

# CALGAROO

May 2022



*Eucalyptus parramattensis* - Calgaroo

**Newsletter of the Parramatta and Hills District Group  
Australian Plants Society NSW Ltd**

This month's *Calgaroo* is being sent to you in two separate parts or files. *Calgaroo* Part 2 contains the fascinating story told by Ricki and Jim Nash of the tour to the central-west of NSW in early April arranged by APS NSW, to talk to farmers actively involved in the restoration of the natural vegetation, partially or completely, on their properties.

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## **What's on in 2022**

**Saturday 21 May: NSW Region Gathering hosted by our group at Gumnut Hall, Gumnut Place Cherrybrook.**

The 2 pm meeting will be preceded by a garden visit from 9.30 am to Boongala Gardens in Kenthurst, followed by a BYO Lunch at Gumnut Hall. The speaker will be Peter Olde who will be talking about "Grevilleas suitable for pots and patios". Please keep this date free to be able to help with the many tasks required to make this meeting a success. See Page 2.

**Saturday 25 June 2 pm Members' meeting at Gumnut Hall, Gumnut Place Cherrybrook.**

**Saturday 23 July 2 pm: Bushwalk Jones Road Kenthurst.**

**Saturday 27 August 2 pm: Bushwalk Cobar Ridge, Murrumbidgee National Park.**

**Saturday 24 September 2 pm: Celebration of our Group's 50th anniversary.**

**Saturday 22 October 2 pm: Bushwalk.**

**Saturday 26 November 2 pm: Members' meeting and Christmas Party.**

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## **NSW Region Gathering 21 May hosted by our Group**

**Jennifer Farrer**

### **We need your help!**

This is an all-day event. Members have been invited to visit Boongala Gardens in Kenthurst in the morning. The gardens will be open from 9.30 am for inspection as well as a tour of the rainforest. We will be providing a simple morning tea at the gardens. Joan Hayes has volunteered to make sure there is enough water in the urns and that there is enough milk, sugar, tea and coffee.

Meanwhile, at Gumnut Hall we need able-bodied members to set the hall up for the afternoon meeting. The hall is booked from 10.30 am so we can get this job done in time before members start arriving for lunch from 12 noon.

Last time we did not permit parking in Gumnut Place. We need some volunteers to be parking marshalls to make sure everyone parks in Gumnut Road.

Members will provide their own lunch but we will provide tea and coffee. We need someone to watch over the drinks table at Gumnut Hall to ensure the urns have enough water, and there is still enough tea, milk, sugar etc. available.

We are providing afternoon tea. The last time we hosted one of these, there were around 75 members to feed. We need volunteers to provide very nice fresh food for afternoon tea, e.g. sandwiches, biscuits and cakes, and savoury things which can be cut up into serving pieces. Because of Covid restrictions, shared food like dips are not allowed.

Ricki Nash has agreed to keep a record of what members are going to provide, so please contact her if you can bring something, just to ensure we have a range of different foods: [nashj\\_e@bigpond.com](mailto:nashj_e@bigpond.com) 0419 626 848.

If you wish to be reimbursed for the ingredients, you must keep receipts and give them to Pip in exchange for the money. APS NSW will reimburse us for costs, but needs receipts.

When all the visitors have gone home, we will need more volunteers to help clean up.

Please email Pip at [pgibian@tpg.com.au](mailto:pgibian@tpg.com.au) or phone 9651 1962 to let her know what you can do. Those members who have already volunteered to help do not need to contact Pip or Ricki again.

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## PIAnts or plAHnts?

*Angie Michaelis was once the Pronunciation Officer for the ABC. Here's what Ian Cox asked her, and her answer:*

**Ian:** How should you pronounce plants? Is it “plants” like in ants, or “plarnts”? You hear both versions on Gardening Australia. Does it depend on which school you went to?

**Angie:** Let's agree to show the short sound (as in *ant*) with an A, and spell the long one (as in *aunt*) AH. So, plAnt or plAHnt?

Sometimes there is more than one valid way of pronouncing a word. In my years of adjudicating and advising ABC broadcasters, I found some of them hated ambiguity. But if Victorians say cAStle, and New South Welshpersons say cAHstle, we cannot really say that one is right, one is wrong.

