



ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

RAINFOREST STUDY GROUP

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"Politicians love activity - it is a substitute for achievement" (Keith Suter - Sydney University)

GROUP ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL SUMMARY..... PLUS MANY THANK-YOUS

Four quarterly newsletters were distributed, each containing the usual balance of rainforest themes - horticulture; ecology; environmental and conservation issues, and associated social, economic and political influences.

The efficient running of the RFSG owes much to the assistance of Peter Jurd who does a sterling job in organising the regular Brisbane gatherings; Patrick Bennett's many hours spent in maintaining our seed bank and recording propagation results; Pete Smith's preparation of address labels; those who have helped publicise our Group during the year (especially Helen and Allan Joyce); and to members who hosted group activities.

All SGAP regions have kept in touch by sending us their quarterly Bulletins. Again, I am sorry that space did not allow me to quote many more items of interest to members, but I am pleased to have such publications for our 'library'.

I must also thank members for their support - those who contributed to the N/L; the many who concur with the Groups direction and who took the trouble to write in appreciation of my efforts with our N/L. Particular thanks to all who paid their subs renewal promptly, without a follow-up reminder. That simple action saves me a great amount of time in administration.

However, there has been one incident which may well be detrimental to the future of the Group as it currently stands (see report further on).

The years accounting -

Income	\$	Expenditure	\$
Subscriptions	720	Printing & Stationery	460
Donations	20	Postage & Phone	412
Bank Interest	19	Display expense	15
	759		887
Balance b/f 1996	\$1153	Balance c/f 1997	\$1025

Once again our funds are adequate for the coming year's operations, but we do have a liability for subs paid in advance if the group is discontinued for any reason. Current membership is 163, only marginally down on previous years.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

IAN ABBOTSMITH Balgowlah NSW

PETER DIXON Granville NSW

JULIE GORRELL Coniston NSW

TIMOTHY HILL Pappinbara NSW

TONY LEWIS Cheltenham NSW

A new addition to our clan is ERIC DAVIS who had the good fortune to marry long-standing member CLARISSA (ex Newling). Congratulations to you both and I'd say all RFSGers extend their best wishes to you both.

THE NEXT TWO SYDNEY AREA GATHERINGS WILL BE AT MEMBERS PROPERTIES

8th November (Saturday) hosted by LEON RADUNZ at 46 Caber Close Dural. An "open afternoon" from 1pm.

8th February (Sunday) hosted by PAUL BRADY at 14 Wintergreen Pl West Pennant Hills at 10.30 am.

Further details of what to see at both venues are listed in 'Members Pages'.

Local members ought to attend these meetings to both meet fellow enthusiasts, and ensure that such activities don't die from lack of interest.

NEXT QUENSLAND REGION CONFERENCE WILL BE AT TOWNSVILLE IN 1998

They always have their shindigs in great places - this one will be handy to our tropical RF which will no doubt be strongly emphasised. Jan also mentioned that the 1999 ASGAP biennial conference will be at Brisbane and preparations are already being made. Rainforest will be one of the featured topics and they are exploring the best places to visit.

COULD I MAKE A PLEA TO MEMBERS WHEN CHANGING THEIR ADDRESS ?

I consider it to be pointless, and a waste of effort when a few days after posting N/Ls, an occasional copy is 'returned to sender - left address'. It would be appreciated if those who move would immediately let me know.

SPECIES CURRENTLY AVAILABLE FROM THE SEED BANK

Abrophyllum ornans Alyxia ruscifolia Alphonsea petrei Araucaria cunninghamii Brachychiton acerifolius Breynia stipitata Cassine australe Cissus antarctica C. hypoglauca Cordyline stricta Dioscorea transversa Erythrina vespertilio Ficus coronata Ficus obliqua Morinda jasminoides Pandorea jasminoides (2 var. - white, normal) Parsonsia straminea Planchonella australis Randia characeae Rhodosphaera rhodanthema Tecomanthe sp Roaring Meg Ck. (Recent donors - Claire Shackel, Richard Logan, Rod Cook, Harry Franz, David, Patrick.) All requests to P. Bennett 20 Belmore Court Pine Mountain Q. 4306 with a stamped self-addressed envelope please.

New members are especially invited to request seed, both for their own benefit and also to record successes and failures. Of course we are always looking for more donors as it is surprising how individual enthusiasts vary in the species they grow or have access to.

MUCH OF OUR TROPICAL RF MAY NOT BE AS ANCIENT AS WAS THOUGHT

The journal 'Ecos Autumn '97' included a fascinating report on the age of some N.Q. forests, currently stable and well established as RF. Almost 20 years ago, Webb & Tracey speculated that those forests expanded and contracted in relatively recent times as climatic conditions altered. Recent research including carbon dating of excavated charcoal indicated that Eucalypt woodland previously occurred until as recently as 1400 years ago at one location. It seems that much of the existing RF developed at various times over the past 10,000 years.

The key to the survival of Rf over the millennia was the maintenance of refuge areas, mainly in a network of valleys and gorges scattered throughout the region, where species could exist during difficult times and advance when conditions improved. Further research to identify surviving refugia locations is needed, and these must be fully protected particularly with the prospect of climatic change caused by our own activities.

This report would certainly benefit everyone interested in RF dynamics and prehistory.

GUIDANCE OFFERED FOR MEMBERS INTERESTED IN RF AREAS IN QLD'S CABOOLTURE DISTRICT

Sue Gallagher has kindly offered to guide or direct members to local remnants (mainly in Caboolture Shire) and/or 'show off' her acre of RF if we happen to be in that area. Thank you Sue. Note that Sue resides at Burpengary and phone no. is (07) 8884126

SOME FURTHER COMMENTS ON THE BEETLES

A most interesting letter from Ernest Adams of Rockhampton was published in the Oz Food Plants Study Group Feb '97 N/L. Included was "I spent a lot of time on Blackdown Tableland just after the road went through. I was collecting beetles etc. for CSIRO Canberra among other things. Under each log there were beetles, and I got samples of most that were up there and sent them to Canberra. Just as well as it happened, because some years later I went up with a professor and his wife (both interested in insects), and I found only one beetle and they did little better. The big question is Why?"

I think it is the result of too much burning of the grass, because most of the ground beetles are slow to fly and some cannot fly at all. Therefore there should be no burning of the National Park area ever. Several species of beetle that we only got one specimen of are represented by that single specimen only!. Astraeus blackdownensis (Barker) and Castiarina personi (Barker), both Jewel Beetles, are examples. A good few insects on Blackdown are also found as far south as Victoria, and the nearest relatives of a species of Carenum (Carib Beetle) are found in the SW of West Australia!"

* * *

Our Judith Brass wrote on identification of moth and beetle larva. "The larva of moths have 3 pairs of legs, then several pair of 'prolegs' which are fleshy leg-like limbs on the abdominal segments. Beetle larva may be legless, or have 3 pair of true legs. They never have prolegs."

BUTTERFLY OF THE MONTH - THE PALE GREEN TRIANGLE GRAPHIUM EURYPYLUS LYCAON

Bart Hacobian mentioned that their plantings at Avalon (Northern Sydney coast) are developing quite nicely and are increasingly attracting more of the local butterfly fauna. One mystery visitor though is the Pale Green triangle - a close relative of the well-known 'Blue Triangle' familiar to most people living in Eastern Oz.

