

Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants Inc.
Wallum & Coastal Heathland
Study Group

Newsletter

23

ISSN 1038-7889

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JULY/AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2007

Fan Flower



Dampiera sylvestris

Dear members and other readers,

I began this year with a degree of control and organisation, but with half the year gone, the weeks are starting to overtake me with terrifying speed. The busy Wallum months are nearly here, so this issue has most details of forthcoming activities for the wildflower season. Following last year's successful inaugural Sunshine Coast Wildflower Festival, plans are almost finalised for the 2007 Festival. We found that one of the best ways to introduce and educate people about the Wallum and its flowers was to take them on walks. So there will be a wide range of "rambles" through various habitats, from Noosa to Caloundra, plus workshops, talks, displays and a couple of bus trips to places of interest. I will be involved with the trip from the Sunshine Coast to the very wonderful Beerwah Scientific Area 1, on Wednesday 29th August - please note the changed date from that in the June Bulletin, no fault of mine, the change was made too late for the Bulletin. Not only will I help plan this day, but I am also asking Study Group members with some knowledge of Wallum plants and the time available, to come along and assist with guiding and identifying for visitors. For details of this outing and the Wildflower Festival in general, please contact me, preferably evenings, on either of the numbers at the top of this newsletter. You can be assured of a most enjoyable day out.

So far this year, there has been a well-ordered activities programme, and a small group of members has visited the following: Eucalypt forest & understorey out at D'Aguilar in February, which was by of a return to the area along Raaen Road just on 20 years since the combined Redcliffe & Pine Rivers SGAPs looked at the Wallum-type vegetation here. There have been some changes in the area, but we were able to find a satisfactory amount of small flowering species to fill a few hours.

A post-fire regrowth inspection at the Beerwah Scientific Area 1 in March satisfied us that healthy successful regeneration is taking place, following vandal-lit fires on 3 blocks in April 2006. There were still some Blandfordia grandiflora/Christmas Bells in flower, along with many seed heads from the December flowers. Perhaps the autumn months would be a better time for hazard-reduction burns? As the wife of a Rural Brigade firie, I often question the time-honoured regime of spring burn-offs. In mid-April, the Redcliffe Botanic Gardens were the venue for a combined Wallum Study Group/Lone Member social day, but a mere handful (6) Study Group (mostly lone members) attended. However, we had a pleasant chat, followed by a wander around the Gardens, concentrating our attention on the Wallum Experimental Garden, where Don Perrin is trialling some more adaptable species, such as: Persoonia virgata, very attractive with a slight weeping habit; Banksia robur with its lovely greenish brushes which turn gold, then rusty before going grey; Banksia oblongifolia, which has responded well to gentle tip-pruning, and was full of brushes in varying stages and shades; pink Phebalium woombye, which had sneaked up on Don and produced three or four seedlings nearby; Melaleuca cheelii comes from the Bundaberg region, but has been a success for several years, while the more local M. nodosa is alive and well. Last year, yellow pea-flowered Aotus lanigera and Pultenaea myrtoides produced a



Boronia falcifolia

dazzling display for the annual "What's Cooking" Festival day, but I think drought conditions and restricted watering is having an adverse effect on these plants of normally wet places.

Also in April, the Deagon Wetlands were to be visited, but only three of us enjoyed a peaceful walk in this Melaleuca woodland where red Callistemon pachyphyllus, Hakea florulenta, mauve Thysanotus tuberosus/Fringed Lily, Goodenia paniculata, yellow Jacksonia scoparia/Dogwood, Hardenbergia violacea, and a few Banksia integrifolia lend a touch of Wallum. There is one mysterious Xanthorrhoea, which I now think is X. macronema, a large patch of Pultenaea villosa, some Melaleuca linariifolia,

plus several other small flowering plants in this suburbia-surrounded wetland.

Back to the Beerwah Scientific Area 1 in May, and we weren't only checking on post-fire regrowth in general, but focussing on the recovery of Epacris pulchella on the block vandals lit on 9th September 2006. I chose this particular activity after reading in the Epacris Study Group Newsletter March 2007, an article on "Fire and Epacris". This article is re-printed at the end of this newsletter. We accessed the Scientific Area by a different gate this time, and were pleasantly surprised to note that general fire recovery along this side of the block burned in September 2006, has been excellent (there has been rain in the Beerwah region), and signs of the fire were minimal. Epacris pulchella was regrowing from rootstock, but whether there will be any seed germination, we have yet to discover.

