

HFNC Excursion to Woohlpooer woodlands area on 20 Oct. 2019

Rod Bird & Dave Munro

Participants.

Leader: Roger Edwards and Kay Edwards.

HFNC: Liz Fenton, Peter Hocking, Kay Aldridge, Glenys Cayley, Yvonne Ingeme, Hilary Turner, Dave & Lyn Munro, Diane Luhrs & Rod Bird, Ross Simpson.

Friends of Grampians: Catherine & Clive Carlyle, Alan & Wendy Bedggood, Ray Wakefield, Sue & Andrew Cunningham, Ben Gunn & Leigh Douglas, Judith & Rodney Thompson.

History of the area. We met our leader Roger Edwards at Cavendish at 9.30 am and proceeded to the Woohlpooer State Forest. Roger provided information on the forest area, categorized as Plains Grassy Woodland (a depleted EVC in Victoria). The Land Conservation Council (LCC) report on the SW Area, District 2 in 1978 and a research report by Jodi Price, Nathan Wong & John Morgan (2008) on the legacy of grazing on the flora in this woodland, provides further background information.

The Carter brothers selected the Woohlpooer lease in the 1860s and ring-barked most of the River Red Gums on that lease. The incidence of liver fluke at Cattle Station Creek resulted in the Carters abandoning the sheep grazing lease in 1886 and extensive seedling regeneration occurred. According to the LCC report, the Crown re-purchased 2,000 ha of Red Gum forest in 1913 and thinned the regeneration in the 1920s, 1930s and 1950s. This forest is almost exclusively populated by one eucalypt species, the River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*). The Forests Commission operated charcoal kilns in the Woohlpooer area during and after World War 2 years and the forest has supplied sleepers, posts, firewood and some furniture-grade wood. It remains a managed forest for timber production.

The understorey shrubs (and any regenerating trees) were kept clear by grazing sheep from about 1920 until a phased withdrawal of grazing from 1981 (in 3 of the 13 fenced paddocks) to 2005 when the sheep were removed from the last 4 paddocks. The study by Price, Wong & Morgan (2008) found that there was a significantly greater species richness in the long-ungrazed paddocks (>20 years) compared with more recently grazed paddocks (9-14 years or 5 years) or continuously grazed paddocks. Several exotic species were also associated with the continuously grazed paddocks. However, species such as St John's Wort and African Weed Orchid appear to flourish on areas now not grazed by sheep.

Roger Edwards introduced a regeneration program in this forest in the 1980s. He ploughed patches throughout the areas that were no longer being grazed, to facilitate Red Gum regeneration. Falling of some trees for milling now opens up gaps which allows natural regeneration to occur. Roger also introduced a system of monitoring the diameter growth of the trees, in order to establish a mean annual increment of timber growth and the basal area of timber. With that data one can estimate how many trees can be taken annually for timber production while maintaining a sustainable production capacity. A significant finding was that the mean annual increment in diameter growth was low – only 2-3 mm/year.

Excursion. We observed, in driving along the roads, that the usual spectacular spring display of the gold from *Bulbine bulbosa* (Bulbine Lily) and the purple of *Arthropodium strictum* (Chocolate Lily) in this woodland was quite muted this year, but perhaps we were a little early.

We diverted onto the Old Henty Highway Rd and then turned right onto a forest track where gravel and soil had been stripped years ago to construct the highway (Stop 1). On the remnants of the original surface we found several species of orchids, including *Pterostylis cycnocephala* (Swan Greenhood), *Pterostylis aciculiformis* (Slender Ruddyhood) and *Caladenia parva* (Small Spider-orchid).

We returned to the Henty Highway and then, about 200 m south, turned east onto a forest track to Stop 2, about 100 m along it. There some of us inspected trees in one of the plots that Roger had set up to measure the diameter growth of the Red Gums (in this plot no trees were allowed to be cut). On the north side of our track we found literally hundreds of *Caladenia parva* as well as *C. carnea* (Pink Fingers), *C. cucullata* (Hooded Caladenia), *C. moschata* (Musky Caladenia), *C. fuscata* (Dusky Caladenia) and *C. pusilla* (Tiny Caladenia). Other flora included *Crassula helmsii* (Swamp Crassula) – growing in a wet depression – a *Ranunculus* species, *Ajuga australis* (Austral Bugle), the fragrant *Cynoglossum suaveolens* (Sweet Hound's Tongue) and *Myosotis australis* (Austral Forget-me-not).

