

EUCALYPTUS STUDY GROUP

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Thank you for entrusting me with the role of Study Lead for the Eucalypt Study Group.

I'm excited to continue the great work of previous study leads and to bring a little of my own perspective to the role.

One of my first goals, one I hope to maintain, is to publish the newsletter quarterly. This will allow us to share updates more regularly, with shorter, more focused editions than the current half-yearly format.

As this newsletter really belongs to all of us, it can only thrive with your input. This group is built on shared knowledge and experience, so that we all get to learn from each other and grow together. Contributions can look like anything you'd like - notes from a field trip, experiments in your backyard, weird and wonderful photos with a brief comment, a research insight, or even just what's happening in your world. The more we each put in, the more we all get out of it, and the stronger and more valuable the group becomes for everyone.

In addition, I'll be contacting various connections I've made over the years to invite them to contribute articles. I'll also continue searching for relevant online material to share with you.

For those active on social media, I highly recommend joining the **Nuts About Gums** Facebook group, which I've been running for the past six years. It's a large and active community with over 130,000 members and plenty of shared knowledge.

If there's anything I haven't covered, or if you'd simply like to get in touch, please feel free to email me at NutsAboutGums@outlook.com. If you prefer a phone conversation, just let me know via email and we can arrange a time that suits us both.



EUCALYPTUS STUDY GROUP



Eucalyptus regnans - Blackbeard, Toolangi Vic

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Eucalyptus Study Group

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Contents

- Got to love Lerps - *Page 3*
- The seasonality of the Forrest - *Page 4*
- A curious trunk from Engadine - *Page 6*
- Grey gums in a different light - *Page 7*
- The Underground world of the Karri - *Page 8*
- Proof is in the pudding! - *Page 9*
- National Eucalypt Day 2026 – What a Celebration! - *Page 10*
- New Books for Eucalypt Enthusiasts - *Page 11*
- Amazing Arid Australia - *Page 12*



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You've got to love a Lerp



A fascinating observation from Dean Nicole of Currency Creek Arboretum, who puts it aptly, “you’ve got to love a Lerp.”

Here we see a lerp on a planted *Eucalyptus botryoides* (bangalay/southern mahogany) in St Kilda, Victoria. At first glance, lerps can look like a sign that something is wrong with the tree, but they’re actually a fascinating and important natural feature.

Lerps are the small, often shell-like coverings produced by psyllids—tiny native insects that live on eucalypt leaves.

Australia is home to a huge diversity of these species, and while they’re sometimes labelled as pests, that’s only part of the story. In reality, they play a key role in local ecosystems.

These insects, and the lerps they produce, are a valuable food source for a range of small native birds, including pardalotes, weebills and honeyeaters. So even in suburban plantings like this one in St Kilda, they’re quietly supporting biodiversity.

As with many things we see on eucalypts, context matters. Heavy infestations can put stress on a tree, but in many cases, their presence is simply part of a healthy, functioning system.

Many thanks to Dean for allowing us to share this, another good reminder that a closer look often reveals more than first impressions suggest.

Sourced from Currency Creek Arboretum Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/CurrencyCreekArboretum/posts/pfbid02NSZqQzdpM5Jw58dfimYdNC95XavK3VDFgUQUUcihsUcch1x9ruBNx71KAzhVMLI>



THE SEASONALITY OF THE FOREST



Large ribbed fruits of Planchon's stringybark, with flowers

Dr Richard Noske presented an excellent talk at our KFPS October meeting, entitled “Eucalypts and birds of Karawatha Forest and their phenology”.

What is phenology? It's the study of **the timing of biological events**, or their **seasonality**. Examples include the dates of the emergence of flowers, the appearance of migratory birds, the time of first egg-laying or the first flight of butterflies.

Many people are birdwatchers, or “twitchers”, but not many study the timing of bird behaviour. One person who has studied this topic in depth is ornithologist and ecologist Dr Richard Noske, an adjunct senior research fellow with the Centre for Biodiversity and Conservation Science at the University of Queensland. We're very lucky to have had Richard study the phenology of parts of Karawatha Forest, and his findings are of great interest, not only to other ecologists, but to anyone who visits Karawatha and would like to know more about its plants, its birdlife, and what is happening at any given time of the year.

