ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

RAINFOREST STUDY GROUP

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" With over one million different plant and animal species and hundreds of ecosystems, Australia is recognised internationally as a key centre of life on Earth. But our biodiversity is in trouble. " ('Waves' winter 1999)

GROUP ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Four newsletters were produced, containing the traditional balance of rainforest topics - horticulture, environmental and conservation issues with relevant social, environmental, economic and political comment on matters that influence the future survival of our forests.

The efficient running of our Group was assisted by many members, particularly Patrick Bennett, Pete Smith and Peter Jurd with their administrative help As well, I thank those who have hosted RFSG activities, publicised us in various ways, and especially people who contributed to the N/L on an occasional or regular basis. It was good to be able to meet new members and to catch up on others that I have not seen for some time, and in being host to a number of people who accepted the long-standing invitation to look at our wonderrful property - "Booyong"

APS (or SGAP) regions have continued to send us their quarterly journals, and I appreciate the opportunity to pass on relevant matters in our own N/Ls, as well as being kept in touch with research and activities in other areas.

There has been so much information sent here or obtained from various sources that I have been unable to include many important items that I believe would be of great interest to N/L readers, but it is my policy to give priority to members comments, reports etc. Those whose contributions have not yet been disseminated, please have patience - they will appear in the near future.

The years accounting.

Income $		Expenses $	
Subscriptions	832	Printing & Stationery	444
Donations	55	Postage and phone	358
Bank interest	5	Taxes	3
		Computer repair	200
		Conference & meeting	67
	892		1072

Balance b/f 1998 $966. Balance c/f 1999 $786

MEMBERSHIP

Our numbers are identical to last year, with 165 subscribers Non renewal by about 10 people was matched by new members joining.

Our finances are adequate for the expected costs of putting out the N/L for the coming year, but as from July 2000 I expect an increase in expenses of 10% plus, because of the GST imposts. That will be around $100 extra, and I give you one guess as to where that will come from.

GROUP WEEKEND AT PAPPINBARRA IS CONFIRMED FOR 29th to 31st OCTOBER

A reminder that this is to be held at the Field Studies Centre, 45 km from Wauchope and in the midst of RF country, much of which survives to this day. As mentioned, accomodation is dormitory or farmhouse style and will be $8 to $10 a day. Our organiser Piet Van Haeff is presently at Gluepot Station in South Aust, having landed a job for 3 months as ranger on the reserve - half his luck - so we won't have final arrangements made until late Sept but in the meantime I can give general details to interested members who enquire. Piet's phone no. closer to the weekend is (02) 6587 6147

MEMBERS INVITED TO JOIN A FERN TOUR AT NSW's ILLAWARRA - SUNDAY 10th OCTOBER

Mark Ziebell wrote "For those close to the Illawarra the local SGAP group will be having a fern tour on that day starting at 10am at Sublime Point (top of the escarpment). The day will be spent looking at approx 25 fern species in their natural environment at 3 separate locations, before finishing with plantings of the Fern Study group within the Grevillea Park at Bulli. Though concentrating on ferns, the day will be largely spent within RF Anyone interested can give me a call on (02) 42673742."

AND AN INVITATION TO VISIT A R F GARDEN AT KURRAJONG (NEAR SYDNEY) IN NOVEMBER

Alan Batley hosted RFSG members to his Blue Mountains property several years ago and feels that we may be interested in seeing how the plantings have developed over the interval. Alan has not yet set the date but suggests that a Sunday in November would be a good time saying "people should ring or fax me and register their interest and I will coordinate it from there. It would be helpful if they let me have details of their phone number, fax or e-mail details if they have this." **phone is** 9909 8050; **fax** 9953 6066.

A LOT OF NEW MEMBERS TO WELCOME THIS QUARTER

A warm welcome to each of you - those who have told of their particular interests in the study are quoted in the 'members page.' Also, I would like to express my personal appreciation that we have gained new people from Qld and Victoria - our numbers are a bit thin in both those regions

SPECIES CURRENTLY AVAILABLE FROM THE SEED BANK

Alpinea caerulea *Alphitonia petriei* *Araucaria cunninghamii* *Brachychiton discolor* *Claoxylon australe* *Cupaniopsis anacardioides* *Erythrina vespertilio* *Dietes robinsoniana* *Guioa semiglauca* *Hymenosporum flavum* *Pandorea jasminoides* *Polyscias elegans* Recent donors - Caroline Haskard, Richard Logan, Patrick, David. **Requests to Patrick Bennett 20 Belmore Crt Pine Mountain Q. 4306 with a SSAE, please.**

INTRODUCING OUR NEW MEMBERS

Graham Caldersmith had spent 20 years in Canberra, working as a violin maker/ repairer/ accessories supplier until building on 3 acres next to the State forest at Kendall. He continues "My love of quality tonewoods (woods specially selected and cut for stringed instruments) naturally extends to the love of trees and their propagation. Guided by my neighbour's prize-winning bush garden featuring RF regeneration in his watercourse, I am clearing ferals from my 1 1/2 acre forested area and planting appropriate species in the gully. I am also growing exotics on an ex-pasture section, mainly maples, to celebrate my European heritage which includes the violin making tradition.
From 1980 - 1990 the Australian Research Council funded my research program in violin and guitar physics. One project was to gather data on the vibrational properties of European, American and Australian tonewoods. I identified Blackwood *Acacia melanoxylon* and King William Pine *Athrotaxis selagnoides* as the most promising contenders to match Curly Maple *(Acer sp.)* and Spruce *(Picea sp)*.
I have made Aussiewood violins, violas and 'cellos for the past 15 years - appreciation of the instruments by leading Sydney violinists and the late Yehudi Menuhin gained the support necessary for State Forests and Kempsey Timbers to stage the inaugural Kendall National Violin competition, held in conjunction with the Camden Haven Music Festival. It brought our finest young violinists to Kendall to compete for the donated Aussiewood violin and a mid North Coast concert tour which included Byabarra.
Having been involved in campaigns to save bushland between Canberra suburbs and in ecologically sustainable population work, I take delight in supporting local ecological protection."
(**Ed.** Graham was featured in the ABC TV documentary in July, on violin makers in Oz. He has already arranged two great musical events in Byabarra that Beryl and I attended, and where we had the pleasure of first meeting him.

Michelle Popp became aware of RFSG after talking to Hugh Nicholson and phoned me for likely sources of RF seed. I explained the situation of our Group and thought it may be to her advantage to join. She decided to become a member and wrote " I spoke to you of the difficulties we were having in obtaining information and seeds of the RF variety - I had made about 15 phone calls to people that were not interested, stopped collecting or were not helpful at all.
We live in the New Italy area (Woodburn, Far North Coast) and our area has been extensively cleared, used, abused and neglected. We have had conflicting reports on whether RF does grow in the district, but in the last 4 years, (since there have been no fires or cattle), we have seen a number of emergent RF species - white ash, red cedar, foambark, figs, elkhorns etc. but while there are healthy eucalypts 30 - 40 years old as a top canopy, there is no real understorey.
We have put in Lily pillies, Bangalow palms, Grevilleas, White Mahogany and Tallowoods. All are going fantastically and we are eager to plant out a 500m x 500m area and are hoping to get some help on how to go about this in an effective way. It was suggested we collect seeds from local trees to maintain 'genetic integrity', but have been unable to raise any interest in this area due to lack of suitable or surviving vegetation. We have owned our property for 18 months, and are ignorant as to how to collect and treat seed and of species identification. Though we would like to collect our own material and swap seed, the property has low diversity so we are willing to pay for any suitable seed available. Attached is our 'wish list'. "
(**Ed.** Michelle's list contained 26 species plus any of the palms, and included lily pillies, cabinet timber varieties, and the larger shrub/ small tree species. I've been able to start her off with *Gmelina* and *Syzigium paniculata* and I expect Patrick will be able to help her with others in due course. If other members could assist, her address is PO box 206 Woodburn 2472. ..... It seems there may be an opening for RF seed distributors, because if this young lady has problems in obtaining small quantities of material, many others would be in the same situation. Perhaps a commercial venture by the Group? (Would help to pay our GST contributions and delay a subs increase.)