Our lunch stop was at the former Forest Office site alongside the Henty Highway on the edge of the Woolhpooper block. This was where Roger and his family lived and had an office for a few years in the 1970s. The house and buildings were removed and the office was then made in Cavendish.

After our picnic lunch in a sunny spot near the site of the old house we took a short walk into the forest block on the southern side of Craigs Rd (Stop 3). Flora seen there included *Veronica gracilis* (Slender Speedwell), *Caesia calliantha* (Blue Grass-lily), *Craspedia variabilis* (Common Billy-buttons), *Glycine latrobeana* (Clover Glycine), *Burchardia umbellata* (Milk Maids) and other species. Unfortunately, weeds including *Sparaxis bulbifera* are spreading along the depressions in this block.

We continued west down Craigs Rd onto Shilcocks Rd where we made two stops (Stops 4 & 5). This woodland is different from the River Red Gum flats that we had visited. The tree species included *Eucalyptus melliodora* (Yellow Box), *E. leucoxylon* (Yellow Gum), *E. aromaphloia* (Scent-bark) and *E. baxteri* (Brown Stringybark). The exciting finds here were the *Caladenia venusta* (Large White Spider-orchid), *C. formosa* (Elegant Spider-orchid), *C. clavigera* (Plain-lip Spider-orchid), *Diuris orientis* (Wallflower Orchid) and *D. pardina* (Leopard Orchid). Other orchids seen were beautiful Large White Spider hybrids (presumably with *C. formosa*), *Leptoceras menziesii* (Hare Orchid), *Thelymitra antennifera* (Rabbit's Ears) and a faded *Pterostylis nutans* (Nodding Greenhood).

We ended the day at around 4 pm, very satisfied with our viewing of wildflowers and particularly of orchids, of which we saw 21 native species. Despite the wet and windy weather of previous days we were treated to quite a mild day with no rain but not sufficient sun to bring out many sun-orchids.

Plant Lists

Orchids

Stops 1, 2 & 3 - East & West of Henty Highway

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Caladenia fuscata</i> | Dusky Caladenia |
| <i>Caladenia carnea</i> | Pink Fingers |
| <i>Caladenia cucullata</i> | Hooded Caladenia |
| <i>Caladenia moschata</i> | Musky Caladenia |
| <i>Caladenia parva</i> | Small Spider-orchid |
| <i>Caladenia pusilla</i> | Tiny Caladenia |
| <i>Diuris chryseopsis</i> | Golden Moths |
| <i>Glossodia major</i> | Wax-lip Orchid |
| <i>Pterostylis aciculiformis</i> | Slender Ruddyhood |
| <i>Pterostylis cycnocephala</i> | Swan Greenhood |
| <i>Pterostylis pedunculata</i> | Maroonhood |
| <i>Thelymitra</i> sp. (pink, bud) | Sun-orchid |
| <i>Thelymitra</i> (white, bud) | Sun-orchid |
| <i>Disa bracteata</i> | African Weed Orchid |

Stops 4 & 5, Shilcocks Rd

| | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>Caladenia clavigera</i> | Plain-lip Spider-orchid |
| <i>Caladenia formosa</i> | Elegant Spider-orchid |
| <i>Caladenia venusta</i> | L White Spider-orchid |
| <i>Caladenia venusta-x</i> | hybrid (x <i>formosa</i> ?) |
| <i>Diuris orientis</i> | Wallflower Orchid |
| <i>Diuris pardina</i> | Leopard Orchid |
| <i>Leptoceras menziesii</i> | Hare Orchid |
| <i>Pterostylis nutans</i> | Nodding Greenhood |
| <i>Thelymitra antennifera</i> | Rabbit Ears |

Plants in flower, other than orchids

Stops 1 & 2

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Ajuga australis</i> | Austral Bugle |
| <i>Arthropodium strictum</i> | Chocolate-lily |
| <i>Brachyloma daphnoides</i> | Daphne Heath |
| <i>Bulbine bulbosa</i> | Bulbine Lily |
| <i>Crassula helmsii</i> | Swamp Crassula |
| <i>Cynoglossum suaveolens</i> | Sweet Hounds-tongue |
| <i>Chamaescilla corymbosa</i> | Blue Squill |
| <i>Drosera hookeri</i> | Grassland Sundew |

