

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY

Southern Highlands Group

...your local native garden club

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Group behaviour is on display in this little squadron of saw fly larvae photographed on the Dead Horse Gap track at Thredbo in April. The larvae are making a meal of the leaves of a *Eucalyptus pauciflora*. SC

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Many thanks to contributors to this Newsletter - Jenny Simons, Jane Pye, Fran Mullard, Tricia Arbib and Jane Lemann.

You too? There will be room for your contribution in the July edition

Diary Dates

Monday, 21st May Committee meeting Trisha's house in Bundanoon



Thursday, June 7th General meeting - speaker - Christine Kelly, Christine has been a resident of Burradoo since 1988. As a local volunteer, she has been involved in a wide and varied number of organisations. Currently Christine is President of Birdlife Southern Highlands a branch of Birdlife Australia. She has been interested in birding since the age of 18 and has been actively involved for the last 10 years. Christine will share with us her insights into how best to provide suitable habitat for native birds in the Southern Highlands.

In the photo, Kristine's friendly magpie is checking the Land for Wildlife sign is fixed to the fence correctly.

Monday, 18th June Committee Meeting Kay's

Thursday July 5th Outing to Erica's Mittagong garden followed by afternoon tea at Rose's Cafe, Mittagong.

7 Alfred St Mittagong at 2.00pm. Don't miss this; you will love visiting Erica and George's lively, productive and much-loved garden.

Monday, 16th July Committee meeting Sarah's 2.00pm

August 2nd General meeting with speaker Pat Hall on black cockatoos

Monday, 20th August committee meeting Erica's

September 6th Bushwalk at Caves Creek, off Wilson Drive at Hill Top

Snippets

CLEMATIS CONFUSION...

Below, from Jenny Simons, a careful newsletter reader. She has provided a likely name for the lovely little euc on the March edition cover and corrected my mistaken identification of the Loseby Park clematis.

Below photos of foliage and flower comparison to confirm identification.



"...Another great issue. I do love it when it pops up in my inbox. I print it and take it to bed to read. The cover pic, so beautiful, you have an artist's eye. Eucalyptus pauciflora 'Little Snowman' I think. I've seen that clematis in flower and it's not a native, but C. terniflora, the



'Sweet Autumn Clematis'. It has quite a strong scent, not altogether to my liking, rather like hawthorne.' Best wishes from Jenny."

Photos for comparison. Left is foliage and flowers of Clematis ternifolia (not native - the one at Loesby Park, Bowral) Photos at right : Native clematis growing on The

Gib - foliage of fence, flowers on rock.

Local native clematis notes from Jane Lemann "Clematis aristata and Clematis glycinoides both grow on the Gib. They flower at slightly different times and have slightly different leaves and flowers - C. glydinoides tends to be skinnier in leaf and petals!"

Hmmmm...! Good luck with working all that out! SC

The photo at left appeared in our January 2016 NL with the following story:



"Clearly this colony of lichen (photo left) is delighted with the position it has chosen. These amazing lifeforms are not simple plants, rather a symbiosis of organisms e.g. a fungus and an alga. They are classified with the fungi. Do you recognise the spot where it's growing? It is the steel support rails of the road bridge over the railway line at Bowral station." SC



Soon after the lichen photo was taken in 2016, the bridge rails were scoured totally clean of this glorious flush of growth (I've read that lichen may degrade metal). Crossing the bridge this week (May 10, 2018) I noticed that, around almost every bolt, there is a tiny frill of regrowth appearing (see photo at right). Clearly this ancient and mysterious lifeforms is planning a comeback!

Here is seriously confused little plant.



Given the continuing summer-like weather, I chanced my luck with a last pot of soft tip eremophila cuttings in early April. This morning, 10th May, just before the first blast of cold weather, I discovered this poor little cutting had clearly thought it was spring and has produced a tiny flower! SC

Letter to the editor Please write to the editor with questions, observations, tips and anything else you would like to share. Here is a tip from our Vice President, Trisha. We look forward to hearing from you too.

