



## TENPS COMMITTEE

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## JUNE 2003 NEWSLETTER

### Meetings and Field Trips

We meet on the third Thursday of the month at 7:30 pm for a speaker at 8:30 pm. The venue is Marrara Christian School, on the corner of Amy Johnson and McMillans Drive. The school entrance is at the very top of Amy Johnson Ave. Keep going on the school road, past the playing fields and following the road round to the right until you get to a small car park, where you will see the meeting room on the right. All welcome. Bring plants to swap, sell or have identified

## COMING EVENTS COMING EVENTS COMING EVENTS

### Meeting Thursday July 17th Guest Speaker: Ian Morris

The Special General Meeting which we had planned for Thursday 17th July has been postponed, as there is a review of the present relevant NT Government act in order to make the wording of constitutions more user friendly. Therefore our constitutional meeting has been postponed until further notice. Ian Morris has, once again, agreed to be our speaker. His talk is entitled 'A Glimpse of the Islands of Arnhem Land.' He will show slides and discuss the natural history and ethnoecology of the islands, in particular, the English Company and Wessel Islands. Plant species of interest he will mention include *Arenga australasica*, *Barringtonia asiatica*, *Cerbera manghas*, and *Terminalia catappa*. Ian is known to many of our members and is always an entertaining and informative speaker. Come along to our July meeting for another round!

### June Field trip Sunday July 20th

Jan McMahan will lead us on a walk around the grounds of the Northern Territory University. The grounds of the university have been landscaped using top end native plants. Meet at 8:30 am on Sunday 20th July at the horticulture building at NTU. We look forward to seeing you there!

### August Meeting Thursday 21st

Sean Bellairs from Northern Territory University will speak on "Seed Dormancy and Germination". Keep this date free and come along to our August meeting to learn more!

### Tropical Gardens Spectacular 9th - 10th August

The TENPS have paid \$55 for membership to the Northern Territory Horticultural Association so that we can sell plants on this weekend. Requests for plant labels by growers intending to sell plants should be given to Marj King as soon as possible. We will also need volunteers to assist with the running of the stall at the spectacular. Remember that "Many hands make light work" - the more people we have the less time each person will need to spend on the stall!

## A REPORT ON PHIL HICKEY'S BLOCK (BY RUSSELL DEMPSTER)

On Saturday 21st June we journeyed to Phil Hickey's block near the Blackmore River, west of Berry Springs. We began walking in an area burnt in January, initially noting the ground to be very rough. This is due to the castings of large worms that live in wet areas and is known as 'debil debil texture'.

*Grevillea pteridifolia* (Fern-leaved *Grevillea*) was in flower, showing off its very attractive bright orange display. A Brown Goshawk was seen in a *Eucalyptus polycarpa* which was in fruit with long woody capsules. Other *Eucalypts* present in this area included *E. bella* (formerly *E. papuana*), *E. miniata* (Darwin Woollybutt) in flower and *E. polysciadia* (formerly *E. clavigera*), which was displaying its characteristic wine-red new growth. We found a *Cymbidium canaliculatum* (Chocolate Orchid) in a *E. bella*.

Another highlight was the *Grevillea longicuspis*, the emblem of our society. These small bushes have holly-like leaves and bright red flowers and are only known from a few locations in the Darwin region. Not much seed is produced by these plants, but they can be grown from tip cuttings.

Other species observed in this area included:

*Acacia dimidiata* (flowering)

*Acacia oncinocarpa*

*Calytrix exstipulata* (Turkey Bush)

*Cartonema*

*Cochlospermum fraseri* (Kapok Bush)

*Cycas armstrongii*

*Erythrophleum chlorostachys* (Ironwood)

*Flemingia*

*Hibbertia*

*Livistona humilis* (Sand Palm)

Moving on to an area burnt 3 years previously, we walked through some woodland toward a riparian belt. Species seen in the woodland included:

*Acacia latescens*

*Calytrix exstipulata* (flowering)

*Dolichandrone filiformis*

*Eucalyptus bleeseri*

*Gomphrena*

Along the riparian belt, the following species were seen:

*Acacia auriculiformis* (Darwin Black Wattle)

*Acacia difficilis* (flowering)

*Acacia dimidiata*

*Acacia holosericea*

*Barringtonia acutangula* (Freshwater Mangrove)

*Carallia brachiata*

*Cyclophyllum schultzii* (formerly *Canthium lucidum*)

*Syzygium armsrongii*

*Lophostemon lactifluus* (flowering, red flaky bark)

*Melaleuca nervosa*

*Pandanus*

*Persoonia falcata* (Milky Plum)

*Petalostigma pubescens* (Quinine Tree)

*Syzygium eucalyptoides* ssp. *bleeseri*

*Themeda* (Kangaroo Grass)

*Verticordia cunninghamii*

*Xanthostemon paradoxus* (Bridal Tree)

*Grevillea decurrens*

*Grevillea dryandri*

*Jacksonia dilatata*

*Owenia*

*Terminalia pterocarya*

*Dianella*

*Exocarpos latifolius* (Native Cherry)

*Helecia australasica*

*Leptospermum madidum* (prev *L. longifolium*)

*Lindsaea*

*Osbeckia australiana* (flowering)

*Rapanea benthamiana*

We sincerely thank Phil for the opportunity to have a look at his most interesting block..