Richard spent 26 years in Darwin as a senior lecturer in biology at Charles Darwin University. He retired to Queensland 13 years ago, and was shocked to find how little was known about the breeding seasons of birds in this state. Retirement has enabled him to pursue his research interests, and he has published widely on avian life history and breeding biology. He moved to The Gap in western Brisbane so that he could study the birds and trees of nearby D'Aguilar National Park. He served as President of Birds Queensland from 2012 to 2015, and helped to form the Bird Education Group in collaboration with BirdLife Southern Queensland.



Euc. baileyana, with criss-cross bark



Euc. racemosa, with caterpillar scribbles

In 2016 Richard was invited to Karawatha Forest by the staff of the recently-established Discovery Centre, and soon afterwards, co-organised bird walks for several schools with other members of the Bird Education Group. But it wasn't until 2020, when he visited the Rocks Track and Frog Hollow in the northern parts of the Forest, that he realised **the rich diversity of Karawatha's tree flora**, with several handsome species of eucalypts that he'd never seen before. He soon became “hooked” on Karawatha's eucalypts. Of the 700 species of eucalypts, Brisbane has 36, and Karawatha 26. It is possible to see 16 species along a 2 km transect, and 14 species in an area of 12 hectares (30 acres)!

What is a eucalypt? Apart from species in the genus *Eucalyptus*, ‘eucalypts’ include the genera **Corymbia** and **Angophora**, all three commonly being called gum trees. They belong to the large family of **Myrtaceae**, which also includes paperbarks and bottlebrushes (*Melaleuca* and former *Callistemon*), Tea Trees (*Leptospermum*) and Lilly Pillies (*Syzygium*). *Corymbia* is the most primitive of the eucalypt genera, and includes the spotted gums, bloodwoods and Moreton Bay Ash. *Angophoras* include the so-called Smooth-barked and Rough-barked “Apples”.



Rainbow Lorikeet feeding on flowers of Red Mahogany



Little Wattlebird feeding on Banksia inflorescence



Large conical buds of Red Mahogany
Euc. resinifera

Since March 2021, Richard has conducted monthly surveys of flowering trees and birds along a 5-km transect circuit from the Elizabeth Street gate to Frog Hollow, then along the Dianella Track and the Rocks, and back along the Wallaby Track. He records a score out of 10 for the buds, fresh flowers and young fruits of 16 eucalypt and four other nectar-bearing tree species along the transect. He also watches eucalypt blossoms to see if they are visited by any nectar-feeding birds, but also counts all the birds heard or seen along the transect to make a list to upload to eBird. He's careful to see that a bird is actually feeding on the floral nectar, not simply feeding on insects present on the flowers.

Eucalypts fall into five groups according to the nature of their bark: **smooth-barked Gums** (e.g. Red Gums, Grey Gums); **fibrous-barked Stringybarks and Mahoganies**; **hard, furrowed Ironbarks**; **scaly or blocky-barked Bloodwoods**; and **half-rough, half-smooth Boxes**. The only group missing at Karawatha is the last (boxes), which are scarce in the Greater Brisbane region. **Scribbly Gums** (*E. racemosa*) dominate large areas of Richard's circuit, but the group that is most diverse is the **Stringybarks**, with no fewer than five species, including the orange-barked, mega-fruited Planchon's Stringybark (*E. planchoniana*) to the black lattice-barked Bailey's Stringybark (*E. baileyana*).

Richard has found that each eucalypt species has a distinctive flowering season, though, as is well-known by bee-keepers, some species don't flower every year. The flowering seasons of some species at Karawatha don't

completely match the descriptions in books, but the latter sources cover wide areas, and Richard has found that flowering seasons vary somewhat from place to place across the species' range. Although one or more eucalypts flower in each month, December has the highest number of flowering species and the highest total number of flowers in Karawatha Forest.

