



ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

RAINFOREST STUDY GROUP

NEWSLETTER NO 42 OCTOBER 1998
ISSN 0729-5413

Annual Subscription \$5

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"The environmental crisis we face as a nation has become increasingly stark - and increasingly apparent to all Australians." (John Howard, opposition leader 31/1/96)

GROUP ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Four newsletters were compiled, containing the customary balance of rainforest themes - horticulture; ecology; environment and conservation issues, and associated social, economic, and political influences.

Once again I thank Peter Jurd, Pete Smith and Patrick Bennett for their assistance in helping RFSG to operate in its customary manner. We would also be lost without the input of the many members who contribute to the N/L, who publicise the Group by various means, and especially to those who have hosted local activities.

I find it particularly pleasing that members continue to call on us at 'Booyong', especially in matching faces with names, ie meeting long-standing members for the first time.

Also appreciated is that SGAP Regions continue to send me their quarterly journals, keeping me informed of the various activities and interests of their States' membership.

The year's accounting

Income \$	Expenditure \$
Subscriptions 795	Printing & stationery 509
Donations 30	Postage & phone 378
Bank interest 7	Taxes 4
<u>832</u>	<u>891</u>
Balance b/f 1997 \$1025	Balance c/f 1998 \$966

Current membership of 165 is virtually steady for the year.

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a warm welcome to people who recently joined the Group. All from NSW

PIET VAN HAEFF Papinbarra

TED NEWMAN & PAT KENYON Dural

JO McNAB Wauchope

JENNY WALL Papinbarra

MY SUGGESTION THAT A LEADERSHIP CHANGE BE CONSIDERED DREW LITTLE COMMENT

A couple of members expressed concern that 'I was going to give it away', but it is not my present intention to abandon the job before a change can be arranged. Richard Logan suggests that in an effort to share the load, a more structured committee type administration should be set up. Ideally many members would be involved - eg new positions of local Region Co-ordinators (say Victoria, Sydney, Illawarra, Hunter, North Coast, etc.), Conservation Officer, Research Officers (prepare/ compile info on various genera), Research Co-ordinator (liaison with officers - maybe to the stage of preparing a booklet for interested people). There are many with various areas of expertise who could take some of the load from Leader/ NL editor who is presently assisted by Patrick as Seed Bank/ Horticultural Officer, Richard as Internet Co-ordinator and Peter organising the Brisbane activities.

Richard hopes to stimulate further discussion on this matter, and I will publish more of his thoughts next time. One thing that needs to be seriously considered is, will distance complicate committee consultation?

NEWS FROM THE SEED BANK

Patrick points out that he has few species available, so it would be good if members could start collecting again. Re Seed Exchange "I agree with Judith Brass' suggestion, a great idea, and I could certainly coordinate - maybe all offers and requests should come to me and I could pass them on for the N/L, with seed bank update. Lets trial this, it could partially solve the problem of requests for numerous species which I do not have access to - I have been thinking for some time that we should publish a *required seed list* as well as that which is available. The plant lists and propagation sheets have slowed down, so a gentle reminder that I really do not mind receiving these items (even revisions from those who have been dedicated enough to send details already). Will start putting something together from info available.

SPECIES NOW AVAILABLE FROM THE SEED BANK

Alphitonia petrei Araucaria cunninghamii Cayratia clematidea Commersonia bartramia Coprosma quadrifida Cordyline stricta Ficus virens Lomatia arborescens Pandorea jasminoides Pomaderris aspera Randia fitzalanii Trichosanthes sp. Recent donors Daryl Kinnane, Joe Friend. All requests to P. Bennett 20 Belmore Court Pine Mountain Q. 4306 with a stamped self-addressed envelope please.

SPECIES WANTED BY TWO OF THE MEMBERS.

Citronella moorei. Mimi Godfrey wishes to obtain a specimen for her herbarium, saying they don't even have it at Mt. Annan. She asks for just 2 leaves (as small as possible) and a bit of flower if available that someone may send (1 Madeira Ave Sylvania 2224).

Richard Logan would like to obtain seed or cuttings of Archidendron grandiflorum. Rich is at PO Box 61 Fairy Meadow 2519

Thanks to Pat Shanahan who will send Rhys Mcgregor cuttings of Hollandia sayeriana he sought.

RFSG's MEMBERSHIP COVERS A WIDE SPECTRUM OF INTERESTS AND OCCUPATIONS

This was brought home to me over just a few days recently. Several letters and a couple of phone calls set me thinking that whilst we are all RF enthusiasts, either through growing selected plants, revegetating cleared or degraded places, perhaps just enjoying natural areas, the majority of us are involved in the whole range of these activities. And we are all have totally different outlooks, experiences and priorities.

Anyway RFSG includes judges, clergy, teachers, scientists in various fields, environmentalists, horticulturalists, technicians, company directors, farmers; from commerce, medicine, arts and crafts. Several members are deeply involved in reconciliation between us colonisers and those who once owned our land; others befriend newcomers to our shores; some devote time and expense in protecting the interests of other species with whom we share this planet - conservationists or 'greenies'.

Isn't it just great that we are all drawn together by our interest in RAINFOREST !

PROGRESS REPORT - SOME RF SPECIES GROWING PRETTY WELL IN EUROPE

Paul Rezl wrote an interesting letter telling how some of our plants are progressing in his homeland - the Czech Republic, and warning us of an unsatisfactory seed supplier here.

'We've been having a decent summer but a bit too windy. This time last year was much worse - worst flood ever recorded. My plants are doing OK despite lack of time for them (my seed business has been quite busy). I'd installed a better system of winter protection in my glasshouse; a combination of bubble-wrap sheets and gas burner (lit only when outside temp. drops below -10°C) but being a good winter this was used only twice.

I must say that Oz natives are better winter performers than are South African species. It is sometimes amazing to see them surviving -5°C without any problem. Of plants grown from RFSG seed; Decaspermum parviflorum is one of the best - although slow it is very tough and hardy and looks to be a perfect subject to bonsai. Pandorea jasminoides is a showpiece in my collection; very hardy, almost thriving on neglect and flowering profusely. Parsonia straminea is an interesting story. Of all the seeds you sent me, only one germinated and the plant is growing OK; not exactly a monster but a delicate plant with a beauty of its own. I wonder what it will grow into? I also have just one plant of P. heterophylla from NZ, a very strange plant indeed - almost ugly but definitely interesting. What happens when I cross the two? That is if they ever produce any flowers.

Perhaps I should also mention Oliver Carter who has also sent me seeds, thanks to him I have more interesting plants to grow.

I must tell of a disappointing incident with an Aussie merchant who offers, among other items, rare fruit seeds and suggest that anyone should be careful if dealing with his company. Not only are seed prices high, and despite charging extra for postage & packing, my order of perishable seed was sent by sea mail only to arrive 3 months later as a stinking mush. It also seems he also doesn't pay back any credits due. That experience cost me AU\$ 200. So be warned!"

(Ed. Paul is likely to be unaware of the defamation laws here that prevent me publishing the name of the supplier involved. That's how some get away with unethical activities, unfortunately. However I can inform interested members individually of the person Paul named.

CLAIRE SHACKEL COMMENTS ON THE RECENT QLD. CONFERENCE AT TOWNSVILLE

It was an interesting time at the Regional conference in June/July. Participants visited the Paluma Range RF on one of the organised outings. We were issued with a pamphlet which helped identify the trees growing along the track. My group was more interested in the understorey species, particularly ferns; though the number of plants was disappointing. However there were nice stands of the tree fern Cyathea rebeccae, and Blechnum cartilagineum (N.Q. form). One that I saw for the first time is the very handsome Pteridoblechnum neglectum. (Jones and Clemesha describe this as "Nth Qld, confined to tropical areas usually above 400m alt. A very distinct fern found in RF, where it grows into handsome clumps. New fronds are a beautiful, shiny purple colour.")

