



Society for Growing Australian Plants Inc., Cairns Branch
Celebrating our 40th year

NEWSLETTER 201 JUNE 2020



A winter wander up Walsh's Pyramid

Stuart Worboys

On the last Sunday of May, a small group of keen walkers met at the Gordonvale service station (corner Bruce Highway and Riverstone Road) to commence a hike up Walsh's Pyramid. Unaware there was more than one servo in Gordonvale, our group departed leaving several people stranded at McDonalds (cnr Bruce Hwy and Draper Rd). Apologies for the misunderstanding.

Starting at roughly 20 m above sea level, the Walsh's Pyramid track is an unrelentingly steep slog, climbing to 922 m in 3 km. But the walk is unique in the Cairns region for providing an insight into the non-rainforest flora of the area. The Pyramid's thin rocky soils, frequent burning and proximity to the rain-magnet of the Bellenden Ker range, means the vegetation of the mountain has more in common with drier sites further inland.

Several species on the mountain, although not rare, are unusual in the region. Near the base of the mountain, woodlands of bloodwood and white mahogany dominate. Approaching the halfway mark, interesting plants start to make an appearance. There is a rare near-coastal

occurrence of *Eucalyptus tindaliae*, and the exposed granite rocks are covered in resurrection plants, *Borya septentrionalis*. Straddling the track is a population of *Pomaderris tropica*, an attractive shrub unique to the mountain.

Further on, the vegetation changes. Two species of *Hibbertia* light up the ground stratum with their golden flowers. Turpentine (*Syncarpia glomulifera*) becomes more common in the canopy, and we start to see the glorious *Banksia aquilonia*, another rare near-coastal occurrence. *Banksia spinulosa*, a dense shrub rarely more than 1.5 m, occurs here near its northern limit (Windsor Tableland is its northern-most occurrence).

Finally at the top, we were rewarded with a breathtaking view of dense cloud. Fortunately the dazzlingly red *Melaleuca pyramidalis* (found only here, and on Hinchinbrook and the Seaview Range) were in flower to provide a distraction. On the peak, a small population of *Acacia falciformis* occurs near its northern limit. On the southern slopes of the peak is a small bouldery heathland with an understorey dominated by *Xanthorrhoea johnsoi* and *Hibbertia*, and a scattering of *Allocasuarina torulosa* between 2 and 3 m tall. In the undergrowth here grows a tiny population of *Acrotriche baileyana*, a relative of the heath that only occurs here and on Bartle Frere. I collected some small samples of this for one of the Herbarium research projects, before joining the crew for the long walk down.



SOCIETY FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS INC., CAIRNS BRANCH

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Half way down, the clouds cleared just enough for us to see Gordonvale and the surrounding canefields.



This beautiful Jewel Beetle (possibly *Temognatha regia*) refused to sit still long enough for a good photo.



Banksia spinulosa



There are few flowers more elegantly presented than Australia's Banksias. This one is *Banksia aquilonia*.



Melaleuca pyramidalis



Destroyer of orchids

Pauline Lawie

This is a photograph of a precious *Geodorum densiflorum*. Every single flower was pollinated and we were looking forward to a grove of beautiful plants.

Obviously we were not alone in finding this plant desirable; the Black and White Tit butterfly (*Hypolycaena danis*) was also enamoured and, in spite of constant vigilance, it won out. At least the main plant is still healthy.

Excellent photographs of this beautiful, little creature can be found in Garry Sankowsky's great new book, *A Field Guide to Butterflies of Australia*, available from:

- Australian Entomological Supplies (www.entosupplies.com.au/books/), \$40.90
- Booktopia (www.booktopia.com.au), \$34.35
- Book Depository (www.bookdepository.com), \$36.19

A new classification for Australia's ferns

Stuart Worboys

The classification of ferns in Australia has recently had a major overhaul, which brings our understanding of their naming and evolutionary arrangement into the 21st century. The last major review of Australia's ferns and fern allies (a group which includes tassel ferns and *Selaginella*) was the Flora of Australia, published in 1998. Since then we have experienced a revolutionary advance in our understanding of biological diversity, resulting from DNA analysis and unprecedented internet access to scanned herbarium specimens held in institutions across the world.

The classification of ferns and fern allies has been investigated by an international group of fern specialists called the Pteridophyte Phylogeny Group, who work as a community to research, discuss and develop the best possible system based on the evidence available. Dr Ashley Field, a botanist at the Australian Tropical Herbarium, is a member of the Group, and on 2 January this year published the outcomes of their work relevant to Australia. The 100 page paper (*Australian Systematic Botany* (2020) Volume 33, pages 1-102) was years in the preparation and required visits to herbaria across Europe and the United States to develop.