Nine species of **honeyeaters** and two species of **lorikeets** have been recorded feeding on floral nectar in Karawatha. These nectar sources include 12 species of eucalypts, the most important of these being Broad-leaved Ironbark (*E. fibrosa*), Planchon's Stringybark, Henry's Spotted Gum (*C. henryi*) and Pink Bloodwood (*C. intermedia*), all of which flower in summer. However, the most important nectar sources by far are Coastal Banksia (*B. integrifolia*) and Broad-leaved Paperbark (*Melaleuca quinquinervia*), which flower mainly in autumn and early winter, when nectar-feeding birds are also most abundant.

Richard plans to spend another two years collecting phenological data before publishing his findings. And as the flowering seasons of many eucalypt species trees is short, he needs many more observations of birds feeding on flowers. This work is unique, and we look forward to Richard's future publications.

Tree species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Pink Bloodwood												
Brown Bloodwood												
Henry's Spotted Gum												
Forest Red Gum												
Narrow-leaved Red Gum												
Scribbly Gum												
Broad-leaved Ironbark												
Grey Ironbark												
Planchon's Stringybark												
Tindale's Stringybark												
Bailey's Stringybark												
Broad-leaved Stringybark												
Red Mahogany												

When you're walking through the forest, this calendar will help you to identify trees by observing which ones are flowering at any given time. It's based on the results of Richard's surveys. He found that *Eucalyptus resinifera* (Red Mahogany) flowered only once in the three years of his observations.

The calendar shows that there are flowers for birds to feed on throughout the year.

Many thanks to Richard for supplying the information and photos for this article.

A curious trunk from Engadine

Philip Wright recently sent in a set of photos from Engadine, commenting on his impression of it being a scribbly gum, however, noticing that there were some distinct markings on the bark. Someone suggested to Philip that the markings may have been caused by hail damage.

This is a great example of the kind of observation that's worth sharing with the group.

At a glance, the tree does resemble a scribbly gum, smooth pale bark and overall form fit the bill. But the trunk is covered in dark, irregular blotches that don't match the usual insect "scribbles" we expect to see. Instead of lines, we're seeing spots and patches, scattered across the bark from base to branches.

Hail damage has been suggested, and it's certainly plausible. Severe hail can bruise bark and leave lasting scars, especially on smoother-barked eucalypts. Another possibility is fungal or other surface growth taking advantage of past damage or stress. It may even be a combination of factors rather than a single cause.

What makes this worth highlighting isn't just solving the mystery, it's the reminder to look twice. Trees don't always present as textbook examples, and these oddities can tell us a lot about local conditions, past weather events, and how different species respond to stress.

If anyone in the group has seen similar bark patterns, particularly on scribbly gums or related species, it would be great to hear your thoughts.

Thanks to Philip for sending this in. Observations like this are exactly what make the group valuable.



Grey gums in a different light



Another informative piece from Dean Nicole of Currency Creek Arboretum.

Dean has highlighted some striking examples of grey gums showing off their freshly shed bark, far removed from the muted tones their name suggests. While we tend to think of grey gums as fairly subdued, the newly exposed bark can be a vivid orange, making these trees anything but understated at certain times of year.

The photos he shared focus on *Eucalyptus propinqua* (small-fruited grey gum), taken across different locations and times, which really shows how variable this feature can be.



Like many eucalypts, this species sheds its bark seasonally, typically during the first half of the year, often around autumn. However, the timing isn't fixed, it can shift depending on local conditions and the season's weather patterns.

It's a good reminder that common names don't always capture the full character of a species. In this case, "grey gum" only really applies part of the time, and for the rest, the tree can be surprisingly vibrant.



Thanks again to Dean for sharing these observations, well worth keeping an eye out for next time you're around grey gums.

Sourced from Currency Creek Arboretum Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/CurrencyCreekArboretum/posts/pfbid02Ui8Lmg9YtSGsJYDGywHeXMT8hoPyATfbFQTZnLoV1hgBFQ1b9hBVF9Boqk4DQ9PKl>

The Underground world of the Karri

On a recent trip over to Western Australia, I was driving through the Margaret River region, along the limestone coastline, with the purpose of visiting the Crystal Caves. It turned out to be a highlight of the trip, not for the formations themselves, impressive as they are, but for something unexpected.