Hi Sarah, Recently we went for the second time to a wonderful native plant nursery in the bush on the south coast near Jervis Bay. It would be good if you could please mention it in the newsletter.

Wirin Wirra Nursery. cnr Evelyn Road and Hill Street, Tomerong 2540. www.wirinwirra.com

They have a great variety of plants. Pam and I bought up big! We chose ones that will grow here. Different Epacris sp including a red, and a rounded, dwarf one. Also, some gorgeous Croweas, low-growing Persoonias and more. I don't think they mail order [haven't checked website] but it is not far away and members might like to visit. Well grown plants. Mostly \$11 for 150 mm pot.

Best wishes, Trish (Arbib)

The Role of the SHAPS Archivist

Jenny Simons

Sarah Cains, our newsletter editor, has asked me to say something about the role of an archivist, as I am the current keeper of the archives of SHAPS.

The archivist's role is to collect, curate and care for material relating to the organisation concerned.

For us, currently, the material is mainly presented in two ways: the minutes of the committee meetings and the issues of the newsletters. I collect copies of these and store them in sequential order.

To ensure their long life, metal staples and paperclips are removed (as these soon rust) and the sheets of paper are enclosed in acid-free plastic sheet-protectors. All the items in our collection are kept in a large, strong, plastic storage box, to keep out moisture and rodents. Cardboard archival boxes could also be used but they would not be so safe for our archives which are moved from person to person.

Fortunately our collection has been carefully assembled over the years, usually by the group's secretary. Every newsletter following the first meeting in September 1996 to the present day has been preserved, and our correspondence from 1993 which initiates the idea of forming an Australian Plants group in the Southern Highlands. Other items in our collection include a photo album (1998 - 2006), now superseded by photographs in our newsletter; our publicity leaflets, some membership lists and attendance registers.

In deciding what to keep and what to discard, the rule is to discard material that was not generated by our group, for example, newsletters of other groups. All ephemeral correspondence is discarded - invitations, thank-you letters, enquiries. However the group or the archivist can decide to keep any items of particular interest to the group, such as Elizabeth Smith's hand-written report of Roma Dix's garden and Elizabeth Jacka's talk and photographs about her parents' establishing the first Australian plant nursery in Victoria.

Historical note : Arthur J Swarby - APS Founder

Jane Pye

Here's a little piece about Arthur Swaby for the next newsletter. You can see from the dates that Elizabeth Jacka's parents' Eastern Park Nursery in Geelong, predated the founding of SGAP, so they were real pioneers! JP (NB Elizabeth was our February speaker)

You may have wondered who this AJ Swaby was, mentioned by Elizabeth Jacka in her recent talk. In fact he was the founder of the Society for Growing Australian Plants (now APS) in Victoria in 1957. For several years he wrote a column "Know Your Natives" in the magazine "Your Garden" and he built up a loyal following of enthusiasts. In 1956 he floated the idea of a network of amateur growers to encourage the understanding of native plants, and he was amazed at the result. He received 400 letters and enquiries from people around the country, having expected about a dozen. A public meeting in Melbourne attracted 200, and membership quickly rose to 1000. The movement became nation wide. Our own Southern Highlands group started close to 30 years ago.

The aim then, as now, was to promote the growing of Australian plants. The group encourages plant breeding for home gardeners and organises meetings, newsletters, conferences and gatherings to spread the word.

May meandering in Grevillea Park at Bulli



On a glorious far-too-warm Sunday, 6th May, twelve of us set out for Grevillea Park (which is directly behind Bulli Showground) to enjoy the plants and to picnic together. And to save you asking, yes! At least two carfuls of us lost our way, despite communal best efforts with Google Maps!

Grevillea Park was started by volunteers in 1987 to encourage the appreciation and study of Australian plants. It is the repository for the living collection of the APS study group grevilleas. The park remains volunteer run and a propagation/growing programme produces plants which are sold and raise \$24,000 annually. There are approx 2000 visitors to the park each year.