Peter Bevan explained "I am interested in all RF plants as I am planting a Rainforest." And is he, just! He contacted me again, after receiving his first N/L, with details of an exciting project he is organising, and telling of his background. "I first caught the bug about 7 years ago. I work at a coal mine at Rosewood (near Ipswich) which was told 8 years ago to plant some trees on the rehabilitation areas. Management asked the Forestry for advice; they sold us 500 various tube stock (mainly Eucs). All but 3 died - perhaps they weren't ready to be planted out. I talked the mine into setting up its own nursery so we could grow our own and plant them out when they were ready and when the conditions were right. My first thought was to grow species that would be worth something, so we again asked Forestry for information and they sold us some cabinet timber seed. I was very surprised to find that the seeds came from around Ravenshoe in F.N.Q. where I was raised and where my family still has dairy farms. The trial was not very successful, but it got me hooked on RF. We then enlisted the help of Lloyd Bird and Arnold Rieck who got us to grow local trees and shrubs, using seed collected in this area (described as 'dry vine scrub), which is going OK.
When having holidays in Ravenshoe, I couldn't stop admiring the RF at the back of the farm. When i was a kid I wanted Dad to clear it so we could run more cattle, luckily one of my sisters strongly objected and she won out. These visits encouraged me to try and grow a RF back at Lowood where the community was in the process of building a sports field. The site included a big, ugly drain that I thought would look good covered in RF I started to collect as many seeds as I could, though I didn't have a clue as to what most of them were, but had good success in germination; many are planted out and are doing very well. I have now been able to I.D. some of the species from the books, though there are a lot still to key out. Received a copy of "Fruits of the RF" last Christmas and regret not having it earlier, as I would have been able to identify more species. However if you, or any other members come this way in the future, I would be glad of any help in identification. Have enclosed copies of some newspaper clippings on our rehabilitation work at the mine."

One of those items gives full credit to Peter as being the driving force behind the environmental management plan, in his dual role as shift supervisor and nurseryman. His aim is 'to recreate a landscape that, in a few years, will look as good, if not better, than it did prior to mining.' 'Visiting the area today, most people would find it difficult to believe that the sites which have been replanted, had been mined at all.'

Another - ' Ipswich SGAP's Arnold Rieck and a nine strong group from the ATCV prepared and planted a 2 ha area, and that the revegetated mine site would act as a wildlife corridor, a link between Rosewood's Peace Park and Perry's Knob'. Species planted include lots of brigalow, rosewood or scrub ironbark, crow's ash, leopard ash, tulipwood, bats-wing coral, white cedar, red cedar, hoop pine, red olive plum, scrub poison vine and rose apple. About 80 Bailey's cypress pine *Callitris baileyi* have been planted out as part of the RF Recovery Program in Ipswich where rare, threatened and vulnerable species are to be grown.'

Robert Heyblok sought to join RFSG as he has 89 acres at Jamberoo in the Illawarra (NSW South Coast) district. The property includes remnant RF though Robert doesn't get a lot of opportunity to enjoy it due to having to continue working hard in Sydney for a few years in order to pay off the property. For this reason he will be a 'passive' member at present but extends an invitation to members who would like to collect seed, etc to visit, but points out that he goes there only on weekends. (**Ed.** He included phone numbers for people who want to take up his invitation - I will pass them on to anyone who wishes to look over his place.)

Caroline Haskard has elaborated on her earlier introduction included in the July N/L saying "Apart from my passion for growing native plants, my other passion is concern for the environment though I am not affiliated with any particular Group. I run a small gardening business and try to influence my clients to lean towards native plants. There are two clients working with RF species and I find it interesting to evaluate peoples' changing perceptions, and hearing them voice opinions on issues that they had previously been unaware of.
My experience in the growing/ propagation and general knowledge of RF species began just 2 1/2 years ago. What I have found is that myth and misinformation abound. When first contemplating and chasing information about establishing a plot here I was told it was too hot, too dry, too cold (too many frosts), and so on through a list of discouragements. At that time I was personally unfamiliar of the situation and history of the countryside around here. Our soil was against me as well - we didn't really have any, just a blend of decomposed granite and clay the consistency of cement. And it was in the middle of an almost decade long drought. So, much to my 'folly' and inexperience I started. The first plantings in the main gully were palms and tree-ferns and somehow they all survived even though we visited the block very infrequently. We cleared a lot of the existing vegetation and doused the area with NATRA MIN, a crushed rock soil additive, bags of ORGANIC EXTRA and feet of mulch and slowly continued planting - still during the drought. Now that we are getting good rain, life is much easier. Perhaps a severe winter will prove the ultimate test, but as time goes by we appreciate the unique topographical features over our 20 acres more and more. Though it can get hot and dry, we have a big dam and the site for our RF plot is incredibly sheltered. We don't have any of the famous red Kingaroy soil which I now know supported RF systems of various types, and the Bunya Mountains are not far away. Everywhere I go I see RF plants, so much for the detractors of my concept - we are surrounded by an area that used to support extensive RF despite the extremes of weather.
Things are improving here, we almost have 'soil' in places - the mulch shaded the ground, the organic fertilizer helped the breakdown of the mulch which in turn fed and supported the worms who then carried the NATRA MIN into the CEMENT which is slowly being opened up and aerated. I've recorded the location and growth rates of every species and though some are single specimens, most are in multiples. To date, there are 230 species from 70 families - predominantly DRF but many STRF, WTRF and some from FNQ, both lowland and montane habitat plants."
Caroline commented that as we all find, results vary from rapid growth rates to doing nothing for ages, then taking off, some flowering well and setting seed, some of which is viable, some not. She does not have special times to take cuttings or sow seed, does whatever as and when available. Results vary but says that there is always something obtained. Germination results of 29 species she included in the letter proved that - rates of between 5 and 100% were listed. (I have passed these on to Patrick for his records, he happened to be here at the time I received Caroline's note.)

Annie Treasure says that they live in suburban Melbourne and recently planted a (small) all-Australian garden which includes a small RF area in a sheltered corner. "Through this experience we discovered the APS and its many interest groups. If anyone can assist us with some plants we require to complete the area, it would be much appreciated as RF plants are few in Melbourne. We are looking for - *Eugenia reinwardtiana, Randia fitzalanii, Lepidozamia perrofskyana, Blancoa canescens, Polyscias sambucifolius.*"

ARBIA had been given copies of a couple of RFSG N/Ls and were sufficiently impressed with their content to suggest a reciprocal exchange of our publications. Secretary Winifred Bower mentioned that most of their (RF Bushfood Industry Assn. Inc.) active members are in the NSW Northern Rivers area, many do have a deep concern for the sustainability of native vegetation, and some if not all are doing something in various measures of replacing or restoring native trees and shrubs, etc on old grazing properties.

Tina Straatmans has had an association with RFSG for some time, especially as a past president of my local APS Group (NSW Mid North Coast). Tina joined the Society in 1994 and lives at Lighthouse Beach (close to a remnant patch of LRF), on a normal suburban block, with a mainly native garden and has an interest in propagation both for her own plantings, to give away to friends and for local wildflower shows. As a keen bushwalker with Susan Phillip's group, walking through most interesting forests in the district has been very educational, and now the time has come to look a little deeper into the mysteries of rainforests.

HELEN TRANTER REPORTS ON CURRENT EVENTS AT THE NSW SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

"I would have more time to spend on RF if it weren't for the other local conservation issues one can't ignore, or fail to support. We are slowly getting somewhere with protecting the roadside vegetation and our small Southern Highlands Aust Plants Society is now established and starting to grow. The poor *Wingecarribie Swamp has taken up much of our time - no one seems to want to take the responsibility for more than 300ha of collapsed swamp. We are still hoping to have it declared a Nature Reserve for there are still many important species surviving there.

Around Robertson, however, there is an increasing interest in RF regeneration with examples of large plantings of *Acacia melanoxylon* in cleared paddocks, and many people starting to link up their RF remnants and plantings and to remove the privet and holly. Very encouraging.

Lots of *Doryphora sassafras* seeds this year (fluff everywhere) so I will send some to Patrick."

* (Ed. The swamp had the misfortune to contain deposits of peat which attracted the interest of a mining company. That organisation was so insensitive to the unique location and had been operating most incompetently, resulting in the collapse of the dredge, causing massive destruction to the swamp and adjacent vegetarian. Such damage was foreseen by concerned locals, but action by authorities was somewhat reluctant and ineffective against the miners intransigence, and greed. The miners have since departed, but their legacy will be long-lasting.