There were a number of Aspleniums (Birds Nest Ferns) including a small colony of the narrow leaved birds nest (A. simplicifrons). Young Calamus - lawyer cane - were also a feature of the vegetation.

BRIEFLY ---

Bev Croft mentioned that they are still planting their coastal patch on the NSW coast; the birdlife is improving markedly as are the reptiles, especially the lizards. They were heading for Greece at the last report - hope the fires didn't affect them.

Geoff & Connie Warn spent 3 months in South America - Peru, Bolivia, Argentina and Chile. Didn't make it to the Amazon, nor see very much tropical RF except around Iguazu Falls in Argentina/Brazil. Lots of other interesting plants though, especially the Gondwana links eg Embothrium. Nice orchids and bromeliads too, in Peru. Down in Tierra del Fuego, not much grows but several varieties of beech and lots of small prostrate plants and cushion-type bushes. At home, most of the garden survived our summer absence, though a Davidsons plum died. Otherwise we tried Bunya nut butter (OK though the paste doesn't have a lot of flavour on its own its quite good as a coating on chicken pieces. The Austromyrtus dulcis had plenty of fruit so dried a lot, and often use them for stuffing lamb roast or kangaroo.

Mimi Godfrey made it to the Townsville conference so took the opportunity to get back to Mission Beach, and then joined a tour to Cape York via the Bloomfield, Battle Camp Road and Lakefield NP. Overall, it was almost 6 weeks in nth Q.

Alex Palmer has made a career change and is the horticulturist at Avondale Golf Club. So far has planted about 5,000 native grasses, shrubs and trees - the site is surrounded by bushland, which adds to the challenge.

Debra Little has just finished a uni course (environmental education) and is catching up on a lot of items put aside of late. "I have only a few RF plants in my own garden - a suburban one where I have also tried to grow many local natives, plus have a few chooks and a permaculture style vegetable garden. I used to work in the Bushland management Unit at Bankstown city Council, and I have some of the RF species that grow in that area. You may be surprised to know that species such as Cassine australis, Euodia micrococca, Rhodamnia rubescens, Alphitonia excelsa, & Acronychia oblongifolia occur in the Bass Hill/ Georges Hall area, with most of them found in one reserve, under a canopy of turpentines. I am growing the first three of those species among my limited collection, and all are thriving - the soil and climate is not far removed from the provenance area."

Jan Sked mentioned that she has now planted out 120 RF trees in her son's garden at Petrie with great results to date. Only 2 have died - a Guilfoylia monostylis and a Pittosprum revolutum. All the rest are thriving and have grown much quicker than many in her own garden. Jan was a bit concerned that "that awful clay soil" he has would make many of them struggle and feels that the choice of plants could be the reason.

Had a card from Garry Daly from Carnarvon Gorge saying he and Helen had also visited Bunya Mountains, Blackdown, Cape Hillsborough, Mission Beach, Daintree and Atherton adding that the RFs are very exciting, however the degree of clearing and general disregard for the environment is ever present. Will pass on some interesting snippets from various sources for a following N/L.

SOME MEMBERS WHO RECENTLY LEFT THE GROUP HOPE TO KEEP IN TOUCH

Jeremy Trahair wrote that work commitments (up to 90 hours a week at times!) has caused him to drop a number of interests including SGAP & RFSG but he would be happy to be contacted by members seeking information. He did notice that 1997 was a good year for flowering of RF plants in the yard, and even a number in pots - Randia chartaceae, Alyxia, Citriobatus, Austromyrtus sp from Gladstone (a small open shrub). We had a quick trip to Cairns and the Tablelands in July, spending some time at Chambers RF lodges at Lake Eacham which are set in regenerating RF. "We struggled to find unlogged stands of RF on the tablelands; everywhere seemed to be at least selectively logged. This was a disappointment. The nicest forest we saw was as Mossman Gorge."

Mal Cullen explained that other interests and priorities, he has relinquished membership of SGAP after 15 years and therefor RFSG too. "We've become involved in the Rare Fruits Council - half our block is full of Oz RF plants and the rest with SE Asian and South American RF species (tropical fruits). We've set up a nursery (bought a section of a neighbours property for this), specialising in food and medicinal plants. We still sell a lot of Rf and other native species. Would like to keep in touch with RFSG members, and welcome anyone to call in and have a look at our garden - the RF plantings are now between 5 - 8 years and really doing well." (Ed. Mal is at RMB 6 Ashby, near Maclean on the Clarence River NSW.

Ian Abbottsmith felt he should drop his membership for now. Endless duties as a single parent leaves little time for catching up with various Study Group N/Ls, other magazines and journals and it is often months before he can read them. "None-the-less thanks for a very interesting N/L - I'm looking forward to future years when I'll have the time to read more, and visit some of the places you've written about."

It really is nice when members take the trouble to drop a line explaining their reasons for leaving our group. Gets back to old-fashioned manners and common courtesy - all too often lacking in our current society.

TUB PLANT OF THE MONTH - SARCOTOECHIA SERRATA (FERN LEAVED TAMARIND) FAMILY SAPINDACEAE

The Fern-leaved Tamarind is a slender tree to 6m which, when young, could be easily mistaken for a fern. The young plants display beautiful serrated, lacy foliage on wavy leaves. This young foliage is pink in colour. Leaves are 10cm long, with up to 9 lacy leaflets per leaf. The pinkish new growth fades into a luscious dark green creating a fern like appearance.

We consider it to be a handsome container plant which has grown rapidly over summer. It requires plenty of light, water and a growing medium of well composted soils. Small yellowish flowers occur in summer.

Sarcotoechia serrata is endemic to highland RF on the Atherton Tableland. It is of a small genus comprising 4 species endemic to Oz.

(Contributed by Rhys and Julie McGregor - North Avoca)

HISTORIC TREE OF THE MONTH - ALEURITES MOLUCCANA - THE CANDLENUT IN NSW

Major Archibald Innes is said to have planted Candlenut trees on his estate in the 1830's, grown for their oil content (about 60% in the seeds). Candlenut oil is similar to Linseed and Tung oils, both of which are used in the treatment of timber, or as part of paint. (Aleurites is also known as the varnish tree.) The pulp that is left after oil is extracted is toxic to cattle. The nuts have a laxative effect on humans - this may have been seen as a benefit, as constipation was a problem for many of our early settlers. Major Innes also planted Castor oil trees on the estate, but the oil produced was not as good as that available from elsewhere. (Ed. Innes' estate was a large land grant at Port Macquarie, made in 1830.)

Innes married Margaret Macleay, daughter of Alexander Macleay (the Colonial Secretary) in 1829. A. Macleay was an amateur botanist and friend of Douglas Macarthur, sheep breeder and mutineer. The Macarthurs also had a private botanical garden, probably at Parramatta, from which they gave specimens of rare and exotic plants to friends. These plants had been gathered from around the world and donated to the garden by other botanists. Family diaries record that (in 1841) "Lantana is spreading and will soon become a pest!" The source of this and other exotic plants was without doubt Alexander Macleay. Other unfriendly species they brought to the area were Mysore Thorn and a giant Bamboo growing in the TAFE grounds.

As well as his rural pursuits at Pt Macquarie, Innes also had an interest in timber (red cedar), employed a cabinet maker and was a partner in a ship building enterprise. Tung oil is a valued but expensive timber finish and would have been quite handy for finishing cedar furniture. Candlenut oil would have been an excellent replacement.

