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~ JULY 2007 NEWSLETTER ~

MEETINGS AND FIELD TRIPS

We meet on the third Thursday of the month at 7:30 pm. Following the TENPS general meeting, the speaker will commence at 8pm. Tea & coffee are available during the meeting. The venue for the meeting is Marrara Christian College, on the corner of Amy Johnson and McMillan Drives. All welcome. Bring plants to swap, sell or have identified.

Summary of the last Committee Meeting

- 1.1. World Environment Day (WED) recruited 5 new members, Geoff conducted plant ID tour in rainforest patch at museum. Russell spoke about water saving plants at W.E.D. We have been asked to provide a speaker on any topic at the garden spectacular.
- 1.2. Grants & projects – Labrynth project – Felicity provided information.
- 1.3. Dave Liddle will open the Joyce Stobo library in September as Dale Dixon can no longer do it.
- 1.4. As Sally Jacka is leaving Darwin, she will be resigning from her position. Sally wants to arrange another working bee prior to next meeting.

~ NEXT MEETING THURSDAY 19th July~

Dr. Brian Thistelton, the principal economic entomologist for the Department of Primary Industry, will be talking about termites, in particular the fascinating and ancient termite *Mastotermes darwiniensis*.

~ FIELD TRIP- SATURDAY 23rd JULY ~

A visit to Finnis Valley Tree Supply nursery near Batchelor. Mark started growing fruit trees but has diversified into native plants, and now supplies plants for new development projects around Darwin. He is happy to show people around both his nursery and his bush block which has a range of vegetation types.

Mark has kindly offered to make tea so bring a cup. Some people might like to go to Litchfield Park before so meet at the Butterfly Farm at Batchelor on Sunday 22 July at 2.30. For those who would like to "car pool" talk to Russell Dempster at the meeting or phone 8983 2131. It's about a 20 minute drive from Batchelor.

~ FUTURE EVENTS ~

August Meeting - Sue Fraser-Adams, a builder will be speaking about her use of native plants in developments; the pitfalls and the triumphs. Sue had a seachange in attitudes three years ago, when building Meeting the third Thursday of the month at 7:30 pm at Marrara Christian School Library

Denise and Michael's unit, after the former refused to entertain a garden full of water-hungry exotics. Since then Sue has become a zealot in the cause of indigenous flora. Her plan for Little Mindil was to build an eco-resort highlighting such plants in their own right.

August Field Trip - Meet on Sunday 19 August at 3.30 with Sue-Fraser Adams at Little Mindil (the area between the Casino and the escarpment) and share with her the vision she had for this area. Also check out the vegetation on the escarpment which has come under the care of the Landcare Group that also looks after Duke Street Rainforest and the area between Gardens Road and Dashwood Crescent. Bring a chair and a glass and sit and watch the sunset, Sue will bring the sparkling wine!