As you descend into the cave, your attention is naturally drawn to the stalactites and stalagmites, the slow work of water over thousands of years. But then, breaking through the ceiling above, are roots. Not fine hair like threads, but thick, rope like strands, alive and purposeful.

These were the roots of the *Eucalyptus diversicolor*, the Karri, towering far above the cave. The roots force their way down through layers of soil and limestone, eventually punching through into the open space below. And once they do, something remarkable happens.

Drawn by the constant moisture in the cave air, they continue growing straight down toward the floor, twisting around themselves as they go. Over time, they form dense, rope like columns, almost like living cables stretching from ceiling to ground.

It's a striking sight. We're used to thinking of eucalypts in terms of what we see above ground, the height, the canopy, the bark. But here is the other half of the story, hidden away. These roots are doing exactly what they need to do to survive, chasing moisture wherever it can be found.

Standing there, it gives you a different appreciation for just how adaptable these trees are. The Karri forests above feel solid and grounded, but beneath them is a quiet, persistent exploration happening out of sight.



Sometimes you have to go a bit deeper, literally, in this case, to understand what's really going on.

If you ever find yourself in that part of the world, it's well worth a look. Not just for the caves, but for the chance to see a eucalypt from a completely different angle.

- *Bryan Rau*



Proof is in the pudding!



This impressive observation was shared in Nuts About Gums by Julie Paulus from southwest Victoria, featuring a planted *Eucalyptus ovata* (swamp gum) that's doing something quite remarkable.

The photos show large, well-developed galls, far bigger than what many of us are used to seeing. While they're now old and dried (and likely a bit smaller than when fresh), the scale is still striking: some larger than an outstretched hand, with others around golf ball size.

These galls are the result of a tiny wasp laying eggs into the stem. What follows is a fascinating interaction, the tree responds to that activity by producing extra growth around the eggs, effectively creating a protective structure that provides shelter and food for the developing larvae. In this case, the size of the galls suggests the tree was in exceptionally good health at the time they formed.

The exit holes tell their own story too. Judging by their size, whatever emerged from these galls would have been hard to miss.

The tree itself is part of a large-scale restoration planting from the late 1990s, with around 30,000 eucalypts established in the area. At roughly 30 years old, it's clearly well established and thriving.

With the current season aligning with peak activity for many insects, there's hope that the wasps may return and repeat the cycle, giving the tree another chance to produce these oversized galls.

It's a great example of the complex biodiversity in our eucalypt systems, and a reminder that even the smallest insects can leave a very big impression.



National Eucalypt Day 2026 – What a Celebration!

National Eucalypt Day on 23 March was a huge success this year, bringing thousands of people together to celebrate Australia's iconic eucalypts. From sold-out tours and community festivals to hands-on workshops, art sessions, guided walks and educational events, the enthusiasm was felt right across the country.

A highlight of the program was the Dahl Medal presentation at University House, which drew praise for its warm, relaxed atmosphere and smooth organisation. This year's Medal recipient, Professor Patrick Baker (University of Melbourne), captivated the audience with a thoughtful and engaging reflection on his life among trees.

Public excitement for the day was unmistakable. The Leon Costermans Eucalypt Identification Tour sold out in an incredible *75 seconds*, and more than 400 visitors joined Dean Nicolle's tours at Currency Creek Arboretum. Across Australia, microgrant-supported events drew strong community participation – from the 2,000 visitors at Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary to fully booked botanical sketching, painting and journalling workshops, children's activities, guided walks, citizen science projects and storytelling sessions.

Feedback from participants consistently highlighted the sense of connection, creativity and learning these events inspired. It's clear that National Eucalypt Day continues to grow as a cherished national celebration, strengthening appreciation and stewardship of our remarkable eucalypts.

And of course – congratulations to the 2026 Eucalypt of the Year!

This year's honours went to the magnificent *Corymbia calophylla* (Marri), with Western Australians turning out in force to support their beloved species.