Specimens of A. moluccana can be found locally at 'Douglas Vale' and 'Roto House'; they are thought to be descendants of the original trees grown by Major Innes.

The average composition of the nut (food value) per 100g is - Energy 2836kj; Protein 20.6g; Fat 61.9g Carbohydrate 10.7g; and a lot of other chemicals that are important to human life.

Further reading - 'Encyclopaedia Botanica' (F. Bodkin) and 'Tables of Composition of Aust. Aboriginal Foods' (Miller, James, Maggiore).

From Dennis Hill, Papinbarra NSW

TRIPLARINA NOWRAENSIS COULD BE A NEWLY DESCRIBED PLANT UNKNOWN TO MOST OF US

Richard Logan, ever vigilant, spotted an item in his local paper giving some details of the species... Apparently it is known only from 12 sites, with a population of 2000 plants. All are on Crown land so should be fairly easily protected, main threats could be from road or fire trail works and track widening. It bears small creamy-white flowers. NP&WS are said to be launching a recovery plan for this species; it will be drafted early next year. Richard says he has never heard of it but will seek further info. (ed. Bet Garry Daly knows lots about the plant and its habitat!)

GROWING ON THE NSW CENTRAL COAST - A SEASONAL REPORT

Helen Joyce wrote - "The last N/L told of many people experiencing drought. Our little creek was dryer than we had ever seen it, but in May we had 17 inches of rain and good follow up has occurred. Strong winds and sodden soil have blown over a lot of old, often insect damaged Wattles, luckily with no damage to buildings or plantings. There have been spurts of new growth on many RF trees, especially Agathis robusta, Elaeocarpus reticulata (pink), Sloanea australis. This Maidens Blush, in the ground for 3 years now, has suddenly taken off. How long must we wait for flowers?"

The native frangipani Hymenosporum flavum is one of the fastest growing of our trees and flowered from an early stage. A surviving Gmelina leichhardtii (White Beech) from RFSG seed, now 2 1/2 years in the ground, lost its leaves in the first winter, recovered with coppice shoots, but is struggling. Nearby, Rhoda Jeavons has had little joy from this species - I wonder if others have had some success with it this far south?"

RESPONSES TO PREVIOUS TOPICS

Difficult seed to germinate: Elaeocarpus grandis. Split the seeds open very carefully and place the pieces into peat moss in a takeaway food container on a warm window sill. The first germination was at 8 days, 2 more in another week. You must split seeds cleanly along their fracture-lines, otherwise the embryos will be damaged and useless. (Richard Logan)

Tecomanthe hillei: How do you tell this from 'Roaring Meg'? I have a plant (got it at Mackay about 40 years ago) that just won't flower despite growing strongly. Yet one at Bank's Garden flowers beautifully. I have a feeling that mine may be 'Roaring Meg' and that it may be an unreliable variety? (Mimi Godfrey)

Diploglottis campbellii: Audrey Taggart reports that her plant (courtesy Norm or Olivers seed) is doing very well in the garden.

Seed Germination: It was interesting to read of others' experience with variability. I have had mixed success with Hibiscus, Melia, Alphitonia, Euodia, & Elaeocarpus even when sown in the same conditions at the same time - so much research to be done... and

Fraser Island: "Rob Cross' experience is a lesson for us (able bodied) to get off our bums and onto our feet. The last walk I did on the Island was 30k in a weekend and didn't see a single person except when crossing over tracks or at camping areas." (Ian Dyer)

Germination of animal-voided seed: "I keep several containers of water in the garden for birds and other animals, and the many seedlings appearing close by suggest that fauna play a significant part in germinating them, especially Alphitonia excelsa and Trema aspera. They transplant easily too. I recently collected some seed-filled droppings from a Satin Bowerbird that I sowed and look forward to the results."

Rhodospaera rhodantha: Claire Shackel wrote "My saga continues. As published in N/L 38, my seeds germinated at the rate of 1 or 2 a week for 9 months till Easter 1997. I had just sent off the germination results to Patrick in June when they started again, but this time averaging four a week. They again ceased this April but recommenced in July!"

Archidendron grandiflorum: Claire added that she had loved this plant since childhood at Canungra, her interest more in the orange seed pods rather than the short-lived flowers. There were plants that flowered regularly, every year; others heavily flowering but erratic. Her pet plant was about 3m high 50 years ago and is now 6m with a somewhat increased spread to match. "Not exactly fast growing!"... Claire rejoiced that a 5 year old, 3m high plant in her Brisbane garden had a small head of flowers last spring.

That Bulb Planter mentioned by Judith Brass. I was unsuccessful in obtaining one of these locally and sought further details from Judith. It is tubular, about 10cm dia at the top tapering to around 8cm to the serrated base (to cut into the soil), and in 2 sections, operated by a 'squeeze' handle to release the contained seedling/bulb with attached soil into a previously prepared hole.

Alectryon tomentosus: Judith mentioned that she has one which flowers several times a year and sets a lot of fruit which she rarely sees. The fleshy seeds are very popular with possums, orioles, figbirds etc.

Camphor laurels: Connie McPherson caught a radio interview where a Dr David Bass of Flinders Uni was speaking up for weeds as food and shelter... he thought that camphors were 'cultural icons' yet there was this move to have them declared noxious weeds... we should try and understand their role and if we do get rid of them, at least try and do it 'strategically to avoid collateral damage'. Connie wonders whether we could make the gentleman an honorary member "so we could witness a good stoush." Good work Connie - you'll be the referee?

Judith Brass wondered whether the word I queried should have been epidemic not endemic and added that Ipswich City Council has a similar policy on prevalent weeds. They say it would cost too much to enforce control of Camphors, Celtis chinenses, Lantana camara, Anredera cordifolia, Jacaranda mimosifolia etc. They just ask people not to plant them. No one listens, yet they cause continual problems for neighbours and nearby bushland.

TRY THIS SUGGESTION IF YOUR NEWLY GERMINATED SEEDLINGS SUFFER FROM 'DAMPING OFF'

Also from Judith - "I have found 'water well' pots good for small and delicate seedlings and those which suffer from damping off. Soil is watered by a wick of soil in a reservoir beneath the pot. No overhead watering is necessary, so foliage stays dry and the seedlings are not washed out. I have 2 window box pots - long, narrow trays for seed raising. Seedlings are transplanted with the bulb planter when they are large enough."

AND AN IDEA FOR A CHEAP AND LONG-LASTING LABEL FOR YOUR GARDEN PLANTS

Brian Collis showed these to the group when we visited his place at Easter. He uses that light vinyl material often laid on shelves for ease of cleaning; obtains offcuts of a light colour, cuts into narrow strips of appropriate length and writes whatever with a marker pen. A small cut is made near one end of the label; the other end is drawn through this slit to attach it to the described plant.

PROPAGATION FROM CUTTINGS

Oliver Carter has listed results of his propagating attempts with many species, from a total of 56 genera. Oliver uses semi-hardwood material as a matter of course. (I will summarise his list; those wanting more detail can contact me or Patrick for a copy.)

FAILURES: Capparis, Cassia, Gardenia

VERY DIFFICULT: Hibbertia, Diospyros, Garcinia, Ipomoea (some Spp.)

All the others were successful, to varying degrees. Some, e.g. Dioscorea, Diploglottis perhaps needed special treatment, whilst others - Cordyline, Hibiscus & Hoya are easy. Syzgium generally OK though a few gave poor results, and interestingly, Eugenias are the most difficult of the lily pillies.