However, unlike the Blue which feeds on Lauraceae, the Pale Green is only recorded from native Annonaceae including Rawenhoffia leichardtii & Mitrephora frogattii. The mystery is that this butterfly shows up regularly in Avalon early in the spring/summer season each year, despite there being nothing in the way of Annonaceae growing in the bush around here. It is possible that (a) It migrates south every year (b) It feeds on garden plants like 'Portwine Magnolia' (as recorded in Butterfly text books. Perhaps though, there is a chance it is eating something in the RF between the Hunter River and Sydney.

If any of our readers have a record of the caterpillars of this species in their gardens, Bart would be most interested to hear about it, especially if they are not eating Annonaceae. (Ed. Robert Fisher's Butterflies Field Guide lists the cultivated Custard Apple Annona reticulata as a host. Anyone growing these in the area Bart? 'Booyong's' lone Annona merely supports a gang of thieving possums though.

FURTHER TO THE LAST N/L'S BANDICOOT STORY

Well-known researcher Tim Flannery recently stated that bandicoots have inhabited the Sydney area for the past 40 million years, yet regrettably have become almost extinct after just 210 years since our arrival. Many other local mammal species have gone as well - the last one recorded by Tim was the Eastern Quoll in 1963, but Sydney lost its harbour's whales, white-footed rabbit rat (was in pest proportions in the early days), kangaroos & wallabies, gliders & pygmy possums much earlier.

Presently, the poor old Wombat is dying by the thousands in NSW due to an epidemic caused by mites.

IT SEEMS POSSUMS CAN PLAY HAVOC WITH WHITE CEDARS IN THE GARDEN

Colleen Keena mentioned that Melia azedarach planted to the north of their house to provide summer shade but allow in the winter sun, were lost. Their 2 1/2 acres of bush is an island that survived surrounding clearing. They saw many possums killed, others who survived of course lost their food supply. The survivors consumed emerging new leaves, buds and flowers faster than the trees could replace them, and after a season or two of this treatment, all the cedars though fully grown, died. Interestingly none of the evergreen species have been killed.

SOME LIGHT ON THE QUESTION LAST N/L ON PLANT SPECIES SURVIVING THE GREAT FLOOD

David Vance says that the bible doesn't mention anything about plants being taken on the Ark other than as food for animals so we can only speculate about their survival. Probably many species would not have survived the flood at all - the fossil record seems to support this. Some plants may have survived from seeds that withstood the inundation, or which floated on mats of vegetation, or debris. A few plants may actually have survived the inundation.

He feels that the court case which prompted our original query (Plimer and evolution v. creation) was somewhat mischievous in using Roberts claims for his challenge, knowing that mainstream creationists had disproved his 'Turkish Ark' theories years ago. (Ed. An interesting dispute; readers may be aware that Plimer lost the case and is now broke.)

David concluded by stating that he is happy with the proposed change of title for the group.

SUPPORT FOR A NAME CHANGE TO 'RAINFOREST AND CONSERVATION INTEREST GROUP' COMES FROM VAN KLAPHAKE

"The word **interest** seems far more appropriate than **study**. As was noted by the Victorian 'study' of various SGAP groups - most members are in them for the interest. If there are serious studies being made by various members these should be published in appropriate nature magazines for wider dissemination and acknowledgment. How much of the information put out by Group members are extracts from their publications? If the Group N/L is the only outlet for such work, then we have an **interest group** - even a serious interest group..... and this work can still be of great value to members.

The other debateable word in the proposed title - **conservation** - seems to be not only a good idea for inclusion, but an automatic choice. Rainforest is a natural community of plants which is under serious threat - particularly in recent years. To have a group which has its basis around a rapidly decreasing commodity (RF) and not indicate some willingness to look after the asset is to end up going in ever decreasing circles and we all know where that leads.

In short - I support the title **Rainforest and Conservation Interest Group**.

(Thanks for very informative newsletters. If one could compare N/Ls of various nature oriented groups, I doubt that there would be many (any?) which put out as much information... and useful... as the RFSG. As far as your frequent 'editors comment', I think you well deserve that big wooden spoon award you received. We need more such comments!)"

SUPPORT FOR A CONSERVATION EMPHASIS ALSO COMES FROM OTHERS

Karl Andersson "I very much agree with your attitudes on conservation. The only chance we have, is to succeed in getting our message across to the politicians and to others with influence over our future circumstances."

Colleen Keena "The new title - both 'Interest' and 'Conservation' - should make prospective members aware of the focus. 'Interest' or 'Study'? **Helen Tranter** says "their long term interest in RF is partly because of where we live. That is we are interested in growing and regenerating the local vegetation. Doubtless others have a similar outlook".

She added " While I would be very happy to take part in a research project I would also be glad to assist anyone else's project by access to our property or providing local data. Over time, however, we will be distracted now and then by other things, especially local conservation battles. For example this year we have had to reduce our RF activities to fight for an important local wetland - the Wingecarriebe Swamp - threatened with continuing and higher intensity peat mining. There is a fourth week back at the mining Wardens Inquiry in July. Then, if all goes well, we can get back to the RF."

JUDITH BRASS DESCRIBES THE CURRENT SITUATION OF HER KARALEE Q. ACTIVITIES

"After a fairly dry summer, we have finally had some rain and everything is looking greener. Have not planted any additional RF species due to lack of space but have Myoporum sp., Petalostigma pubescens, Evodiella mulleri presently flowering and fruit on Evodiella and Aleurites moluccana .

A suggestion regarding short viability seed. I am also a member of Food Plants Study Group; many attempts have been made to establish a seed bank but this has never eventuated. It has now been suggested that a 'seed exchange' may succeed, with Requests & Offers published in their N/L. This would ensure fresh seed and allow people to choose local sources. Maybe we could do this with the more difficult species as well as the normal seed bank operation? It could also be used for cuttings and would require requesters to supply a suitably sized envelope with adequate stamps for postage."

(Ed. Such an arrangement was tried some years ago and a few members listed species they could supply, but from memory only one person sought seed. However if sufficient interest eventuates, we should certainly try it again. I will discuss this suggestion with Patrick, and list appropriate conditions in a later N/L.

LEON RADUNZ SUMMARISES WHAT SYDNEYS NOVEMBER GATHERING CAN EXPECT AT HIS DURAL GARDEN

"Our forest is about 5 years old now and there is enough to interest people. I enclose a list of species, there are others I cannot yet identify so I hope members will be able to help on the day. The block includes some steep slopes, but stone steps will assist access. Plant list identifies 64 species to see, quite a few old stalwarts in cultivation but a greater number are unusual and rarely seen out of their natural habitat. Those needing identification are no doubt just as interesting." Obviously an inspection not to be missed.

Leon adds - "The name change to include **conservation** is more appropriate. We appreciate your efforts and hope that you can keep them up for a while, at least. Would like to meet you and look at 'Booyong' one day, soon."

PAUL BRADY TELLS MEMBERS WHAT TO SEE ON HIS BLOCK AT THE FEBRUARY MEETING IN SYDNEY

"Our property of 2100 sq. m. (1/2 acre) has the advantage of being able to grow a good range of large trees, and at the same time be manageable. The downside of course is not having a full forest and always being an oasis in a sea of weeds. We are located in the 'West Pennant Hills Valley' - existing vegetation is similar to that of the nearby Cumberland State Park i.e. Euc saligna, Angophora costata, Syncarpia glomulifera with understorey of Pittosporum undulatum, P. revolutum, Glochidion ferdinandi & Clerodendrum tomentosum. I have been restoring and replanting since 1990."