In Australia, the word *plant*, like *dance*, *glance*, *enhance*, *advantage* and so on, is more commonly pronounced with a short A rather than a long AH. You may have noticed that in all of these words the vowel is followed by 'n'. But it is not that simple – in some similar words, you never use the long AH sound. Think *pants*, *man*, *ran*, *rant*, *pansy* ...

Historically, it seems that the short sound is the older one, but the lengthening of the vowel in front of certain consonants occurred in southern England about Shakespeare's time. In many other English regions, it didn't undergo a shift.

In Britain, the way you sound the vowel is to some extent associated with class (or “where you went to school”). In Australia, you won't necessarily sound like a toff if you use the less common AH. At least I hope not – I use it, probably because my mother said plAHnts (come to think of it, she did go to one of the “right schools” in southern England ...).

But in Australia “where you went to school” might mean “what part of the country are you from”? And here we find some of the rare regional differences in Australian pronunciation. If you are from South Australia, you are more likely to say plAHnt. A Tasmanian will probably say plAnt. Ian, you can test whether I am right when you next watch Gardening Australia (Sophie Thomson is SA born and bred, Tino Carnevale is Tasmanian).

But then, that is a very small sAmple/sAHmple!

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Angie has been spending much of her time lately campaigning for action to combat climate change. Here's her very impressive banner:

**Stand for climate action now**

**TOGETHER  
WE CAN**

## Porters Road Fire Trail walk 23 April

Jennifer Farrer

Our April walk was planned to be at Vineyard Creek, Telopea, but the recent heavy rains had made the track conditions very muddy, so it was decided that a walk along a ridge might be a drier option.

There are not too many ridge walks in The Hills, as the ridges were originally cleared for farms and orchards in the 19th century, and then gradually subdivided for suburbs in the 20th century.

However, there remains an excellent uncleared sandstone ridge at the end of Porters Road Kenthurst. This area was also slated for subdivision but community pressure ensured that it remains to be enjoyed by many of us today. Twelve of us set forth on an afternoon, which remained delightfully sunny even though the forecast had been for showers.

There have been several fires in this area including 1975, 1992 and 2002. After the 1992 fire, members of the Parramatta Hills Group pegged out several sections which were periodically monitored for regrowth. These records are still held by our group. Unfortunately, the pegs were burnt in the 2002 fire so it is not possible to identify the exact sites. Apart from one section of the walk where the dominant vegetation is casuarina woodland with little or no understorey, the flora diversity seems to have survived the fires.

Tony Maxwell had prepared lists of species likely to be found in the area, and the keen eyes of members enabled us to identify 106 species in two and a half hours. Credit needs to be given to Chris Cheetham, whose wonderful knowledge and keen eyes identified some of the smaller species amongst grasses on the road margin which everyone else had walked past. This included a largish patch of *Pimelea curviflora*, and an early flowering *Tetratheca ericifolia*, which for a short while was thought to be the much rarer *Tetratheca glandulosa*.

Our destination was this lovely spot dominated by *Corymbia eximia* trees, but there were too many other interesting plants to look at on the way. So, we never made it.



We did see one rare species - there were two plants of *Persoonia hirsuta*.  
The list of species will be on our website with this report of the walk.

Photos taken on the walk by Lesley Waite: *Melichrus procumbens*, *Bossiaea heterophylla*,  
*Pultenaea ferrugenea* and *Persoonia hirsuta*.



## A new \$2 coin features the introduced honeybee. Is this really the species we should celebrate?

**Eliza Middleton**, Laboratory Manager, School of Life and Environmental Sciences, University of Sydney, **Caitlyn Forster**, PhD Candidate, School of Life and Environmental Sciences, University of Sydney, **Don Driscoll**, Professor in Terrestrial Ecology, Deakin University  
From [The Conversation](#)

The Royal Australian Mint has [released](#) a \$2 collectors' coin to celebrate 200 years since the introduction of the European honeybee.

At the time of writing, one of the 60,000 uncirculated coins was selling for [as high as A\\$36](#) – but that's not the only sting in the tail of this commemorative release.

The coin celebrates an [invasive alien species](#), and continues a long tradition in Australia of romanticising introduced fauna.

Meanwhile, we've missed an important opportunity to showcase Australia's native pollinators, some of which are threatened with extinction.

### Honeybees: two sides of the coin

The coin was released to mark the bicentenary of Australia's honey bee industry. Honeybees were [introduced](#) to Australia by early European settlers and there are now about [530,000](#) managed honeybee colonies.