-Eucalypt Australia

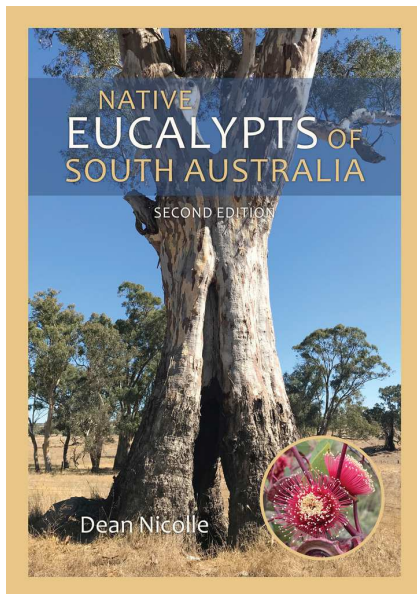


Ros, Dean and Ian courtesy of Ros Gleadow at Currency Creek



Corymbia Calophylla by Geri Barr at Kings Park NED botanical drawing day

New Books for Eucalypt Enthusiasts



Native Eucalypts of South Australia – Second Edition

The second edition of *Native Eucalypts of South Australia* is only a couple of weeks away and now available for pre-order. This fully updated release replaces the long-out-of-print 2013 edition and covers all 102 species and subspecies native to South Australia.

Key improvements include updated taxonomy, more detailed maps for the state's south-east, a complete flowering-time table, improved photography, and a tougher flexi-cover built for field use.

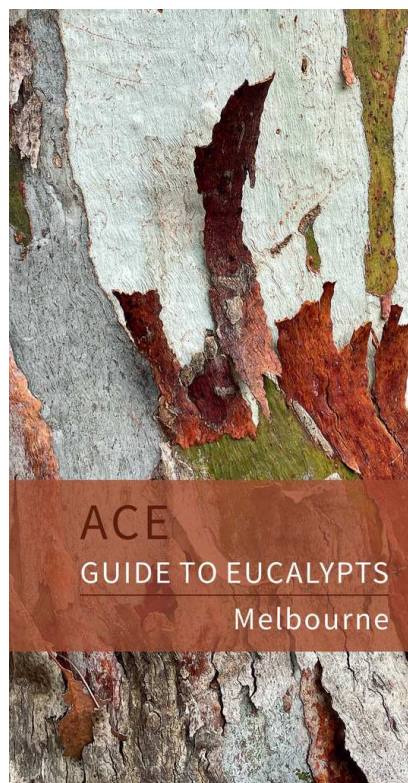
Printed in Adelaide and bound in Melbourne, the book is expected to ship at the end of May. Pre-orders, sample pages, and an updated identification key are available at dn.com.au/Eucalypts_of_South_Australia.html

ACE Guide to Eucalypts Melbourne

I am delighted to introduce the newly published *ACE Guide to Eucalypts Melbourne*. This compact and visually distinctive field guide is designed for curious walkers, naturalists, botanists, and anyone drawn to the intricacies of the Australian landscape.

It's an accessible companion for exploring Melbourne's eucalypt diversity, combining clear identification features with engaging visuals in a portable format.

The book is available for purchase at eucalyptsmelbourne.au



Amazing Arid Australia



The 'Trephina Gorge Ghost Gum' in the East MacDonnell Ranges - Dean Nicole Currency Creek Arboretum

Excitement is building for the upcoming [ANPSA Biennial Conference 2026](#), to be held in Mparntwe Alice Springs from 24–28 August 2026. With a strong focus on Australia's amazing arid flora, the conference promises a fantastic mix of presentations, excursions and opportunities to connect with fellow native plant enthusiasts.

One highlight for Eucalypt lovers will be hearing from Warwick Varley, the long-time former leader of the ANPSA Eucalyptus Study Group, who will be speaking on Eucs and sharing his extensive knowledge and passion for these iconic Australian plants.

If you're thinking about attending, conference details, speakers, program information and registrations can all be found here: [ANPSA Conference Website](#)