In an earlier letter, Paul included a list of species he has planted, most of which have done well despite getting little additional water (some moisture runs from the top of the block onto the main RF plantings), otherwise he relies on rain and a small drip system turned on from time to time. In the year he was away in Nepal, they had no attention, just natural rainfall. He summarised his success, or lack of it and feels that it all comes back to moisture levels. Some plants have done surprisingly well with a lack of water.

I'll send his records off to Patrick to add to the data base, but Paul listed 28 fast growing species, 21 good steady growers, 14 slow but steady and just 4 very slow. These were Croton verreauxii, Citriobatus, Mischocarpus pyriformis, Parachidendron pruinosum. "Only Omalanthus failed - start off ok but succumb to dry conditions." (Ed. They don't like the cold, I find.)

He then summarised the benefits of RF plantings on his type of property (on good soil Paul - Wianamatta Shale, once Sydneys bread basket?). "** restricted light is not a major impediment as opposed to ('dare I mention it') lawn or other common natives. * excess moisture is readily soaked up by many of these species. * stabilises soil - preventing land slips/erosion. * reduce fire risk. * don't require the same water input as most gaudy exotics. * are generally hardy with few insect problems * promote diversity in bird and other animal life (unfortunately in respect of Syzgium fruits my feathered friends seem to eat the lot)."

Finally "I should add that around me are neglected large blocks overrun by the weeds which once dominated my own - Sydney specials i.e. Privet, Lantana, Tradescantia, Lonicera and Rumex acetosa."

NEARBY MEMBER ROD COOK WROTE OF RECENT EXPERIENCES ON HIS 5 ACRES

They are troubled with Cedar Tip Moth on the few Toons they grow and wonder if they could obtain some Neem trees as a 'companion plant', as over the years they have used such combinations with some success in food and flower sections.

Rod has kept honey bees for ages, currently has 8 hives with some honey sold but mostly given to charities, and is after a mead recipe. He is now interested in native bees after hearing a talk by Dr A. Dollin. Reckons they are fascinating. Garden Cissus antarctica and Lilly-pillies each provided just enough fruit for a small pot of jam - nice flavours.

"We are still trying to develop the 5 acres of tricky country in an ESD way. Run of the mill developers only want maximum dollar return, which means concrete all over and no spare space, let alone green patches."

He concludes "The trouble with our electoral system is that politicians always get in." (Ed. And I always thought that it was solicitors and barristers that we chose to run the nation! They don't, successfully, but we elect them anyway. Which probably indicates that voters are pretty stupid too.)

FROM NSW BLUE MOUNTAINS - EVAN WEATHERHEAD REPORTS

"Fortunately I have 2 in-ground tanks to collect roof runoff and washing machine water and with a high pressure pump I give all the plants a good watering, weekly with soapy (Fab) water, as well as the local birds who enjoy a summer soak. It is always pleasing to see the unpolluted colour of leaves and stem colour, especially on Syzigiums. I noticed that the trunks of Acmena smithii variegated (usually sold under a trade name) seem more like those of Syzigium australe I bought from John Ross, or perhaps S. paniculatum. They have flowered for 3 years but have not set fruit - either too cold here, or no pollinators.

Due to limited space - just a 10 x 10 m Rf area, I have 50 - 60 plants in the ground, but over 100 in pots ranging from 12" to 36" dia, all under automatic watering. Just having a go at people with acreage; perhaps I should dig other natives out?

Finally, another question - anyone growing Attractocarpus spicularis? Colin Andersen identified this which I grew from seed collected from a creek on an offshore island. About ten of these germinated

JOYCE WARD WRITES ABOUT HER AREA AT MT GLORIOUS

"As you may know, the environment here is of very ancient RF lineage and our small community is committed to do whatever to protect it. We have recently protested (993 objections) against a millionaire developers plan to build a RF lodge catering for conferences as well as tourist and other visitors. The local council is allowing the development but State government has severe restrictions.

On my block, the RF trees are mature and I have been propagating Ervatamia angustisepala for fringe and understorey cover. Also Callicarpa pedunculata but it is hard to collect seeds as they are most attractive to birds. Prominent in the garden are a number of Oreocallis wickhami and O. pinnata. I also have most members of the northern Proteaceae."

(Ed. Are these species of interest to Rob Cross for the Melbourne Bot. Gardens ?

JAN SKED DESCRIBES PLANT LABELS SHE PRODUCES FOR THE SGAP FLOWER SHOWS

These are nursery-type tags which are printed on a laser printer. They are done on a Celcast photocopier film called 'permanent paper' and last for a very long time. She is able to print 17 x 3-line labels from an A4 sheet and enclosed one (a Black Booyong of course!) for me to look at. Looks to be an economic proposition, and you can write your own description as well as determine the exact quantity needed.

FOLLOW UP TO ITEMS IN PREVIOUS N/Ls

Germination of Rhodospaera rhodanthema. I just soak them to remove the flesh and plant into ordinary potting mix with some coir peat added to retain moisture. They took several months to germinate, but this seems to be the norm with many RF species.

Scale insects. These are individually removed at my place by a tireless band of unpaid workers - mainly Striated Pardalotes and White-chinned Honey Eaters, but others help from time to time. They even include Lorikeets if nothing is flowering, so it is important to attract birds to your garden. (Both from Judith Brass)

Growth rate of Austomyrtus bidwillii. From seed planted March 96, plants are now 20 - 30cm high (still in pots)... From seedlings 30cm high (age unknown) and planted out around 2 1/2 years ago, growth of between 10cm and 70 cm has been attained. (Patrick Bennett)... Ed. It has also been my experience that individual plants vary markedly in growth rates.

Connie McPherson says "I'd reckon about 2" p.a. is right, judging from some still have in pots. In fact there is greater length in the root than the top (I thought RF were surface rooting!) Those in the ground for 6 months haven't made any surge, but are alive."

Rod Cook adds some history to Duboisia myoporoides. "The species has interested me since 1941. As an industrial chemist interested in forestry working with a kindred spirit, we learnt that enterprising Gosford residents were then earning a shilling a pound (now 10c per 1/2 kg) for leaves gathered in 'brush' gullies. Hyocine and atropine were then extracted for use in the war. Years later we heard that these 2 drugs were synthesised. I'd like to get a few seeds, to grow the tree and rekindle an unfinished dream."

Germinating RF species by the plastic bag method. Norm McCarthy who previously described the method, further adds - "The 50 Diploglottis campbellii germinated so strongly as I was away on holiday, otherwise the plants would have been set out much sooner before they achieved such long radicles and 4" top growth." When they were first placed, with some water in the plastic bag, a few drops of 'Morning Fresh' detergent were added to soften and condition seed material. It is thought that this aids or hastens moisture penetration and decomposition of the aril and seed casing.

After a few weeks, the well decayed material around the seeds was washed away and the cleaned seed placed in a fresh bag, again with a little water, with a few drops of household bleach included as a mould deterrent. Be aware that seedlings produced in such an enclosed environment must be carefully nurtured to survive such different conditions outside the plastic bag, otherwise the plants could collapse.

RF timber 'woodlots' are becoming popular with our members. Karl Andersson has also an experimental plantation at Killabakh, and as he is just on the other side of the Comboyne Plateau to me, it will be very interesting to compare notes regularly.

Colleen Keena agrees with Ralph Woodfords advice on RF woodlots. ("If it wasn't RF previously, I wouldn't try growing RF there.") Colleen says "Having worked at establishing RF sections on 2 acreage gardens (both with minimal maintenance), one on Eucalypt woodland and the other on previous RF habitat, if we had known as much nearly 20 years ago we would have been more successful. Changing a Euc woodland certainly requires a lot more input than is needed with an ex-Lantana site.