The commercial honeybee industry [provides](#) pollination services to a range of crops, as well as honey and beeswax products.

But the industry comes with costs as well as benefits. The introduced honeybee can escape managed hives to establish [feral populations](#), which affect native species.

In New South Wales, feral honeybees are listed as a "[key threatening process](#)".

Honeybees can take over large tree hollows to build new colonies, potentially displacing native species. Tree hollows can [take many decades](#) to form and bee colonies occupy hollows for a long time – so this is a long-term problem for native bees.

Many other native species also rely on tree hollows for shelter and breeding, and are likely to be affected by competition from honeybees. They include [at least 20%](#) of [birds](#) including threatened species such as the superb parrot and glossy black cockatoo, as well as a range of native mammals and marsupials.

Honeybees, both feral and managed, also compete with native species for nectar and pollen in flowers. [Research](#) has shown honeybees often remove 80% or more of floral resources produced.

### Unrealised pollinator potential

As [others have noted](#), farmers around the world have become "dangerously reliant" on managed honeybee hives to pollinate their crops. Overseas, honey bee colonies are [declining](#) due to threats such as parasites, loss of habitat, climate change and pesticides.



While Australia has been sheltered from some of these threats, relying on a single managed pollinator is still [considered risky](#). For example, Australia is the [only](#) inhabited continent free of the varroa mite, a [parasite](#) implicated in the collapse of overseas bee colonies. Should the mite become established in Australia, it could lead to agriculture industry losses of [\\$70 million a year](#). Fortunately, the varroa mite has [little impact](#) on native species.

Australia is home to a range of native [pollinators](#), including bees, butterflies, and bats, which all contribute to the [\\$14 billion](#) pollination industry. Some – such as Australia’s 11 species of stingless bees – can produce honey – though not to the extent honeybees can. They can also pollinate [blueberries, macadamias and mangoes](#). In fact, some native bee species can [nest](#) on the ground in stubble and other parts of crops. In contrast, honeybee hives are often trucked from crop to crop. And best of all, pollination by non-commercial native species is free.

[A recent study](#) found the common native resin bee is a suitable lucerne pollinator, and that small, ground-nesting nomiid bees were more efficient at pollination than honeybees. Pollination by stingless bees also may result in [heavier blueberries](#). While these studies are promising, more research is needed to assess the potential of native pollinators.



Native bees, such as this *Amegilla bombiformis*, also have pollinator potential. Shutterstock

### **Feral horses: a true national icon?**

This is not the first time an Australian coin has commemorated an invasive species. This year, the Perth Mint released a collectable [\\$100 coin](#) to celebrate Australian brumbies – or feral horses – which it described as “national icons seen by many as symbolic of our national character”.

Brumbies have long been an object of affection in Australian culture, including romanticised depictions in movies and poems such as Banjo Patterson’s *The Man From Snowy River*.

In recent years this has translated into a campaign to protect feral horse populations, which can wreak havoc in fragile ecosystems such as NSW’s Kosciuszko National Park. The damage includes trampling endangered ecological communities, causing soils to erode or compact and sending silt into streams. Feral horses drive away native species such as kangaroos and can wipe out populations of threatened native species. Like feral honeybees, feral horses are listed as a key threatening process in NSW. They’re also considered a potentially threatening process in Victoria.



Feral horses can trample fragile ecosystems, including stream banks (pictured). NSW Office of Environment and Heritage

### Which species should we celebrate?

When species are featured on a coin, it elevates their profile, engenders public affection and, according to the Royal Australian Mint, helps “tell the stories of Australia”. Australia’s native species are tenacious – often the underdog fighting for a fair go in a harsh environment.

Surely that’s a story also worth telling!

\* \* \* \* \*

Once in his life, a man ought to concentrate his mind upon the remembered earth, I believe. He ought to give himself up to a particular landscape in his experience, to look at it from as many angles as he can, to wonder about it, to dwell upon it. He ought to imagine that he touches it with his hands at every season and listens to the sounds that are made upon it. He ought to imagine the creatures there and all the faintest motions of the wind. He ought to recollect the glare of noon and all the colours of the dawn and dusk.

**N. Scott Momaday**

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## The first eucalypt

Kevin Mills

The first known 'eucalypt' collected in Australia was *Eucalyptus gummifera* (now *Corymbia gummifera*), gathered by Banks and Solander at Botany Bay in 1770.