IF YOU WANT TO GROW CABINET TIMBERS - GREENING AUSTRALIA HAS SOME BASIC INFO

Richard Logan picked up an item on the internet on the subject, and sent a copy for our files. Its a mere 4 pages, extremely basic but the value lies in its 'references and further reading' section - 16 publications that could be useful to growers. Some of these are well known to RFSG members, especially Floyd's wonderful 'Rainforest Trees...' and Nicholsons' RF Plants (4 volumes) but other books would help would-be agriforestry growers.

AN UNUSUAL COACHWOOD - CERATOPETALUM APETALUM - FOUND IN SYDNEY BY BILL JONES

Bill had reason to collect foliage for a talk on RF at our Oz Plants Society recently. He found the usual opposite-leaved form near the Lane Cove River, but nearby was another specimen which regularly had a third leaf at right angles to the customary pair. Bill wonders whether anyone else has come across this odd form. The audience for the talk were all astonished; obviously none of the locals were aware of this abnormality.

(Ed. It happened that Garry Daly was here when I received Bill's letter - Garry thought it could be a genetic irregularity called polyploidy.) Anyone else have a suggestion on this strange plant? I told Bill to PBR the type ASAP - before someone else did so!

THERE'S BIG MONEY IN SEEDS - IF THEY ARE GENETICALLY MODIFIED IT SEEMS

In July, Monsanto (the maker of Roundup) paid A\$ 2.3 billion for the foreign seed operations of Cargill. It means Monsanto can quickly introduce the genetically modified crops sweeping the US into dozens of other countries. (Dow Jones report 30/6/98.)
Comment. Human consumers will quickly evolve absorbing herbicide (or else we will cease evolving), but will the forests tolerate it? What are the crops included, other than Soy Beans and Cotton? Is Roundup the only chemical involved?

NURSERY OF THE MONTH - 'ORANA RAINFOREST & PLANT NURSERY' TALLAI QLD.

Members Laurie and Dorothy Meadows recount the circumstances that led to them establishing this enterprise.

"We live on a 10 acre fraction of a beef property, totally cleared when it was sub-divided in the mid 70's; six acres of grey mullock and 3 of rich red volcanic soil which slopes southerly to an acre of alluvium bordering 150m of creek. As a hobby we commenced planting RF trees in 1992 on the southerly slope. Due to the southerly aspect, excellent soil, warm climate and lots of water, the trees flourished and the hobby became an obsession, the usual case I suppose.

Some varieties, notably Elaeocarpus grandis, competing with Grevillea robusta and Euodia elleryana have exceeded 16 metres, and many other of the approx. 1000 trees on roughly 2 acres planted at 2 1/2m spacings are growing into handsome single stem specimens as they reach for the sunlight, including Toona australis which was very difficult in the early stages due to tip moth.

As this proved to be rather expensive, we soon started gathering and germinating seed to grow and plant out our own stock. From this basic beginning we have developed a small nursery stocking about 80 varieties (a few Nth Qld ones recently declared local environmental weeds have been removed). The rest are mainly local provenance and I have enclosed a list as you suggested.

Our paid ad in the Qld bulletin, which you mentioned, has entitled us to take advantage of a space in the societies web page so keep an eye out for it, listed under Qld. SGAP growers."....

"Regarding Dysoxylon spp., we have a small stand of D. muelleri in a small park left by a developer. The largest would be approx 16m so I suppose its grandmother has been felled.

On camphor laurels, farmers in a landcare group in Numinbah valley have been operating in their area to eliminate them and replant with native species, whilst residents of Beenleigh have been complaining loudly because Council has removed them from the main street! They are a major pest on part of Merrimac floodplain, supposedly spread by RF pigeons eating the seeds.

Discussing the global environment with a fellow member of Gold Coast SGAP this week, we both agreed that it would be blind to support our local issues whilst ignoring political consequences and global issues. Please keep lighting the way for us on the front page of the N/L, David."

(D.J. Thank you both. I am very pleased that others have similar views to my own.

** Their list of plants available covers understorey species, shrubs, small to large trees, and all are obviously suitable for S.E.Q. and Nth NSW. I'd be happy to send a copy to members, but those interested would be best to contact Laurie and Dorothy direct at 359 Worongary Rd. Tallai 4213.

COOCUMBAC ISLAND NATURE RESERVE - A RARE NSW RAINFOREST REMNANT NEAR TAREE

The Island is about 5ha in area and was declared a N.R. in 1981. A rehabilitation program commenced in 1987. Funding ran out on a couple of occasions, but local complaint and influence ensured that additional money was made available so regeneration has been almost continual since that time. A nearby school has become involved in seedling propagation from locally sourced material and the students participate in planting them out at a suitable size.

It is a tiny fragment of the once extensive floodplains and islands of the lower reaches of NSW's north coast rivers - wetlands, mangrove forests and RF - a composite ecosystem almost totally destroyed for agriculture over the years.

Coocumbac's RF is described as lowland subtropical 'Large Fig - Giant Stinging Tree association' and dominated by Dry RF species. It is in the salt water section of the Manning River, by the city of Taree and about 15 km downstream of the well-known Wingham Brush. (The Brush has 13 tree species not found at Coocumbac, which conversely has a number of species not recorded at Wingham. These include Celtis paniculata (the second largest specimen known at 30m high and stem dia of 1.2m), Arytera divaricata, Bridelia exaltata, Ficus obliqua, F. watkinsiana, and Drypetes australasica.) Celtis and Aphanathe philippensis are the most common tree species, while fringing Grey and River Mangroves and Casuarina help to prevent major erosion from flooding and passing speed boats.

Being subject to regular flooding, weeds are both numerous and varied, some of the worst being Lantana, Madeira vine, Balloon vine, Morning Glory, Asparagus fern and Wandering Jew. In earlier years it also suffered from selective logging and some clearing for market gardens. Early vandalism included the chopping down of 6 large Stinging Trees; other senseless (mindless?) actions include occasional theft of orchids, destruction of saplings, signs etc. and rubbish dumping - the all-too-common experience of so many reserves near large communities.

Readers who decide to have a look at Coocumbac Island need to bear in mind that a boat will be needed to get them there. A tourist cruise operator does a regular run, and boats can be hired locally. A brochure describing its history and present natural attributes is available from the NSW NP&WS.

If you are able to look at the place, you should organise extra time to check out Wingham Brush as well. The Brush has been referred to in past N/L's, but one of its claims to fame that I have recently come across is that some of the giant Moreton Bay Figs, Ficus macrophylla, are believed to be more than 1,000 years old and claimed to be the largest examples of the genus in NSW. This council reserve is mostly on higher ground, so suffers less from floods. However the RF was under serious threat just from weed invasion, mostly vines which were taking their toll on the canopy, but dense carpets of Wandering Jew (Tradescantia) prevented seedling regeneration and survival. A bush regeneration group commenced work in the Brush in 1980 and is now close to completion. Though a mere 9ha, Wingham Brush represents a tenth of the floodplain RF (lowland STRF) surviving in NSW. It is also the southern natural limit of a number of species including the Grey Walnut Beilschmiedia elliptica, Thick-leaved Laurel Cryptocarya meisneriana, and Native Plum Guilfoylia monostylis.

Ed. This brief description was written from material made available by the Port Macquarie NP&WS office. A local ranger would be happy to accompany a group of RF enthusiasts, but there would need to be about 20 participants. Our next get-together?

OUR N/Ls WILL BE AVAILABLE ON THE INTERNET

There was a good response to Liz Haylocks suggestion - there was no one against the idea.