One of the most successful plants on the woodland has been a Hoop Pine - large sized, really took off."

Further confirmation of natural regeneration after removal of Lantana. Noeline and Bob Harris comment that it is encouraging to see so many different species appearing in cleared areas, obviously from long deposited seed. They have also planted about 1300 RF trees, shrubs and groundcovers to strengthen the regeneration on their Tomewin (Murwillumbah area NSW) property.

Sooty mould without ants? Evan Weatherhead has this problem on 2 Lilly pillies - Acmena smithii and Waterhousia floribunda from where it spreads to other plants. Has at no time seen ants on any of the affected trees, even checking them out at night. Some of these are near 12m high, so maybe insects high up transfer the mould? Only had scale on one (unnamed species) - luckily it has not infected others. A question to members. Why do some species seem immune to sooty mould - i.e. Acronychia suberosa, A. oblongifolia, Euodia elleryana, E. micrococca, Rhodospaera rhodantha to name a few I grow?

Some comment on the running of the Rainforest Study Group In response to your earlier editorial remarks, we'd like to contribute the following.... We are only new to the group and noted with interest your proposal that the group should split into a Rainforest plants in horticulture and a Rainforest - Botany and Ecology group. Surely both are important! If the group were to split we'd have to join both to keep up to date. To date we've much appreciated your thought provoking and controversial newsletter. We may not agree with everything in it but its a great read, stimulating and keeps us informed. Its important to have our existing views challenged and subject to re-evaluation, else how do we progress? So we have to endorse the views of others: that you shouldn't sanitise the newsletter from review of the impact of political decisions. (Elizabeth & Don O'Gorman)

Pine River Shire is in the gun! A member who had better remain nameless is highly critical, declaring that it buys back no bush, allows developers to destroy dense Koala et.al. habitats. Then they make a noise about their regeneration plots. Where will the wildlife go, into cold storage for the next 100 years while waiting for their replacement habitat? So they are not so very serious really. "If it wasn't for (several widely known and respected SGAP members named), where would we be?"

I'm going to claim some prescience with that forecast about downsizing our military and disposing of defence land. (I didn't think it would have been quite that soon though). Late in June it was announced that 7,800 defence jobs will go, and perhaps another 13,000 would go to private enterprise (that's outsourcing). Soon after that, it was admitted that some "surplus" defence properties around Sydney Harbour would be sold and others returned to the State government. Considering that they were all originally public properties, the Commonwealth has a hide in attempting to sell any of them. The fight is on for these to be returned to the state as additions to Sydney Harbour NP. So you Queenslanders be prepared to fight for Canungra and other important places as well.

MEMBERS WITH SURPLUS PLANTS MIGHT LIKE TO DONATE SOME TO ILLAWARRA GREVILLEA PARK

Richard Logan mentioned that he is involved with this Group and is working on the development of a RF gully where almost a thousand plants have been put out. They are seeking further donations of plants for the site. Contacts for the project are either Richard at PO Box 61 Fairy Meadow 2519 (ph 042 855088) or Ray Brown, president (ph 042 849216).

"Ideally, donations would be of wild-sourced material but this would not always be possible. The Fern Study Group are involved and have planted a number of ferns in the RF."

He feels this is a very good project and will hopefully be able to see the RF develop over time to a climax stage. (Being one of our younger members this should be as easy as a piece of cake).

At home, Rhododendron lochae has shot ahead and is thriving in a mix of 1/2 river sand & 1/2 garden soil with a southern aspect. The Syzgium leuhmannii hedge plantings took off after the rain, with the tallest doubling its height to over 1 1/2m two years after planting.

OLIVER CARTER IS SEEKING MARSDENIA VIRIDIFLORA MATERIAL TO GROW ON

He has been unable to obtain anything from the normal sources, and asks if anyone could tell him where he could get a couple of plants, or seed, or cutting material. It is a twiner from our north, (e.g. Brigalow areas) known as the Native Potato. Tubers are reported as being sweet and watery and Oliver would like to include the species in his 'Manna nursery' catalogue.

WAYNE O'CONNOR DESCRIBES HIS NEW RF IN THE GLORIOUS GIPPSLAND LAKES DISTRICT OF VICTORIA

"I am now in my own house on the property where I started planting a RF in March 94. That garden is 20m x 80m on a slope facing south west and is at the lowest point of my 5 acre block. Species grown include - Acmena smithii (planted Apr 94 and now 4.8m high); Telopea oreades (Apr 94 now 2.5m); Flindersia australis (May 94 now 2.4m); Brachychiton acerifolius (May 94 now 3.3m); B. populneus (Apr 94 now 4.8m); Melia azedarach (May 94 now 4.4m); Toona australis (Mch 95 now 4.5m); Grevillea robusta (Mch 94 now 6m).

All these were planted out when less than 30cm high, as tube plants.

This past year I planted out a new section with Black Bean, Bangalow Palm, Cabbage Palm, Alexandria Palm, Acronychia oblongifolia, Nothofagus cunninghamii, Elaeocarpus reticulatis, E. holopetalus, Eucryphia moorei, and Sambucca australasica. I plan to just keep on adding to the RF progressively as I do get so much enjoyment from this group of plants.

I have also established a plantation of over 200 Red Cedar (Toona australis), both for a future income and to take some pressure from our native forests. Plantations are the way of the future.

There should be good potential for RF gardens in this area - everyone who has seen my garden seems very impressed and wish to construct their own RF area. I am currently involved in setting up such gardens for friends and relations. Sadly, most local nurseries have little knowledge of RF so don't stock many species - other than the Orbost Rainforest Centre which I find excellent.

Keep up the good work with the N/L - full of information that would be otherwise hard to obtain."

(Ed. I have asked Wayne if he would give us occasional updates on the progress of his Toona woodlot. The species natural range finishes some way north though the general distribution and Waynes location have near-coastal habitats in common

STILL IN VICTORIA - THE O'GORMANS' WRITE OF THE SITUATION PRIOR TO WINTERS' CHILLS

"You would be aware its been a particularly hot and dry summer in Melbourne. The weather is now mild and the autumn break has still not arrived but we are now getting a few thin showers of rain. In our garden the watering system has been a boon - both as a labour saver and also in efficiently providing water directly to the plants when required and not broadcasting (wasting) water all over the yard. Fortunately we threw some shade cloth over our poly-house prior to summer to prevent burning. The plants there have certainly been warm, but have been sheltered from the worst of the sun and regularly watered. Currently we have about 30 *Castanospermum australe* Blackbean in the poly-house doing well. The seed was collected from a friends place in Lismore. We've had nearly 100% germination of Blackbean. We've also had very high germination, more than 95%, of the Rosewood seed we planted *Dysloxyton fraserianum*. We now have approximately 40 *Araucaria Bidwillii* seedlings ranging in size from just sprouting dicots to a few of the previous years crop that now average 30cm high. The seed was collected from mature trees around Melbourne, and at a central Victoria country town that has a whole avenue of Bunyas down its tiny main street. Don has also collected seed dropped from a mature *Toona Ciliata* he's found. The pale, delicate winged seeds were planted about a month ago and have produced 40 seedlings to date.