A REPORT FROM VICTORIA'S EAST GIPPSLAND REGION BY WAYNE O'CONNOR

Wayne mentioned that his district, too, has just come out of drought conditions and he is surprised that most of the RF plants have survived. He was able to water them twice a week but avoided feeding or fertilizing them and this no doubt saved them. "The Red Cedars did not seem to mind this situation however, but most of my other trees did suffer with their growth rates. Now that the climate has returned to normal I have resumed planting, using *Doryphora sassafras, Euodia elleryana, Syzigium moorei, Agathis robusta, Flindersia breyliana, Macadamia integrifolia, Cupaniopsis anacardiodes, Polyscias murrayi* which are all doing well. It will be interesting to see how these go as they all came from Brisbane in 6" pots and are the first RF trees that I have not propagated myself. However, I did 'harden up' these plants for 12 months so hopefully they will be right. I will send you for Group records, photos of the progress of different species, and records of growth rates if you think it would be relevant to our study.

A method I use and which seems to work well down here is that when I start a new section of RF, I mulch around the plants but encourage vegetation - some grass but mainly clover - to grow over that section. This acts as a living mulch that protects the soil and keeps it moist and as well helps feed the soil as I mow it heavily. It is fairly expensive to get any sort of mulch down here, and I won't use hay as it is the best way to bring in unwanted weeds."

* Wayne planted, from memory, several hundred *Toona ciliata* a few years ago as a future investment in a cabinet timber woodlot. The species is not too far south of its present, natural distribution so we would expect them to do well - be interesting to find out their size and condition when they are, say, 10 years old.

AND ONE FROM WEST – CENTRAL VICTORIA AT NEIL MARRIOTT'S PLACE

There has been 3 years of sustained drought in the district; this has caused mixed results in his planted RF, eg Antarctic Beech (*Nothofagus moorei)* and Celerywood *(Polyscias elegans)* are looking healthy while all the *Polyscias murrayi* succumbed.

Neil expressed concern that throughout the state, but particularly in his area, thousands of acres of grassy woodland with huge old Red Gum and Yellow Box trees are being bulldozed for the planting of extensive areas of vines and olives. So much for sustainable development - what a load of garbage that phrase is!

He worries that some of the varieties being used could be invasive to whatever bushland is allowed to remain, unless they have been proven to be completely safe, saying "too many previous introductions have gone disastrously wrong - over 60% of new plants introduced in the last 10 years have become weeds! Here in Victoria, food plants that are pests include Blackberries - now found in every gully, creek and wet area; Olives by their thousands throughout the Wimmera (particularly along creeks and rivers); wild Apple trees along roadsides, creeks, etc; same for Crabapples."

WE JUMP TO N. E. NSW - BEV CROFTS PLACE AT TYAGARAH

"We are still planting trees, though the wet weather has put us back quite a bit." (Same here Bev - certainly a lot different to Neils recent experiences, and to Caroline Haskards and many other interstate people). " Getting difficult to buy bales of mulch now - suppliers can't get onto their land to cut.

Now that our plantings are becoming more mature and well established, we are seeing more birdlife. In June, a Noisy Pitta was seen scratching around (we've found a few largish native snails in the past year or so); sighted a Log Runner earlier; Regent Bower-birds are regular winter visitors; Whip birds are usually in residence as are Rufous Shrike thrush and Fig birds; Pheasant Coucals reared young earlier this year. Various RF pigeons are often seen, while the expected smaller birds and Lewin Honeyeater are common now. There is a colony of Noisy Miners, plus the usual Currawongs but we hope that as we change the ecosystem to a more natural state, that these threats to other species will move away.

We have achieved a lot in the past 8 years and hopefully it will further improve as we finish planting the block and increase the area of habitat for forage as we concentrate on growing a wide variety of bird feed species. These include laurels, Celerywood, Pencil Cedar, Palms, Blueberry Ash (Bower birds love this), Euodia, Bleeding Heart (specially for the pigeons) - all for fruits. We plant species such as Red Ash (*Alphitonia)* and Brown Kurrajong *(Commersonia)*, which host a lot of insects to encourage the insectivorous birds - some of the RF pigeons, Bar-shouldered Doves included.

All this not too bad for what was an open paddock facing the sea, on a hill about a mile inland. Though we lose a few trees occasionally in very strong winds, there are many seedlings starting to 'volunteer' so we expect that eventually the area will able to regenerate itself from damaging storm events that we are sure to experience again. We plant fairly densely - one to 1.5 m centres which seems to encourage rapid growth as we have been told that RF is a gregarious community. The trees certainly seem to show that - they elbow each other up for the light and they seem to like to get their roots together."

MEMBERS' DOINGS - IN BRIEF

Among RFSG members who made their way to the SGAP biennial Conference in Brisbane were **Mimi Godfrey** who had arranged to join the pre-conference tour to Fraser Island, and afterwards on the Nth Qld Tinaroo tour. She will then spend around a month travelling around the Wet Tropic areas including Atherton, Cape Trib, Mission Beach, Cairns etc. - lucky lady! Mimi's special interest is in locating new plants and maintains an extensive herbaria - (still after *Citronella moorei* for her collection, though I've organised some foliage for her) but finds the items about frogs, insects and other fauna in the N/L of special appeal.

Wendy and Brian Fopp, too, were wending their leisurely way from SA to Qld with the intention of visiting various APS Groups and individual members when Wendy was taken severely ill, prior to an intended stay at 'Booyong'. Happily she soon recovered and was able to enjoy the conference and associated tours and did spend time here on the return trip. They remarked on the difference with our vegetation compared to their equivalent 100 acres (Much of it in pretty original condition) in the Adelaide Hills - Eucalypt dominated, mainly Pink Gum, Stringybark and one other . They said little of this habitat survives and added that not a lot of the natural vegetation remains in much of S.A. anyway.

If you would like 'to get away from it all', an associate of RFSG is selling up at Ellenborough (between Wauchope and Walcha) - 2 acres of organic land with a duplex consisting of 2 small units without electricity and with tank water. They have not used chemicals in their 10 years there; before that it had reverted to bush after earlier use as the site of the village school. Asking around $90,000.

***Waterhousia floribunda* - a range extension?** David Thomas found trees near Seaham, north of Newcastle and feels it could be an extension of its known southern limit. He wonders if other members have observed range extensions, or are perhaps aware of disjunct occurrences of RF plants? **(Ed.** Garry Daly wrote of finding species outside their known range in the Nowra area, south of Sydney but did not specify if they were fauna or flora species.

Joe Friends home at The Channon burned down earlier this year. He happened to be away the time, at Norfolk Island with Neem work. When I spoke to him there had been no results from the investigation into the cause of the fire. Much of his research, as well as personal and sentimental items were destroyed. Not to be daunted, he has done further work on the camphorlaurel problem, sending us a summary of the info he has so far obtained. This I have forwarded to the APS Conservation Officer, asking that it be discussed and passed on to the NSW Nature Conservation Council for their consideration and concern.

Ted Teutsch has now retired and is spending a lot more time on his main regeneration project in Sydney - Brush Park at Eastwood, and near where we used to live before coming to 'Booyong'.. Ted has been involved there for maybe 20 years and a once mainly privet dominated, abused piece of bush is so improved and claims I wouldn't recognise the area now. Nor the old, once village-like shopping centre which has could soon have a 12 storey complex of shops and 145 strata units which will join the now overdeveloped and overcrowded suburb. I suppose all urban areas are becoming lookalikes of global CBDs so I have no regrets about leaving such grotty ghettoes.

Also recently retired is **Evan Weatherhead** who lives on the Blue Mountains. He is looking forward to having the time to move around more in the future. Hope to see them up here shortly.

On the move next year too, is **Danie Ondinea.** She now lives in a near city suburb of Sydney but has a property north of Wollongong and looks forward to have a more rainforesty garden down there. Danie says that it is wonderful seeing *Alphitonia excelsa, Ficus coronata, Pandorea pandorana* etc responding after removal of the Lantana and Morning Glory. Birdlife is prolific there, and a semi permanent resident Diamond Python and Bandicoots are making her impatient for the big move.

Bumped into **Martin Hazenveld** in town last week and he mentioned that **Anske** recently had a complex operation on her shoulder for a benign growth but is recovering well. They have arranged a trip back to Holland to see relations and wonder whether RFSG members may like to have a day at their Mt Seaview property after their return late November.

