

APS EAST HILLS GROUP NEWSLETTER



December 2020

NEXT EHG MEETING IS A DAYTIME EVENT:

12 noon Wednesday 2 December 2020

Sylvan Grove Native Garden

7 Sylvan Grove, Picnic Point

You must register beforehand by contacting Graham Fry (phone 9580 6621).

Covid-19 restrictions will be in place.

Please bring your own festive food and drink for lunch.

Walk at 12 noon

Lunch (BYO) at 1 pm

WELCOME to the December 2020 edition of the APS East Hills Group Newsletter.

Reading this newsletter you can travel without leaving home! First, you can stay local and visit Georges River National Park for an exploration of pea flowers with Karlo Taliana. Then you can join Graham Fry in visiting national parks and nature reserves around Bourke in western NSW.

I hope you will be coming to the December meeting, which is only a week away. It will be good to catch up, even at a 1.5m distance!

Wishing you good health and a happy Christmas and New Year,

Jan Douglas

Interim Editor

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<http://austplants.com.au/East-Hills>



A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Like so many aspects of our lives, APS activities have been significantly affected by the coronavirus outbreak, with both regional and local groups unable to hold meetings. While some groups have managed to successfully hold meetings on-line, this is not the same as a face to face meeting. Our normal meeting venue, like other churches, was closed for group gatherings. However, we have been advised that provided no more restrictions are imposed, we will be able to resume our meetings there next year.

A major impact of the restrictions was the need to postpone the ANPSA biennial conference which was planned to be held in September 2021. It will now be held in September 2022.

After the success of our meeting at Joseph Banks Native Plants Reserve in October, we will have our final meeting for the year at Sylvan Grove Native Garden on 2 December. As we will be outdoors it is probably not practical to hold our AGM, so we will hold that over to February next year. Therefore, please come and enjoy a social gathering at our wonderful little known gem, Sylvan Grove. As it is nominally our Christmas gathering, bring some festive food so we can enjoy the Christmas spirit. Karlo hopes to have some plants for sale as well.

Looking forward to catching up again.

Graham
Graham Fry
President, APS East Hills Group

APS EAST HILLS GROUP MEETING – NOVEMBER 2020

No meeting of APS East Hills Group was held in November 2020, due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

PEA FLOWERS OF GEORGES RIVER NATIONAL PARK

Karlo Taliana

You may recall that in our September newsletter, Karlo provided an article about a walk he led in Georges River National Park for Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society. This time, his article concentrates on pea flowers in GRNP.

Most of my time in Georges River National is spent walking around the Picnic Point area where some of the greatest floral diversity exists. Each year, our local pea flowers decorate the bush with a variety of colours while also providing a valuable food source for insects. As the seasons roll by, each species steps forward on cue, followed by others when their turn arrives, often avoiding competition for pollinators. From my observations, pea flower regeneration in our local bushland appears to be highly successful, judging by the large number of specimens with many seeds.



Bossiaea heterophylla

Australian peas belong to the *Fabaceae* family (sub-family *Faboideae*). Most of our local pea species are small shrubs, although some can be climbers, scramblers, groundcovers or tall shrubs.

Our current list of species in Georges River NP includes:

Bossiaea ensata, *B. heterophylla*, *B. prostrata*, **Daviesia acicularis**, *D. alata*, *D. corymbosa*, *D. ulicifolia*, **Dillwynia retorta**, *D. rudis*, *D. sericea*, **Glycine clandestina**, *G. tabacina*, **Gompholobium glabratum**, *G. grandiflorum*, *Hardenbergia violacea*, *Hovea heterophylla*, *Indigofera australis*, *Jacksonia scoparia*, *Kennedia rubicunda*, **Mirbelia rubiifolia**, *M. speciosa*, *Phyllota phyllicoides*, *Pultenaea daphnoides*, *P. flexilis*, *P. hispidula*, *P. retusa*, *P. stipularis*, *P. villosa*, *P. tuberculata*, *Viminaria juncea*.

Bossiaea heterophylla (Variable Bossiaea) is one of our first peas to flower each year, starting in Autumn. It grows as an upright open shrub to one metre with flattened stems bearing large yellow and brown flowers.