And so we come to June, and a look along Caves Road on the southern side of Tibro-gargan Creek, easily accessed from Matthew Flinders Park, where we meet for all of our excursions in the Glass House Mts./Beerwah region. Caves Road is a gravel road which goes west from the picnic area under the railway line, eventually meeting up with Old Gympie Road, via a section of pine plantation. We drove and stopped to look at interesting spots (typical SGAP excursion "rambling") before a lunch stop. Of special note this time were the brilliant fully-opened brushes of the Banksia spinulosa, a lovely gold, very photographic against the scribbly bark of Eucalyptus racemosa. They weren't as numerous and spectacular as the hillside we saw near Beerburum in May 2006, but they were just as beautiful. Incidentally, from Shirley Flinn of Caboolture comes some "food for thought". In early June this year, she took Caboolture Daytime SGAP members to see and admire the Beerburum Banksias, but there was barely a flower brush to be seen. Does anyone have an explanation for this - masses one year, none the next? We'd be pleased to hear of any theories. And back to Caves Road - while not in flower, there were delightful scenes of the varied forms of Persoonia cornifolia/stradbrokensis, some with rounded leaves, and others with longer, narrower foliage. These Persoonias are such lovely suitably-sized plants for gardens, it is a shame they haven't been able to be propagated and sold in nurseries. Anyone out there with the necessary skills? Please come forward if you are there. There was a beautiful big Syncarpia glomulifera/Turpentine along the roadway, not far from the creek, plus smaller specimens. Since I was first "introduced" to this tree, for some weird reason I have loved it, and can always recognise it when I see it. It is just something about the way the leaves and the tree itself grow. Smaller flowering plants were present but having their off-season rest, but noted were: Acacia complanata & hubbardiana; Pultenaea myrtoides; Epacris pulchella; Gompholobium pinnatum; Hibbertia stricta & vestita; Hakea actites & florulenta; Melaleuca sieberi; Patersonia sericea; Daviesia umbellulata; and others common to this type of coastal woodland near creeks.

Another walk in this region is planned for later in the year, see more in the list of coming activities. With so much of the Sunshine Coast Wallum now lost to various developments, and the former lovely Ningi wildflower field also under houses and roads, plus the cost of using the motor car, this Study Group virtually now has only Bribie Island and the Glass House Mts./Beerwah/D'Aguilar region in which to study our chosen subject. I am also sad about the loss of venues at which I can provide displays of the Wallum and its plants & flowers. Changes such as the loss of the Coolum Wildflower Show, and the closure of the Beerwah Field Study Centre have impacted on our activities. Noosa Parks Association has moved its annual display

from its Environment Centre to the nearby Library for better public exposure, with the display there for the 2 weeks of the new-style Wildflower Festival. It is beyond my capabilities to participate, with the old days of spending a week or so on the Coast no longer affordable. I have gradually moved my involvement back to the southern end of the Sunshine Coast, where participation in activities entails only a day trip. However, this year the opportunity for a small but colourful display stall in conjunction with the Kathleen McArthur Wildflower Day at Currimundi, could be lost with only one walk there, in the morning, the afternoon walk being at Ben Bennett Botanic Garden, another Caloundra Reserve.

Our annual Bribie Island Wallum Day doesn't "go public", although visitors can join us, to learn about the Wallum plants. There will be a limit to what I can do by way of a display at the Redcliffe Botanic Gardens "What's Cooking in the Gardens?" Open Day on Sunday 5th August. The original environmental education concept focussing on Acacias - a "Wattle Day" - has become very commercial with the Redcliffe City Council's events section using the surroundings of the Gardens for one of their annual Festivals. So my Wallum display opportunities have become almost non-existent. So if any members have a chance to display Wallum, please get in touch. I have A4 and smaller laminated pictures of our Wallum flowers and scenery, photo albums and leaflets which I can send to you.