Rhoda Jeavons says she is running out of room since the last major planting. That was of 300 *Flindersias*, all of which are doing well though a bit yellow from some icy winds. She says that there is a new nursery in the area (at Ourimbah) which specialises in RF species, mainly wholesale but retail by arrangement. Went to Sydneys Bot Gardens recently to worship at the shrine (actually a steel cage) housing the Wollemi Pine, "amazing that they have to protect it so". Said the foliage is similar to *Prumnopitys ladei* which they grow but it is slow in that climate.

SGAP/ APS has awarded honorary life membership to Jan Sked, recognising her outstanding service to, and involvement with the Society. Jan has been a member of SGAP for nearly 30 years, and as well, was one of the first people to join our own Group. I have always appreciated her regular contributions to this N/l (even before I became leader) and valued her wise counsel on several occasions. And what a great state Journal that Jan produces! As I told her personally, I repeat as spokesman for the RFSG - ***Well Done Jan.*** Subsequent to the recent conference Jan took on the additional workload of Study Group Co-ordinator. Never a dull moment for that lady.

MEMBERS PROPAGATION EXPERIENCES THAT WILL BE OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Gymnostachys anceps (Settlers Flax) - Helen Tranter mentioned that she got them growing from the 'plantlets' on the flowering stalk and wonders whether this is a common method of propagation. She says that the birds seem to take most of the fruit from local plants.

Some of the **germination results** listed by Caroline Haskard surprised me, so I'll pass on a few of those notes. (She has obviously kept meticulous records and has used many methods of seed treatment). *Hibiscus heterophyllus* - 18month old seed germinated in 6 days (20%), fresh seed no results as yet (2 months). *H. splendens* - fresh seed commenced germinating at 7 days. *Harpullia pendula* - fresh seed 40% success, 6 months old = 75%. *Rhodosphaera rhodanthema* (fresh) nicked - none yet (6 months); 6 months old soaked in hot water - 90% in 5 weeks. Other species with useful comparisons were *Cassine australis, Alyxia ruscifolia, Alpinea caerulea.* I wonder if she stores spare seed in a fridge or in some special manner.? Makes me look forward to Patricks future analysis and distribution of his records, even more. This information should be published for wide distriution and I wonder whether RFSG must meet the preparation costs, or if the Society itself should? Any suggestions, as well as offers to prepare an appropriate presentation to the APS would be appreciated.

FURTHER COMMENTS ON TOPICS MENTIONED IN PREVIOUS NEWSLETTERS

Useful references for RF identification (Heather Marks' enquiry). Mark Ziebell adds that as well as 'Trees and Shrubs in RF of NSW and Sth Qld', the 'Rainforest Climbing Plants' by Williams and Harden ISBN 0 85834 293 6 (OK, not trees but an essential part of RF ecology?) and 'Field Guide to Native Plants of Sydney' by Les Robinson ISBN 0 86417 639 2 are two that he feels anyone venturing into the forest should have at their disposal.

Fruiting of *Trema aspera.* That specimen just outside the bustling RF Computer Operations Centre here at 'Booyong' still has ripening fruits (July), though extremely sparse in numbers but providing sufficient reward for the resident Lewin Honeyeater(s) foraging there every day. It has been flowering continuously since summer which could be unusual for the species?

Psyllids. There is now a specific 'psyllidicide', reports Rhoda Jeavons, though she doesn't know its name. It could have been developed for NSW Christmas Bush but should be OK for other plants. They survive White Oil sprays, avoiding this by hiding under rolled leaves. Rhoda reckons **White Oil** is a rather kindly treatment for most problems and says Richard need not worry about foliage burn as long as it is applied at a rate of not more than a 2% solution.

Bosistoa pentacocca. Don Yates appreciates the responses by members to his query on this species. He shall continue to trying to obtain a plant, or seeds but in the meantime he obtained a *B. brassii* from Fairhills to go on with.

Bush Regeneration. Carol Bentley sent a magazine item on the NSW National Trust - one of its biggest conservation activities is the Bush Regeneration Program which contracts out its expertise throughout Sydney using over 100 trained personnel. It has produced a leaflet explaining the concept of natural regeneration to restore degraded bushland. For copies or further information write to them at Observatory Hill Sydney or phone 02 9258 0123. In addition, I have 2 copies of Joan Bradley's **'Bringing Back the Bush'** that I picked up at a sale for $5 each if anyone is interested.

A Query About Peat Moss. Mark Ziebell is also concerned with its use . "You mentioned use of it in your last N/L. I have avoided using 'peat' materials as I believe these to be products from peat mining and regard the conservation of swamps where these occur to be important (and our knowledge of their role in above and below ground water movements to be scant). Hence my surprise in seeing this mentioned given the general 'support the environment' tone of the newsletter." **(Ed.** There have been items in previous N/Ls of the non-sustainability of the use of peat in horticulture, and of the environmental costs in exploiting this substance. As well, Trevor Dean obtained literature on some of the alternatives that are as effective of peat - Cocopeat, Brickpeat and other products which are the by-products of foods obtained from plantations such as coconuts - and which the RFSG N/L at that time advocated should be used as suitable substitutes.

TWO MORE PLANT INTRODUCTIONS WHICH HAVE RECEIVED PUBLICITY RECENTLY

The first was Gambar(?) grass which is fast spreading through the Top End. Though it is spreading out of control in some areas, it is still legal to plant it as pasture. It is a perennial developing huge tussocks and grows to 4 metres tall. Each plant contains vast amounts of fuel and when ignited burns very hot. It was imported from West Africa for pasture for northern cattle. What! a 4m high plant for cattle to eat? Must be going to cross them with giraffes. Seriously though, the grass is threatening the existence of the woodlands due to its destructively hot burning ability, so we can well believe what it will do to the monsoon vine forests and thickets and expanses of palm habitat that have as yet survived our previous assaults on the landscape. A comment from a Conservation Commission ranger was "Mate, we've tried everything against it - you had better bring in the elephants (as control)"

Then, it was advocated on 'Gardening Australia' 23rd July that a most wonderful plant was a native of Asia *Callicarpa dichotoma* - Beauty Berry. "Flowers are insignificant but it bears masses of long-lasting purple berries; is drought and frost hardy, etc." Probably ideal for those who do not yet have a problem with blackberry. I sort of, often, wonder about those influencing our horticultural and agricultural activities - do they know something we don't, or are they totally out of touch with reality? Maybe its just our evolved two centuries of cultural cringe whereby whatever is from overseas is far superior to the dinky di product? Perhaps they are anyway and it is just I who is bigoted, biased and stupid. Future programs may well give mention to the 4 species of *Callicarpa* which grow naturally in Oz, and make me feel small and mean spirited for my criticism ?

ANOTHER WEED - CAMPHORLAUREL - IS EITHER NOXIOUS OR IT ISN'T

Don't laugh - this is meant to be serious! It was announced mid August that the plant was declared 'a noxious weed' in Nthn NSW, in 9 local government areas. However in 3 shires - Tweed, Byron Bay and Ballina it is OK, not a problem. So in a number of places Camphors are noxious on one side of the road, yet are OK on the other, and where rivers and streams are LGA boundaries it is acceptable on one side but not over the water. Is this like having to drive your vehicle on one side of the road at a 60k limit but going the other way you can go as fast as you like? Or charging GST on RF woodlot seedling of Red Cedar but allowing White Beech to be exempt?

NUCLEAR WASTE COULD WELL BE STORED (DUMPED) IN OUR FORESTS

But there is only one place to store such material ! Where would you suggest ? It seems likely that much of the worlds problem material - high level nuclear waste - will in fact be transported here for storage. On the 2nd of March, Pangea Resources lodged an application with the federal government for such intention, confirming long held fears by environmentalists about Oz becoming an international nuclear dumping ground. (There is no legislation preventing such action). Opposition to this scandalous suggestion includes - the waste will remain a threat to humanity and the environment for 200,000 years; the possibility of an accident at sea, or road accident within our country; propping up a declining nuclear industry in Britain and other nations; and sanction those countries who generate nuclear waste to avoid having to deal with it responsibly within their own borders.

Particular concern is being felt because of the our government's attitude to the nuclear industry - a new reactor in a fairly densely populated district in Sydney (dangerous decision) and their intention to have as many new uranium mines established as possible; Kakadu and Beverley recently approved, Honeymoon (SA) and one in WA likely soon.