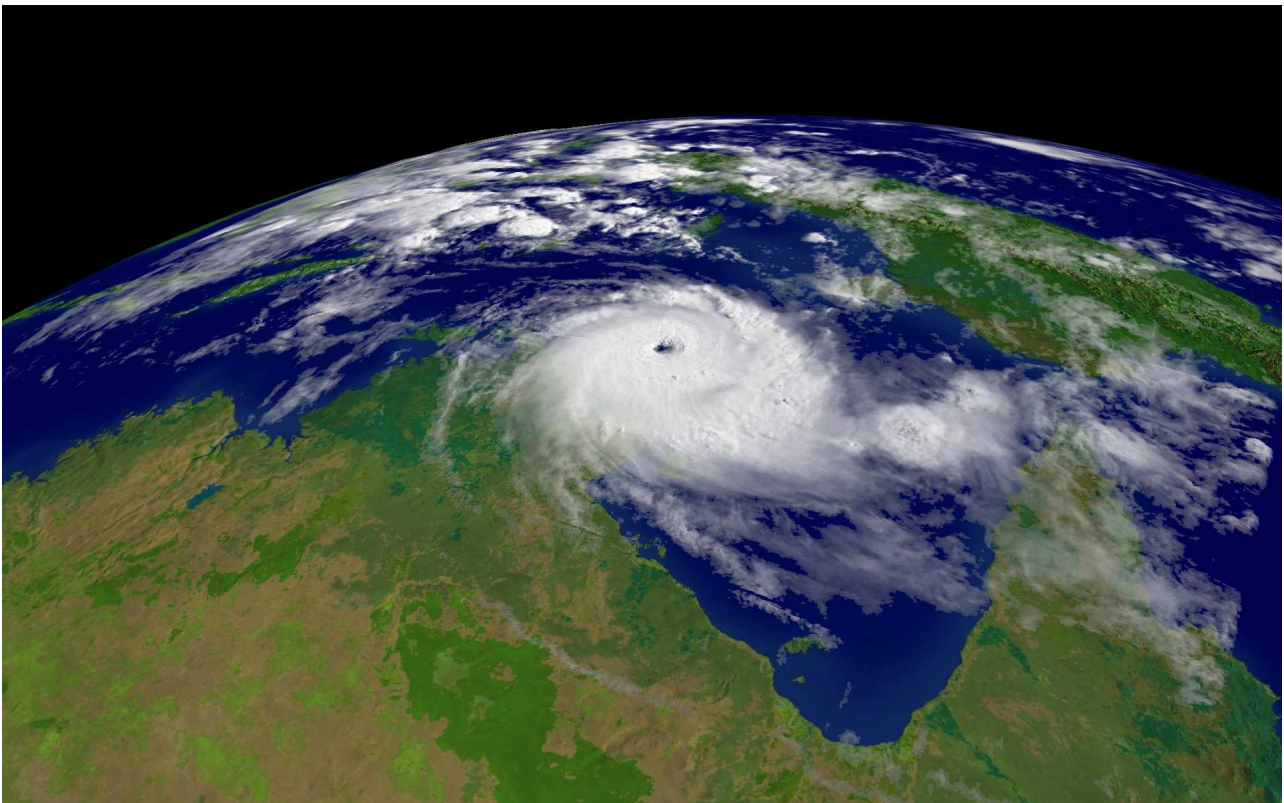
Plant Sales - Can people who are selling plants at the up and coming plant sales please send the names and numbers to Marj. Preferred format is on an excel spread sheet and emailed to seeds@topendseeds.com.au.

~ PAST EVENTS ~

July General Meeting

Dr. Garry Cooke is the principal research scientist at CSIRO (<http://www.csiro.au>). He came to the Top End 19 years ago to look at the effects of fire. Many papers have been written on this topic, but looking at the results of Cyclone Monica, made him think they'd missed something.

Cyclones are fed by warm water from the ocean and dry air from land. As the sea off the Top End is relatively shallow, there are no deep, cool strata to reduce the water temperature. Consequently Darwin is one of the most vulnerable cities worldwide, to be hit by a large cyclone.



The Top End generally experiences relatively small cyclones by world standards – Tracy was one of the smallest on record. Yet Monica was one of the most intense cyclones to make landfall in the southern Hemisphere (see above; photo courtesy of NASA).

The recurrence interval for a category five cyclone such as Monica is currently thought to be 1 in 785,000 years. However, several of similar size have hit or just missed the Top End in recent years. It's likely that recurrence intervals have been overestimated. And Top End cyclones have changed direction – whereas in the 1800's cyclones travelled west to east, now they move east to west.

Meeting the third Thursday of the month at 7:30 pm at Marrara Christian School Library

Effect on vegetation



Many cyclones hitting the Top End cause substantial damage to trees. At Junction Bay where the eye of Monica made land, 75-80% of woodland trees, mostly *Eucalyptus miniata* and *E. tetradonta*, were snapped off or toppled. Trees lost all their leaves and were also debarked (see right; photo courtesy of CSIRO). Many were “rattled” around in the ground and died later, possibly from damage to their roots.