## NEWSLETTERS AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

The TENPS Monthly newsletter is **now available** by **email**. If you would like to receive your newsletter by email (You will need Acrobat Reader - a free programme) then please email [tenps@austarnet.com.au](mailto:tenps@austarnet.com.au) ASAP! There are benefits to receiving your newsletter this way - you get it sooner, you get it in full colour and we save paper and postage! You should also note that subscriptions are due as of 1st July. Please renew your subscription with Jen Cooke (our treasurer) or by cheque to our postal address. Thankyou in anticipation!

## BOTANIC GARDENS MASTER PLAN

The George Brown Botanic Gardens Masterplan was discussed at the June TENPS meeting, led by Pat Rasmussen. A questionnaire was completed by consensus of those present, and some good suggestions were also put forward. There will be further opportunity for input at the Tropical Garden Spectacular in August.

## LAND FOR WILDLIFE

A Seed Exchange and Plant Identification Workshop was held at the Humpty Doo Village Green on the 29th of June as part of the Land for Wildlife project in the Litchfield Shire. The National Heritage funding for the coordinator of the project ceased on the 30th of June. Litchfield Shire Council is currently reviewing staffing and considering the appointment of a full time Council Environmental Officer. In the next twelve months it is proposing the Land for Wildlife project, like others, be coordinated by willing volunteers from within the Shire. Land for wildlife members are encouraged to contact the shire President, Mary Walshe, to discuss the matter.

The Top End Native Plant Society would like to pay tribute to and thank Sally Jacka for her work on the Land for Wildlife Project.



## OBSERVATIONS BY STRIDER (MAY TENPS TALK)

At the May meeting Strider took us through a 40 year journey of observations on the effect of cyclones, fire, human disturbance and buffalo on the growth and survival of Acacia, Brachychiton, Buchanania, Cycas, Eucalyptus, Livistonia, Persoonia, Planchonia and Terminalia. When he left school he was a chain man with a government surveyor. The surveyor pointed out that all of the big Woollybutt and Stringybark trees looked to be identical as they were all of the same age and dated from the time of the 1897 cyclone. Strider's keen eye has continued to notice similar trends in stands of native trees following more recent cyclones. He noted that following severe cyclones such as Tracy, there is initial destruction of many of the trees. The fallen limbs and dead trees increase fire intensity and this leads to further mortality over several years. The flexible young saplings that could survive the cyclone and fires are then able to use the available resources and grow to replace the fallen trees in even aged stands. Growth rates vary depending on the species and from place to place with changes in soil nutrients and moisture availability.

When living in the Flying Fox Creek area in the late 1970s Strider noted that many stumps of Stringybark trees were twice as thick as any of the living trees. Was this due to a decline in soil fertility? Was this due to the arrival of buffalo? When buffalo initially arrived in an area they grew twice as big as those in areas where they had been long established. Perhaps the buffalo diminished soil fertility, due to the nitrogen evaporating from the large buffalo pats. Thus less nitrogen in the soil, less nitrogen to grow large trees and less nitrogen to produce protein and thus smaller buffalo.

On the 4 April 2001 Strider inspected Section 1683 Hundred of Colton and recalled the conversation with Mr Wilson back in 1960. There was one big old Eucalyptus bleeseri tree, it was about the same height as the

surrounding woollybutt and stringybark trees, but much thicker in girth. So this one has survived the 1897 cyclone, but how come the post cyclone crop hadn't reached the same girth in 104 years? They seemed to have only grown slightly since 1960. Perhaps the buffalo over-population of the 1960s has reduced soil fertility and led to a bonsai generation of trees. Another observation is that trees that spread out low don't grow as tall as long thin saplings. The ironwood trees in the vacant lot north of the Humpty Doo shopping centre illustrate this sort of variation in size and form. At some point a tree grows to a certain size and then just continues to put on girth. When observing section 1683 there was no evidence of recruitment into the upper height class for a considerable time, perhaps since the seedling crop of 1930. An extensive search failed to find any current woollybutt or stringybark seedlings in April 2001. Tree seedling numbers for all species were extremely low. Perhaps past soil compaction by buffalo is a continuing problem; perhaps the annual fire regime. Other aspects discussed were the impact of Noonamah Forest Dieback Disease in disturbed forest and the impact of annual fire. Strider compared the tree densities of each height class in Section 1683, which has been burned in each of the previous 10 years, and in an adjoining unburnt area. Annual fire had the most marked effect on the mid-storey trees. Fire projection resulted in a substantial increase in numbers of seedlings and no saplings seemed to be surviving in the annually burnt area. Even larger, older trees seemed to be gradually being killed. The size class data for a dozen species was discussed. This data was collected to present to the Development Consent Authority in response to a clearing application that would have resulting in the loss of around 20,000 mature trees in a strategic wildlife habitat location.

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**SUBSCRIPTION FORM - MEMBERSHIP DUE 1ST JULY 2003**  
**TOP END NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY. PO BOX 135 PALMERSTON NT 0831**

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**To:**

**NEXT MEETING THURSDAY JULY 17TH**  
**GUEST SPEAKER: IAN MORRIS**

**SENDER: TOP END NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY**  
**PO BOX 135 PALMERSTON**  
**NT 0831**