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Eucalyptus leucoxylon</i> | Yellow Gum |
| <i>Geranium</i> sp. | Crane's-bill |
| <i>Kennedia prostrata</i> | Running Postman |
| <i>Lagenifera stipitata</i> | Common Lagenifera |
| <i>Myosotis australis</i> | Austral Forget-me-not |
| <i>Pimelea humilis</i> | Common Rice-flower |
| <i>Ranunculus</i> sp. | Buttercup |
| <i>Rutidosis multiflorus</i> | Small Wrinklewort |
| <i>Stenantha conostephioides</i> | Flame Heath |
| <i>Villarsia</i> sp. | Marsh-flower |
| <i>Vittadinia</i> sp. | New Holland Daisy |

Stop 3

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Bossiaea prostrata</i> | Creeping Bossiaea |
| <i>Burchardia umbellata</i> | Milkmaids |
| <i>Caesia calliantha</i> | Blue Grass-lily |
| <i>Craspedia variabilis</i> | Billy Buttons |
| <i>Glycine latrobeana</i> | Clover Glycine |
| <i>Oxalis perennans</i> | Grassland Wood-sorrel |
| <i>Pimelea curviflora</i> | Curved Rice-flower |
| <i>Senecio</i> sp. | Groundsel |
| <i>Stylidium graminifolium</i> | Grass Trigger-plant |
| <i>Veronica gracilis</i> | Slender Speedwell |

Stop 4 & 5 (Shilcocks Rd)

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Acacia paradoxa</i> | Hedge Wattle |
| <i>Dillwynia hispida</i> | Red Parrot-pea |
| <i>Neurachne alopecuroidea</i> | Fox-tail Mulga-grass |
| <i>Pultenea pedunculata</i> | Matted Bush-pea |
| <i>Veronica calycina</i> | Hairy Speedwell |

The fungi we saw were:

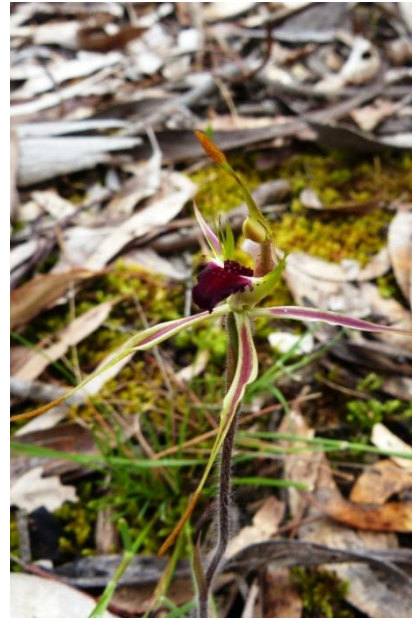
| |
|--------------------------------|
| <i>Amanita xanthocephala</i> |
| <i>Amanita</i> sp. |
| <i>Heterotextus</i> gp. |
| <i>Lichenophalia chromacea</i> |



Pterostylus aciculiformis



Pterostylus cycnocephala



Caladenia parva



Caladenia carnea



Caladenia moschata



Caladenia pusilla



Caladenia cucullata



Caesia calliantha



Roger with a fine Red Gum



Lunch stop at Woolhpoer



Ajuga australis



Dillwynia hispida



Pultenea pedunculata



Diuris orientis



Diuris pardina



Veronica gracilis



Leptocerus menziesii



Caladenia formosa



Caladenia venusta



Caladenia venusta x hybrid

Birds

The most interesting sighting was of a flock of White-browed Woodswallows in and over the treetops at Stop 1.

Birds seen at Stops 1-3

Australian Magpie
 Brown Thornbill
 Crimson Rosella
 Masked Woodswallow
 Musk Lorikeet
 Rainbow Lorikeet
 Red Wattlebird
 Spotted Pardalote
 Striated Pardalote
 Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
 Superb Fairy-wren
 Weebill
 White-browed Babbler
 White-browed Woodswallow
 White-plumed Honeyeater

Other birds seen at Stops 4-5

Jacky Winter
 Rufous Whistler
 Little Wattlebird
 Grey Fantail
 Grey Shrike-thrush
 Laughing Kookaburra
 Emu