Liz has organised that appropriate sections (the serious content) join the web site already operated by APS/ SGAP. Thank you Liz for your interest in this matter.

WALKING TRACK OF THE MONTH - "THE HODDLES TRACK" (NSW ILLAWARRA)

Richard Logan describes the area that he recently traversed. "The bushwalk runs between Saddleback Mountain and Barren Grounds Nature Reserve, on the ranges behind Kiama and giving the walker beautiful views to Wollongong and Lake Illawarra to the north. To the south you can see to Seven Mile Beach and Shoalhaven Heads. Not to mention wonderful RF remnants along the track.

According to Floyd 1990 (RF of Aust in NSW) the RF occurs in cool, sheltered sites on shale and coal seams. This forest is classified by him as 'sub-alliance 38 Ceratopetalum - Ecryphia - Doryphora - Acmena' which is a form of WTRF, apparently an intermediate between warm & CTRF. Mills and Jakeman 1995 (RF of the Illawarra) refer to it as type 10.

Altitude of the forest is around the 500 - 550m mark; in various places exposed to winds from the S, SE, E, NE & W. The eastern exposures are of benefit to the vegetation due to the orographic uplift of rain bearing clouds. This results in annual rainfall of about 1800mm, distributed reasonably evenly throughout the year. Rarely does any month have less than 50mm - this being regarded a minimum for RF development."

Richard enclosed a species list recording 33 trees, 9 shrubs, 9 herbs, 18 vines and 10 epiphytes, considered to be a fairly diverse remnant for such a southern and cool RF.

"There is one spot which is like a gallery, formed by a drainage line and the escarpment fashioning a recessed area. The canopy consists mostly of Plumwood and Lilly Pilly with many epiphytes and saprophytes; a truly beautiful spot to ponder what was once a much larger area of RF.

Highlights of my day included hearing many of the lyrebirds close to the track and sighting 2 of these beautiful birds. Few plants were flowering though Dendrocnide excelsa, Diospyros sp and Acmena smithii were in fruit. Unfortunately the Eucryphia moorei had already dropped its seed, probably 2 - 4 weeks previous. Sighted an orchid species budding up, growing on dead branches - looked like that Tangle orchid that grows at 'Booyong. Is that Plectorrhiza tridentata? There were about 20 plants on one tree; this was out in full sun which seemed rather strange to me.

The area requires more investigation, who knows what else is around there. One of the spots that looked good was to the east of Barren Grounds into the headwaters of Broughton Creek, another was a nice little gully on the SW of Saddleback Mt, the third is the western to NW slopes of Saddleback."

(Ed. Thanks Rich - we look forward to looking at it with you sometime not too far distant.

THE FROGS ARE UNDER YET ANOTHER THREAT - FROM AN INTRODUCED FISH

This little pest would be known to most of us either from childhood, or as an invader of local streams. It is the gambusia, also known as mosquito fish or plague minnow - Gambusia holbrooki the scientific name. It is said to grow to about 12cm, but my memory of its size in Sydney would be only half that.

Native to central America, it was imported as an aquarium fish in 1927. It is thought the NSW government deliberately introduced it into the state's rivers during World War 2 in an attempt to reduce mosquito numbers. As well as eating mossie larvae, they also feed on other fish spawn and fry (baby fish), frog eggs and emerging tadpoles. It very successfully and quickly adapted to Australian conditions and can now be found in almost all metropolitan streams and many dams, as well as widely spread throughout the country. It is to be declared "a key threatening process" by a Scientific Committee for its adverse affects on a number of threatened species, including the green and golden bell frog, New England bell frog and other species as well as native fish. It will no doubt be extremely difficult to eradicate.

(From information sent by Richard Logan)

OUR LATEST WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION IS FOR THE BLUE MOUNTAINS OF NSW

The total area that was nominated last June was 10,326 sq km (over a million ha); all of it currently in National Parks. Among the criteria justifying a listing were 700 known rock art or other Aboriginal sites, wide range of habitats, extensive areas untouched by development and a huge variety of plant species, especially standing out is the strong representation of Eucalypts; 90 are found in the nominated area - out of a total of 310 species in all of S.E. Oz. There are many endemic plants, some of extremely limited range.

Some of the most important aspects, of course, are the areas of RF to be found throughout the region - particularly those relict, inaccessible valleys where remnants of the original Gondwanaland vegetation survive, species such as the Wollemi Pine found just 4 years ago that caused so much excitement.

THE ANTI-WIK BILL HAS BEEN PASSED - A RECONCILIATION GROUP COMMENTS

Margaret Ralph has been involved in this activity for some time, and sends an update of the likely effects of that recent legislation approved by some of those people in Canberra. Taxpayers will in future finance the guaranteed 75% of the costs that states like WA and Qld will pay in compensation, whenever they extinguish Native Title on Crown land currently leased to occupiers for varying purposes, though mainly as pastoral leases. This burden will be met by all Australian taxpayers, with just the remaining 25% to be found by the state concerned.

A Canberra correspondent confirmed the big song and dance made by supposed concerned politicians (about 'uncertainty') was the effect of Mabo on vacant Crown land that could well be claimed by survivors of the original occupants was spurious. That's a vast area - a whole 6.4% of N.T., 0.8% in SA, 0.2% of NSW and barely an acre of Qld, Vic or Tas! The exception is WA where 34.2 of that state has not yet been given away.

Pastoral leases though are a different story - around half of Qld and the NT are leased out, near 40% of SA and NSW, though Tas and Vic have negligible areas of leasehold.

In brief, that legislation allowing the states to extinguish native title rights will enable vast amounts of land, currently part of all our "common wealth" to be handed to present occupiers at our expense. Only in WA with its large tracts still, of vacant Crown land, will native title remain a problem for anyone.

Think about it - would you be happy to finance an upgrade of reasonably intact vegetation to a conditions-free freehold at no cost to the current lessee, or would you prefer any spare taxes be spent on rainforest acquisition or other important environmental aspects? You'd also like to maintain the present safeguards that give at least some protection to large areas of forest and grassland that are imposed on leases, but cannot be demanded on freehold, wouldn't you?

One other matter - around 30 years ago, a huge majority determined that the Commonwealth assume responsibility for Aboriginal affairs. That decision still stands - there has been no subsequent referendum to restore such obligation to the states, so it must be questioned as to the legality of Howard doing just that.

WORLD HERITAGE RAINFORESTS - CENTRAL EASTERN RESERVES

Total area of these reserves is 366,507 ha - 59,223 ha in Qld and 307,284 ha in NSW. Over 50 individual reserves, from south-east Qld to mid NSW make up this World Heritage Area and include national parks, nature reserves, flora reserves and state forests. Most are easily accessible and in fact attract a total of about 2,000,000 visitors p.a.

Types of RF found on the 'property'; cool temperate, warm temperate, subtropical, dry, and littoral.

The property is made up of 8 groups - some are large individual tracts, others are areas in close proximity, and some are made up of forests well-separated from each other. The largest grouping is an arc from about **Cunninghams Gap** through to **Mullumbimby**. This comprises 'The Main Range', 'Focal Peak', and 'Border' Groups and include the many well known and unusual forms of STRF of the Qld /NSW border, such as Springbrook and Lamington NPs, Mt Barney, Toonunbar, Tooloom and Malanganee.

The **Hastings - Macleay Group** (west of Kempsey /Macksville) encompass spectacular gorges on the edge of the New England Tablelands, moister RF clad mountains and luxuriant valley forests of the Great Divide.

Gibraltar Range Group along the Grafton - Glen Innes road includes Washpool NP - the largest Rf wilderness in NSW, and the adjacent Gibraltar Range NP - renowned for its spring wildflower displays.

