

ACN 002 680 408

NEWSLETTER

JULY 2020

JUNE WALK

Once again, after what seemed like an eternity, a group met at the usual meeting place as we prepared for a walk in the bush. Among the walkers was John Weatherstone, of the well-known Gunning district farming family. The property has now been sold but not before it was a model for those interested in knowing how ecological plantings could contribute significantly to a typical farming enterprise.

Several years ago, we had a group visit to the property. On our propagation and sale list since that time, *Acacia flexifolia*, has been a constant inclusion. That came about from seeing the plant in flower in one of the farm plantings.

South's Reserve is short drive outside town in the direction of Bungonia. Since the walk, I have googled South's reserve with no result; not sure why that is.

The reserve is a mix of grassland and woodland and is in sharp contrast to the nearby Pomaderris Reserve.

We did not have a plant "lister" or scribe for the walk so it was an easy-going affair; some of what was seen will be described briefly. Scattered eucalypts define the woodland. Prominent among these is cabbage gum, *E. amplifolia*. As the name suggest this species has large leaves (especially the juvenile leaves) and is similar to Blakely's red gum (also called blue gum locally), *E. blakelyi*. Seed of the cabbage gum collected near Towrang was used to propagate for the wetlands. A mid-storey plant in the woodland is the Early green wattle, *A. decurrens*. The only other wattle seen on the day was Early wattle, the prickly *A. genistifolia*. Among the smaller shrubs were *Cassinia arcuata* (Sifton Bush) and the less invasive *C. aculeata*.

Among the smaller shrubs was *Melichrus urceolatus* which is just coming into flower with its creamy bells. This belongs to the Ericaceae Family (previously Epacridaceae). While it is a widespread species locally, it is not propagated often. It has prickly foliage and that quite possibly helps to keep it out of the hands of the propagators.

Cryptandra amara is another slightly prickly plant but it belongs to a different family - the same family that includes the better-known Pomaderris. *C. amara* has small tubular flowers with colours between white and pink. It is a widespread species but not usually common- no large colonies.

We saw one clump of another low-growing shrub belonging to the pea-flowered sub-family, Faboideae - *Pultenaea microphylla*. This form is what I tend to call a cushion plant, rising a bit from the ground but mostly spreading; the more common (carpet-like) form of *P. microphylla* is purely prostrate. This form is more abundant both in the reserve and in the general area.

Another prostrate species was also seen. This was *Astroloma humifusum* from the Ericaceae family. I don't think it was displaying any of its red tubular flowers. In fact, flowers were quite rare on the day.

It is known that our floral symbol, *Cheiranthra linearis*, the Finger Flower, occurs in the reserve. We did not see any. A search by Peter and myself outside the reserve a year or two ago had also failed to bear fruit. Hopefully the good rains earlier in the year will have prompted germination of the species.

A small plant that had flower remains was noticed. It reminded me of a species that occurs on my place and seems to be much more common following the rains. It also is recorded on a recent list for things seen by Ashlea and Greg in the Alison Hone Reserve. It is *Opercularia hispida*. It has very small flowers and the crushed leaves emit an unpleasant smell. Unsurprisingly, it is not commonly grown. We did come across it on an earlier trip to one of the reserves in the Laggan area.

Among the daisies we did see the nationally endangered variety of *Leucochrysum albicans*.

Chrysocephalum apiculatum was common and had flowered earlier. On the way out I did notice a few *Brachycome rigidula* growing near a gully. Kangaroo grass, *Themeda triandra* was common as one would expect. Another grass we noticed with seeds dislodging was Purple Wiregrass, *Aristida ramosa*. The seeds of this grass have three awns - a bit like three tails and it just loves socks - you know what I mean. From a grazier's point of view it produces little foliage. It grows in infertile sandy soils which have had little "pasture improvement."

It was then back to the cars and the short distance to the Pomaderris Reserve.