Now for the coming events for July onwards:

Sunday 22nd July: This is too close, next Sunday - meet 9-9.30a.m. at Matthew Flinders Park, north of Beerburrum, for m. tea, before heading off to the Beerwah Scientific Area 1 on Roys Road, Beerwah. On this outing there will be the opportunity to meet Michael Gillies, Maroochy Shire Council Community Conservation Officer, who is organising a bus trip to the Area in conjunction with the Sunshine Coast Wildflower Festival, on Wednesday 29th August. We'll be doing the usual post-fire regrowth check, and choosing where to show off the wildflowers on the 29th August. Usual excursion needs, bring lunch, insect repellent, etc.

Saturday 4th August: Our annual Bribie Island Wallum Day based at the Bribie Island Community Nursery, with John Ward doing his usual competent job of hosting & guiding the day's activities. Meet at the Nursery between 9 & 9.30a.m., in First Avenue, Bongaree, just past the sports fields on the right. Morning tea & socialising, wildflower walk, lunch, discussion and look around the nursery. BYO eats, hot water for cuppas available.

Sunday 5th August: "What's Cooking in the Gardens?" at the Redcliffe Botanic Gardens, George Street, Redcliffe, from 10a.m. to 3p.m. There is an environmental section, with Caboolture Daytime SGAP and their plants for sale, Pine Rivers W.P.S.Q. and SGAP, plants for sale in the Gardens Nursery with Don Perrin, and a few more of us doing other things. I'm to give a talk on growing Australian native plants in Redcliffe, but hope to have a little Wallum display somewhere.

Saturday 18th August: The opening day of the 2007 Sunshine Coast Wildflower Festival. I am waiting for final details of the programme, and had hoped to include it in this newsletter. Otherwise, if you would like details, please contact me on either of my phone numbers later this month. There are plans for lots of walks, workshops, displays, ground parrot listening, and much more.

Sunday 19th August: Bribie Island Environmental Protection Association (B.I.E.P.A.) is having its annual Wild-

N.B. WILDFLOWER FESTIVAL LAUNCH : FRIDAY 17TH AUGUST
2-30 - 4.30 PM KATHLEEN McARTHUR CONSERVATION
PARK, CURRIMUNDI. PHONE : MSC CALL CENTRE 54758501



from page 3 - Coming events:

flower Walk, meeting at the Community Arts Centre in Sunderland Drive, Banksia Beach at 8.30a.m. Bring water, hat, comfortable walking shoes (don't need the climbing boots, though - it's all sand tracks), sunscreen, insect repellent. It's an early start, but will allow more time for looking and discussing, so try to come along. At this time of year, Bribie's wildflowers can be absolutely glorious, and they have had some rain along the way.

Wednesday 29th August: I've already mentioned the bus trip from the Sunshine Coast to the Beerwah Scientific Area 1 on this day, so won't use any more space on it, except to ask again for members to help as guides if possible. The Scientific Area is a wonderful place, and we can stay on afterwards, for our own look at it.

Saturday 1st September: Kathleen McArthur Wildflower Day this year will be held at 2 different reserves. In the morning, Sunshine Coast and Hinterland W.P.S.Q. members will guide a walk through the Currimundi Lake Kathleen McArthur Conservation Park, then in the afternoon, there will be a walk in the Ben Bennett Botanic Park, off Queen Street, Caloundra (Map 100 S. Coast Gregory's UBD). It's years since I walked in this area, but I well remember lovely big old Eucalypts and grassy, shrubby understorey.

Sunday 9th September: This will be our last visit to the Beerwah Scientific Area 1 for this year. As usual, meet 9-9.30a.m. at the Matthew Flinders Park north of Beerburrum, with usual excursion needs.

Saturday 15th & Sunday 16th September: S.G.A.P. Qld. Region Spring Flower Show at the Mt. Coot-tha Gardens Auditorium, 9a.m. to 4p.m. each day. Displays and plant sales, plus advice about Australian native plants, etc. Bring family & friends.

Sunday 21st October: Glass House Mountains walk near Mt. Tibrogargan. Meet at Matthew Flinders Park 9-9.30a.m., as usual, for morning tea before we proceed to the carpark at the back of Mt. Tibrogargan.

