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~ May 2008 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.

~ NEXT MEETING THURSDAY 15th May ~

An Inconvenient Truth. Robin Knox

The Climate Project, a nonprofit initiative, began with the mission of increasing public awareness of the climate crisis at a grassroots level. Volunteers are trained by Al Gore to present an updated version of the slideshow featured in the film 'An Inconvenient Truth'. There are a total number of 2300 presenters worldwide.

Robin Knox, the COOLmob Project Manager, attended a Climate Project training session with Al Gore last year and will be presenting at the May meeting. This is an opportunity to get better informed on the issues of and possible local affects of climate change. Robin can also make suggestions and answer questions about what you can do to reduce your carbon footprint.

~ NEXT FIELD TRIP- May ~

Plant identification workshop.

Unfortunately we had to postpone the workshop due to time constraints on both the organisers part and TENPS members. A number of members indicated they were interested but had other commitments for this particular week-end. With this in mind it has been decided to run the workshop over 2 half days. The format will be slightly different and the venue closer to town. Details of when and where are yet to be decided, but Dale has indicated he will come along to the next general meeting with an outline. We will certainly be in touch with those who put their names down for the original event, including those members of Field Naturalists who made contact.

WHAT IS YOUR COMMITTEE DOING ???

- Listing Russell's number in Telstra white pages as information contact for TENPS;
- Researching development of a web page for our society;
- Organising a presentation and static display at the WED Expo on 1 June 2008;
- Seeking ongoing funding for fence maintenance at Bankers Jungle;
- Applying for a sales area at the Tropical Garden Spectacular 9-10 August 2008.

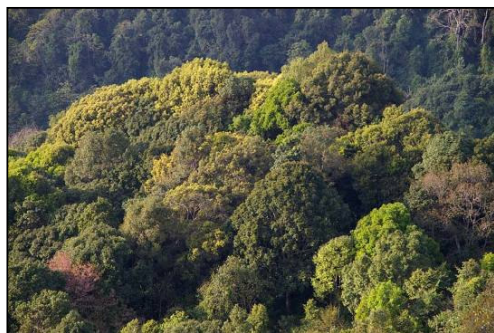
~ Notes from GENERAL MEETING – April ~

"The hill forests of central Indochina" - Don Franklin

Notes taken by Felicity Middleton

Our April speaker, Don Franklin, took us through the hills and mountains of northern Thailand and north-west Laos. The story began on the Mekong River with 2 days travel in a long flat bottomed boat. The second leg was on the Nam (River) Ou over 2½ days; a very clear pretty river flowing through spectacular scenery. The third journey was on the Nam Fa.

The slopes of Di Inthanon in Thailand rise from 300m to 2600m above sea level. Thailand has some broad flat valleys and, in northern Thailand, the lowlands comprise evergreen rainforest, with deciduous bamboo and dry dipterocarp forests. The highlands are moist evergreen, including cloud forests, with areas of dry evergreen, including pines. Trees in drier lowland areas have deciduous leaf colour and the Dipterocarpaceae family is strongly represented.



Pine trees and rhododendrons thrive in the highlands of northern Thailand. In Doi Inthanon National Park, cloud forest and grasslands are found in the highlands. The highest mountain is forested to the top. At 2500m the cloud forests are very wet. Montane forest, at 1600m, is less wet, evergreen with closed canopy.

Doi Pui Forest Canopy. Photo Don Franklin

Thailand has a population of some 100 million. Forests cover about 60% of the northern section of the country. A total ban is imposed on commercial logging of native forests. The ban is implemented through an extensive system of national parks and driven by the need to protect catchments for water for lowland rice fields. Hunting remains a major issue. A major commitment is made to developing economic alternatives for the hill tribes, mainly in the form of tourism and alternative cropping systems. These are lowland peoples, rice growers; the hill tribes are different ethnically.

Dry Dipterocarp Forest Canopy Mae Hong Son Jr. Photo Don Franklin

Laos is the most heavily forested country in Asia and is largely undeveloped overall. Northwest Laos is a little moister and cooler with evergreen forest. In Laos, evergreen forests often have deciduous emergents showing at the top of the canopy. Below 800m, lowland forest is found and wild bananas are common.