We also have some *Stenocarpus salignus* and *Stenocarpus sinuatus* germinated from seed collected last year. These are progressing, but only slowly since potting out. The *salignus* seem to grow slightly faster than the *sinuatus*. We have also had a modicum of success with the seeds of *Brachychiton acerifolius* and *Brachychiton discolor* from Melbourne street trees. The *discolor* grow quicker than the *acerifolius* and are less tasty to slugs - these slimy little horrors have taken quite a toll on a number of our *acerifolius* specimens. Where are these plants going you ask? Well we plan to purchase some land in the near future with the hope of planting our 'babies' on, to revegetate it.

With respect to our existing garden, most of our rainforest trees are still very young. The *Flindersia australis*, *Toona ciliata* and *Castanospermum australe*, and *Endiandra globosa* have been somewhat burnt by the hot summer sun, but have put on new growth in response to assiduous watering. We've trimmed off some small branchlets from the *Toona* to see if they would strike as cuttings; but to no avail. Has anyone else tried this? We did notice the other day that a single Blackbean seed that we stuck in the ground some months back has germinated with a 20cm shoot sprouting new leaves. We weren't sure how a seed would go if consigned direct to the soil of a Melbourne winter but it made it!

The warm summer and frequent watering also agreed with our Antarctic Beech, bought late November. Its still in a pot, but has grown a foot, in 2 months, in two discrete spurts of new growth! We hope to plant it out when the weather is more temperate."

STAYING IN MELBOURNE - STEVE SINCLAIR RELATES SOME RECENT GERMINATION RESULTS

"From seed collected during my stay with you in Jan '96 Have heaps of healthy little Booyongs; *Gymnostachys* are pleasing - about 5" tall, with 3 leaves. The Tuckeroos are fine, but a bit slow (about 3") as are the Python Trees (a mere 2"). Just one *Endiandra* grew but is 5". *Euodia micrococca* sprouted a few quick seedlings, all but one soon shrivelled with mould. This year, though, another 8 seeds came up - still at the cotyledon stage but look healthy enough. So far everything's pretty small as I'd expect, through the cold weather and shade they are in, and I don't generally use fertiliser.

I've also got heaps (about 30) of little Prickly Tree Ferns which are scarce as hen's teeth in cultivation. I'm really pampering these - they are not easy to grow from spores and they become out of shape and twisted all too easily.

Those seedlings you posted to me arrived in surprisingly good shape; a bit flat but the tips were undamaged. The *Diploglottis campbellii* lost its attached seed so I hope it no longer needed it!"

UPDATE ON THE RF GARDEN AT MacGREGOR HIGH SCHOOL IN BRISBANE

Claire Shackel reports that it now has a good canopy and the understorey is starting to develop. A storm last year sheared off the tallest tree - a 16m *Elaeocarpus grandis* - at ground level, and 3 smaller trees were also destroyed. The site showed classic regeneration with an initial weed invasion where the light was able to penetrate. The break in the canopy is almost closed now.

Re *Bowenia serrulate* "About 8 or 9 years ago I bought a good sized specimen which grew into a nice pot plant and produced a male cone. From then on it was all down hill with every leaf dying. Couldn't find any information to suggest that *Bowenia* flower and then die, as do other palms. It remained leafless for 2 years, though as the subterranean trunk was still solid I planted it out in a most unsuitable spot Jan '95, and in April '97 there were two young but fully expanded leaves and 2 still unfurling.

My interpretation is, that as so many rhizome plants do, the cone terminated the growing point and it took 4 years to develop 2 more growing points. I also had a 5 year old *Macrozamia miquillii* leafless for 2 years which is now doing well after it was also put into the ground.

NEW MEMBER JULIE GORRELL'S INTRODUCTION

"I have joined RFSG as I am interested in the concept of the simultaneous healing of the human soul/spirit and the environment. I don't believe we can separate the two any longer. I feel there needs to be a shift from an individualistic approach of the 'self' to one where we reflect, include and are a part of the biosphere.... I'm interested in projects that assist in education toward social change to a future as I've described above. I look forward to meeting you one day."

ANOTHER RECRUIT - PETER DIXON - MENTIONS THAT HE TOO IS INVOLVED IN RF REGENERATION

Peter mentioned that he is active in bush regen around Sydney and on the Central Coast. This encouraged me to do a quick tally of those in the group with such involvement, and there is a surprising(?) at least 10% with current or ex-professional involvement, or with voluntary or own property work. Most are around Sydney with the Jones', Deans', Ted Teutsch, Toni May, Carol Bentley, Dean Pryke; others in NSW are the Tranters', Ralphs', Audrey Taggart, Van Klaphake, Jan Parkin & Ross, Ralph Woodford, Beryl & I; in Brisbane Keith McClymont. Anyone else? Perhaps we should start a special 'chapter'?

BACKHOUSIA CITRIODORA ("lemon myrtle") MAKES A REFRESHING DRINK ACCORDING TO COLLEEN KEENA

"I put a few fresh leaves in my glasses case each day, and just add hot water to one leaf when I feel like a drink. I find the youngest leaves are the most enjoyable - even so I fish the leaf from the mug as soon as the water starts to colour. The longer it is left in, the stronger (and darker) is the brew. Some of my workmates have also joined me in preferring lemon myrtle to customary beverages. A stem of this plant in water maintains its freshness for 1 - 2 weeks.

Another use - Just one chopped leaf stirred through cooked rice gives a slight lemon flavour which really complements an accompanying curry.

BURRENDONG ARBORETUM IN THE NSW CENTRAL WEST IS WORTH A VISIT BY RFSG MEMBERS

Ted Teutsch usually manages to call in each year, and has just spent 8 days there. He said that the (well known) 'Fern Gully' has quite a selection of ferns and RF plants that are now well established, and it is a delightful place to spend some time. (Ed. The setting is close to the foreshores of a dam on the Macquarie River near Wellington and within a State Recreation Area set up on an old overstocked and degraded grazing property. Natural regeneration is restoring the area quite well and it is a pleasant place to visit, look at and fish.)

Ted mentioned that the arboretum will receive its final grant this year - \$85,000 - when they will need to arrange their own funding; either corporate sponsorship or through a commercial activity - retail nursery or suchlike. Economic (ir)rationality is still supreme, it seems.

PRACTICAL PROPAGATION NOTES PUT TOGETHER BY PATRICK BENNETT

Members are responding to the call for their experiences in germinating seeds, and Patrick has summarised the first reports.

(From Kim Gollan) * Found 100% coarse river sand best media for propagation * Other materials frequently cause fungal problems. * A lot of RF seeds need scarification as in the natural environment - often done by birds and animals. (Kim scarifies at least 70% of species and gets germination in weeks.) * Rhodosphaera rhodanthema germinate very quickly once the hard nut covering around seed is removed. * Same for Gmelina leichhardtii, Alphitonia excelsa, Cassine australe, Drypetes australasica, etc. Downside is that treatment is VERY labour intensive.

(From Des Tuck) * Livistona australis. Trial of 3 seeds - 2 sown after removal of black casing, 1 with casing left on, into a mix of 50/50 sand/peat. The 2 with skins removed germinated in 4 months. Other left for further time had shown no sign of sprouting, so the casing was removed and seed replanted. (Patrick. Could this be the old bird/animal trick Kim describes?) * Harpullia alata. Planted just one day after collection into 50/50 sand/peat with germination in 6 weeks (just one seed in this trial though). * Glochidion ferdinandi. Sown Oct 96 into 50/50 sand/peat (collected a month previous) after 24 hours soaking resulted in good germination but slow growth rate. * Rhodosphaera rhodanthema. 7 seeds collected Jan 96 were cut around circumference and sown in potting mix. 2 germinated though one was lost in the drought. The survivor is now approx 45cm high. * Notelaea longifolia. 60% germination in 4 months; slow, so fertiliser trial is imminent.