Bossiaea heterophylla - Picnic Point, GRNP



Daviesia acicularis

Daviesia acicularis is probably our rarest pea flower. Aside from just two plants in local government reserves north of the Georges River, there were only a few plants known to exist at Picnic Point last year. Unfortunately, two perished in last year's drought while another four were destroyed with the widening of fire trails. Only two known plants remain in the laterite areas on Picnic Point ridge. The phyllodes (leaves) of this species are very sharply-pointed while the margins are also toothed making it one of the most prickly native plants in our local area. The fruits of all Daviesia are triangular.



Daviesia alata is another rarely seen pea flower, although according to local flora experts, it is now presumed extinct north of the River (having not been seen in Georges River NP for over 15 years since last sighted at Picnic Point). It grows as a low groundcover shrub with stems having a triangular cross-section and its leaves reduced to scales. There are very few specimens remaining south of the River at Menai on the laterite areas and these are also under threat due to poor land management such as clearing and the dumping of mulch.



Daviesia alata - Menai GRNP



Dillwynia retorta (Eggs and Bacon) is by far our most common local pea flower species with populations widespread across all sections of the Georges River NP. From early Spring, the profusion of yellow and red pea flowers can be seen, although some plants will have only plain yellow flowers, but these are seldom seen. Most grow as shrubs up to two metres high, but low-growing forms may also occur



Dillwynia retorta
– Picnic Point GRNP (left)
Dillwynia retorta, yellow-flowering form, Illawong GRNP (right)

Gompholobium grandiflorum (Large Wedge-pea) is a species common in the Sydney region and the Blue Mountains. It grows as an erect shrub to one metre



bearing large yellow flowers. As in other pea flowers, the stamens are enclosed within the keel of the flower, but that doesn't stop the local native bees from knowing where to look.. (see photos at left of ***Gompholobium grandiflorum***).



Late in the flowering season, unpollinated pea flowers release their stamens to ensure pollination occurs (see photo at right of ***Bossiaea heterophylla*** with stamens released from keel).



Hardenbergia violacea (along with another locally-occurring pea, *Kennedia rubicunda*) is quite clever in that it has the ability to both climb or creep, depending on where the plant germinates. If there is nothing around to climb, then it has no choice but to creep until it finds an erect shrub. Even when it creeps over large areas, at flowering time it will hold the flowering stems vertically to increase its chances of attracting pollinators.



Hardenbergia violacea –
Sandy Point GRNP

My favourite local pea flower would have to be *Mirbelia speciosa*. To my knowledge, in Georges River NP this species is limited to a particular section of Picnic Point, an observation that has been confirmed by local flora experts who have studied the GRNP for over 30 years. Specimens have been also found in the Sutherland Shire, but these occur within the Royal NP. This species grows as a small shrub to a metre tall and has been seen in three colour forms – pink, purple and, rarely, white (pictured right)



Mirbelia speciosa showing three colour forms (purple, pink and white) as seen at Picnic Point

With just a few local peas described in this article, you can at least appreciate some of the treasures that can be found in our local bushland. In an area that is also diversely-rich in *Proteaceae* and *Myrtaceae*, the many members of the sub-family *Faboideae* make up a significant part of the eco-system. While many of us can enjoy the colours on display as they brighten up the landscape, more importantly, they play an significant role in sustaining many of the local insect species - with the agreement that they will return the favour through pollination.



L-R above: *Viminaria juncea* (Native Broom), *Hovea heterophylla*, *Indigofera australis* (Native Indigo), *Phyllota phyllicoides*

All photos in this article: Karlo Taliana

WILDFLOWERS OF NORTH-WEST NSW

Graham Fry

In September this year, Tony and Kate Porritt, Liz and I and seven others spent 20 days exploring the national parks and nature reserves in the Bourke area. We were prompted to go at that time as we thought that the good rains in late summer and autumn would likely produce a good wildflower display. We were not disappointed.

We visited Culgoa, Toorale, Gundabooka and Paroo Darling National Parks as well as Nocholeche and Ledknapper Nature Reserves. Each of the parks was quite different in its geology and history and it was reflected in the large variety of flowers that were on show. As well as the wonderful wildflower display, the birds were also enjoying the great conditions in the area after many years of drought.

Budgerigars (photos at right) were very common, seemingly nesting in any available hollow. Other conspicuous birds were the Wood Swallows which had all just arrived from the north and were busy setting up nest sites, and Rufous Songlarks which seemed to be calling everywhere we went.