At Maningrida, 17-18% of trees were damaged by Cyclone Monica, against 43% for Cyclone Tracy. 130 kms away in Jabiru, 43% of trees were down. Thousands of hectares of other trees, for instance paperbarks, were also killed in the delta of the Goomadeer River.

Garry wondered whether such events were shaping our vegetation patterns? For instance, those adult trees not killed by the cyclone may be vulnerable to fire, particularly those in open forest/woodland. However, monsoon forest recovers and thrives.

Palmerston Walk

Marj King and Denise Goodfellow led a walk along the Palmerston escarpment. About a dozen of us attended along with Sarah the dog, and we may have recruited new members on the walk – a couple going to photograph the pink flowers of *Brachichiton megaphylla*. They wished to know what the plant was called and we were able and willing to help!

The Palmerston Escarpment is a steep rocky ridge that winds its way through the suburbs of Gunn, Bakewell and Rosebery. The total length is approximately 2.7 km. but we only covered a small section.



Common trees noted were *Acacia latescens* and *Eucalyptus miniata* (both flowering at the moment), *Xanthostemon paradoxus* (some flowering), *Pogonolobus reticulatum*, and several species of *Grevillea* including *G. dryandri*, and *G. decurens*. Five-fingered fern *Dicranopteris linearis* grows quite prolifically in spots at the base of the escarpment, near purple-flowering *Osbeckia australiana*. The most common shrub along the path was *Boronia lanceolata* (see left). In the wet season the rather pretty orchid *Geodorum neocalidonicum* grows in a few places along the path.

There are rare species along the escarpment including *E. atrovirens*, a smallish tree with grey flaky bark on a greyish or orange trunk. It produces small creamy white flowers late in the wet season. Endemic to the NT it was previously only known from low rocky hills east of Annaburroo.

Call for volunteers

I am currently setting up long-term vegetation monitoring transects in three rainforests east of Darwin and am seeking volunteers to help establish 9 sample lines per forest marked by star pickets located 20m apart.

Once the pickets are set up within a rainforest, a range of vegetation assessment will be conducted. This will provide a baseline against which to assess how the forests change or do not change in the future. The project will hopefully shed light on a range of disturbance agents from fire to cyclone, but is particularly focused on the issue of water supply to the rainforests. The results are expected to assist in determining the allocation of groundwater for environmental requirements. These transects will provide an incredibly valuable means of assessing the outcome of contemporary land management practices and will provide participants an opportunity to learn about rainforests and vegetation assessment.

Meeting the third Thursday of the month at 7:30 pm at Marrara Christian School Library

The work will involve day trips from Darwin and be conducted from Monday 23rd July to Thursday 26th July; Monday 30 July to Friday 3rd August; and Tuesday 7th August to Friday 10th August 2007. If you would like further information, please contact me (Dave Liddle) on 8995 5055bh, 8945 6809ah or email dave.liddle@nt.gov.au

The CSIRO and Territory Wildlife Park in conjunction with the Biodiversity Conservation Unit are conducting flora and fauna surveys on 16 sites within and around the TWP.

The purpose of these surveys is to determine variations in flora and fauna composition and densities between burned and unburned sites. Researchers are seeking assistance with the field work to commence on the 7th of August 2007 (date is tentative at this time). Some experience with animal identification would be an asset, in particular bird identification.

Expressions can be in writing to the Park Manager, Territory Wildlife Park PO Box 771 Palmerston 0831 or by phone on 89887219 or via email at stuart.traynor@nt.gov.au.

Basic accommodation on Park grounds may be available for those wishing to do early starts.

Dion Wedd
Curator of Life Sciences,
Territory Wildlife Park

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

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PO BOX 135 PALMERSTON NT 0831**

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