(From Claire Shackel) * Many RF seeds do not germinate till spring regardless of when planted. * Pavetta australis - 80% germination in Sep/Oct. * Rhodosphaera rhodanthema - sown in used potting mix with first seedling up June 96 and thence one or 2 per week until March 97. Another 4 germinated 26 May - 10 June. On germination they put up 2 large cotyledons and start to develop their first true leaves before the root emerges from the seed. At this stage they transplant without loss, but if seed is dislodged after root has developed, they suffer severe setback and most die.

(Patrick comments - "Oh! This is the stuff Study Groups are made of.") He added that there has been good response by members in returning propagation sheets recently and thanks RFSG members for this. Strong demand for seed, too. Had to actually chase donors for specific seed. "Good work members."

FICUS CORONATA - IT'S A GOOD BEVERAGE PROVIDER AS WELL AS COST FREE SAND-PAPER SUBSTITUTE

Did I mention that we tried its fruit in wine making? A small quantity of figs were collected last February and fermented with yeast and a moderate quantity of sugar to achieve a dry and fairly low alcohol wine. Fermentation ceased after 6 weeks and 9 x 375ml bottles were 'put down' early April. We tried one just tonight (late Aug) and found it very palatable, so yell orl jist hav to forgiv eny spelin mistikes for a while..... The colour is very good with an amazingly clear reddish hue (though not as purple as many red varieties) and is dry as was intended, delicately flavoured, perhaps a little thin. But very pleasant and I look forward to making a larger quantity next season..... (We tried some in June, and have decided that it has further improved with age.)

HARRY FRANZ IS CONTINUING EXPERIMENTS WITH HOOP PINE SEED

"I am continuing my trial with old, refrigerated seed. It has been stored since Jan 1992 and I still get good results from my yearly sowing. A 20% germination this year (5 from 25 seeds) with enough left for a further 2 years trials. I plant each January."

He added that the drought around Goomeri seems like it will never end, saying "I've eased up on growing from seed lately due to the past 2 summers drought as my planting schedule has been curtailed. Most of the recent plantings have struggled and produced little growth. Hopefully this year will be better with reasonable rain and an easing of the severe water restrictions we've had. However I've visited some interesting places, including patches of Dry RF with the Murgon Field Naturalists Club; this local group's outings result in the sharing of information and experience."

WE HAVE BEEN WARNED - EL NINO IS BACK AGAIN AS STRONG AS EVER

Just this week it has been confirmed that 'the boy child' is back and could be one of the worst such events we have experienced. Forecasts of a huge reduction in rainfall over many areas of the east coast (as little as 30% of normal in some places) will renew or reinforce a drought, cause another bad bushfire season, and lead to a scarcity of some food commodities.

The increasing number and severity of these El Ninos is confirming the theory that 'Greenhouse' is either very closely connected or has a major influence on the temperature changes of our oceans. So much for stupid statements by out-of-touch people as 'I won't allow any (economic) damage to happen to Australia'. Wonder what they think recurrent droughts do?

Anyway, be prepared. Fill up all your buckets so that you can keep your RF alive, don't pay your water rates in advance, and make sure that you are as secure from wildfire as you can be.

A NEW AND POTENTIALLY NASTY WEED IS BECOMING 'NATURALISED' ALONG THE COAST

It is a creeper - Lophostemon erubescens (Scrophulariaceae) - native to southern America. I do not know if it has a common name, but according to 'Flora of NSW' it is a garden escape and appearing in RF north from Taree in NSW. We discovered 3 vines on 'Booyong' early August, only because they were in flower and stood out from surrounding native vegetation. They were at the edge of RF (ex-Lantana) and we had missed them earlier, even though we are often at that place. Another was found nearby, on Sita's place last year.

Unfortunately they have a very attractive flower, bell-shaped, mauve-pink, about 7cm long and progressively coming out individually from each leaf axil, so would no doubt be popular with exotic plant fanciers. Alarmingly their seed capsules (at every axil) contain about 200 seeds, each smaller than a pin head and surrounded by a flat membrane (similar to a miniature Grevillea seed). Apparently wind borne. Obviously bad news and yet another threat to the forests.

BOOK OF THE MONTH - "HIDDEN RAINFORESTS subtropical rfs & their invertebrate biodiversity" BY GEOFF WILLIAMS
Published by NSW University Press 1993 ISBN 0 86840 0548 Price \$85.

A detailed study of the Manning Catchment area of NSW north coast (between Newcastle and Port Macquarie), a subtropical region of pronounced biotic diversity, rich in endemic plants and animals. There are nearly 200 colour photos, and many detailed appendices that would be of great use to keen observers of our coastal Rfs.

As probably everyone is aware, insects represent the vast bulk of RF fauna and until this book was available, it was difficult to easily obtain details of these animals. But there is an excellent coverage of the RF flora as well, and great descriptions of many of the few surviving forests of the Manning. I found the book of particular interest as it covers the area south of here, as well as the Comboyne Plateau. (Byabarra is located at the base of the Plateau, so much of the flora and fauna has rolled down the steep slopes in the past, and ended up on 'Booyong'.)

Despite it being a description of a specific area of our great East Coast, it would be most useful as a reference to sub-tropical eastern Oz as local detailed information is generally unavailable. Especially for those seeking references to the insect fauna. (I believe the author is an entomologist).

Mention is made of the tiny remnants of riverine RF that survive in NSW - barely 100 ha of the once widespread and extensive tracts around most coastal rivers. Several of these remnants had the luck to be protected by being adjacent to wharves in the old days. Wingham Brush, Lansdowne Reserve & Boat Harbour are among them.

Another interesting point is that littoral forest makes up just a 1/2% of the states RF - 1300ha. Much was lost in recent years due to sandmining for the traces of rutile etc. around tree roots, and the need to create very short-term jobs. Virtually all of the surviving RF is degraded and in need of some form of rehabilitation if biological value is to be retained. Something else I learned is that littoral RF is of 2 types, headland, or beach hind-dune vegetation.

MORE RF NATIONAL PARKS AND RESERVES HAVE BEEN DECLARED IN NSW RECENTLY

They include **Ben Halls Gap NP** of 2500ha south east of Tamworth. Undisturbed old growth tall forest.

Billinudgel NR 357ha 10km north of Brunswick Heads. Littoral habitat.

Bongil Bongil (additional 409ha) between Sawtell and Mylstom. 7km of littoral communities.

Cudgen NR 464ha north of Cabarita Beach - part of the largest remaining remnant vegetation on the Tweed Coast. Includes temperate and STRF.

Demon Creek 900ha is 30km east of Tenterfield with steep rocky slopes and narrow RF gullies. Near the Washpool wilderness.

Guy Fawkes NP with 10 separate additions totalling 10,400ha

Mt Jerusalem NP 970 ha, NE of Lismore includes the largest remaining intact old growth stand of Blackbutt dominated, tall, moist open forest with populations of rare and endangered plants.

** **Toonumbar NP** (5750ha) and ** **Toooloom NP** (3980ha) are in the Richmond Ranges west of Casino and contain internationally significant RFs and other habitats. Numerous endangered plant & animal species.

Willi Willi NP of 9620ha, 50km west of Kempsey protects a range of RF types from lower altitude dry STRF to higher altitude CTRF.

** **Yatheyattah NR** 10 km north of Milton, though only 19ha, reserves a small remnant patch of ST and dry RF which is one of the most diverse RF communities in southern NSW.