Deciduous native bamboo is replacing the old teak forests. Now, in Laos, teak is being planted on degraded land areas. Some 15% of the country is designated as National Protected Areas, selected genuinely on an ecological basis. Cultural/ecotourism can provide income and the country retains populations of elephants and tigers etc, and receives foreign aid. However, management of National Protected Areas is seriously problematic and not always implemented. The army controls logging in native forests, and the government is secretive, impoverished and ineffective. Corruption is a further factor.



Don's talk was wide ranging in its content and I am hard put to do justice to it. It covered so much more than a simple description of scenes and plants. His photographs were amazing and varied and his enthusiasm quick and infectious. Thank you, Don, for a most interesting, entertaining and engaging evening.

Bamboo. Nam Tok Mae Surin National Park lr. Photo Don Franklin.

~ Summary FIELD TRIP- April 2008 ~

Sayer Road Field Trip

On Saturday 19 April a group of TENPS members and friends met at the corner of Sayer Road and the Stuart Highway to tackle the weeds growing amongst the *Citrus gracilis*. It was very satisfying to be able to clean up the area at the end of the wet, although the abrupt ending of this years' wet in March made the work a little harder than we had hoped. The damage caused by spraying along the fence line was evident, but it was pleasing to see that many of the previously tagged *Citrus gracilis* were still alive. 52 live plants were found. All of the Gamba Grass was removed as was much of the Mission Grass.

Thanks to everyone for your efforts. A great job! Well done!



~ WHAT'S IN FLOWER? ~

Hibiscus panduriformis is a grey-green shrub growing to only 1-2m high. It is covered with soft hairs and prefers sandy to heavy soils. Flowers are from April to September. Cultivation from seed, little tried.

Photo: Russell Dempster from his block

[Information from Brock]

Haemodorum coccineum is a perennial herb to 1m high with somewhat grass like leaves preferring gravelly or shallow soils.

Flowers: November to March although sometimes flowers through to May. The flowers & roots can be used to produce a purple-red dye.

Photo: Isabella Amouzandeh Kakadu National Park

[Information from Brock]



CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOME

Photos of flowers, plants, gardens, vegetation ... ☺

If you are willing to have your photographs included in newsletters please forward to Melina McDowell melinajmcdowell@yahoo.com.au

~FUTURE EVENTS ~

May:

Community consultation workshops for Howard River water use options. Ray Hempel

At the February TENPS monthly meeting, Emma Woodward spoke to members about a project being conducted by a team from CSIRO in the Howard River region, east of Darwin. Early in April, we received information from Emma and Sue Jackson about community consultation workshops for Howard River water use options. The first session was a 1-day meeting held at CSIRO Berrimah on 22 April. A 2-day session is to follow on 15 and 16 May at Charles Darwin University, from 8.30 to 3.30 on day 1 and 8.30 to 4.30 on day 2. Morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea will be provided. TENPS member Ray Hempel attended the first session, and his report follows. If members wish to obtain details of the second session, they are invited to contact Emma Woodward on (08) 8944 8409 or Sue Jackson on (08) 8944 8415 both with CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems. If any member attending the second session were prepared to provide a report for the TENPS newsletter that would be much appreciated.

Session 1. 22 April 2008 CSIRO Berrimah

This session was attended by representatives of TENPS, Bushfire council, shooters, field and game, Larrakia, amateur fishermen, McMinns lagoon, Landcare and other interested parties who came and went during proceedings. Although invited, representatives of the extractive and horticultural industries did not attend.

The meeting was introduced to the water planning process for the Howard River area, the role of the CSIRO/CDU project and provided with an overview of the project team's work to date. The meeting discussed at length many water and wetland management issues, values, options and future use scenarios.

A number of criteria were developed relating to future uses of the area and were weighted in terms of their importance to the group. From this a list of questions was produced. These questions will be put to various people with specialist expertise at the next workshop to be held at CDU on 15 May.

It would appear, from information already obtained, that there are some serious and worsening water issues in the area which will necessitate the development and introduction of a water allocation plan. Such a plan will require a very balanced approach to allocation given that the priority "beneficial uses" are for environmental and cultural purposes with uses for public water supplies, rural and stock use, manufacturing industry and agriculture taking second place.