Sunday 25th November: Deagon Wetlands and Third Lagoon Reserve have been chosen for the final outing for the year. They do have some Wallum species, such as *Callistemon pachyphyllus*, *Hakea florulenta*, *Melaleucas quinquenervia* & *linariifolia*, plus many coastal woodland plants. Meet 9.00a.m. at the carpark in Bracken Ridge Road, opposite Third Lagoon Reserve. The carpark is used by a model plane club, and also serves the Deagon Wetlands. Whether wet or dry, these 2 reserves are always pleasant to wander in, and even the birdoes among us are catered for. Afterwards, we can retire to the home of member Pat Barry for lunch and a comfort stop, the latter lacking at the reserves.

Well, that is a lot of activity promised, plenty to choose from, hope to see you at

Vanilla Lily



Sowerbaea juncea

Trigger Flower



Stylidium graminifolium

Sun Orchid



Thelymitra pauciflora

Wallum Tea-Tree



Leptospermum semibaccatum

Fringed Lily



Thysanotus tuberosus

Christmas Bells



Blandfordia grandiflora

from page 4 - Coming events:

some of them. Remember, if you know of any display opportunities, get in touch, and I'll provide materials, any costs covered by the Study Group.

Please contact me if you have any queries, evenings preferably.

I'll be away (health permitting) at the ASGAP Conference and tours at Newcastle from around 22nd September until 12th October, and am hoping to enjoy myself seeing places and plants I've never been to as yet.

In March, we gained a new member when Gretchen Evans of Maleny joined during our Beerwah outing. Gretchen's interests go beyond just the flowers, and include fungi and a concern for the natural environment in general. Along with Carol Heyworth of Caboolture Daytime SGAP (a member group), Gretchen has added to our little Beerwah "survey" group. Members of this Study Group often cannot avoid being environmentally concerned, as our study areas are diminishing in front of our eyes each year. When the Study Group started in late 1992, we still had some wonderful wildflower fields at Ningi (between Caboolture & Bribie Island), and at Marcoola, south of Coolum Beach on the Sunshine Coast. Bribie Island and Tin Can Bay also still had extensive areas of Wallum, but development has now overtaken these places. Where can we see that swathe of mauve Vanilla Lilies nowadays? Nowhere that I know of, but I have the photographs of where they used to be.

On the Sunshine Coast, we have the Noosa National Park now stretching from Noosa Heads to the northern "boundary" of Coolum Beach. Mt. Coolum (the upper slopes and summit) is now the Mt. Coolum National Park, continuing to the outskirts of Pacific Paradise, north of the Maroochy River. There is a large gap to allow for the Sunshine Coast Airport, and very little actual wetland Wallum as we knew it at Marcoola (just behind the frontal dunes) has been included in either of these National Parks. At the end of 1992, Emu Swamp at Peregrin Beach was included, and a few years ago, Emu Mountain became safe, except for the area directly at its base between it and the Sunshine Motorway. What was formerly the Peregrin Environmental Park, opposite Emu Mountain and the Emu Mountain Estate, is now in the National Park, but it is mainly a wetland with not a lot of actual flowering Wallum areas. At least, these areas are mostly inaccessible, except after wildfires. After many, many years in limbo, the high dune system known as the "Marcus High Dunes" between North Peregrin and Sunshine Beach south of Noosa, finally became part of the Noosa National Park. These are a wonderful example of dunal heathland, and include swamps, woodlands and other wetlands, through which walking paths lead, even to the shore of Lake Weyba. You have to know where to access and park your car to enjoy these walks, and members of the Noosa Parks Association (now a member group of SGAP Qld. Region) would probably be the best to contact to learn about these areas.

Just north of Coolum Beach, and to the west of the Sunshine Motorway, a beautiful area of coastal woodland and wetlands was sacrificed for the prestige development now known as "Peregrin Springs". This is an interruption in the flow of the Noosa National Park, and should never have been allowed, but there it is now, and I have the photographs and memories of what it once was.

We are fortunate to have Emu Mountain, but it could be "loved to death", with its ease of access, and continuing erosion of the

Fan Flower



Dampiera sylvestris

Native Iris



Patersonia sericea

Guinea Flower



Hibbertia stricta

Vanilla Lily

tracks to its summit. It is also open to abuse from nearby residents of Emu Mountain Estate walking their dogs (never mind that it is National Park), and trail bike riders. Mt. Coolum to the south of Coolum Beach, isn't totally protected, only the upper sections, so houses have crept up the lower slopes, to spoil its former beauty. However, we must be grateful for what has now been included in National Parks, even if most of it is fairly inaccessible to all except the more able-bodied of us. Bribie Island has areas of National Park, but development has been given precedence, and some places are locked off to walkers as well as cars. Childhood memories sustain me, but also make me sad for what has happened to the formerly extensive wildflower areas of 50 years ago - our wonderful "Boronia Patch".

