

CARDWELL BIOBLITZ

Jacqui Richards of Terrain Natural Resource Management (the Wet Tropics' NRM group) is organizing a bioblitz for the Cardwell area for the 15th and 16th June. This is an intense period of biological surveying in an attempt to record as many of the living species within a designated area over a 24 hour period. This community project is aimed at bringing together professional and amateur biologists, ecologists and naturalists - and those interested in learning more about their natural environment - to advance the scientific knowledge of, and learn more about, the Woodlands of the Wet Tropics and their diverse biota, ecological communities, and environmental resources.

She is currently looking for plant experts who would be willing to donate their time to take community groups/individuals out into the survey areas and show them how to conduct basic surveys, identify plants or animal or signs of their presence, answer questions and just generally poke around in the bush looking for interesting things.

If you're interested in helping out, please contact Jacqui at jacquir@terrain.org.au, or telephone 07 4776 0186.



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Excursion to Cattana Wetlands 20 April 2013

By Don Lawie

The Cattana Wetlands were once lowland "Mesophyll Vine Forest with Feather Palms", and the 80 hectare reserve still retains 30 hectares of remnant forest which is pretty much intact. The rest has gone from farmland to a hole in the ground and Mulgrave Shire Council very wisely bought the land and over the years has produced a most impressive "passive recreation area". The holes are now large shallow lakes with islands for birds to nest, the water is covered in waterlilies, the surrounds have been intensively planted with appropriate native species, and bird hides, barbecues and picnic shelters have been emplaced.

On our last visit in 2008 Rob took us across a knee-deep swamp into the remnant area and we saw an array of plants which are rarely seen at sea level. This time we found a boardwalk which meanders across the swamp and allows easy walking and viewing. Alas, the sand ridge that last time was populated by rare plants has been bulldozed and is bare, but I hope that it recommences further to the west. The Wetlands

were officially opened in December 2009, and the earlier plantings are coming to maturity.

Walking tracks, wide, gravelled and well placed are easy to follow. Waterside plantings vary from Melaleuca species to damp-loving plants such as *Hibiscus tiliaceus*, *Thespesia populneoides*, *Nandea orientalis*, *Pandanus spp.*, and *Dillenia alata* in flower and fruit. Birds abounded – Pacific Black Ducks, Pied Cormorants, Darters and lily-walking Jacanas on the water, with Sunbirds, Yellow-spotted Honeyeaters, Rainbow Bee-eaters and kingfishers among the trees. Butterflies abounded – the majestic blue Ulysses near its host tree *Melicope elleryana*. Freshwater Mangrove, *Carallia brachiata* had been planted profusely and supported numerous caterpillars of the 4 o'clock moth pretending to be pretty yellow spotted twigs. Mosquitoes were not obtrusive but an eye-catcher was a large golden web of the *Nephila* spider spanning a narrow creek.

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**Cattana Wetlands
(continued from front page)**

Clearing and planting are continuing on the western side with some interesting species such as the Noni tree *Morinda citrifolia*. Some of the smaller plants there are under assault from the exotic invasive twiner *Centrosema* which can smother a small tree if unchecked. Other vines are abundant, and there were a few species of Mistletoe which had a particular affinity to waterside Melaleucas.



Four o'clock moth larva on Carallia brachiata

Some shrubs planted just back from the water had us confused : they had the appearance of a Red Beech *Dillenia alata* but some features were wrong: the leaf margins were slightly serrate, the buds were pink, the flowers had the right number and colour of petals but the stamens were too long and pure white with no red colouring. I couldn't find any reference to another Australian *Dillenia*. Investigations finally identified the plant as a Malaysian native *Dillenia suffruticosa*, a most attractive plant but why and from where they were planted here are another mystery.



Dillenia suffruticosa



Dendrophthoe sp.



Morinda citrifolia

The Cattana Wetlands are a dynamic and evolving largely manmade system, well worth a leisurely visit and worth putting into our programme for a return visit in a few years time to see what changes have occurred. For now I give full marks to our Council for establishing and maintaining this resource.



Cerbera sp.



Premna serratifolia



This really is an outstandingly beautiful tree. I purchased my specimen in about 1986 at one of those annual Plant Expos conducted by Tablelands Branch SGAP in Merrilands Hall, Atherton where SGAPers offered a vast array of local plants unavailable elsewhere, at attractive prices and with growing advice based on experience.

I planted the seedling on a raised roadside bank in granite soil and on advice gave it no fertilizer and only watered in dry periods – pretty rare in the Babinda area. It grew steadily though rather slowly and now at about 27 years of age is six metres high and about half as wide, multi-trunked, and carries a few flowers along the branches at any time of the year. Peak flowering although, is about February to April when the branches are covered with pendulous short typically Proteaceous “bottlebrush type” racemes that vary in colour from dark purple to port wine in colour (see pic, above right) before maturing to a creamy white.

The green, knobby, walnut sized fruit remain on the limbs for many months until they dehisce to reveal rectangular shiny brown seeds which

Beautiful tree species of the Wet Tropics

Hollandaea riparia, PROTEACEAE

Roaring Meg *Hollandaea*

By Don Lawie



fall or are harvested by birds. The opened fruit cases then remain on the branch.

Identification is fairly simple: for a start *Hollandaea riparia* has only been found in the vicinity of Roaring Meg Creek south of Cooktown, so if a *Hollandaea* is spotted anywhere else (except in a garden) it is probably the also attractive species *H. sayeriana*, or the undescribed and extremely rare *Hollandaea* sp. Pinnacle Rock Track (P.I.Forster PIF10714).