** We looked at those 3 places some years ago and they are surely worthy of preservation. Yatheyattah though, had some Anredera cordifolia (Madeira vine), a dreadful weed well established, but I trust since removed.

Many other areas of the state are in the process of being added to the reserve system so I will try to obtain the NPWS 1996-97 Annual Report and publish other important RF sites included.

HOWEVER THE NEWS IS NOT ALL GOOD - REMNANT NSW LITTORAL RF UNDER THREAT OF CLEARING

"The government White Paper on the Native Vegetation Conservation Bill is a shocker. It allows local committees (likely to be dominated by farming and developer interests) to develop regional vegetation management plans that will override environment protection zonings, and planning policies presently covering Littoral RF and Coastal Wetlands.

There will be no regional study. The NP&WS and its minister will be relegated to an advisory role on threatened species. Plans will be based on local government areas, potentially leading to over 100 plans dominated by the rural lobby.

The Bill does not contain a clear target for vegetation retention. Self regulation by farmers is the aim - 'this proposal puts farmers in the driving seat' - the minister said (17.7.97)."

This report was issued by major environmental groups with a request that our members contact relevant ministers, local members and others to oppose this attack on environmental planning and pollution control.

The **Iron Gates development** mentioned previously destroyed a rare coastal RF. The courts ordered that the vegetation be restored, but how can you do this to such an area totally demolished? One particularly annoying fact is that if the NP&WS and/or the EPA acted when they were called on to intervene (both refused), that destruction would have been prevented.

SOUTH STRADBROKE ISLAND IS HARDLY PRISTINE.... SO DON'T BELIEVE THE DEVELOPERS HYPE

Judith tells of its present condition. "The Island could hardly be considered pristine - it was all sand mined in the 60's! The vegetation now consists of Casuarina equisetifolia (not native to the area) planted by the miners. Behind these are Banksia integrifolia & B. serrata with patches of Spinifex on exposed dunes. The centre of the Island has several species of Eucalypt, the above Banksias plus B. aemulla. There are signs of RF succession at one sheltered spot, species include Tristaniopsis laurina, Lophostemon conferta, Parsonsia sp., Zieria sp., Hibiscus tiliaceus, and 5 species of Mangrove grow on the landward side.

Couran Cove is not a new development, it is a redevelopment of the old Tipplers resort. There are also 3 or 4 smaller resorts as well as a group of private homes, many of them rented out, as well as a school campsite. There are no sealed roads and few cars but the island is ringed by a 4wd track. I have been going there for about 8 years with a group of biology students. Not this year though, due to funding cuts."

So there we are. A somewhat different description to that quoted by the sellers agents, and included in associated publicity. It would be interesting to know how many sales were made to locals as compared to southern and overseas suckers.

The next question. Does anyone know where the sewerage, and garbage generated by the occupants of those 468 units and the hotel complex will end up? Not in my fish, thank you. (Just wishful thinking.)

There was a write up of the project in "Aust. Horticulture's" May/ June issue, and sure enough it is a canal-type 'dredge, fill, and level' operation and be based around a "6ha semi-tidal man made lagoon" with an "adjacent wilderness area" to "house 300 eco-cabins".

Just shows that different outlooks and impressions vary so much, depending on both the size of one's wallet and I.Q. rating. (Usually of inverse proportions, unfortunately).

SOME GOOD NEWS ON RF HABITATS WITHIN QUEENSLAND PUBLIC FORESTS

"I wish to reply to your comment on conservation values of Qld forest reserves. There are large reserves around here (Goomeri); native hardwood reserves are important for many plants & animals. Hardwood harvest happens only about every 20 years. Except for an occasional fire and some grazing in parts - the forests are left untouched. Fire is important to reduce the risk of a large litter buildup which would promote a very damaging fire.

There are some very significant dry RF remnants in local Forests. Many of these have not been logged for a long time and look like virgin forests. The emergent Crows Ash and Hoop Pine are mostly missing though. State Forests have in the past provided bush for new and enlarged National Parks. If State forests did not exist - much of the bush would have been cleared for farming or grazing. Locally, logged areas regenerate quickly. If logging ceased, the forests would become like virgin bush again.

Even plantations are havens for some native plants and animals (although far from being natural bush). Dry RF species grow under Hoop Pine plantations. Unfortunately these are damaged and destroyed by thinning and eventual clear fall harvest. Our local hardwood forests are selectively logged - not clear felled. Trees are cut only above a certain size. There are a couple of special wildflower spots in local forests. Other important wildflower areas exist near Miles (in Cypress Pine Reserves) west of our area. Cypress Pines are selectively logged and allowed to regenerate naturally

I would like to see more positive reports in the N/L about things people are doing for the environment, regeneration etc. I think many landholders are becoming more aware of native bush through programmes like Landcare. I know of several people who are preserving patches of dry RF on their properties. It is always sad to see any destroyed." (Harry Franz)

NSW STATE FORESTS ARE WORTH VISITING AND GOOD LOCAL INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE

Various publications covering forestry districts and individual forests have been available for many years. In our area, at least, brochures have been updated with an emphasis on "Welcome to -- Forests". Brief description of history, area, forest type, road conditions are listed and places of interest or detailed forest drives are covered. These are free and can be obtained from district forest offices or tourist info centres.

Picnic facilities are widely available and many a forest has well supported camping areas - all free of charge and no need of a permit. Forestry offices willingly suggest appropriate locations to the traveller with a particular interest. Excellent maps are available for purchase and are good value even for short time visitation.

LORNA MURRAY DESCRIBES TWO INTERESTING EVENTS EXPERIENCED DURING A RECENT TRIP TO NORTH QLD

A talk by Garry Werren of the N.Q. Joint Board discussed the now completed planning exercise for the Tully-Murray section of the Wet Tropics Bioregion. It has been based on the geology, vegetation patterns and other natural aspects and matters now being considered include ecosystem reconstruction, links between fragments, weed removal and fixing stream vegetation. The planning exercise was to see where difficulties exist and to address the problems systematically. A 'rehabilitation needs' map links it all together.

The whole enterprise is being organised on river catchment areas. In the Barron section which is being worked on now, all local authorities and 40 community groups are involved. The list of Rare & Threatened plants for this area include 2 endangered species and 11 considered vulnerable. Data is still to be collated for the more northern areas of the Wet Tropics.

The Wet Tropics Bioregion which is under the control of the Wet Tropics Management Authority covers most of the lowland and littoral RF in Nth Q. If we wish to find out more about the activities, the officers of the organisation could probably supply further detailed information. Lorna believes that the worthwhile RF areas are now conserved in N.Q. but agrees that they must be given adequate attention and maintenance for their survival.

An opportunity to travel on The Kuranda 'Skyrail' was accepted, and considered to be an excellent means of educating the general public about the RF, without undue pressures on the habitat. At the first station there are good boardwalks through the vegetation, with some information and signs to help the interested visitor. At the second station as well as 2 boardwalks, there is a modern information centre organised by CSIRO, with help from QDPI, Uni of Qld, James Cook Uni and others, to inform people about local flora and fauna and conservation values.

"I feel that it is essential that people generally become more aware of the value of our remaining natural areas if there is to be sufficient pressure for their conservation in the future. This Skyrail project is a means of encouraging thousands of people to experience the RF, and to learn about this unique environment without any impact of people pressure on the area. Now, less than 2 years after placement of the towers there is no sign of the disturbance of the 10 metre area which was cleared around each tower site during construction. The Skyrail is a much more successful educational tool than the provision of walking tracks through the edge of a forest area. If more people become aware of the importance of such places, there will be more influence on governments and local authorities to provide adequate maintenance."