(Much of this info from a Friends of the Earth release forwarded by Richard Logan)

Recent history of this proposal demonstrates that underhand and secret arrangements were discussed and that the nation was lied to on a number of matters, on a number of occasions by a number of individuals. *The chronology as discovered to date.* Aug '98. Reports that Pangea had approached government politicians on the proposal. (This was denied at the time). Nov '98 Minister for Forests and Conservation Wilson Tuckey met with Pangea representatives. Dec '98 Minister Minchin stated, unequivocally, that no ministers had held any discussions, nor had any meetings taken place. Mch '99. Mr. Tuckey admitted that he had, in fact, been involved in discussions with regard to 'a controversial $16 billion plan for a nuclear waste depository'. Apr '99. Pangea's Voss admits, on ABC radio, to having lied about approaches to set up a waste dump. His superiors blamed 'incompetent employees' as being untruthful. (One would have to be incompetent to work for Pangea - Its management would be even more incompetent in not knowing what is being said in the name of their own organisation).

As well, in March ANSTO (The Aust. Nuclear science and Technology Organisation) revealed that it had attended a series of meetings with Pangea, the American company behind the controversial plan. ANSTO is administered by, and answers to Senator Minchin. Also reported to be involved in various discussions with Pangea were four of the greatest despoilers of your environment - ERA WMC, BHP, Rio Tinto.

We have been lied to time after time on this matter, though only two of the people involved have as yet admitted to this. Intelligent individuals won't have a bar of such highly dangerous product being stored in any of our forests - or anywhere else in my country, other than the one place which totally deserves it. **Underneath the big house known to ABC listeners as 'Kindergarten of the Air', in Canberra.** If they want it in Oz, let them put it where no expense will be spared to ensure that it is safe, forever. And if the unthinkable does happen, such a lovely bunch of people would be able to admit that they made yet another mistake.

Further, Richard wonders about the present political and business short sightedness in setting up the Beverley uranium operation using acid to leach this deadly substance from the ground. What happens when the soil becomes waterlogged and the polluted soils and rock strata is flooded - will this flow into one of the various (underground water) basins on the continent. "That deadly material is under the ground and locked up for a reason!!!!"

Footnote Since this item was written, it has been announced that a low -level nuclear waste dump will be established, probably in S.A. As well, Pangea is to move its offices from Melbourne to Perth, no doubt with much bureaucratic and ministerial encouragement.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TIMBER INDUSTRIES AGAIN ACTING LIKE THUGS

They attempted to ban the sale of a book - *"Forest Friendly Building Timbers"* - which was being sold by a leading hardware organisation and which included suggestions on the use of timber either produced from plantations, or recycled material. NAFI threatened the publisher and all retailers with court action, claiming the book was deceptive and misleading and threatened to use the Trade Practices Act. It seems however, that BBC Hardware, and others, may have been subjected to unlawful pressure to remove the book from its shelves. A press report included "NAFI's executive director, Dr Robert Bain, confirmed that this meant his lobby group, representing the country's biggest timber companies was under investigation." Similar legal threats from that organisation have been made regularly on individuals and groups who dare to have an opposing view; we are all familiar with brutal or subtle responses that NAFI members sometimes resort to against forest blockaders or others who are concerned with our survival and the maintenace of diversity.

Unfounded threats frightened some retailers into withdrawing the book from their shops, as according to some newsagents and bookshops they understood that "the book has been banned." (My local shop stocks the publication and is having good sales.) One of the more memorable comments was a denial of the claim "that Australias native forests are continuing to disappear at an alarming rate." Mr. Bain said independent figures showed native forests had been expanding for the past 20 years. They are certainly not in my district, and on a recent short trip through the Hunter valley, to Dubbo - Orange - Goulburn - Canberra - Sydney and home, virtually wherever we went trees are being cleared for such things as coal mines, vineyards, wheat, timber, housing. Perhaps Mr Bain should leave his office, disregard his own propaganda, and instead drive around the countryside with his eyes open.

Those who, like myself, wish to make an appropriate gesture to Mr Bain and his crude attempt at censorship may obtain a copy of *Forest Friendly Building Timbers* from Alan Grey, Earth Garden Books RMB 427 Trentham Vic 3458. Price $9.95

DISCUSSION OF CAMPHORLAURELS IS BACK ON OUR AGENDA

I believe that we are now able to resume rational and intelligent discussion of this serious problem plant. Sue Walston included a stark photo of the effects, as she describes - "camphors are a serious erosion factor for stream banks. Around 10 years ago the previous owner of this property cut down all of the large CLs around the creek. The suckering, as you can imagine is frightful, but far worse is the erosion caused by scouring around the very coarse root system that these trees have. We have many examples of this, and after killing the CLs by injecting (super thoroughly) with glyphosate, are pinning logs to the bank where erosion is worst, back filling with gravel and planting various riparian species with their characteristic fibrous roots.

I've been meaning to use the scanner so will try to scan a photograph of this into this note". (and very well done too, Sue) "It shows the root scouring, logs pinned in front, gravel bench and planting. It's been under water for the last 3 months and the plants are only just starting to emerge with the drop in water level this week." Photo shows very starkly the undercutting of camphors root systems and loss of much of the original stream bank. Land administrators, take note.

Another item on this plant was a local paper's (Port Macquarie) item that the North Coast Weed Advisory Committee will appoint a (part time) co-ordinator to identify research required to prove or disprove much of the antidotal evidence about the good and bad aspects of C'laurel. Some of us, though not all, feel that the best antidote is a chain saw and bottle of glyphosate, but I'm not too sure if 'antidotal' was the word that was meant. Applications for the position are now being sought, so if you have a genuinely open mind on the problem plant you may be interested.

You would need a good dictionary to succeed - perhaps one that includes both antidotal and anecdotal, just in case of different meanings.

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO OUR FROG ENTHUSIASTS

Included in Natural Heritage Trust 'Endangered Species Program', in 1997 $4,500 was allocated to monitoring threatened frogs around Eungella, $19,500 for species of the Wet Tropics and $6,300 for declining species of S.E. Qld and N.E. NSW. Another proposal was for $53,243 sought for Declining Frogs of Qld and northern NSW. I am unaware if this money was allocated. (From Richard Logan - off the internet)

Update on Jan Sked's frog pond. Jan wrote " I was given numerous tadpoles of various sorts and it has been wonderful to see them develop. The fish also multiplied considerably and are a joy to watch. Over a week ago I saw the first batch of freshly laid eggs in the pond. They looked like those of the green tree frog *Litoria caerulea;* these were amongst the species of tadpoles I'd been given.
The very next day, I heard a splash in the pond and discovered a wretched cane toad cavorting there. I managed to remove it from the water and hoped I'd frightened it enough for it to stay away. - I don't like killing things, even toads. However a few days later it was back in the pond so this time I did kill it. Then I noticed that both my tadpole and fish populations were sadly depleted. I suppose the toad must have eaten them. I am keeping a very close eye on the pond now. Marjorie brought some tads to refurbish my pond and mentioned that she had read that Rainforest
Spinach (*Elatostema reticulatum)* was good for feeding tadpoles and brought some leaves for me to try. We floated them in the pond, within a day or so they had broken down to a lovely mushy condition which should be good for the tads."
(Ed. Judith Brass mentioned to me that the fish (rainbows) Jan introduced at the beginning may not trouble tadpoles but they could well eat any eggs that they can find. I passed on this info accordingly.

Latest news on the frog fungus. To date, a total of 23 **Aust.** species have been affected by the disease, but surprisingly tadpoles are not affected. However after metamorphism they usually succumb and die too. Little is known of the disease - how it is spread, any immunity which could develop, treatment etc - but it has been found in populations in pristine RF and locations where no obvious means of transfer of the fungus is obvious.

ANOTHER VIEW ON THE OPERATIONS OF THE EARTH SANCTUARIES COMPANY

Julie Ho writes in defence of that group saying "Thank you for raising the issue of the NSW election and how conservationists voted. you discussed the response of ESL when opposed by some conservationists and some in the NSW government.

In my opinion ESL was not advocating a vote against the state government, their plea was 'to put our wildlife above petty partisan politics'. But the issue had already been well and truly politicised so voters had to know which candidates favoured the wildlife sanctuary. Labor's Bob Debus (now minister for the environment) did not!! John Walmsley of ESL is a radical but reasonable man: 'Hat your Cat'. His message is that wildlife survival cannot be left entirely to NPWS, who do not exclude feral animals from their lands.