There will be much emotion associated with this process, not the least being the current and increased pumping by PAWA of the McMinns aquifer to supplement the Darwin river dam water supply, the increase in horticultural use and the impact of all of this on the many domestic bores in the area. At present there are in excess of 3000 bores in the study area.

'Scientists call for banning of dangerous grass in northern australia'

On 31 March 2008, the Cooperative Research Centre for Australian Weed Management issued a media release with this heading: The media release opened with the following paragraphs:

Almost 200 ecologists and weed scientists have signed an open letter calling on the Queensland and Northern Territory Governments to ban the planting and sale of gamba grass (*Andropogon gayanus*), a dangerous exotic grass that fuels fires of such ferocity they could transform Australia's northern savannas into weed monocultures.

The Gamba Declaration was launched in Brisbane today by Dr Rachel McFadyen, CEO of the Weeds CRC, and in Darwin by Professor Stephen Garnett, Director, School for Environmental Research, Charles Darwin University.

'Future generations will ask how we could have been so stupid as to allow the planting of this grass. It's foxes and cane toads all over again, with the difference that we know full well what the consequences of gamba grass are,' Dr McFadyen said. 'It's a major threat to biodiversity, and it's a high fire risk for wildlife, humans and infrastructure.'

The Gamba Declaration was sent to the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, the Premier of Queensland and the Federal Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts with copies to relevant federal, Queensland and Northern Territory ministers. The introduction of gamba grass was banned in Western Australia on 17 January 2008.

Territory environment minister, Len Kiely, has said he will wait to see the results of a weeds risk assessment before deciding what to do about the plant. The Territory government is reported as saying that it will balance horticultural, agricultural and environmental interests when deciding what to do about gamba grass.

According to the media release, a copy of the open letter with supporting information and quotes can be obtained from <http://www.gamba.org.au/declaration>

June:

World Environment Day Expo 2008

The Environment Centre NT Inc has invited TENPS to participate again in its annual World Environment Day Expo. Whilst the official World Environment Day is celebrated on 5 June, which is a Thursday this year, the Darwin Expo will be held from 11 am to 5 pm on Sunday 1 June. The theme this year is 'Mobilise for Change – Get involved'. We intend to mount a static display, as we have done in previous years, highlighting TENPS's aspirations and activities etc and providing relevant information. A couple of our committee members have offered generously to make a presentation. Support from members in preparing the display and generally on the day will be much appreciated.

Things of interest

ABC weather pix



Long time member, Pat Rasmussen decided she was tired of the endless sunsets and such that preface presentation of the weather following the 7 pm news on ABC television. Pat believes it provides a good opportunity to draw attention to the beauty of our native flora and contacted ABC management to sound them out with the idea. She was told that suitable photographs of appropriate subjects would be welcomed. Consequently, we are inviting members to make available for this purpose any of their better photographs.

Landcare is a great community organisation of groups committed to caring for the environment. These groups look after an area of vegetation through planting, watering, weeding and general maintenance. It is a fantastic way to get out there in your local community and enjoy your area. If you are keen to get involved contact the Landcare coordinator on 8999 3423.

The Landcare groups of the NT:

Darwin Urban Groups

Casuarina Coastal Reserve
Knuckey Lagoon Recreation Reserve
Ludmilla
Rapid Creek
National Trust (Dashwood Crescent - City)
East Point Breezeway

Outer Darwin

Coomalie
Cox Peninsula

Litchfield Landcare Groups

Darwin River
Holtze
McMinns Reserve
Lambells Lagoon
Livingstone Reserve
Taminmin High School (Woodside Reserve)
Girraween
Friends of Fogg Dam

Field Naturalists:

May 2008 Meeting. Note non-standard date and location: Friday May 16 at Mary River Park.

Combined evening meeting with the Australian Naturalists Network. There will be four speakers:

- Bob Wasson: Geomorphic development of the Alligator Rivers floodplain.
- Stephen Garnett: Climate change and tropical birds.
- Peter Jacklyn: Termites.
- Don Franklin: Life history of bamboo.



For more information contact: Don Franklin & Christine Maas
eucalypt@octa4.net.au or 8948 1293

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

TO:

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