The **New England Group** is located near the town of Dorrigo in the ranges west of Coffs Harbour and features the Dorrigo RF Centre, a major interpretation centre for this WHA. Dorrigo NP was one of the first major RF reserves in NSW, while the nearby New England NP is justly renowned for its majestic RF vistas and walks.

Barrington Group is the most southern location and includes large expanses of CTRF including ancient Antarctic Beech forests. Barrington Tops NP comprises a varied mosaic of Eucalypt and Rainforest, subalpine woodlands, swamps and grasslands.

Right on the coast is the **Iluka Group**, near the mouth of the Clarence river which contains the only littoral RF in the WHA, and is in fact the largest stand of LRF remaining in NSW. A self guided walk explains the importance and fragile nature of this RF by the sea.

Obviously many RFSG members will be familiar with some of the places which comprise the WHA, but perhaps some have spent little time in exploring the various locations? They really are awe-inspiring places that would certainly be appreciated by those who value nature unspoiled by 'progress' or 'development'.

Most of the reserves making up the WHA are easily reached by sealed or good gravel roads, even forest roads and are not too far from large towns. A wide range of visitor facilities is available - walking tracks, picnic and camping areas and sometimes printed information.

If this item prompts you to explore some of these reserves, I'd appreciate a brief description of your trip and some of the highlights.

HISTORY OF THEIR PROTECTION

The initial action that resulted in the creation of this WHA was the controversial 1978 decision to allow logging of NSW RF near the Qld border. In exchange for the creation of a Border Range NP, at the time dubbed the 'Snake Park' because it was merely a long narrow (2km wide) strip of forest on the border, existing flora reserves were to be revoked and intensively logged. The proposal caused so much outrage that it focused attention to logging in other locations and led to further protests, eg Terrania Creek in 1979. As such widespread opposition helped sweep the previous liberal government from office at the previous election, Wran's new government quickly determined to create a number of NPs to protect, for all time, the best RFs remaining in the north of the state, despite objections from the timber industry, and even some of his own ranks. This was achieved in 1983 and 1984. (It was realised that if logging continued for perhaps another 5 years, the forests would be completely devastated.)

Many of these forests - 203,0hh ha - were nominated in 1985 for World Heritage as being 'internationally outstanding samples of the range of RF types in the state'. They were inscribed the following year.

Large extensions were included in 1994 - NSW an additional 104,000 ha; and Queensland with an initial 59,223 ha.

We can surely take some pride that over 300,000 ha of our nations prime RF - including the most extensive areas of STRF in the world, large areas of WTRF, and nearly all of our Antarctic Beech CTRF are preserved in perpetuity. These reserves complement other World Heritage listed RF in the wet tropics of north Qld and the Tasmanian wilderness.

I hope to describe these in later N/Ls.

RECENT ADDITIONS TO NSW NATIONAL PARKS INCLUDE A LOT OF RAINFOREST

During the 1996 - 97 year, 13 new parks were reserved in that state. Of these, 11 are of predominately RF vegetation, or include RF within their boundaries. They are -

Bellinger River NP. (2830 ha) located within the New England Escarpment, south of Dorrigo, containing extensive areas of old-growth dry blackbutt forest as well as established and developing RF.

Chaelundi NP. (10,060 ha) north-east of Dorrigo, with 60% of the park being old-growth forest.

Dooragan NP. (1062 ha) north of Port Macquarie containing coastal forests, old-growth blackbutt forests and STRF.

Dunggir NP. (2500 ha) located west of Urunga, containing three different RF sub-forms and at least 5 sub-alliances considered to be inadequately reserved.

Fortis Creek NP. (7838 ha) lying 20km north of Grafton which includes extensive areas of old-growth forest and habitat for threatened bats, such as the great pipistrelle and common bent-winged bat.

Koorebang Nature Reserve (465 ha), west of Port Macquarie and containing old-growth forest, RF and a large population of the rare plant, the five-leaved bosistoa (*Bosistoa floydii*).

Mt. Royal NP. (5530 ha) is north-east of Muswellbrook and provides habitat for threatened fauna including the Hastings River mouse and Parma wallaby.

Nymboi Bunderay NP (8610 ha) north of Dorrigo, renowned for its floristic diversity and the rare Dorrigo white gum.

Richmond Range NP. (8250 ha) in northern NSW containing tall moist sclerophyll forest and old-growth forests. Protecting the rare Richmond Range spotted gum and one of the largest areas of flooded gum in the north of the state.

South East Forest NP. (96687 ha) located inland from Eden on the far south coast, providing a 150km conservation corridor and habitat for a range of rare and threatened flora and fauna.

Wambina Nature Reserve. (54 ha) situated close to Gosford, providing important habitat for a grey-headed flying fox colony along with several other threatened species.

As well, the 10578 ha **Coolah Tops NP** at the junction of the Liverpool and Warrumbungle Ranges east of the town of Coolah, has a variety of landscapes including basalt plateaus, escarpment cliffs and slopes, swamps and herbfields. The old-growth forests are habitat for greater gliders and powerful owls, so it seems that this park will protect some of the unusual, long-isolated patches of RF found in the Liverpool Range. These remnants 'claims to fame' include being located well away from any major RF,

and being inland of the Great Divide; they are likely to be rare surviving patches of a once great inland forest system unable to cope with earlier climate changes.

I'd appreciate comments and impressions from members who may be lucky enough to visit any of these places, for inclusion in our N/L.

Stop Press! In July, the government announced the creation of 8 new Parks and Reserves, and additions to others, totalling 40,000 ha, making 560,000 ha reserved by the present government in 3 years. That amount of land has increased the percentage of NSW dedicated to conservation by 14% - now making up 6% of the state's area. That's a sterling effort - sadly no other Oz government has had such commitment to the setting aside of a reasonable area, as habitat for the millions of species who have as much right to survival as do us humans.

The States opposition party predictably complained bitterly about these additions, and the leader of the Nats stated that if they win next years election, there will be no more new national parks. You'd have to call that, an open mind? He wonders why he doesn't get the Green vote, and why city electors are unsympathetic to National policies and demands.

IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO INCLUDE RF NEWLY RESERVED IN THE OTHER STATES

Obviously I am not in a position to easily obtain such details, so seek information from members who know of recently gazetted reserves, or who could find this out. The State's land managers annual reports are a good start, conservation groups would probably have current lists, and even your local MP may feel the need to gain a few Brownie Points and supply such information.

I would especially like to pass on information on Queensland - after all that State does contain the bulk of our nations RF.

I suppose Pm asking for a co-ordinator from each State who is interested in natural Rainforest and able to spend a little time in obtaining relevant information for a regular segment in our N/L.

INCIDENTALLY - QUEENSLAND RECENTLY HAD A CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT

The conservative Borbidge administration was replaced by the equally conservative Labor party. I sought details of the environment policies of the groups seeking government in our last N/L, to no avail. However, from the limited news available in my area of the outback it seems that - NP/Lib promised 2 new coal-fired power stations (to add 5% to our current greenhouse emissions), a billion \$ worth of new dams, and 40 ha of National Parks. One Notion had no environmental platform "we had no time to prepare one". Beattie's main considerations appeared to be job creation and economic growth, so it would appear that the customary developments will continue.