But what has all this to do with plants or RF? I think that ESL has 'written the book' on conservation of a whole ecosystem, with animals being integral to its health. For example at Yookamurra sanctuary in the mallee, small marsupials eat and bury fungi and seeds which maintain lichens that hold the soil together. Burning is unnecessary as the animals utilise plants as food, and balance the regrowth. The same principles apply in a RF, where fauna do so much of the pollination, seed dispersal and nutrient recycling. We know some plants depend on Cassowaries for example. Earth sanctuaries are a cost-effective way of maintaining our biodiversity. They have seen that our wildlife is a valuable asset and the reason that many overseas visitors come to Australia. They happily pay to see it, and the wildlife benefits.

People who visit an earth sanctuary will be astonished to see the bush alive with numbats, boodies, bilbies and more. Happily breeding, free from ferals - a luxury for them! The human accommodation, however, only rates one to 1 1/2 stars - hardly lavish.

David, its good that principled shareholders (you and me) can question the action of ESL (our organisation).

But how would the animals have voted? "

Ed. Thank you for your response to my criticism Julie. As I said at the time, there would be very many differing opinions on the company. It now has more than 4,000 shareholders and the objective to acquire 10 million ha of land covering each of the major habitats of Oz. That amounts to 100,000 sq. km, or almost 40,000 square miles and is almost twice the size of Tasmania. I must admit to feeling very uncomfortable that any individual or non-government organisation, however laudable its objectives, could control such a vast area.
Julie's concept of that Company may help answer Steve Sinclairs enquiry. He asks a question for people in general - "and that is to do with Earth Sanctuaries Ltd. Does anyone know much about this group and what do they think of its approach? " My thoughts are in our previous N/L so Steve could consider two opposing views - perhaps an arbitrator may have another opinion.

THE EXTINCTION OR DEPLETION OF PLANT POLLINATER SPECIES OFTEN SEEMS TO BE IGNORED

The **Qld Region Bulletin June '99** contained the 1998 Bill Tulloch Memorial Lecture given by Betsy R Jackes of James Cook University under the title 'Plants, Animals, Sex or Don't Kill the Messengers'. There were 6 pages of rivetting information in this report and everyone with an interest in maintaining our future as we expect it to be, should be aware of its content. Of special interest to our study is this extract. "In Australian RFs, assorted insects, and particularly beetles, are common pollinators. Large beetles tend to be clumsy so need large robust flowers. Small beetles are relatively agile, in which case the flowers may be quite small and grouped together. Beetles are attracted by a strong often fruity scent and sometimes by colour....." "In conclusion, I'd like to stress again the importance of saving the messengers if we are to conserve areas, look after our crops, and reduce the chance of species becoming extinct. ... Where there is a specialised relationship, then if we lose one we may lose the other. Loss of hummingbirds in South America affects many species. Loss of nectar feeding bats could lead to a cascade of events - no pollination, then no fruits, no seeds, no seedlings etc.. Then what about all the other fauna and flora that depend on them?

So learn to recognise the pollinators before it is too late and help save not just our unique native flowers but also our fauna and our crops. Are you providing fauna for your flora or are both slowly suffering? Are their genes screaming 'Pass me on? Think about it."

At about the same time I'd earmarked the **Journal** as a worthy item to pass on in our N/L, Don Yates touched on plant pollination and man's interference in his recent wide ranging contribution. He expressed some concern with the direction that Australian Plants or SGAP . seems to be heading. "To grow plants without being involved with conservation is pandering to commercial interests and could be disastrous to our plants generally. Flowering plants have been around for about 60 million years, with two major things in mind - (1) to survive and (2) to attract pollinators and seed dispersers. Man comes along, and in just a few years thinks he can make improvements on what took the plants all this time to evolve. Changing flower colours or size, or even leaf shapes and habits isn't necessarily good for the plants ability to survive. If one takes the orchid societies as an example, they have bred hundreds of thousands of cultivars and changed the original orchids so much that studies have revealed that few, if any, would survive if put back into their original RF habitat. With orchids the first to disappear in diminishing RF, and the disastrous burning off that is occurring; if the originals are lost, what is there to put back should the need arise? The same could happen with native plants and we should ask ourselves, am I just a collector? Or am I growing for the reason of preserving plants and creating a living seed bank? Fortunately the majority of RFSG members seem to be on the right track, I'm very glad to observe from the newsletters."

IT IS OBVIOUS THAT AS A NATION WE ARE UNABLE TO DEFEND OUR FORESTS ANYWAY

The crunch came for me when it was announced that we have sold off our National Transmission Authority to overseas interests. Fancy not controlling a nation's communication infrastructure! Disposing of the means to move troops and equipment in defence of the realm is a pretty stupid decision too. Government has sold off its planes, shipping line, railways; closed down naval and armament facilities, abandoned defence bases and drastically cut back military personnel and privatised many maintenance sections. Recently, just north of 'Booyong' a fairly large boat drifted ashore and its cargo of illegals dispersed as far as 40 kms inland before 60 of them were caught! During this episode, sundry boat people and all our Dinky-Di searchers likely trampled all over an expanse of LRF; perhaps one of the few areas where the rare *Acronychia littoralis* (Scented Acronychia) still survives. Scotts Head has one of the few known populations of the plant. What pathogens, nasty plants and destructive animals arrived with those people. None? - How do we know?

We are unable to defend our fishing grounds near Tasmania from poachers who pillage and plunder the endangered Orange Ruffy, yet we have naval ships doing nothing in the Persian Gulf, and are presently squandering five billion dollars on reportedly useless submarines. We are told we cannot afford the military personnel that we should have to protect our Oz though. What a joke.

Postscript on this one. It was announced in August that our defence manufacturing operations (A.D.I.) had been sold off, to a majority foreign owned (French) group. I hang my head in shame at the stupidity of the politicians that my fellow Australians unwittingly choose.

TIMELINES AUSTRALIA PROJECT – REGULAR OBSERVATIONS & RECORDING OF DAILY EVENTS

Ros Runciman mentioned this project, also described as *Seasonality in Australia* which was developed by Alan Reid in Victoria. Ros maintains a record book covering her region - the Hunter in NSW - based on a set of explanatory notes, and which had provision for regular and systematic recording of observed natural phenomena such as plants currently in flower (or bud, fruit etc); birds seen on that day (or week); examples of animal behaviour; weather phenomena; insect life cycles and so on. Perhaps we may come to realise that our inherited view of the European seasons of spring, summer, autumn and winter perhaps may be inferior to the aboriginal determination of (I think) 7 separate and definite seasonal variations.

Beryl and I have been doing something along the same lines, but on a very irregular and sporadic basis - recording such things as when Bladder Cicadas are heard, frog calling durations, bird sightings etc in a diary or day book. Merely for personal interest.

Dave Bray had a similar idea in mind, mentioning this to me soon after Ros had given me the summary of Timelines Project so I passed on that info to consider. His personal interest is a bit more specific, to concentrate on building up a picture of the fauna and flora and supplementing that with the geology, climatic effects etc with a format easy-to-use by both the recorder and by any later users of the information gathered. What of a researcher in 100 years who seeks a specific sighting of an animal who may have to sieve through thousands of pages of records? He thinks he may have in mind a record sheet for each individual species commencing when an animal is initially sighted/ identified, and gradually the details build up over time. He has drawn up a basic sheet for (manual) field work; multi columns for species, location, habitat, date observed, etc but would like a computer expert to confirm that his design would be appropriate for a data base operation where it would need to be stored.

Dave had earlier spoken to Geoff Williams (local biologist) who suggested that it would be best to be very specific - select a group of plants/ animals eg ferns, cicadas dung beetles and survey such limited groups thoroughly. This would no doubt be a valuable record, but would not an accumulation of opportunistic observations prove just as useful in years to come?

Could we have some discussion on these ideas for a RFSG project to record rare and endangered plants and animals over a wide range?

APPARENTLY THERE IS MONEY IN ABUNDANCE FOR YOUR FAVOURITE RF PROJECT

Try any or all of these honey-pots for a grant to expand an existing area, to restore a degraded remnant, or even to re-establish a forest for environmental obligations anywhere in Oz.. By far the bulk of projects approved to now have been in rural locations, but towns, suburbs and cities are all eligible for funds, and in fairness there should be a lot more ongoing activities in such places. Some of the sources for grants include -

Total Catchment Management, Landcare, Rivercare, Salt Action, Algal Management, Streamwatch, Waterwise, Phosphorous Reduction, Rivercare 2000, Rivers Reborn, Key Rivers, Dunecare 2000, Greening 2000, Tidy Towns, Bushcare, National Reserve System Program, Farm Forestry, State Wetlands, Pastures and Rangelands, Wildlife Refuge, Voluntary Conservation, Farming for the Future.