The park is extensive with the planted area merging into an adjoining

rainforest section which is open to walkers. one of the most attractive areas to me was the retaining walls close to the entrance where a number of prostrate plants were tumbling over the walls looking marvellously healthy. I recognised the delightful *Banksia serrata* cv, 'Pygmy Possum' (no label, so I'm not absolutely certain of the ident). We have seen this little beauty at Mt Annan and it was a pleasure to meet it again. I grew it with some success in Mittagong, on the Gib, where it obligingly spilled over a wall. It was not watered again once established and mine did not grow quite as green and robust as the Grevillea Park one, which I suspect receives a drink of water from time to time.



In the background of that photo is a splendid weeping casuarinas - cv 'Cousin It', I suspect, because that is the older of the available cvs and the plants showed some maturity. There were several of these plants and there was considerable variation in their growth habits displayed.

Further up the hill we found a delightful little coffee shop run by an elderly volunteer (instant only, so perhaps look elsewhere if you are a coffee aficionado and take your own cup to avoid a plastic offering if you plan to risk it!) The tiny church-like building was surrounded by a variety



of healthy plants which delighted us as we sipped our morning cuppa. In the array were couple of groups of our favourite 'Kris plant' *Homoranthus flavescens* displaying their beautiful tabulate growth habit and silvery foliage. Since they were not in flower I will show you a photo (above) of *H. flavescens* in flower, taken at the ANBG on a hot November day in 2015.



Another plant that caused us to pause in our meandering was the *Lambertia* above. Being more used to *L. formosa*, the Mountain Devil native to the Blue Mountains, we were puzzled by this small rounded shrub with its rounded leaves. Elliot and Jones, in their Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants, describe one *Lamberti orbifolia* and, as you can see, this might be a good guess (orb shaped leaves). This is an endangered species known in only two locations on the Darling Downes. According to Elliot and Jones it had limited cultivation in the 1970s but is now 'rarely encountered'. Grevillea Park is the sort of place you would expect to encounter a rare and endangered treasure. We were itching to take cuttings, but managed to restrain ourselves! And by the way, does anyone have *Lamberti formosa* growing? That plant grew beautifully in my Mt Gib garden and now it has disappeared from my life. I would love some cuttings in spring. It is a serious favourite of small native birds.

Sated with plants, we stopped for sustenance (photo above) before heading for the exit via the inevitable visit to the plant sales area. Even those of us who are gardening in tiny spaces found plants we simply could not leave behind. "Kids in a lolly shop" was suggested by one of our number.

Hard to refute that!

April Meeting - and overview by Sarah Cains of proceedings of the ANPSA CONFERENCE held in Hobart in January 2018. "Grass Roots to Mountaintops"

Compiled by Fran Mullard, from notes by Sarah Cains

In January four members of our group attended the 2018 ANPSA Conference in Hobart, which was held in the Conference Centre attached to Hobart's casino complex. The 18-storey octagonal casino tower was designed by important Australian architect, Sir Roy Grounds, who worked mostly in Canberra and Victoria from about the 1930's through to his death in 1981. One of his last commissions, Hobart's Casino tower remains the tallest building in that city and is an iconic landmark much-loved by Tasmanians.

The general conference format was speakers in the morning and excursions in the afternoon. Additional to speakers' presentations were displays in the foyer by specialist groups, put up to inform us of their activities and to encourage us to join.

All the speakers were highly qualified and, without exception, were highly informative and engaging. Sadly, since their work is mostly underfunded, it is largely disregarded by our politicians. As it is impossible to feature all the speakers in this article, here follows a brief of the content of a few of the presentations.

Jamie Kirkpatrick AM is a professor of Geography and Environmental Sciences at University of Tasmania and has been much awarded for his work. He chose to speak on the day about the Alpine vegetation of Tasmania, referring often to the risks to these vegetation communities posed by climate change.

Australian Alpine vegetation is globally unusual in that it is dominated by shrubs and hard cushion plants. In Tasmania there only 10 species. This is due to a lack of persistence by snow and year-round grazing by wombats and wallabies.