Can someone obtain a copy of Mr Beattie's environment policies for publication? Or at least confirm that Labor is aware that the environment does exist

VICTORIAS STATE BUDGET CLOBBERED THE ENVIRONMENT ONCE AGAIN

In what is turning out to be an annual event, the Kennet government has further reduced funding to its Dept of Natural Resources and Environment. In past years though, most sections of public administration have been affected by cuts to their finances, causing retrenchment of public servants and a decrease in services to the community. This time, it was only the Environment Dept that suffered. I did not hear the amount that was cut, but the report stated that about 500 employees would lose their jobs. I wonder when all of this will end - perhaps a Victorian member could tell us exactly what is happening in the State.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA ALSO TREATS THE ENVIRONMENT BADLY AT TIMES

That state has received unwelcome publicity on several recent occasions. A supposed problem in the city of Port Lincoln, caused by an invasion of Galahs which the Council determined to rectify, by shooting the birds in the streets. Those that were not killed outright would be clubbed to death. The parrots had been attracted to the town from their usual country habitat by large quantities of wheat spilled from trucks delivering grain to the port.

There were at least two choices available to the local administration - kill the birds with firearms or by poison, or ensure that grain be handled intelligently to avoid spillage. Poison was ruled out for a couple of reasons, but after all, there is a lot more fun in shooting defenceless animals than the other choice - sweeping up and salvaging any spilled wheat. This action would have, of course, denied the Galahs their food source, quickly forcing them to return to their normal areas.

In August NP&WS personnel captured and killed a poor Pelican which had made its claim to fame by taking a sandwich from a child's hand. It was declared that the bird was a danger to the public and must be shot (instead of being moved well away from tourist areas). We like South Oz and the people generally, but obviously pride and integrity are missing from some decision makers, and we wonder what sort of country we are considered overseas.

The most recent event was the shooting of coastal dolphins by persons unknown. Perhaps these were killed by ordinary vandals, and not by government decree.

IT HAS NOW OCCURRED - THE DREADED RABBIT CALICI DISEASE HAS AFFECTED NATIVE ANIMALS

The recent 'Earth News', a regular report from Earth Sanctuaries Ltd discloses - "The first downside was the loss of our boodies (Burrowing Bettong, now almost extinct) when the calici rabbit disease went through Yookamurra sanctuary. Our numbers dropped from 120 to 7 in a week. The CSIRO assures us it had nothing to do with the RCD release but refuse to do any tests to check. They do admit they did not test the boodies, nor did they test Red Bettongs - another worry as they may be susceptible too."

Readers will remember that we were assured that trials on native animals had been conducted and that it was safe. If this report is correct, and I'd think that Walmsley has no reason to mislead his shareholders or the public, there are valid reasons to be concerned about the introduction of this supposed safe biological control.

If we are unable to believe the scientific community, especially a government organisation that theoretically has not the same dominant reason for making big profits as do commercial groups, what do we do. Those who are prepared to question decisions that may be of dubious value are generally howled down, belittled or ignored. When mistakes or errors of judgement are admitted, it is usually too late to reverse any detrimental effects that have eventuated.

Currently the Green movement is under attack, especially those concerned people who are being harried, assaulted and arrested at Kakadu where they are opposing that uranium mine. One woman was arrested for protesting by the side of the road. In Tasmania the law was changed at the behest of Liberal labour to ensure that the sitting Green politicians be wiped out in the coming election. The arrogant will always win, either by using fair means or foul.

MARSUPIAL OF THE MONTH - THE ENDANGERED HASTINGS RIVER MOUSE PSEUDOMYS ORALIS

This native rodent was described in 1921 from 2 skins in English museums that had been collected in the 1840's. One was noted as "collected in Australia", the other was "Hastings River NSW." It was not until 1969 that live specimens were collected at Warwick Q. and it was thought to be extinct in NSW until 1981 when a single mouse was found in the headwaters of a Hastings tributary - the Forbes River (now part of Werrikimbe NP). Over the following 5 years a total of 6 animals were trapped at that site; none have been found there since, following a wildfire in 1986.

However, during the next 10 years about 120 animals were collected and released, at about 20 sites along the great Divide from the Qld border to the Hunter valley, though it is of concern that in most locations only one or 2 individuals have been found and only a few have been breeding females. Most of these recent sightings were within streamside habitat, often alongside fallen logs in old growth Euc forest with a dense understorey of ferns, sedges and rushes.

It was therefore most upsetting to read a report that a mining company, the controversial Ross Mining NL at its Timbarra operation near Tenterfield, trapped and was allowed to hold 10 of these in captivity last June. One died before the animals were released. It seems that the local Tenterfield Shire Council gave consent to the miner to 'catch, hold and release' native animals found during survey work on a mine access road. Though roadworks would have a significant impact on mouse habitat the council issued consent without requiring a species impact statement.

Concern has been raised that local Councils, often controlled by developers and sundry bushrangers can have any control whatever, over rare species of fauna or flora. It is properly the responsibility of State or federal authorities who have an overall view, and especially avoid local parochial amateurs who prove so often to be incompetent.

"OFF THE 'WEB' "

Richard has accessed some topics from the internet that may be of interest to members. They include Nuclear Testing and World Nuclear Arsenals as valid reasons why we shouldn't mine Kakadu. Kleenex tissues and how they affect the Otways - Kimberley Clark plundering remnant forests. Monga Magic a small but important old growth forest inland from Batemans Bay in Sthn NSW. Univation - Australlias RF captured on computer announcing a CD ROM for identifying RF species is available. Wollemi Pine Species Profile Sheet of 6 pages detailing current knowledge of the tree. Aust Plants with food crop potential. Early trial details of six RF species of likely economic value.

Copies of each are now in our library. (Thanks for these Richard.)

He subsequently picked up a CD Rom for \$10 on Oz National Parks. It had, for most entries, a couple of pictures, some with short movies, plus text on each park. Contact numbers and some audio are also included.

QUEENSLANDS SUGAR INDUSTRY WANTS TO REDUCE ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE

Cane farmers have been attacked for bad farming practises in many regions, of late. Financially they are under pressure because of low prices for sugar. So, as too often happens they feel that they must increase production in order to maintain their income. This of course accentuates the problem - increased supplies further reduce prices. All the best land available was turned into cane farms decades ago; any expansion now means going into that marginal land that was previously rejected.

This new land is often coastal wetlands, soils with a major acid sulphate composition. Earlier this year there were fish kills, mainly of Barramundi in Nth Q., and only last month Cudgen Lake near Tweed Heads was affected by acid sulphate (said to be as concentrated as battery acid) which killed an estimated 30,000 fish as well as crabs and other marine life. All of these disasters have been linked to cane farming though the industry denies that it has created any of the carnage.

The Qld industry has launched a blueprint to cut damage to the environment, and it seems that NSW won't be far behind, particularly if the enquiry into Cudgen finds that some or all the blame is pinned to it. Many of our rivers, once densely forested to the waters edge now have sugar fields covering every square inch of available land, often with drains all the way from the foothills and carrying large volumes of acid-laden water during deluges.

On the coastal lowlands of Nth Q, less than 30% of the original wetlands remain in some districts. It is only over the past 30 years that boggy country, swamps and lagoons have been drained for sugar cane. The arrival of tracked equipment designed for drainage works ensured that no wetland was safe - any land could be made to grow cane. Fortunately, some farmers realise that mistakes were made and have ceased reclaiming remnant wetland and are even restoring some areas or creating artificial lagoons.

One bloke at Tully set up a lake of about an acre at great expense, and recorded the changes to its environment. Within a couple of seasons the lagoon contained 14 species of native fish; the most found in any of the natural lagoons in the area was 17. Another advantage, though the fish wouldn't appreciate it, is that such waters situated on a farms drainage system would act as a silt trap, and the effects of chemical run-off or acid leachate could be detected and treated before they reached nearby streams.