During Cook's final voyage in 1777, Bank's plant collector David Nelson sampled a tree on Bruny Island off Tasmania, which became the first in the genus to be given a name.

The specimen ended up in the British Museum, where, in 1788, it was named by French botanist Charles Louis L'Héritier de Brutelle (1746-1800). Thus, the authority L'Her. is used after the genus name *Eucalyptus*.

The name comes from the Greek, *eu* meaning well and *calyptos* meaning covered, thus, 'well covered', referring to the operculum or calyptra that covers and protects the early flower parts.

That first-named species was given the name *Eucalyptus obliqua*, the specific name referring to the oblique base of the leaf.

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## Olive Pink

Elizabeth Heffernan

Botanical artist, anthropologist, and Aboriginal rights activist Olive Muriel Pink lived a long and fascinating life that took her from her birthplace in Hobart all the way to Alice Springs. Today she is remembered as a controversial, even eccentric, figure in outback Australia during the twentieth century.

Born in 1884 in Hobart, Tasmania, Olive showed a keen interest in both arts and the environment from a young age. A friend of her father, A. T. Bell, gifted Olive *A Handbook of the Plants of Tasmania* in 1896, when she was twelve years old. Olive kept it with her the rest of her life. She was similarly enchanted by her grandmother's garden in Hobart, commenting on the abelia from the Himalayas, peonies from China, forget-me-not from the Alps, and tulips—her “favourite” flower—from Turkey: “One's garden would seem like travelling over the world!”

Olive studied then taught art at Hobart Technical School before moving to Perth, then Sydney, with her mother. She worked for the Red Cross during the war while studying at [Julian Ashton's](#) Sydney Art School, and in 1915 was employed as a tracer by NSW Government Railways and Tramways. Olive painted excursion posters and other graphics for the department until her retrenchment during the Great Depression.

Olive had taken a trip to Ooldea in South Australia in 1926-27 to visit her friend [Daisy Bates](#)—at the time, a prominent anthropologist and welfare worker among the First Nations people there. On the train between Ooldea and Alice Springs, Olive “sketched flowers wherever railway workers reported them”. These 64 sketches are now held by the University of Tasmania. It was on this journey that Olive first became interested in the rights and welfare of Aboriginal people. This was an interest, and later a passion, that would dictate the rest of her life.

Olive took courses in anthropology at the University of Sydney and received government grants in the 1930s to study the eastern Arrente of Alice Springs and Warlpiri of the Tanami region in the Northern Territory. Her decision not to publish her Warlpiri research out of respect for the secret rituals it relied upon effectively ended her anthropological career. Some commentators have, however, critiqued the fact that she chose to publish two papers on the Arrente, despite similar secret knowledge disclosed.



Olive returned to Alice Springs in 1942, seeking to establish a “secular sanctuary” for the Warlpiri. From 1946 she lived with some Warlpiri people for a time, before returning to Alice Springs to work as a cleaner at the courthouse, where she closely monitored how Aboriginal defendants were treated. This did not endear her to the local population. Unsuccessful in her petition for land for a museum, Olive turned part of her hut into a

gallery, where luminaries such as [Sidney Nolan](#) visited, until trouble stirred with the locals and it was burned down.

In 1956, Olive was finally granted land to establish the Australian Arid Regions Native Flora Reserve with the help of her gardener Johnny Jambijimba Yannarilyi, where she lived for the last twenty years of her life. Upon her death in 1975 it was renamed the Olive Pink Botanic Garden, and opened to the public in 1985. Today it contains over six hundred Central Australian plant species, forty of which are rare or threatened.

“It was worth fighting for—to live at this site,” Olive wrote in 1959. “One looks at Mt Gillen—and the Todd ‘River’ Gums . . . I thought it so ‘heavenly’ a view.” She was buried at Alice Springs with her gravestone facing west, overlooking that very view.

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## Our bushland playground at Kenthurst

Malcolm Johnston

First published in the *Kenthurst Community News*

As children growing up in the Hawkesbury Sandstone region during the 1950s and 1960s, we gained a special connection with the bush and the wildlife which lived within.

On weekends and during school holidays we looked forward to exploring new places in the gullies, or revisiting favourite sites discovered in the past. There were no boundaries, as there were no fences. Our playground was as large as we could walk in one day.