On the western side Tasmanian Alpine vegetation is highly endemic, whereas in the east it is more like that of mainland Australia. Many plants have been irretrievably lost to fire, especially since European invasion altered fire regimes.

Some of the worst climate change effects in the world are seen on the east coast of Tasmania, e.g, in the kelp fields. On the western side so far the Tasmanian environment is not getting colder and drier so "the plants may persist for a bit longer."

Sebastian Burgess is Greening Tasmania's Director of Conservation. He addressed the dramatic and terrible loss of native birds and mammals due to the clearing of native forests. He stated that industrial-scale replanting is required to halt the decline. The Tasmanian Ark Project has been implemented, its goal being to create 6000 ha of new and enhanced habitat in the Tasmanian midlands. New technologies such as drones and heat and colour sensitive devices assist with accuracy and speed in mapping. It's heartening to learn that ancient indigenous land-management techniques are also being acknowledged.

Tanya Bailey, a PhD student, was horrified by the vast number of dead trees in the Tasmanian midlands, so much at odds with the green, wet image so often seen in tourist brochures. She centred her study on the cascade effect once you begin removing trees, and methods of reversing this destructive trend. She reminded us that 50% of Australia's forested areas have been cleared.

Louise Gilfedder's main research interest is the conservation of natural grasslands, which are the most endangered of all plant communities. This is a worldwide trend, due to agricultural and urban development.

Patrick J Dalton, a highly awarded academic with 44 years experience lecturing in Botany, focused on non-flowering flora; mosses, ferns and liverworts. Unfortunately, many ill-informed gardeners and property owners have been convinced by chemical companies that these amazing plants are pests. His advocacy informs us that these largely-ignored plants are just another wonder of the natural world.

The afternoon excursions were also informative and enjoyable.

Mt Wellington is known as kunanyi to the Tasmanian aborigines, who describe it as follows:



More than a rock

Kunanyi it is called

Tribal land in sacred country

*Seasons of rain and wisdom of stories
past,*

*Kunanyi brings forth life for two
thousand generations past, and for*

Ever more

Songs and dance honour this power

Listen.

*These words still carry in the wind, so
that kangaroo and mountain*

*berry will always grow in Kunanyi's
forest cloak.*

Photo above taken from the top of kunanyi/Mt Wellington on a wondrously clear January day. Hobart below in the distance. SC

Inverawe Garden is a 9.5 ha garden developed over 20 years. It is water-wise, low-chemical and low maintenance. Its 12500 native plants have attracted by 103 species of native birds.

Saltmarsh Wetlands provide the critical link between marine and terrestrial systems. Ongoing threats from human impact and climate change have caused the degradation of these areas. Science, the general public and, hopefully, policy-makers, are working together to raise awareness of the value of the marshes.

Photo at right APS 'plant nerds' in blazing heat on the salt marshes "Mad dogs and Englishmen..." comes to mind!

The Tasmanian Bushland Garden is a regional botanic garden near Buckland which showcases the native plants of Tasmania. It is completely funded by donations from The Australian Open Garden Scheme, other community organisations and individuals. It is maintained by volunteers and receives no funding from the government or the corporate sector.

At the **Royal Tasmanian Botanic Garden** the group had a talk with plant ecologist, field botanist and geographer Nick Fitzgerald, who is undertaking a PhD looking at vegetation change on Macquarie Island in relation to the eradication of rabbits.

Macquarie Island is a Tasmanian protectorate, lying 1500kms off Tasmania. It is a nature reserve and a UNESCO World Heritage Biosphere Reserve. There is no transport on the island. Just walking.

Megaherbs, such as *stilbocarpa polaris* (M I cabbage), *pleurophyllum hookeri* and *poa filiosa* (an important habitat for petrels), dominated and soon became the favourite food of rabbits and rats. The state and federal governments worked together to eradicate these ruinous pests, and after a prolonged assault spanning many years, the island was finally declared rabbit and rat free. The vegetation is now undergoing a massive recovery.

James Wood, manager of the Tasmanian Seedbank Program based at the gardens, who has been working with seed conservation for 27 years, gave the keynote address for the conference, which was entitled "Going to seed and proud of it."