If no flowers are present, the leaves are distinctive, being clustered towards the ends of slender

branchlets, shiny green above when new, paler beneath, lanceolate, about 15 cm long by 3 cm wide. They have a yellowish, depressed midvein, with branch veins widely spaced and anastomosing. The leaf margin has a smooth margin which is rolled under to make a ridge which can be distinguished by the fingertips. There is a noticeable pulvinus at the base of the petiole (*H. sayeriana* leaves also have a pulvinus but the margin is widely dentate and the leaf blade is much longer and broader.



Tree shape is fairly ragged with the trunk dividing into numerous subsidiary trunks commencing at a height or only 80 cm (below).

Propagation: The seeds germinate readily without pretreatment. Cuttings are very reluctant to strike roots. Marcots succeed after several months, BUT despite all of this I have not yet succeeded in growing another specimen. All plants, from seedling, cutting or marcot inevitably die when planted out. I have delayed planting until a plant is about 80 cm high but always with the same result. I theorise that our soil may be responsible (although the parent plant never looked back). I have exactly the same problem with *Sauropus macranthus* from the Atherton Tableland’s Mabi forest which grow prolifically in a pot, flower and fruit, but die in the ground. Attempts continue...



Upcoming Events

CAIRNS SGAP

Saturday 18th May

12 noon. Garden of David and Mary Gandini. Bring lunch, and enjoy a walk around this well established and diverse garden afterwards. David and Mary live at 3 Moowooga Street, Moorbool.

Mary advises there is space for parking at the top of the (steep) driveway. Careful of the lawn if it's been raining!

TABLELANDS SGAP

Meetings on the **4th Wednesday of the month.**

Excursion the following Sunday.

Any queries, please contact Chris Jaminon on 4095 2882 or email hjaminon@bigpond.com

TOWNSVILLE SGAP

Meets on the **2nd Wednesday of the month**, February to November, in Annandale Community Centre at 8pm, and holds excursions the following Sunday.

See www.sgaptownsville.org.au/ for more information.

OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

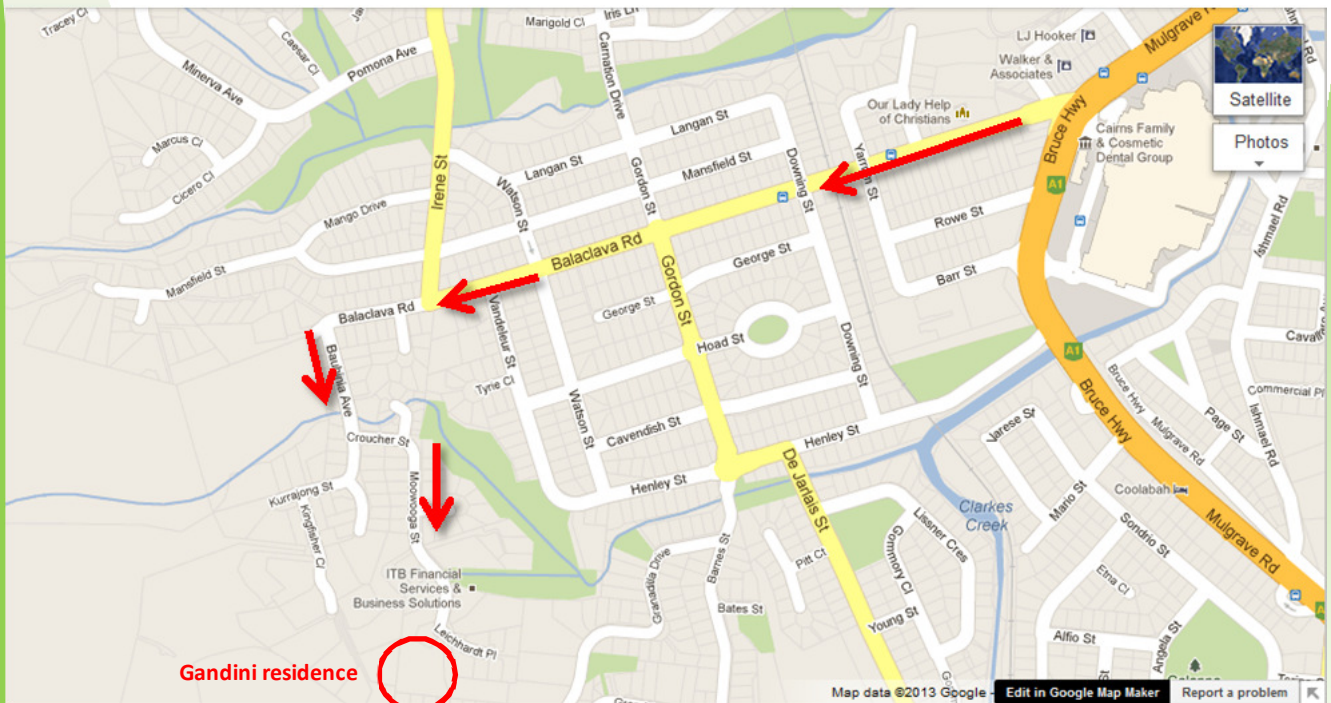
15-16 June 2013

Cardwell Bioblitz. Contact Jacqui Richards of Terrain for more information.

10-16 August 2013

ANPSA Biennial Conference, Sunshine Coast. Held every two years, this is the conference of our national parent organization.

See www.sgapqld.org.au/anpsa2013.html for more information.



Cairns, Queensland, 4870
www.sgapcairns.org.au



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