There is, of course, public money available to reverse earlier environmental damage. That is why Telstra was sold. In this instance it is the Sugar Industry Infrastructure Package. I must remember to ask Con Mann for a list of all the other programmes available to our farming friends, out of the Telstra pork barrel.

THE ABC's 'THE FUTURE EATERS' SERIES WAS BOTH POPULAR AND CONTROVERSIAL

These were shown in August and featured Dr Tim Flannery, author of the book of the same name, published in 1994. Tim has stirred up much debate on his sequence of hypothesis of the reasons for the extinction of our earlier megafauna. A number of other well known scientists have taken exception at some of the assumptions and findings which have been advanced - John Benson, Mary White and Marcia Langton are just some who are arguing the toss.

One major line of concern is the opening that Tim has appeared to give to the continuing destruction of our countryside. As Marcia Langton puts it "already, a farmers group has sent a circular to its members, using Flannery's hypothesis to reassure them that, as aboriginal ancestors in the Pleistocene era some 60,000 years ago are supposed to have produced the demise of the megafauna in a single extinction event, 'modern Australian pastoralism constitutes restoration of the Australian environment' ". A somewhat long bow to draw by those who have totally cleared vast expanses of land of every species of native plant, as well as the fauna for monoculture.

Though the book has been out for nearly 4 years, little discussion has ensued (at least in public), but within days of screening of the first episode on TV, it seems everyone is talking about the ideas put forward.

It is obvious that a wider coverage of controversial topics leads to greater discussion. This in turn ensures that more people are made aware of important(?) matters and perhaps leads to further evidence and/or perceived problems being remedied.

ON A SIMILAR FASHION - THE ARGUMENT OVER CAMPHOR LAURELS CONTINUES

Opposing views are still being expressed in NSW on the dangers of those trees. Among the correspondence I have been sent on the problem is a copy of release from the Far North Coast County Council asking that all trees less than 3m high in 6 Shires be destroyed or suppressed with the aim of restricting their spread. In most areas of the coastal strip from Sydney to Qld, a very high proportion of laurels is less than 3 years old. This indicates an alarming spread, the Council claims.

The Sub Tropical Farm Forestry Committee wants to do silvicultural trials to see if there is a potential market for sawlogs and are seeking a stand of established trees that meets a number of characteristics. The idea is to initially conduct thinning, then regular pruning and measuring and as a venue for field days. "If these weeds were started to be viewed as a resource then their management and ultimately their control would be economically justifiable." Don't see any mention of that well known 'ecologically sustainable' requirement so fashionably affixed to any economic activity currently.

Joe Friend has sent more details of his work around The Channon, including the results of tests by NSW Agriculture on foliage of 4 different trees, all growing in the Lismore district. There have been claims locally that Camphors are Camphors and that there is only one variety, but there is quite a variation in those samples' chemical composition. There were 17 different constituents listed - "from Lismore's original street plantings (a 'true' Chinese variety)", *camphor* made up 82.8% of the distilled oil, from elsewhere his sample showed 4.35 *safrole* "the most toxic and carcinogenic local type", another gave 56.4% *cineole* and the last 3% *camphene*. The only chemical that was uniformly measured is *naphthalene* with just a trace. The cost of each test is \$100

Another writer wonders whether the horse may have bolted long ago and declaration as a noxious weed is not facing reality because of the method of its spread. That is by birds; as they are protected species we have no control over them eating the seed and then spreading it widely. Much of the affected land is owned by farmers without the financial ability to carry out a removal program, or on public land where most councils are in the red or are just trading, with no spare money. He also takes the view that they may be a potential timber resource and that income from managing and harvesting trees may return landholders enough money to replace them with higher value endemic cabinet timber plantations.

Finally, 'BRAINS' June 98 N/L carries "**Parsonsia trials** - Ever noticed how Monkey rope or Silk pod vine *P. straminea* grows very quickly up all available trunks? How it forms a smothering mass which can crush the canopy? Have you ever seen it climbing Chinese elm or Camphor laurel? Could it be an excellent way of killing these trees - a nemesis on Madeira vine and cats claw creeper?! If you would like to experiment with planting *Parsonsia* adjacent to weed trees, have done so already, or know of research into this area, let us know. We know people have been planting strangler figs in and adjacent to camphors - we see *Parsonsia* as being a little faster."

(Ed. I'll keep the rest till next time. Meanwhile keep the controversy going in each area of invasion, and draw more official and public attention and awareness to the problem to ensure proper decisions are made.

THERE MUST BE AN ELECTION NEAR - 'THE ENVIRONMENT' IS BEING MENTIONED AGAIN

Not since early 1996 has there been so much activity in Canberra on this issue. As the quote of the N/L reminds us, the then opposition placed conservation and environmental concerns high on its list - extra money (from Telstra) to be spent in many directions, as well as maintaining existing spending. As we know, that was either a fib or non-core commitment because each budget reduced the amounts promised.

However, 'the environment' has been brought out of the cupboard, dusted off, and solemnly discussed. It will no doubt be put away again just as carefully after the polls, as usual. For safekeeping.

A big new marine reserve is promised for our southern waters; not a fish protected area though, as trawling is to continue. There has been the odd million or two for various environmental projects announced by Senator Hill but they must have been pretty inconsequential for I can't recollect any of them.

Why don't our political leaders and captains of industry take this matter seriously. They obviously know all about the problems as they continually tell us of them. They so often decry economic inefficiency and the waste of money on so many activities that do not produce tangible outcomes, yet are quite happy to promote particular developments, full knowing that they will be unsustainable. When the time eventually comes to repair the damage, they are not prepared to take the hard decisions in finding the money and ensuring that rehabilitation is carried out though.

As this N/L goes to the printers (late Aug), an election date has not been announced, so environmental promises are generally unknown, except that Ms Paulines One Notion has declared that logging and mining in National Parks will be allowed. 'That's what their for.'

ITS HARD TO RECONCILE A PLEDGE TO REDUCE EMISSIONS WITH A REDUCTION IN FUEL PRICES THOUGH

That old adage 'supply and demand' has not yet been rescinded. During the federal election campaign we have/ will have whole forests cut down to announce, publicise and promise all sorts of environmental goodies - both 'core' and 'non-core' commitments. But reducing the costs of road transport fuel by as much as 40% is not the way to go about encouraging energy consumption and lessening greenhouse and ozone-depleting gas emissions.

A couple of local examples may be similar to your own situation, and that is with the current excise (tax) component of transport costs. Until July, our local milk factory used to package most of its milk and sell it within the region, any small surpluses trucked to Sydney for processing. Since then though, the big chains bring their milk up from Taree, Sydney or Victoria (depending on their sole supplier) and don't stock the local product any more. Our farmers now have to put much of their now surplus milk into tankers for processing in Sydney. It is packed there and put into refrigerated trucks (more energy required for cooling) and delivered a couple of days staler, to those same outlets that used to buy fresh, locally.

And our town supermarket has all its groceries supplied from Brisbane, about 600km distant, despite being just 400km from Sydney where most of them are processed. Moving goods over 1600 km instead of just 400 is not only bad economics - its bloody stupid, dangerous and environmentally damaging.

Another result of any GST /sales tax proposal will be to reduce the price of cars whilst adding a tax to public transport fares. This will certainly discourage use of trains and buses etc; no doubt deliberately considering that prime ministers brothers and party officials, with their friends, run private roads and are greedy for increased income.

We already produce far too much CO₂ for the forests to absorb.

The repeated references to 'my government' always leave me fuming. We are supposedly a democracy and yet the majority have no influence whatsoever. Even Con Mann tells me that many government members have little input into policy. Disgateful.