*Sowerbaea juncea*

So some of us can't help getting a bit emotionally-environmental at times, and we now find our study area reduced, and are using the Beerwah Scientific Area 1 and its diverse plant communities to show and teach anyone who is interested in Wallum.

There was concern within SGAP Qld. Region that some Study Groups were leaning a bit too much towards conservation when our Society's aims are primarily "growing" Australian plants. However, this didn't become an issue, as it was realised that some of us can't avoid environmental and conservation, given our fields of study. Wallum and coastal heathland is a different type of Study Group, as it is not a plant community whose species are easily propagated and cultivated. Often, we are more of an "educational" Study Group. Even after the 50 years of our Society's work, Wallum plants aren't common in cultivation, and probably never will be. Members have tried to propagate them from both seed & cuttings, but success has been limited, despite trials with a variety of methods.

As we watch another patch of Wallum go under the machines then the buildings, we are sad, and naturally wish these areas could have been saved for future generations to enjoy and love, as we were priveleged to do. I have worked with a lot of people on the Sunshine Coast over the past 10-15 years, and have tried to teach them about the Wallum wildflowers so they can then approach the appropriate authority if they want to save an area, or collect propagation material. While Councils have allowed some unpopular developments to go ahead, they have also assisted the formation of many community groups which are carrying^{out} environmental work. And on it goes, we win a few, but lose a lot, and have to be thankful for small mercies. The Queensland Sunshine Coast is but a small part of Australia's coastline, and there are many more areas of coastal heathland under the same threats as our beloved Coast. But I still wish that 30 years ago, efforts to propagate Wallum had continued, but perhaps the secrets of these plants will always elude us. Are they telling us that they just want to be left where they are? Such a shame, as many of them would make beautiful plants for small gardens. To those of you who are still trying, please don't give up yet. And I'm afraid that within this Study Group, conservation and environmental issues will continue to be on the agenda.

Now for a little bit of business: It is again time to renew your membership of the Study Group, or let me know you no longer wish to continue. Included with this newsletter is a reminder form to fill in, and return with \$5, before you forget (like I usually do). If there is no reminder, don't worry, that means you have already paid till next year.

Over the past few years there have been changes within the State Government's environmental departments. Regarding our access to the Beerwah Scientific Area 1, and other former State Forests, I no longer deal with Dept. of Natural Resources, but with the Environmental Protection Authority/Queensland National Parks Service and the permit is handled by Ecoaccess. I must admit that I get a bit confused with changes which occur on almost an annual basis nowadays. This year the permit for a Group Activity cost the Study Group \$22.90, and I can no longer hold the gate key on a permanent basis - I have to arrange with the Maleny office of Q.P.&W.S. to obtain the key for our excursions to the Beerwah Scientific Area 1, and then return it. After the initial annoyance, we now manage to organise things satisfactorily to all.



Wallum bottlebrush
Callistemon pachyphyllus

Two Wallum species of the Myrtaceae family are featured on this page, as a tribute to another Study Group leader whom I've known since I joined the Pine Rivers S.G.A.P. back in 1981, and from whom I learned a few things about Australian native plants, especially Callistemons. On the 9th June, during the weekend on which S.G.A.P. Qld. Region Inc. celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the formation of S.G.A.P. in Melbourne, the leader of the Melaleuca & Allied Genera Study Group, Colin Cornford, of the northern Brisbane suburb of Bracken Ridge, lost his battle with cancer. He and wife Verna were both very quietly-spoken, I doubt if ever a harsh word went between them, and I was deeply saddened to learn of his death. Back in the 1980's, Col and a member of the former Redlands S.G.A.P. were able to use facilities at the Redlands Special School to propagate plants, and they must have produced simply hundreds of Callistemon hybrids and cultivars, many of which found their way into Pine Rivers SGAP members'gardens, as well as other Brisbane region gardens.