Then there are Fencing Assistance Schemes - NSW has just allocated $15 million to encourage landholders to protect remnant habitat or to fence off areas being regenerated; Rate Relief and differential rating schemes are available in some states, or in particular local government areas; Land for Wildlife is a Victorian initiative jointly administered by its Environment Dept and The Bird Observers Club. This scheme alone now has nearly 5,000 properties involved and its success has encouraged WA, Tas and SE Qld. to set up similar systems.

If you are unable to access any of these, there is always Greencorps or other work for the dole schemes. Minister Kemp is always looking for new ways to keep the unemployed occupied and will consider any make-work proposition. You could try big business groups for money also, the largesse of many of these has been proved recently with the generosity of their 'encouragement' of political groups. For example prior to the 1998 Federal elections Coles Myer donated over $220,000; Pacific Dunlop 98,000; Channel Seven 56,000. Several large well-known developers each handed over several hundred thousand, big financial groups over a half million. In NSW alone, Corporate inducements totalled over $2 million ! The bulk of the money was given to the Liberal/ National coalition, because they were always going to win that election. It will be interesting to see who gave what to the parties prior to the NSW March elections where Labor was the odds on favourites. (Personally as a shareholder I would prefer fatter dividends; as a consumer I'd better appreciate cheaper products rather than by helping out likely decision makers who receive public funding anyway.) However, my point is that they obviously have a lot of money to donate to good causes, and what better cause could there be to restore or improve our environment ? And RF ecosystems should be well at the top of our priorities because of their biodiversity, as well as their ancestral and intrinsic beauty.

Finally if you are unable to obtain money from any of the above, just ask the federal government for some of their proven largesse. For example instead of **wasting $150 million on that ridiculously named and stupid idea of The Multi-function Polis** where almost all the money was squandered on fat cat salaries, feasibility studies, and consultants fees. The associated international lobbying, seminars, and junkets never produced one cent in investment; a house, factory or university; or even an environmental restoration project. Nothing to show for any of it. Just imagine what we could have achieved with a $150 million Rainforest programme! What has become of the genius who arranged this fiasco? More than likely he runs a consultancy business now, and not an Oz environmental protection organisation.

And if none of these agencies/ organisations/ programs are able to finance you, why not approach the International Olympic Committee - they seem to be awash with funny money and perhaps some guilty consciences would like to 'square off' and help improve some area in a presently degraded state.

BUSH FOODS AND BUSH REGENERATION AT BELLINGEN NSW

Beryl and I finally took up Jan Parkin and Ross Macleay's invitation to catch up on their regeneration efforts since we last saw their sites almost 9 years ago, and spent a very enjoyable couple of days with them. Their 150 acres is basically RF - wet sclerophyll vegetation which had a fair share of the exotics well established in that district - mainly lantana, privet and camphorlaurel, as well as a nasty grass *Paspalum Wettsteinii* which is becoming out of control in many areas near the coast. It was heavily promoted by the Dept. of Agriculture in recent times 'as being of value as providing pasture by growing well in shaded locations and in forests'. It surely does, and is of increasing worry to land managers because of its rampant growth, blanketing large areas and totally excluding all other species. Jan has found that selective hand weeding together with a paper mulch over dense patches of this pest keeps it under control. Their work will lead to its eradication on their block, but is a constant effort. Lantana is being hand pulled as this has repeatedly been proven to be the cheapest, quickest, safest and most effective method of removal, and sites even of once dense coverage are quickly colonised by native species, providing sufficient follow-up of seedling removal is maintained.

During our visit in 1990, Ross demonstrated his method of dealing with the problem plants privet and camphors. Quite a simple exercise - all you need is a hammer. He virtually ringbarked them, sapling to big tree-sized plants, by wounding/ pounding/ removing a strip of perhaps a couple of inches right around the stem, just above ground level. An occasional follow-up is required to knock off coppice shoots below the wound, and providing this is carried out the plant loses vigour, drops leaves, languishes and dies within a year or two. I wondered whether they still found the method satisfactory and was shown the demo areas of 9 years ago which had a total absence of the once dense exotic species. Recently treated trees and large saplings were looking poor and forlorn. Obviously effective, cost efficient, chemically free and safe. Trouble is it doesn't increase the nations GDP so it won't be too popular with the economists.

One of the bush tucker plants that Jan grows is Davidsons Plum *Davidsonia pruriens var pruriens*, the Qld variety. They acquired about 50 seedlings soon after they settled in and have picked fruit for some years now. Jan wrote last February saying that the trees were flowering well and hoped for a good crop, seeing that it was a particularly good season. They were abundant with fruit during our stay in June and Jan was pleased with the crop. She has strong demand for 'Davo Jam' made from the fruit, at local markets and retail outlets, and they enjoy (so did we) the excellent wine that the plums make. (Members who attended the gathering at Booyong at Easter '98 were also fortunate in trying both products). They gave us fruit to make a nice batch of wine and it will be interesting to compare some of this with that from *Rubus rosifolius* and *Ficus coronata*, which are presently maturing well, at the next RFSG get together.

We spent a little time helping them in bush regeneration on Bellingen Island during their regular weekly commitment in restoring this rare patch of surviving NSW lowland RF. Ross and Jan showed us over the island and explained the history of its recovery since the team of volunteers started work there in1984. The number of people involved has been pretty constant at around 8 individuals, one morning each week, weather permitting, and the results are remarkable. They have not received any assistance from the local council or other agency. We were impressed with the progress the group had made since we last saw the Island 9 years ago; with areas totally weed infested to that time now showing a dense tree cover including mature-stage species as well as pioneer and secondary vegetation. (There was an extensive report on this RF in an earlier N/L - No 10 of Sept 1990 and I must ask Ross if he would give us an update).

They pointed out a particularly nasty plant recently seen there - *Desmodium sp.* - Silver-leaf Desmodium, a dense matting ground cover which has numerous 'hooks' along the stems which far too often capture and crucify the lovely Dwarf Tree Frog *Litoria dentata* and Bleating Tree Frog *L. dentata*. Ross considers this plant as 'nature's velcro' and mentioned that this is yet another gone-berserk introduced species - a sub-tropical legume recommended for pasture by so-called experts who seem to have no awareness, or concern, of such introductions to the wider environment and of resultant effects on particular plant or animal species.

PAUL BRADY TELLS OF SOME INTERESTING EXPERIENCES IN TROPICAL RF IN SOUTHERN THAILAND

"From the end of November last year until mid-February I was working at a technical college near a small city called Nakhon Si Thammarat. Outside the city is a NP called Khao Luang (which is actually the name of one of the mountains). For less than $1 you can get to the park using local transport. On a day trip you can follow a stream uphill, passing a number of waterfalls. In some locations you can have a dip but expect to be nibbled by small fish. Plants included fishtail palms, *Ficus, Dipterocarpus, Eugenias, Ixora, Hibiscus, Begonias, Arisaema,* pandanus, bamboo and many orchids. It is possible to organise what is a three day trek to the summit of the mountain and back using one of the park guides, though I unfortunately didn't have sufficient time. At the top which is known as cloud forest, there are *Rhododendrons* which flower around April. Wildlife includes tigers and clouded leopards.

Economic activity including tourism are having deleterious effects on what remains of quasi wilderness areas in Thailand. Many tourist locations end up destroying what some people originally went there to enjoy. Part of the problem is an acceptance (even demand) for the tacky. A good case is the removal of original vegetation and its replacement by coconut palms on Koh Phi Phi for the filming of the movie 'Beaches'. It seems many people prefer the Hollywood stereotypes of tropical forest over the real forest. I was however pleased to stay in one resort area, Ao Phra Nang, near Krabi where there is a nervous balance between the environment and development. It proved to be a very good base for exploring surrounding areas - nearby is perhaps the last littoral RF. This can be visited on a day trip (one of many tours available at the resort). I was rewarded on my trip there with Tacca (bat flower) species in flower (black) along with orchids and pitcher plants. Also observable there are teak trees - these have largely gone the way that red cedar went here."

AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO GRAB PEOPLES ATTENTION IS TO CREATE AN URBAN RAINFOREST

Don Yates (near Fraser Island) believes that this works. He knows that many of us feel pretty helpless and at a loss to understand the priorities of many people, and we fight a losing battle in changing attitudes and perceptions. But creating a beautiful RF garden - if one is on a small block - attracts attention, and when others see how unique and outstanding these plants are they hopefully will try and copy, thus taking the first step down the path of conservation and appreciation of nature.

