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~ OCTOBER 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

- Library – Books in the TENPS Joyce Stobo Memorial Library have been organised into lists by Category order and Author order. These lists will be attached to the library along with instructions on borrowing books.
- Plant Sale – The next plant sale is Saturday December 1st at Coolalinga
- Newsletter – NT government and other large organisations have anti-spam preventing receipt of group emails with attachments. Hopefully this problem will be resolved at a later stage.

~ NEXT MEETING, THURSDAY 18th OCTOBER~

Moths by day, butterflies by night! A talk Michael Braby

Moths are generally thought of as being drab, dull coloured, fly at night (nocturnal) and are pests that eat your clothes and food, whereas butterflies are more widely appreciated because they are brightly coloured and more readily seen due to their day-flying (diurnal) habits. However, a number of moths from different taxonomic groups have evolved day-flying or crepuscular habits, while a few butterflies fly only at dusk. These moths are equally spectacular as butterflies, but remain poorly studied. Michael will show some of the species, and their larval food plants, likely to be seen in the Northern Territory.”

~ FIELD TRIP, SUNDAY 21st OCTOBER~

A further survey of the threatened species *Ptychosperma bleeseri* will be conducted by Dave Liddle on one of a few sites remaining in the Top End where this palm has been sighted in the past. Details will be given out at the next General Meeting on Thursday 18th October. If you are unable to make it to the meeting but would like to come along please phone Dave on 8945 6809.

~ OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS ~

AGM

TENPS AGM is being held on November 15th prior to our General Meeting. All committee positions will be declared vacant and we encourage members to become involved in the organisation of events. At this stage we have not confirmed our speaker for the meeting but hopefully Ian Morris will come along and share his knowledge.

NOVEMBER FIELD TRIP – Saturday 17th

The intention is to visit Robin Falls and the surrounding area where there are a number of not so common species. It will be a full day trip and departure time and vehicle sharing arrangements will be organised at the prior general meeting. Contact person is Marj King 8985 6885

PLANT SALE

A plant sale is to be held on Saturday 1st December outside Woolworths at Coolalinga, also on this date Greening Australia is having their plant sale, so if we cannot supply what you want there is the possibility they can help.

OPEN GARDEN

After a very successful Open Garden in August Dale Dixon is going to have another and has asked TENPS to sell plants. This is to be held sometime in March.

PLANT ID WORKSHOP

Two years ago a very successful Plant ID Workshop was held out at Litchfield. An event like this requires considerable organisation and forward planning but the intention is to schedule it either the last week-end in April or the first week-end in May. Dale Dixon from the Herbarium has very kindly offered his services again.

FIELD NAT'S CALENDAR

Next Field Trip: 22nd October – Annual Bird Watching Event on the Ranger Lease at Jabiru.

Contacts: Sally McFadyen & Amber Hooke Ph 8938 1228

November 14th Meeting: Piers Barrow talking on Leichhardt's Grasshoppers

December 12th Meeting: Greg Browning on Severe Weather Events

~ PAST EVENTS ~

September Trip to Members Properties at McMinns Lagoon and Virginia

My 2 ha block at McMinns Lagoon was subdivided from an 8 ha block owned by friends, who sold it to me in 1985. The land had not been treated well, most recently having been leased for horse agistment. The builders who erected my home seemed hellbent on destructing as much vegetation as possible during the six months or so they spent here, leaving a bare dry compacted area all around the building. In 1987 a fire went through the block. It came from the back on a windy day, whilst I was at work in Darwin. It burnt out all vegetation to within some 40 m of the front boundary, but fortunately spared the house. Quite frankly, this scared the socks off me and forced me into having the block slashed for a couple of years whilst I saved to get my own ride-on. Men on slashing gear tend not to be too kind to vegetation I found! In December 2001, the block was registered with Litchfield shire's Land for Wildlife Scheme, I met Sally Jacka and I made up my mind to keep the block for native species. Mission grass and snakeweed have been major issues.