On the way to Culgoa NP we visited the Brewarrina fish traps (photos below) and were taken on a very interesting tour of the museum and the traps by a local Aboriginal guide. It was very worthwhile and I would highly recommend visiting the traps and going on the tour if you are in the area.



At Toorale NP on the site of a former cotton farm, the land is slowly regenerating and the change in vegetation was very much appreciated by emus with literally hundreds feeding on the flats.



Right: Emus on a former cotton field.



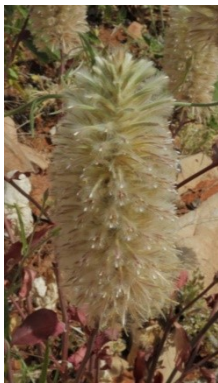
Far left: *Polycalymma stuartii* (Poached Eggs)
Centre left: *Swainsona* sp. (Darling Pea)
Left: *Ptilotus leucocoma* (Small Purple Foxtail)

It was great to see the Darling (photo at right) and the Paroo Rivers with plenty of water - even some rapids in the Darling. In contrast, the Culgoa River in Culgoa NP was virtually dry (the upper reaches of it flow through the massive Cubbie Station cotton farm and virtually all the water is diverted into their dams).



Below: Flowers in Darling Paroo NP (left to right):

- 1: *Ptilotus nobilis* (Regal Foxtail)
- 2: *Eremophila gilesii* (Green Turkey Bush)
- 3: *Polycalymma stuartii* (Poached Eggs)
- 4: *Brunonia australis* (Blue Pincushion)



Ledknapper Nature Reserve was originally not on our program, but Tony and Kate travelled through it after we left Culgoa NP and highly recommended it. So at the end of the trip we stayed an extra day to explore this reserve. Again it was quite different, with extensive sand dunes and very different plants. A highlight was the sight of groves of large grevilleas - *G. juncifolia*, which I did not realise occurred in NSW; I had only seen them in Queensland and the Northern Territory. Other plants of note were the beautiful delicate white Carpet-of-Snow (*Macgregoria racemigera*) and sundews (*Drosera* sp.) which again were quite unexpected on a red sandy roadside. Fortunately we had our copy of the Plants of Western NSW which is still a very valuable reference book for the outback even if many of the names have changed over the 40 years since it was published.



Flowers in Ledkapper NR :

- Above left: *Grevillea juncifolia* (Honeysuckle Grevillea)
 Above centre: *Macgregoria racemigera* (Carpet-of-snow)
 Above right: *Micromyrtus hexamera*
 Right: *Drosera* sp.

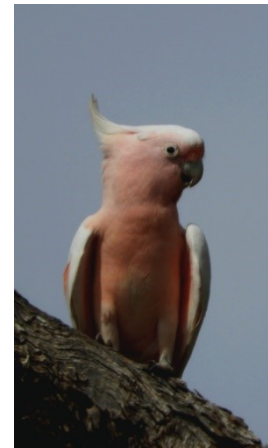


We were very lucky with the weather with relatively mild conditions, not too hot and no rain. However, two days after we left, north-west NSW received 40mm of rain, triggering the automatic closure of all dirt roads in the area.

It was very obvious that inland NSW was enjoying a tourist boom thanks to the COVID restrictions on distant travel; most of the accommodation was booked out and there were lines of people waiting to get served at shops. Sydney might be suffering from lack of tourists but not our country regions.

The organiser of the trip, Deb Andrew, has written a very descriptive article for the Brewarrina News about our trip, see <https://view.joomag.com/brewarrina-news-november-2020/0994038001604367832?short&>

We were so impressed that we might repeat the trip, although the remarkable conditions are unlikely to be repeated in the near future. I have included some images from the trip, I hope you enjoy them.



Above, L to R: Pool on Mulreeyana Creek in Gundabooka NP; *Prostanthera striatiflora* (Jockey's Cap), Nocolleche NR; Pink Cockatoo or Leadbeaters Cockatoo, Nocolleche NR

COMING EVENTS

Because of the Covid-19 outbreak, face-to-face meetings are restricted. Some meetings are being held on-line, using Zoom. For details of coming events, please see the APS NSW newsletter (which you should be receiving by email at the end of each month).

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