The new classification recognises 471 ferns and fern allies occurring on the Australian mainland, with 406 species or 86% of those in Queensland. Several species have been rediscovered after being believed extinct, others in the paper are new records for Australia.

Perhaps the most controversial part of the paper is the nomenclatural section. This means name changes! There are a lot, with many comfortable and familiar names dropped - and it may be a while before these are broadly accepted within the botanical community. The reasons are many - sometimes the name change reflects an older name that was attached to a dusty type specimen discovered in the bowels of an ancient European herbarium collection; in other cases the new name reflects a more natural and scientific classification uncovered by DNA analysis. Here are just a few to finish:

Lycopodiella cernua is now *Palhinhaea cernua*

Cyathea cooperi is now *Sphaeropteris cooperi*

Huperzia phlegmaria was wrongly applied to specimens occurring in Australia, the correct name is *Phlegmariurus harmsii*.

Upcoming events

Townsville

Meetings of Native Plants Queensland - Townsville Branch on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7pm, Annandale Community Centre. Excursions the following Sunday.

Sunday 12 July. Tentatively marked down as official celebration of Townsville Branch's 50th Anniversary. To be confirmed.

Website: www.npqtownsville.org.au

Tablelands

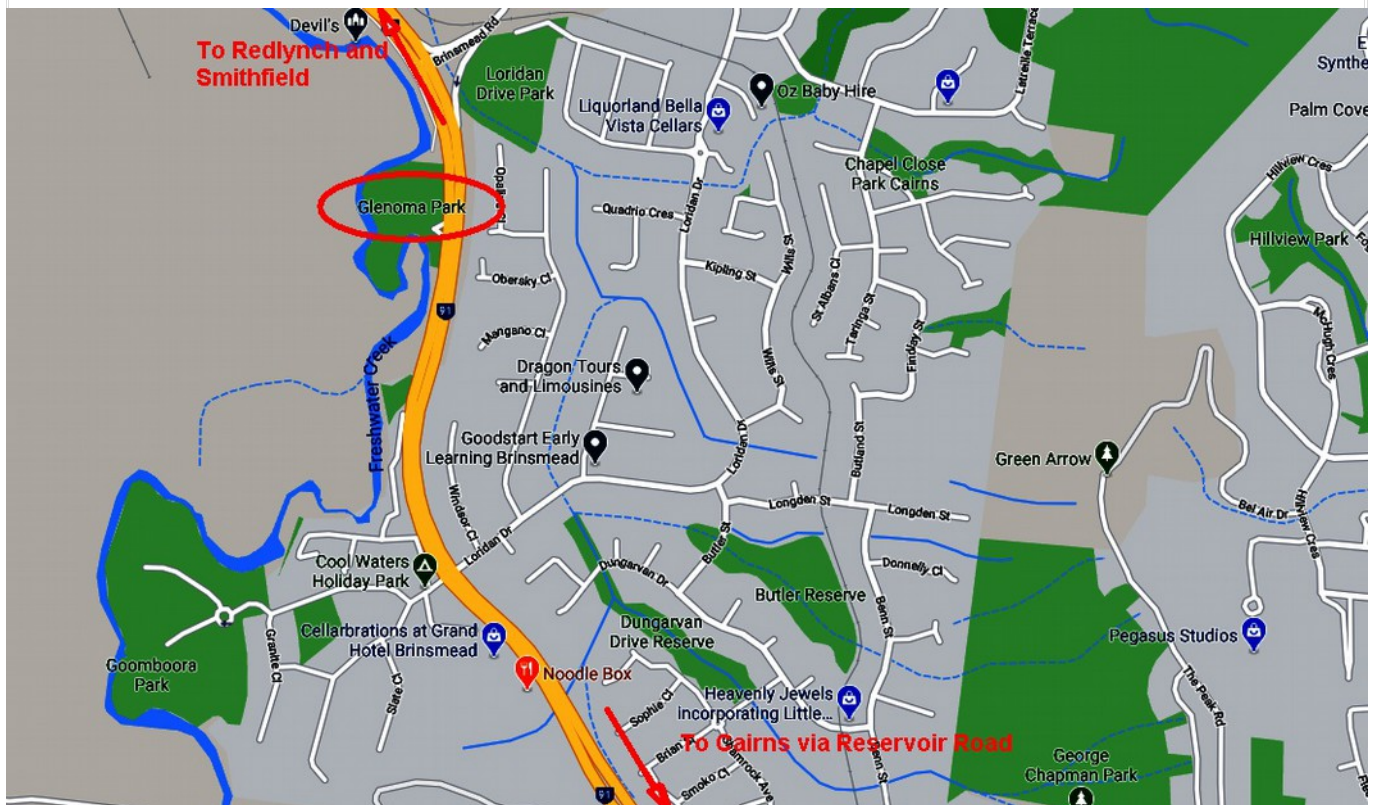
Wednesday 24 June. Meeting at the CWA Hall, Tolga, 7.30 pm. There is a limit of 20 people as per SGAP Guidelins. Please ring Chris Evans on 4091 3082 to book your space if you're attending. There will be no guest speaker.