Our day started at sunrise, as Mum was keen to have us out of bed and at the breakfast table. She had housework to do, and eggs to pack. After a bowl of Weet-Bix, several slices of buttered toast covered with jam, and a glass of milk, we were on our way, dressed in homemade shorts, a tee-shirt, and definitely no shoes.



*Lomandra*

After leaving home with my brother Allan and our black Kelpie dog, we usually met up with Johnny Baildon or Tony Thatcher, before starting off down the track towards the creek. This track was an overgrown fire trail that started near Baildon’s house, “Maronoa”, and ran beside Hilton Nolland’s cow paddock.

On the way to the creek, we would often leave the main track to see our special places, or native plants, which we had found over the years. These special places may have been a cave, an interesting outcrop of rocks, or a high place on the cliff tops to sit and view the gully below. Clumps of Lomandra grass (Durawai\*) were common in the bush, the leaves of which are good for weaving, and the seed can be ground to make flour. We sometimes pulled a broad leaf from the centre of the clump to chew the soft

base, which moistened our mouths.

Our bush trails were lined with a vast variety of native plants. On the drier ridges, we walked through Flannel Flowers, Pink Boronia, Red Spider Flowers (*Grevillea speciosa*) and Mountain Devil (*Lambertia formosa*) which had flowers full of nectar. We often picked a Mountain Devil flower, bit off the base and sucked the nectar, spitting out the ants before swallowing. We also chewed the marble-sized fruits which grew on the *Persoonia* trees



*Lambertia formosa*



Native Cherry fruit, with green seed attached - *Exocarpos cupressiformis*

*Persoonia pinifolius*

Rock Lily - *Dendrobium speciosum*



(Geebung). Native Cherry (Kwigan\*) is a parasitic tree that had tasty small orange/red fruit we also liked to eat.

Native cymbidium orchids grew from hollows in old mature trees, showing their sprays of green flowers during spring. Rock Lilies and Onion Orchids grew on rocky shelves, while Thumbnail Orchids clung to rock faces covered with blue-grey lichen.

The creek was a special place, with its larger pools, where freshwater crayfish lay in the sandy shallows and the deep potholes set in the solid stone creek bed, which made a safe haven for tadpoles and other small creatures. The edge of the creek was lined with a variety of ferns. There was Maiden Hair Fern, Cyathea tree ferns and King Ferns (*Todea barbara*), growing from between the mossy rocks. In the moist, sunny areas along the creek bank grew carnivorous plants. On hot days we often lay or sat in the shallow water to cool off.

The large old dead gum trees were nature's boarding houses. Ringtail Possums sheltered in the hollow trunks, while Eastern Rosellas nested in the smaller hollow branches. The tiny Stingless Native Bees established their hives in the same trees.

There were many caves in the gullies which we liked to visit. One such cave was situated close to the creek, and in times of heavy rain the floor became quite damp. Rock Warbler nests made from spider web, hair, and grass hung from the ceiling of the cave. These little birds only occur in the Hawkesbury Sandstone region. At the rear of this very low cave was a fox den. In this dark confined space, a fox reared her young. During fox hunting season we heard the call of the hounds as they chased through the gullies.

We knew of termite nests that clung to the upper trunk and branches of huge old gum trees. Kingfishers and Kookaburras (Kogunda\*) sometimes tunneled into these muddy masses to build their own nest. Goannas (Wirriga\*) dug holes into the termite mounds to lay their eggs. After the Goanna had laid her eggs, the termites sealed the hole with mud, leaving the eggs to incubate.