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

Nowadays, I take out the firebreak and make necessary pathways to the bore etc with the ride-on. Otherwise, I weed by hand. The mission grass is largely under control, but now there is a problem with humidicola, tully grass, which has come through from the block behind, along with a goodly crop of hyptus, and probably spraying will be the only way I will get rid of it. There is some fairly tall timber on the block. Basically, it is open woodland with predominantly *Eucalyptus tetradonta* and *E. miniata*. Strider identified *E. porrecta*. There is variation in vegetation between the front and the back. The front boundary features a line of *Callitris intratropica*, which had been planted as a dust barrier before my time, as McMinn's Drive was not sealed then. These have now naturalized on the block and are spreading around more extensively than I like. There are numerous examples of *Petalostigma pubescens*, *Erythrophleum chlorostachys* and *Clerodendrum floribundum* along with *C. holtzei*. Reflecting, I suspect, the largely degraded nature of the block, large stands of *Calytrix exstipulata* are found, and are now being joined by spreading masses of *Grevillea dryandri*. These have come from 2 nurseries bought plants I put in my house garden in 1986. *Grevillea pteridifolia* is spreading around in the same way. *Planchonia careya* abound as do *Syzygium eucalyptoides ssp. bleeseri* and *Ficus scobina*, *Flueggea virosa*, *Alphitonia excels*, *Brachychiton diversifolius* and *paradoxum*, *Breynia cernua* and *Persoonia falcata*. *Planchonella pohlmaniana* are now appearing and last year I found 2 examples of *Exocarpus latifolius*. The back of the block has numbers of *Terminalia carpentariae* and *T. ferdinandiana*, many small *Acacia aulacocarpa* and numerous *A. auriculiformis*.



Xanthostemon eucalyptoides are also found and many *Buchanania obovata*. Throughout the block, and spreading increasingly, are stands of *Pandanus spiralis*, the lovely *Alstonia actinophylla* and, of course, *Cycas armstrongii*, of which several are close to 2 m in height, and *Livistona humilis*.

This field trip took place in late September, deep into the dry season. Outside of the immediate house garden area, no water is available for plants other than what nature provides. The grasses were largely dried up, the prevalent *Heteropogon* species being nothing but withered clumps in the dense layer of leaf litter. Many trees are deciduous and hard to identify without fruit or foliage. A large *Mallotus* at the back was of interest, but the species could not be identified. I thank those who were able to come for their interest and knowledge. We might do it again at a time of year when the trees are in full leaf and the ground is green!

The TENPS Mob at Felicity's Place

From my place, we went to Russell's which is an entirely different neck of the woods! I think Russell said that he, Penny and their young family moved to Virginia some 9 to 10 years ago and they found a beautiful block for themselves. A rock escarpment runs through and, at its base, a rapidly flowing wet season creek, providing a good variety of environment for the plants that Russell so clearly loves. At the time of our visit, the creek was nothing more than a dry gully, deeply eroded in places. Russell was able to indicate the excellent way in which some trees are able to halt erosion where he has planted selected species along the creek. He told us that, at this time of year, he will run bore water through his rainforest area, effectively flooding it for some hours at a time. This has enabled him to establish a flourishing green area with species of *Calophyllum*, *Timonus*, *Cathormion umbellatum*, *Crotons*, *Diospyros*, *Elaeocarpus*, *Macaranga* and *Mallotus* and other species too numerous for me to recall them all. We will have to wait for the plant list for that level of detail.

It was a pleasure to visit Russell and Penny's shady hideaway after the dry exposure of my block, and to enjoy Penny's delicious scones and meet the latest little rabbit to join the Dempster menagerie. Thank you Penny and Russell for your generous hospitality!

Felicity Middleton

Joyce Stobo Library

Our general meeting was a little different from the usual state of affairs. Joyce Stobo's family attended and several bottles of champagne joined the tea and coffee on the sideboard.

Dave Liddle talked about *Boronia viridiflora* and *B. quadrilata*, two of over a hundred endemic plant species in the Arnhem Land escarpment. The landscape is highly dissected which results in high species diversity. The study area is in the East Alligator catchment near Jabiru in Kakadu National Park.

There are only two known areas of *B. viridiflora* in the study area, of a few hundred plants. About 1.1/2 metres in length, it hangs pendulously from cracks on sandstone cliffs where it grows. *B. quadrilata* is only known from a small area. It grows in rocky outcrops.

Both plants need rocks that absorb water and offer fire protection. Like many escarpment plants, *Boronia* are sensitive to too frequent fires.

Sally then spoke of the *Boronia* propagation project. Why are they so restricted in distribution? It seems there is poor seed set, poor dispersal, and poor seed viability. She spoke about various experiments aimed at increasing germination.

Sally then launched the Joyce Stobo library.



Dave, Sally and Joyce's family

Tribute to Joyce Stobo (1920-2005)

Joyce Stobo was an active member of the Top End Native Plant Society from 1987 to 2005. For most of this time she was a committee member and undertook the roles of Librarian, Publicity officer and President.

She embraced these roles very seriously, particularly the position of Librarian. Joyce's strongly held belief that the Library was a valuable and important resource for the Society ensured that we have a diverse collection of books. Continuing this conviction, she bequeathed her extensive personal library and her microscope to the Top End Native Plant Society.

Joyce was an inspiration to many members of the Society and has changed peoples' attitude toward the seasonal wetlands of Darwin's rural area, many of which are of international significance. She was a driving force in bringing the small showy Darwin region wetland plants to our attention. She inspired many of us to recognise that, here in the Top End, we have a beautiful array of wildflowers that are of conservation significance and that their habitats are worth preserving.