He had intended to send a list of the species he has growing but after listing all of them on a card system it came to over 150. Made up of trees, shrubs, ferns and orchids on a small block 20m x 34.4m. Not all are in the ground as yet, and I suppose he needs room for a house somewhere there too. A current project almost finished is 'a delightful section at the back with a dry creek bed as a feature, along with several pools and bridges but it doesn't take much space in Australia to grow an awful lot of RF.' Another point of interest with his situation is that during the month of June, about 50% of the plants are either in full new growth or coming into it. Many of these are from FNQ highlands, though none from other areas were worried by an unusually very low minimum for his district of just 3^{0}.

THE THINGS STEVE SINCLAIR DOES TO GRAB THE HEADLINES

He spent a night wrestling wombats, assisting a friend who is studying their population structures. "We had to catch them, anaesthetise them, clip on tiny reflective ear tags, and take Skin and fur samples..... Very unusual fun. We spotted the beasts grazing with a nightscope, and then simply ran after them and tackled them. Extremely strong little buggers - like muscley little bricks. I now sport a wombat bite on my tummy!"

BUSHWALKING THE WOLLEMI WILDERNESS IS ARDUOUS BUT REWARDING

Just 70km northwest of Sydney is the longest sandstone gorge in NSW, situated in the State's largest wilderness. Piet van Haeff and three friends were privileged to spend 9 days of mostly trackless walking through some fantastic gorge country. Piet writes "Access to these gorges is mostly difficult - sheer cliffs bar progress between river and tree clad ridges and you must traverse steep slopes of sand alternating with rocks and dense vegetation.

Commencing at Newnes allowed us easy access as we followed a track along the Wolgan river. This area was the habitat of many Wombats and Red-bellied black snakes; we also observed a group of yellow-tailed black cockatoos searching out large moth larvae in wattle and Eucs. Using their bill like a stethoscope, they sense the sound and movement in the wood and then use that powerful bill to excavate the grubs.

The first nights camp-site was made memorable by a near run-in with a feral bull which fortunately soon departed the scene. After dark we heard the whistle of a bomb falling, the unique call of the infrequently encountered Sooty owl.

We followed the river from here, the easiest route along the bank, over large boulders, through dense stands of water gums, or in the shallow water where it was common to sink waist deep in quicksand. Fortunately unlike those movie scenes where people are completely swallowed up into the depths of the earth. We were intrigued by a pillar about 8m high and less than 50cm wide, close to the river and consisting of rocks bound together with clay, topped off with a large rock. Somehow this totem had stood the test of time as the soil around it had eroded away. We arrived at our camp-site at the junction of the Capertee river with ample time to climb a nearby peak to view the country we had traversed and what was ahead of us the next day. The views were spectacular and we had the added bonus of a diamond python sunning itself on a rock ledge.

The vegetation over these sandstone ridges is on poor soils and is mainly dry woodland of Ironbarks, smooth-leaved Angophora and yellow Bloodwood with an understorey of hard leaved shrubs; their intricate beauty is easier to appreciate than the scratches from the prickly foliage as we push through. The evenings entertainment was a chorus of frogs resembling the sounds of toy soldiers tapping on little tin drums, accompanied by the 'oom' of a Tawny frogmouth. Breakfast was accompanied by Lyrebird lyrics but all too soon we had to resume the walk Progress was slow and again boulders, thick vegetation and quicksand had to be dealt with, plus walking in the river where sheer walls of rock edged both sides of the stream. It took 8 hours to travel the 9kms to the junction of the Colo & Wollemi rivers, where we set up camp on a white bank of sand with massive cliffs pock marked with caves towering above us.

The next day, we leave our tents and equipment, taking just water and near empty back packs as we entered the Wollemi river gorge to follow the river upstream looking for a way up the Culoul Ridge where we had previously cached food in a cave.. The Wollemi's waters are black, like tea, probably from tannin from decomposing vegetation. Giant black boulders are scattered along it, interspersed with still pools edged with white sandy beaches. Ascending to the top was steep and difficult, climbing rock ledges where a slip could have meant a sheer drop of 50 metres or more.. It turned out that we climbed the wrong spur, later finding an easier way which we used to return to the gorge with the food.

As we travel further downstream, the Colo river becomes a series of long deep pools with intermittent cascades rushing through boulders. Reflections of the orange coloured cliffs in the deep, still pools had an extremely beautiful and dramatic effect. This stretch of the river is increasingly beautiful and spectacular but progress also becomes more difficult as we cover more rocks, scrub, sandbanks, quicksand, and creek crossings - over, under, sideways, down, backwards forwards and around! We wondered when will it end?

Riverbank vegetation is predominantly water gums (*Tristaniopsis laurina),* but the red brushes of *Callistemon* and clusters of white flowered *Leptospermum* are also prevalent. Pockets of RF with Sandpaper figs *(F. coronata),* Coachwood and Blueberry Ash being dominant. Water skinks and Dragons are common along the river's edge. On the final leg of our journey the river is deep and wide and can only be crossed where there is a blockup of boulders where water rushes through, about waist deep. We manage to travel 10km in as many hours.

We relaxed on reaching the base of Bob Turner's track with a swim, before climbing out along the well graded path back to civilization.

As an alternative, some people choose to lilo down the river after heavy rain, which may be quicker and easier than walking, but be warned - a flooded Colo can be quite terrifying. We saw flood debris accumulated 12 m above the water level. Rest assured, the hard going of the walk is well compensated by the magnificent scenery and refreshing river pools."

WE CAN THANK THE 2000 OLYMPICS FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF 'PROTECTED BUSHLAND'

From **'Native Plants for NSW' - Apr 99**. "A report from a Sydney paper (SMH 17.3.99.) *'Council clears protected bushland for Olympic Games work'*. It seems that contractors for Bankstown Council cleared bushland at Georges Hall in Sydneys south-west to accommodate the Cycling Velodrome. In this case it was Cumberland Plain Woodland, recently 'protected' under the Threatened Species Conservation Act. It also contained *Acacia pubescens*, also protected. Of course there will be much consternation in Council and much wringing of hands.... Conciliatory noises will be made and investigations made to ensure such a thing could never happen again. 'We'll landscape with native plants' they will say and one wonders how many Cootamundra Wattles or Queensland Silver Wattle will be planted to replace the *Acacia pubescens* and pollute whatever bushland remains nearby. In the end the Velodrome is built, Council has its way and another piece of Sydneys bushland disappears."

(Ed Well said Brian. All NSW APSers will miss your first class editorship of the NSW journal, and that editorial was a pretty good swan song. RFSG members wish you well and I have partticularly appreciated your 9 years effort in that position. Trust that we maintain some sort of contact in the future.

MUNDULLA YELLOWS - A STRANGE NAME..... BUT A DISASTROUS PLANT DISEASE

My original and recent awareness of this extremely serious disease was from our **APS S.A. Journal** Aug '99. It is having a serious impact on native trees and shrubs in S.A. where it was first noticed about 20 years ago; as well it is now in NSW, Vic, Tas and WA. Dr Frank Podger, a plant pathologist with a wealth of experience in plant diseases believes that M.Y. is of equal if not greater concern than is *Phytophthora*. It progresses slowly but it is always fatal. The main symptom of M.Y. is a distinctive yellowing of leaf tissue which begins on a few leaves on just one branch; only after some time do most leaves yellow. Sometimes, leaf and fruit deformity is associated with the yellowing leaves. These symptoms then spread slowly until the whole plant is involved - it then dies. The symptoms are especially evident along roadside verges. After a mere 20 years of awareness of this possible environmental catastrophe, preliminary research has actually commenced to see if it is a virus.

The SA report indicates that a total of $38,000 has been allocated for research though it is estimated that $500,000 will be required for a vital 3 year study to find a solution. The article suggests that those wishing to lend support to a campaign for Commonwealth funding for such research should write to Hon Wilson Tuckey, minister for forestry and conservation and Senator Robert Hill, minister for the environment.

The second time I heard about this disease was on an ABC current affairs program late August so an awareness of the effects of M.Y. is getting through to some people at least. Perhaps Messrs Tuckey and Hill might do something, but don't hold your breath waiting on them.

Well, I have run out of space once again - and I still have a very high pile of members comments as well as a mountain of (currently) topical and serious matters to pass on. I don't know what the answer is though.