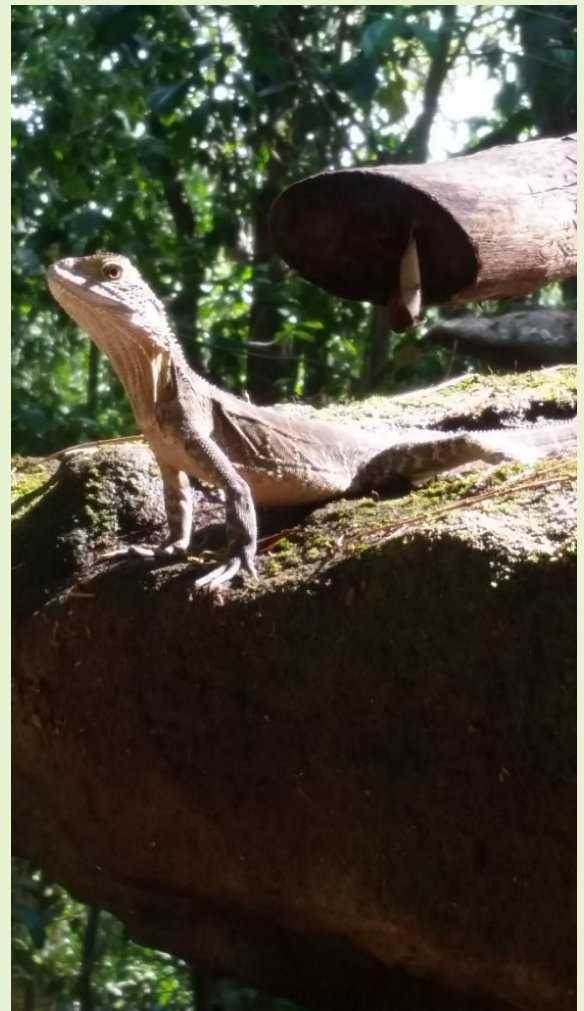
Black Cockatoos and their young often came to feed on the Old Man Banksias which grew on the ridges. There was lots of noise as they fed on the Banksia cones which were left strewn over the ground under the tree. They also chewed on the Sheoak nuts (Dalwal\* tree). If you have a toothache, place a nut between your teeth and bite down on it to ease the pain. We also chewed these nuts to moisten our mouths when dry.

Blue Tongue Lizards appeared from their rocky hides to lie in the warm sun. Large Goannas (Wirriga\*) were sometimes seen climbing trees to raid bird eggs, which were concealed in the hollows of tree trunks and branches. The Goannas were usually dive-bombed by Kookaburras and harassed by "Twitty Twats", Australian Miner birds, to drive them away.

Water Dragons (Bidjiwong\*) jumped from a log or rocky outcrop and made a splash in the creek as we approached.

Snakes were a common sight. Huge Carpet snakes (Diamond Pythons) were often seen in the trees. They lived in tree hollows and rabbit burrows, where they sometimes found a meal that was swallowed whole, leaving them with a large bulge in their stomach till it was digested. We liked to follow the snake trails which were left in the soft sand along the bush tracks, but were always aware of the Red-bellied Black Snakes (Cherribit\*) and the aggressive Brown Snakes which could be encountered. Our family dog usually sensed when a snake was present, and alerted us by standing motionless with his eyes fixed on the reptile's hiding place.

During summer, the bush came alive with the din of Cicadas (Bulla\*). We liked to spot the different species as they clung to the trunks and branches of the trees. There were Black Princes, Yellow Mondays, Green Grocers, and, if you were extremely lucky, you would spot a Flowery Baker.



Even the ants became a part of our bush experience. We learnt early that if you stood near a Bull Ant (Juljul\*) mound, or "Jumping Joes" as we called them, you were certain to suffer the pain of their bite. We often watched the road ants, known as meat ants to some, busily going about their business. They built very wide earth mounds covered with thousands of small pebbles. Rolling one of these pebbles in our mouths seemed to quench our thirst. There was also the small green ant with its painful bite and the larger harmless sugar ant living in tunnels under bush rocks.

Grass trees (Ng Ngu\*) grew on the sandy ridges amongst the Grey Gums and Stringybarks (Buran\*). Their tall white flower spikes were full of nectar which attracted honeyeaters, beetles and native bees. These tiny bees built their hives in cracks between rocks and in small hollows in the trees.

We would run our fingers up the flower stem of the Grass Trees to collect the nectar. It was very tasty.



Port Jackson Fig trees (Damun\*) grew on the rocky outcrops. We liked to eat the darkest fruit.

It was always exciting to spot a Waratah flowering on the side of the gully.



Those early years exploring our bushland playground gave us a good understanding of the environment in which we lived, leaving us with our special connection to those Hawkesbury Sandstone gullies for the rest of our lives.

\* Denotes Dharug language.

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## Share your stories . . .

What have you been doing?

Email me at [itcox@bigpond.com](mailto:itcox@bigpond.com) for the next Calgaroo.

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*In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of our Country, the people of the Dharug nation, whose cultures and customs have nurtured, and continue to nurture, this land since time immemorial. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and future, and their connections to land, sea and community, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.*

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### **Parramatta and Hills District Group**

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