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## **MAY 2004 NEWSLETTER**

### **MEETINGS AND FIELD TRIPS**

We meet on the third Thursday of the month at 7:30 pm. We attempt to conclude the General meeting by 8:00pm and this is followed by a Guest Speaker beginning at 8:15 pm. There is time for a cuppa inbetween the meeting and the guest speaker. The venue for our meeting is Marrara Christian School, on the corner of Amy Johnson and McMillans Drive. All welcome. Bring plants to swap, sell or have identified.

## **COMING EVENTS COMING EVENTS COMING EVENTS**

### **~ NEXT MEETING THURSDAY MAY 20TH ~**

#### **~ GUEST SPEAKER: ~ STEVE POPPLE**

At our May meeting Steve Popple will be our Guest Speaker. His topic of discussions is "Bringing Local Flora Back" There are 6 landcare groups working within the urban Darwin area to rehabilitate local bushland. each of these groups face different challenges in restoring local flora communities. This talk will focus on how various landcare groups approach bushland rehabilitation, and how you can make your garden bush friendly. Steve currently works within the "Landcare" department of the N.T.

### **~ MAY '04 FIELD TRIP ~**

#### **SUNDAY 23 MAY – SAND SHEET FLOWERS**

We will be exploring an area next to the Howard River where, with the receding water, there are many small plants in flower, including water lilies and local carnivorous plants such as Drosera, Byblis and Utricularias. Be prepared to walk in wet sedgeland and bring plenty of water, sun block and mozzie repellent. Meet at 9.00am at the Howard River crossing on Gunn Point Road (about five kilometres past the Howard Springs Nature Reserve turn-off).

### **2004 GARDEN SPECTACULAR**

Only three and a half months to go before the 2004 Garden Spectacular. Have you propagated all those native plants that you would like to sell at the Garden Spectacular in August? If not, do so now so that they will be a reasonable size and ready to sell at the Spectacular. This event has always been a great way to promote the use of Top End native plants in local gardens and we encourage your participation in this event.

### **OTHER HAPPENINGS OF INTEREST**

At the NT Field Naturalist Club next meeting on Wednesday May 12th Mark Gardener is the guest speaker. He will be speaking on 'The Bizarre Flora of New Caledonia' at 7.45pm in the Seminar Room (Building 30) of the School of Australian Indigenous Knowledge Systems (used to be FATSIS) at Casuarina campus of CDU. This will be followed on Saturday May 15th by a Field Trip, meeting at the George Brown Botanic Gardens at Any of our members interested in participating in one or both of these activities will be most welcome.

## REPORT ON THE APRIL FIELD TRIP BY SALLY JACKA AND DAVE LIDDLE

The Litchfield National Park Easter trip was enjoyed by fifteen people with walking, fishing and swimming in glorious weather. The focus for the more serious plant people was on wet areas, as now is the time to view small flowering plants in the receding water of swamps.

Tabletop swamp was wetter than expected, but still provided interest with keying out two water lillies, *Nyphaea hastifolia* and *Nyphaea violacea*, and photographing curious cauliflorous flowering of *Melaleuca leucadendra* (see picture). The leeches finally won and we moved on to upstream of Tolmer falls where we had a refreshing swim interspersed with seeking out some *Utricularias* and setting off the triggers of *Stylidium*s. *Eucalyptus porrecta* and native *Hibiscus petherickii* bushes were both spectacular in flower. Other less common Eucalypts, *E. kombolgiensis* and *E. brachyandra* were also observed.

On the second day, while some enjoyed successful fishing at the Finnis River crossing, others wandered in a nearby swamp and found many things in flower, including a *Centranthera tranquebarica*, which is data deficient and not previously known to be in the Litchfield area. We also found a tiny pink-mauve flower, only recently discovered by herbarium staff and also not previously known in the Litchfield area. It is *Goodenia eliaosome*, although has not yet been officially named.

Other species included two beautiful trigger plants, the spectacular *Stylidium ceratophoran* and another deep pink *Stylidium*, *Buchneria gracilis*, many varieties of *Mitrasacme* and numerous *Utricularias*, including *chrysantha*, *hamiltonii*, *lasiocaulis*, *leptoplectra*, *odorata* and *D17394 parvialba* (previously *caerulea*).



*Melaleuca leucadendra* (Paperbark) displaying cauliflorous flowers.

Cauliflorous flowers or cauliflory refers to the production of an inflorescence on the trunk of older branches of a plant. This form of flowering occurs commonly in some species of rainforest Myrtaceae (e.g. *Syzygium cormiflorum* (Bumpy Satinash) in far north Queensland). However, the production of flowers on the trunk of other Myrtaceae, such as this species of *Melaleuca*, is a curious oddity. The cauliflorous flowers pictured are probably the result of a pathogen attack on the tree. Some other paperbarks around the Tabletop Swamp were also noted to be displaying this and other examples of abnormal flowering.

With our fill of stomping around in swamps, we walked up a tributary to Walker Creek. This began by walking through a drainage tunnel under the road very quietly, so as not to scare the many small bats nesting there. It was not so pleasant at first, walking through a myriad of weed species, but as we ventured further upstream, native rainforest species dominated and the range of beautiful butterflies made the hike up well worthwhile. At the top we climbed out into the savanna woodland and walked back down to the road, amongst native grasses and many flowering herbs.

Next, a walk along Walker Creek where we saw many more plants in flower, including *Osbeckia australiana*, more *Droseras* and *Mitrasacme* and *Trachymene didisoides*. Finishing the excursion with a swim and sliding down the cascades was fun for all, young and old.

A short late afternoon stroll from our accommodation revealed a substantial population of the Society emblem, *Grevillea longicuspis*, in flower.

The focus for Sunday morning shifted from diaspores to eggs, with all the young folk (and some not so young) searching the surrounds of our abode to see what the Easter Bilby had left behind. If the quantity of eggs was any indication of a reward earned through good behaviour, one could only conclude that the party was primarily comprised of saints. In the afternoon, a clamber to the cascades and swim did much to burn-off the indulgences of the morning. An attractive stretch of riverine communities including a grove of the clumping palm *Hydriastele wendlandiana* on a seepage area. Rocky outcrops supported our native Top End Hoya, *Hoya australis* subsp. *rupicola*.

On Monday the party divided into two groups: those with a focus on the pleasure of a another swim at the Cascades and a dip in the downstream thermal pool; and those who headed for the delights of Petherick's Rainforest. Petherick's is a wonderful spring fed forest on the escarpment of the Table Top Range. A perennially moist forest that supports an excellent selection of wet forest species, including *Elaeocarpus angustifolius*. In the Northern Territory, this large buttressed tree primarily occurs in the wet spring fed forests of the Tiwi Islands. As with many other *Elaeocarpus*, the leaves turn all shades red when they come to the end of their days as photosynthetic organs. The assortment of leaf colours of this and many other species provided a great focus for the attention of the younger members of our group. Other plants that caught our eye ranged from a large Banyan, *Ficus virens*, strangling its host, to the annual above ground leaves of the cheeky yam *Amorphophallus paeoniifolius*. The wander through Petherick's Rainforest nicely rounded off an enjoyable weekend relaxing at the comfortable accommodation of the Woolaning Homeland Christian College, interspersed with excursions to swim or watch the leaves grow!

**NEXT MEETING THURSDAY THURSDAY MAY 20TH ~  
~ GUEST SPEAKER: STEVE POPPLE ~ ”**

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