Ripe in March. Oliver was Daniel Oliver, Keeper of the Kew Herbarium who was extremely attentive to Australian flora. Broadleaf Tamarind (*Diploglottis australis*) "A tall, straight tree up to 30m. Can be a dominant tree with a bushy canopy of large, dark green leaves. It possibly Fruit: a two or three-celled, hairy, orange to yellow small fruit with an orange aril covering the seed. The flesh is very acid and relished by birds. Large trees produce huge amounts of fruit, littering the ground below. Fruit ripen in November on large spikes" (Australian Bush Food Magazine).



**Yellow Carabeen (*Sloanea wollsi*) (Photo by Jan Whittle)**

On our way to see the largest of the buttressed Yellow Carabeen, we saw a White Beech (*Gmelina leichhardtii*). While it gets a mention in both Alex Floyd's notes of native flora in the Coramba Reserve later to become the Coramba Nature Reserve (see below), and the accompanying plant list of Hayes and Floyd, it is not mentioned in Floyd's book (2008) at p173 as present in the Coramba Nature Reserve when dealing with the White Beech. However, there is at least one there. I have always been surprised by the loss of leaves in winter, entirely covering the ground below, but this aspect doesn't get much mention in the books. I also note with some surprise by the fact that it doesn't seem to fruit regularly but, rather, about every third years it has a massive crop. On those occasions the ability to follow some very basic rules set out in Floyd, and also in Dunphy, et al., *Australian Rainforest Seeds: a guide to collecting, processing and propagation*, CSIRO, 2020, p123, is near foolproof for a successful harvest of small seedlings. And finally, there I also saw the majestic Red Cedar (*Toona ciliata*).

It was an interesting time to be in the Coramba Nature Reserve – after a very wet summer and everything in abundance. And it was true, there were no leaches on me when I emerged. Apparently, it is well known for the fact. My thanks to Rowan for leading a very enjoyable walk. Thanks too to my extremely enthusiastic companions for their help in identifying many of the trees.

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## Phil O'Shea: *Stockwellia quadrifida*

Photos by Phil

This rare tree from the high altitude North Queensland rainforest on the Atherton Tableland is the only member of its genus and has only a very few close relatives. It is a genetically ancient species of Myrtaceae and is a sister genus of the Eucalypts. Its nearest relatives are apparently two species of

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I had successfully grown large cuttings of *Ficus watkinsiana* and African Mahogany (*Khaya nyasica*) using

The *Stockwellia* proved to be a bit more difficult with ants or crickets moving in, the cut healing up and roots not forming. Three months ago I tried using plastic rooting boxes filled with wet sphagnum moss and this has finally resulted in successful root growth. Maybe it was the prolonged wet and mild summer. I have now potted up the cutting and await the emergence of new leaf growth.



(L) Root nodes emerging from the cut; (M) Rooting box in place; (R) Potted cutting

### References.

"The Discovery of *Stockwellia*" R. Flick & P. Wilson. Australian Systematic Botany No. 113, Carr, Denis J.; Carr, Stella G. M.; Hyland, Bernie P. M.; Wilson, Peter G.; Ladiges, Pauline Y. *Stockwellia quadrifida* (Myrtaceae), a new Australian genus and species in the eucalypt group, *Botanical Journal of the Linnean Society*. **139** (4): 415–421 Dec 2002.

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## Citizen Science Projects

### Flora Connections

Ruby Stephens, Hawkesbury Institute for the Environment  
[<r.stephens3@westernsydney.edu.au>](mailto:r.stephens3@westernsydney.edu.au)

If you are interested in participating in this project, please contact Ruby Stephens. Flora Connections will develop resources and an online data portal to help citizen scientists collect data about the population numbers and distribution of potentially threatened native plant species. These data can help scientific committees assess e.g. how the 2019-20 bushfires have affected rare plant species, and whether particular native species or ecosystems need more protection.

### Big Bushfire Bioblitz

Casey Gibson seeks assistance from members for their Big Bushfire Bioblitz, particularly for **Washpool and Gibraltar Range National Parks, 4-6 March 2022**. For information:

<https://newsroom.unsw.edu.au/news/science-tech/citizen-scientists-needed-help-record-impact-fires-biodiversity>

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**Contributions to Newsletters can be sent to**  
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