Monica's damage still evident



Michael and I travelled to Mamadewerrie, an outstation in western Arnhem Land in late September, for a relative's funeral. The damage caused by Cyclone Monica is obvious. Near the outstation virtually all big trees are down or dead. Now fires are burning along much of the main road.

Fortunately the area has had recent rain and the fires aren't the usual conflagration that one sees late in the dry season. It will be interesting to see whether weeds gain a foothold throughout the damaged forest.

Denise Lawungkurr Goodfellow

The following article courtesy of The Environment Centre was sent to a TENPS member in response to our July speaker, Dr. Brian Thistelton who spoke on termites.

New termite chemical open to misuse

The Environment Centre is very concerned about the widespread use of a new termite-killing chemical in the NT. 'Termidor' is the replacement chemical for the highly dangerous organochlorine 'mirant'.

The active chemical constituent of Termidor is fipronil.

- Fipronil is highly toxic to a wide range of insects (e.g. bees and ants) and animals (e.g. lizards, frogs, fish, birds). There is increasing evidence that it is being misused to kill green ants and other native insects, which in turn are eaten by lizards or birds which are then killed as well.
- The NT Department of Primary Industry, which regulates chemical use in the NT, has decided to make termidor much more freely available to the public than is allowed anywhere else in Australia. Elsewhere it can only be purchased and used by licensed pest controllers, under a label specifying: "For professional use only; licensed pest control operators only". In the NT, almost anyone can buy Termidor over the counter.
- Once again a lower standard of public and environmental safety has been deemed acceptable by our pesticide Department.
- As well as being used around houses it is also being used on citrus, grape and mango crops. It is being used in both rural and suburban areas and in ways that are not specified on the label. There are many potential harmful impacts on people and wildlife as a result of widespread and improper use of fipronil.
- Fipronil is banned in parts of Europe because of its toxicity to beneficial insects such as bees.

The Environment Centre wants the use of fipronil/termidor to be much more tightly controlled (e.g. licensed pest controllers only) and the Department should be forced to monitor and report on all applications of this chemical. Instead of always promoting the increasing use of toxic chemicals, the Department should be putting far more effort into non-chemical responses to pest issues. To find out more about this and other chemicals visit: www.pan-uk.org

Guidelines for Preparation and Sale of Propagated Plants

TENPS is committed to promote and encourage the propagation and cultivation of Top End native flora. To help in the achievement of this object, all members are encouraged to propagate and pot up Top End native plants. Sales of these plants are open to the public at various times through the year. In order to ensure that quality plants are available for these sales, the following guidelines have been developed. For any propagation advice, or if you have questions, please contact members of the cultivation subcommittee.

Appearance of Plants and Pots

Plants should be free of obvious disease and pest damage, and vigorous (unless in a deciduous phase).

Pots should be clean and undamaged.

Dead or partly eaten leaves should have been removed from plants.

Weeds should have been removed from pots.

Untidy growth on plants should be pruned.

Any root material outside of pot should be pruned.

Plants should be staked as necessary.

The size of the plant needs to be appropriate to pot size.

The plant should be ready to plant out or pot on.

The potting material should be a good quality mix permitting free drainage.

Labelling

Where possible, labels should be arranged well in advance of plant sales. Plants should be labelled using TENPS computer generated labels, if possible with the following information.

Botanic name.

Common name, particularly in the Top End of the NT.

Description, including ultimate size.

Growing conditions.

Pruning tolerance.

Water requirements.

Special features, eg. bird or butterfly attracting, indoor or veranda, deciduous, perfumed, colourful flowers and leaves, shade or screening benefits.

Tubes

For small tubes, notes with information on how to care for the plant to help ensure survival should be provided on a push-in label and on a handout. Desirable information includes:

Care in the pot.

When to plant out.

Where to plant out.

Watering and fertilising.

Sun exposure and protection.

Protection from predation and accidental injury eg. rocks, fence.

Note that membership subs were due on 1 July, 2007.

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

TO:

**~SUBSCRIPTION FORM MEMBERSHIP DUE 1 JULY 2006~
TOP END NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY
PO BOX 135 PALMERSTON NT 0831**

Please accept my subscription/renewal for membership of the Top End Native Plant Society

My details are as follows:

Name/s (Please print all family member names)

.....

Postal Address Post Code

Telephone (work) (home)

Email address

Newsletters are now available by email (Acrobat Reader required to read files).
If you would like your newsletter sent by email please tick the box.

Payment Enclosed \$..... (\$20.00 per member/family, \$15.00 unwaged)

Signature

Date:/...../.....

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