Sunday 28 June. Excursion to Irvinebank/ Petford Road. Meet at 9.30 am at Stannary Hills turnoff on the Herberton-Irvinebank Road. Numbers are limited to 20 people - call Peter Radke on 0418 719 748 to leave details.

Cairns Branch

As of 1 June, COVID-19 social distancing rules have been relaxed to allow gatherings of up to 20 people in parks, public spaces and lagoons, National Parks and State Parks. Travel for recreation is permitted anywhere in the State. Physical distancing and hygiene rules remain in place. Please review the NPQ Covid-19 Guidelines (next page) and book your attendance by email to secretary@sgapcairns.org.au

Sunday 21 June 2020. With the easing of COVID-19 travel restrictions, we have decided to gently recommence our monthly excursions. To welcome everyone back, we will look at the recently opened track along Freshwater Creek in Brinsmead. Meet at Glenoma Park, Brinsmead at 12 noon. It's on the Western Arterial Road, just north of the Cool Waters Caravan Park (see map, below). The walk is paved and relatively flat, so is open to all abilities. Bring lunch, smoko and good humour!



Native Plants Queensland COVID- 19 GUIDELINES 6 th June 2020

*Reproduced from SGAP Tablelands Newsletter,
June 2020*

This document is a Guide and covers the Society's guidelines (COVID Safe Plan) regarding leading and participating in the Society's activities* in a world impacted by COVID-19. It is intended that this guide be read by both leaders and participants of activities.

First and foremost, members must abide by all the Federal and State COVID-19 regulations that are in place at the time they are participating in a Society activity. The remainder of this document puts some of these regulations, post the Stage 3 relaxing of Queensland's restrictions effective the 10 th July, in the context of our Club's activities. This plan will evolve as restrictions are adjusted by the Federal and State governments.

Native Plants Qld COVID-19 Guidelines

1. Members must not partake in an activity if they are feeling unwell due to symptoms including fever, sore throat, cough, or if they have returned from overseas in the previous 3 weeks.
2. No more than 2 per vehicle with the second person if not from the same household being in the rear seat on the passenger side of the vehicle. (exceptions apply for elderly or disabled passengers)
3. Participants should use their own pen to sign on & bring hand sanitiser with them to use at sign on and to take on the activity.
4. Unless the start times are staggered, and there is no interaction between the group, we must be

careful at the meeting point, making sure that no more than 20 members gather in a group and that we greet each other whilst maintaining social distancing. Members must register for activities (not just turn up). Contact the Branch President or nominated activity leader. Splitting activities that are oversubscribed into two or more groups is not permitted.

5. When walking/cycling, a distance of 1.5m between participants must be maintained and when walking we should maintain 1.5m when approaching others from the opposite direction.

6. Morning and afternoon teas and lunches are not to be shared. Anti-bacterial wipes, sanitisers and soap must be used prior to eating (BYO), with tables and seats being wiped down. It is preferable that you bring your own chairs, to enable and ensure the 1.5m distance.

7. Leaders must check National Park websites regarding Park closure and/or tracks and picnic areas are open. These guidelines are constantly changing.

8. Leaders should carry a copy of the return to Play Guidelines. FACT SHEET Update on Return to Play.pdf. See website below.

9. Any personal fines (\$1336.00) incurred are the responsibility of the individual & not the Society, Branch or the activity leader.

10. Be mindful of the potential fine of \$13000 to NPQ if found in breach (fines can be handed out by Qld Police, QPWS staff, etc.)

11. Handling of incidents, particularly if person to person contact is required.

- a. Leader nominates a qualified first aid responder
- b. Mask, gloves, and apron are on hand
- c. Other members maintain social distancing in their attempt to assist
- d. Relevant emergency responders are known and contactable