

Wategora Reserve Duck River Walk - 22nd August 2020

Wategora Reserve *Melaleuca* woodland

On Saturday 22 August seven Parra Hills members and three visitors walked through the Duck River track through Wategora Reserve at South Granville

Duck River is about 7 km long. It stretches from the catchment area of Regents Park in the south, flowing north to its mouth at the Parramatta River in Silverwater. In February 1788, Governor Phillip entered the mouth of the river while exploring the Parramatta River. Seeing a group of wild ducks taking flight from a reed bed, and thinking it might be a breeding ground for ducks, Governor Phillip named the waterway Duck River.

To-day the reserve is surrounded by suburban streets on one side and a golf course on the other. It is a relatively intact 11 hectare bushland reserve. Botanically it is the richest area in the eastern part of Sydney's Cumberland Plain with some 264 species recorded. Cumberland Plain communities grew on the fertile soils cleared in the Sydney Basin for farming and later suburban developments. The NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service (2002) estimated that prior to European settlement the vegetation community covered an area of almost 130,000 ha. It now covers less than 9,000 ha which equates to a loss of 93% of the entire woodland community. For this reason it is known as an endangered community.



The timing of our walk coincided with the flowering of *Acacia pubescens* The Downy Wattle, a plant which is listed as vulnerable but which flourishes in the reserve. We were not disappointed. There were several stands of very healthy plants all flowering beautifully.



Acacia pubescens

We were fortunate to have a list of the plants identified as occurring in reserve prepared by Tony Price, a retired school teacher and member of the Friends of Duck River. IN the 1970's he spent three years surveying and collecting plants in the Auburn area particularly the remnant vegetation of Rookwood Cemetery and Duck River Reserve. He compiled an extensive list of the existing plant species, recorded ecological observations, and interpolated them into a picture of the landscape and vegetation of the district at the time of European settlement. At a time when field botany was inaccessible to many, and the focus of conservation was largely on the broader scale, Price's local scale work at these sites was unusual and important. Though never formally published, Price's 1979 account 'The Vegetation of Duck River and Rookwood Cemetery, Auburn' has been cited in all subsequent work of consequence for the area. Tony Price passed away in 2010.

As well as the *Acacia pubescens* plants we also identified the following plants:

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| <i>Acacia binervia</i> <i>Acacia decurrens</i> <i>Acacia longifolia</i> <i>Bossiaea prostrata</i> | <i>Exocarpos cupressiformis</i> <i>Hakea sericea</i> <i>Hardenbergia violacea</i> <i>Indigofera australis</i> |
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Calotis cuneifolia
Calotis lappulacea
Cheilanthes sieberi
Clematis aristate
Daviesia ulicifolia
Dillwynia juniperina
Eucalyptus fibrosa
Eucalyptus moluccana
Eucalyptus punctata
Eucalyptus tereticornis
Eustrephus latifolium

Leucopogon juniperinus
Lissanthe strigosa
Melaleuca linariifolia
Melaleuca nodosa
Meleleuca styphelioides
Notelaea longifolia
Notelaea ovata
Pandorea pandorana
Pittosporum revolutum
Pittosporum undulatum



Eustrephus latifolium



Dillwynia retorta



Lissanthe strigosa



Pandorea pandorana

My thanks to Tony Maxwell for sourcing the following article about Tony Price.

Alison Hewitt "Revisiting Tony Price's (1979) account of the native vegetation of Duck River and Rookwood Cemetery, Western Sydney" in *Cunninghamia* 17/6/2013

Jennifer Farrer