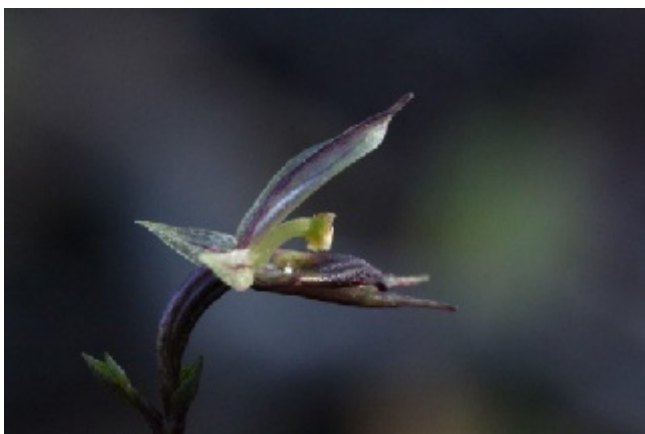
A lot of this reserve is dense forest and is markedly different from the grassland and woodland of the South's Reserve. It is also at a higher altitude. To investigate possible reasons for the differences, I looked up the geology of the area. The sediments

and exposed rocks in the South's reserve are of what is called 'recent' geological age - that happens to be up to a million years. The age of the surface material - sandstone in the Pomaderris reserve - is close to half a billion years. In addition, that material was placed there as sections of the Earth's crust slid and ground their way past each other. It seems reasonable to assume that the different geological histories account for some of the differences in the vegetation of the two places.

On entering the reserve, we first checked the endangered Pomaderris plants which had been planted. They looked quite healthy inside their protective cages. A non-endangered Pomaderris nearby was *P. andromedifolia*. The patch we chose went through the quite dense forest, mostly dominated by silvertop Ash, *E. sieberi*. In addition, *Allocasuarina littoralis* - Black she-oak - grew tall and slender.

An occasional smaller shrub was seen including the holly-leaved *Podolobium ilicifolium*. One *Acacia terminalis* - sunshine wattle was in flower. One of the 'bush food' species, *Omphacomeria acerba* had some fruits on it. In one of the tall silvertop ashes, a couple of branches shooting from the same point allowed water to collect and this was a considerable attraction for birds of several species as they ducked in and out of the water.

At ground level, John Weatherstone kept an eye out for orchids. There were some greenhoods, *Pterostylis* sp. but none in flower; they can be identified as belonging to that genus from the leaf shape and configuration. John is a keen orchid hunter and did get a photo of what he considered to be the Small Mosquito orchid.



The Small Mosquito Orchid: *Acianthus pusillus*

OPPORTUNITIES OR MORE THINGS TO DO?

In recent days, our Group has been invited to be involved in two projects. The first of these came from the *Community Voice for Hume* Group. The invitation from this group was to be part of a group who would develop ideas for a model backyard-type garden which was intended to achieve a range of objectives - including attracting wildlife, being sustainable, helping reduce possible effects of climate change and others. The hope was also expressed that it might become an idea that might be copied elsewhere across the nation.

From the plans briefly outlined to achieve the desired goals it was

clear that a good deal of discussion would be needed to arrive at the model garden concept. The thought of being involved in discussions that did not centre on native plants may not be an attractive one and little impetus was felt to be involved as a group. Individual members might wish to be involved just as individuals. A similar but somewhat simpler idea of attracting wildlife to peoples' garden was proposed some years ago by TGG - The Goulburn Group but it did not seem to come to fruition. If we cast our mind back to the first Workers' Club forum a few years ago, there are local experts on attracting wildlife to gardens. I, for one, am not interested spending a lot of time on the social, political or related implications.

A second project we have been invited to join is the provision of plants and our expertise in helping to revegetate areas damaged last year and earlier this year in the Bundanoon area. This request came through Heather Miles, NSW APS secretary. Information on this has been sent out by Peter and he is looking for responses from individual members by July 6. This project is much closer to our interests despite it being a little out of our backyard. In thinking about our backyard we do have associate members from the Highlands and of course we have members who reside between here and the Highlands. We often do walks in Highland areas - e.g. that on Saturday; perhaps we need to have a wider backyard vision. In any event, get your views to Peter by the due date.

THE UNUSUAL

In the photo this *Bossiaea heterophylla* has just started to flower. Another of the same species planted about 2 metres away flowered at the expected time - March/April. I know everybody has similar unusual garden tales.



CALENDAR

Sat July 4	Belanglo State Forest
Sat/Sun Aug 1-2	Royal NP overnight trip
Sat Sep 5	Walk in Bango Nature Reserve
Thu Sep 17	Propagation
Sun Sep 20	Propagation
Sat Oct 3	Dalton Reserves
Sat Oct 10	Wetlands Working Bee/ Goulburn Connects
Sun Nov 8	Rare plant sale Riversdale tbc
Sat Nov 21	Bundanoon area walk
Sat Dec 5	AGM and end-of-year lunch