ENVIRONMENTALLY DESTRUCTIVE DEVELOPMENTS ARE PROPOSED AUSTRALIA-WIDE

One of the current controversies in north-west Tasmania is the 'Surry Hills' estate. This is 107,000 ha of privately owned land where North Forest Products wants to log 'degraded' forests. Large areas are clearly undisturbed, pristine RF (which Senator Hill designated as degraded, but then he has never been known to reject any development during 2 years of authority over the environment) but a license for an additional 450,000 tonnes of Woodchips has been issued. Old growth forests will be clear felled and replaced with Eucalypt plantations. Despite ancient and valuable sawlog myrtles being woodchipped, the 'Forest Practises Board' has refused to intervene. Allegations of dubious dealings have been made, apparently to no avail.

Perhaps somebody in Tassie could elaborate on this controversy, and also advise on whether access to 'Surry Hills' has only resulted from that wretched road through the Tarkine Wilderness?

We should hope that little RF was included in the 497,000ha of native vegetation to be cleared in Qld by permit, last year. A quick calculation shows that this is almost 2,000 square miles, what do they do with all this biota-dead land that is created every year? How much of it was actually RF?

Widespread dismay at the decision to further mine uranium within Kakadu NP. The Jabiluka deposit is to be mined against the traditional owners wishes, and ore will be trucked about 20kms to the treatment plant at Ranger. Truckdrivers never go slowly, so that road will be a real speedway and one can only imagine how much radioactive material will spill along the route. The EIS, as always, gave the development the all clear, but I wonder whether it recommended that people be employed to remove an assuredly large number of dead and injured wildlife run over, and to publish regular reports of the numbers of each species slaughtered?

Yet another looming threat could be **Coronation Hill** where the mining company has just won a court challenge to the validity of a government decision to prevent exploitation. They will seek compensation and I am fearful that our eco rasha masters will allow them to mine, and save the compo. Just one more environmental battle that was won years ago looks as though it will have to be fought again.

Northern NSW - Timbarra Plateau, Tenterfield area could be devastated if gold mining does commence. The company intends to treat the ore with large quantities of cyanide, but if that gets into the Timbarra River, the whole catchment could end up like Ok Tedi. Objections to this project are based on it being completely different to the one outlined in the EIS. Lots of RF in that district.

A decision passed by the NSW National Party Conference in July reads "When we are returned to power, we will limit the number of new National Parks, and ensure that the existing ones will be opened up to other uses". It surely is impossible to change the mind-set of some people out of reverse gear, but one must live in hope.

It seems the Hinchinbrook area in North Qld. is in for a further shake-up. And it will serve Mr Williams jolly well right. A bit of competition for the tourist dollar with another big development approved. This one is the 'Club Hinchinbrook' near Lucinda, south of Cardwell and fronting the Channel. It will include a 50-berth marina and residential units. All this activity will generate stacks more tourists, so naturally Hinchinbrook Island though a World Heritage listed national Park, will be upgraded from the quiet little backwater it presently seems. Moves are afoot to allow 2 operators to conduct large commercial tours of the island; construction of 3 new walking trails in the Bluff area; a boat landing ramp 'with minimal infrastructure'. These plans appear to allow for the quadrupling of tour visitors to some of the island's most sensitive areas.

ITS EASIER TO OBTAIN 1.3 BILLION DOLLARS FOR ANYTHING OTHER THAN THE ENVIRONMENT

You will recall that \$1.3 million was allocated to the Natural Heritage Fund last year and is to be spent over the coming 4 years. This was such a vital problem that it was necessary to sell a bit of Telstra to get the money for environmental 'commitments'.

A different story though was when Thailand recently got into trouble. That nation decimated its forests over the past 20 years, went on a huge growth and development debt binge with all sorts of associated social problems - pollution, overcrowding, massive Aids epidemic, drugs, rampant prostitution etc. Hoping to save their economy, prop up currency markets, and ease the pain on numerous speculators, other countries advanced massive amounts of cash. Australia dutifully supported these attempts, and released \$1.3 billion of OUR dough- money we may never get back. We didn't give them any money to help protect their RFs though

The system of priorities determined by our inept decision makers is absolutely disgraceful and I often wonder why so many of us put up with it without complaining.

TOURISM CAN BOTH HELP TO PRESERVE VALUABLE HABITATS AND PROVIDE INCOME TO LOCAL PEOPLE

Paul Brady found an interesting example while working in Nepal. "The problem for preserving large areas (given greed and survival are largely responsibility for such destruction) is being able to provide a value to it. We will always come up with this equation of juggling between the value of the land and the supposed economic virtues from its destruction. Unfortunately most decisions are made for the short rather than the long term. In this regard tourism needs to be supported (provided it is not destructive eg. golf courses).

The eastern southern area of Nepal (called the Terai) is fairly flat. Prior to the fifties it helped maintain the isolation of the country because few people were prepared to settle there because of wild animals (rhino, tiger, leopards and bears) and malaria. Of course this meant there were extensive forested areas including dense riverine associations (large trees with lianas and epiphytic orchids). With the opening up of the country, vast areas were settled leading to the destruction of much forest. Concerns were raised about this, leading to the establishment of some national parks, the main one the 'Chitwan'. Thousands of villagers were resettled out of these parks. Tourism significantly developed at Chitwan and in turn the government has become even more resolved to maintain it in its pristine state. This has led to even more pressure on the remaining villagers to depart.

I'VE OBTAINED MORE DETAILS OF THE REMARKABLE WOLLEMIA NOBILIS - THE WOLLEMI PINE

There are 38 adult specimens, genetically all the same, growing in 2 small groves on wet ledges in a deep (400m), sheltered RF gorge in Wollemi NP north-west of Sydney. It is a member of the family Araucariaceae, as are the related Norfolk, Bunya, Hoop, Monkey Puzzle and Kauri Pines. It, too, is bisexual with both male and female cones on the same tree - both borne on separate branches at the very tips. Male cones are lower down on the tree on older branches. Seeds are winged.

The older pines have multiple trunks of different ages, and in many cases the original trunk is long gone. Scientists estimate the trees to be between 500 and 1000 years old.

The National Park contains the largest wilderness in the state, a very rugged mountainous region of gorges, cliffs and undisturbed forest. No doubt many other new species will be found over the coming years.

AS IT IS OBVIOUSLY AN OPEN SEASON FOR COMMENTS AND CRITICISM - I AM GOING TO HAVE MY SAY TOO

I always welcome comments to improve the N/L and constructive criticism on particular issues, and believe that I have implemented all reasonable suggestions presented. Time and personality, though, prevent me carrying out all requests - ideally I should personalise each N/L to suit individual members' desires. However my various duties within RFSG, including leader; editor; secretary; treasurer; researcher; administrator; seed gatherer and plant curator precludes such luxury.

I know that some would prefer not to have so many environmental bad news stories included. but a lot of members wish to know of such matters and in fact often draw attention to them. We are all optimists at heart, but cannot escape reality. If we were prepared to face the facts, our planet would be in far better shape, and society would be a lot fairer than it is.

I have become intolerant of constant demands from people unprepared to contribute to this publication or to assist me in any way, and often wonder why anyone with this attitude wishes to remain with us. It would be far better for the good running of the Group if ardent critics chose to discontinue membership by their own decision.