The conference was both busy and rewarding for both participants and presenters and gives a window into the kind of conservation research and action that is happening quietly and stoically around our country. When we are able visit small, private gardens which sport native plants and provide habitat for native fauna we know that all is not lost. From little things big things grow.



Artificial hollows for habitat in the Southern Highlands

Thanks to Trisha Arbib for sending in this article for publication.

Remember, your contributions enrich our Newsletter. All are most welcome.

Microbats, Pygmy Possums, Squirrel Gliders and Gang-gang Cockatoos are some of the animals that are starting to benefit from the strange holes appearing in dead trees across parts of the Southern Highlands. The artificial hollows are being formed as part of our Wall to Wollondilly (W2W) project, to create much needed new homes for threatened and common species in the region.

The Southern Highlands Shale Woodlands, known to support a diverse range of native wildlife, are under serious threat. Since European settlement they have been significantly altered due to intensive land clearing, introduction of invasive weeds, inappropriate fire regimes and the removal of fallen timber and dead standing trees.

“Many of Australia’s wildlife depends on tree hollows for survival, using them as nesting sites, shelters and protection from predators. Natural hollows can take up to 100 years to form. Sadly, it is these large, statuesque trees that are the very ones that are being lost at a significant rate,” says Greening Australia local project officer, Nathan Green. “By creating artificial hollows in dead or alive trees we can support short, medium and long-term habitat needs.”



Local Arborists, All Scale Tree Services, works to make sure the old trees are safe and stable before drilling one or more hollows into the trunk. Both dead standing and fallen trees are used.

“People see a dead tree and they just see it as a liability, but these dead trees still provide vital habitat for many years. An important part of our work is raising awareness and showing people that these trees are still a beautiful and useful part of the landscape,” says Mr Green.



“Artificial hollows create high quality, supplementary habitat that complements our on-ground work. We are effectively using hollows in other areas too such as Western Sydney, where we have created over fifty hollows across private properties to provide habitat for species including Red-rumped Parrots, Pardalotes and Feathertail Gliders.”

In addition to establishing artificial hollows, W2W is engaging the local community and landholders along the Wingecarribee River to revegetate and conserve land, control woody weeds, and improve water quality. The river serves as a major corridor linking the coastal cliffs with the Central Tablelands and contains a healthy population of Platypus.

“Collaborating and involving the local community in projects like these that improve habitat and landscape connectivity is not only rewarding but critical for the survival of our native wildlife.”

W2W is funded and supported by the NSW Environmental Trust Bush Connect Program.

Photo above: March 22, 2018 - Gang-gang Cockatoo. Photo copyright cc Wikipedia / Benjamint444
<https://www.greeningaustralia.org.au/artificial-hollows-habitat-southern-highlands/>

A Walk Among the Banksias in late April

Story and photos by Trisha Arbib



The Banksia Walk at Burrewarra Point is described as “a charming walk through a mature banksia forest with views of the coast and hinterland...” Whilst the brochure got us there it didn’t do this amazing walk justice.

A little way south of Batemans Bay was the turnoff to Guerilla Bay and Burrewarra Point, where one immediately entered a mass of huge gnarled old banksia trees (*Banksia integrifolia*, *The Coast Banksia*) covered in large, silvery-brown cones full of seed. It felt like an older world, and even more wonderful as the track led right along the coast with jagged rocks and expanse of sea and no intrusive fences or formal lookouts. I was told that this is a great place to spot whales from September to November.

Meandering slightly away from the sea we were among younger banksias, but some still as much as five metres tall, and covered with flowers full of nectar. The sound of birds was remarkable, most of them being friar birds, large, noisy honeyeaters named for their bald heads. My English friend had not heard such a bird chorus before in his eight years in Australia. It was one of those magical moments that come rarely.

Further along, the track hugging the coastline allowed magnificent views across the bay. The supposedly 1.5Km return walk never seemed to end, the path leading on to further beaches. But there is no need for me to say more. The photos say it all.