In Pine Rivers SGAP there were a lot of interesting members, and three of us had special interests linked to where we had grown up. Col was from Pittsworth on the Darling Downs, and his expertise was western plants, Jan Sked came from Beechmont in the Gold Coast's hinterland ranges, and everyone knows she is a rainforest expert. Although I was born way out west, from the age of 9, I lived at Bribie Island and Redcliffe, around Moreton Bay, and Wallum & other coastal plants are my passion. I do hope another leader for the Melaleuca & Allied Genera Study Group can be found, as Col's latest newsletter had the incredible news that Callistemons could become included with Melaleucas! I want to know more - Melaleuca pachyphylla? So on this page are the two plants from my "Cultivation Notes" page - Callistemon pachyphyllus, Wallum Bottlebrush, which comes in shades of red, cream, a couple of green forms, and a salmon-pink, and Leptospermum semibaccatum, a Wallum Tea Tree, whose flowers can be either white or pink, grows in both wet and dry dune heaths, and has soft seed cases which release the seeds when least expected. And I made a mistake - I usually have L. liversidgei on the "Cultivation Notes" page - sorry. Let me know if you have any of the Wallum Myrtaceae plants growing - Callistemon; Leptospermum; Melaleuca; Austromyrtus; Baeckea (Babingtonia/Ochrosperma); and Eucalyptus & Angophora.

CULTIVATION NOTES: With the long drought and current water restrictions around the States, gardening habits have had to change, and we will be seeing the "survival of the fittest". Some of the more environmentally-minded of us have for years advocated the use of mainly plants native to the region where we live, as they are accustomed to local conditions, and are possibly better survivors at any time. My garden at Kobbie Creek/Samsonvale bears that out, as it is probably 75-80% native to south-east Queensland, and now well-established, needs little fussing-over. But what SGAPPER can resist the challenge of growing plants from other parts of Australia? I have the odd interstate specimen, and some actually perform with surprising results. Others might grow, but never have a flower. Then there are those which I've sadly watched "grow backwards", dying a slow death. So what are we all doing now? In towns, gardens just have to go without, or maybe manage on some "grey water". At both my gardens - Kobbie and Moore - I have my own water supply from dam and bore, but Geoff says the dam at Kobbie is the lowest he has seen it in his almost 50 years there, so I have to be very sparing, watering mainly my potted Wallum and others, and just some special plants. At Moore, the bore water isn't the best, due probably to mineral salts content - many plants do not like it at all. Eremophilas and Westringias are the best here, so I'm collecting the former, having been unable to grow them to any great extent on the coast. I have made a tiny Wallum plot

Wallum Tea-Tree



Leptospermum semibaccatum

"Cultivation Notes" from page 7:

which measures 90cm. x 30cm., and has a Banksia aemula plus a few little plants which I brought back from Beerwah to measure and photograph, to estimate their rate of regrowth following the April 2006 fires. Plants and their survival rates: Hakea actites - 1 alive; Daviesia umbellulata - 1 alive, 1 dead; Leucopogon virgatum - 3 alive of 4; Persoonia virgata - 1 alive of 2; Dampiera sylvestris - 1 alive of 3; Pultenaea myrtooides - 7 alive, 1 dying. The Banksia was already waiting to be planted somewhere, so here's hoping. I dug out the heavier Moore soil, replacing it with Wallum sand I had in various pots, plus some local creek sand. The plants get watered with tank water, definitely not the bore water. It will be an interesting experiment. They receive only morning sunlight, and are sheltered by some large rocks and other garden "features". This week has been very frosty, but this little spot seems to have been free of it.

Back at Kobble, I continue to be amazed at the survival of plants which might get some water on my weekly visits. Some of the Wallum species were "rescued" between 1992 and 1998, they continue to live, but don't do much. I had four Epacris pulchella, which seemed to be coping with my life between 2 homes, but 3 succumbed eventually. As I've had most of these "survivors" 10-15 years, I forgive them for dying, it might just have been their life span anyway. Patersonias sericea and fragilis, two Melaleuca thymifolia from Emu Swamp in 1992, 2 Banksia robur flower from time to time, various Hibbertias are healthy, but I can't transfer them to Moore, so they will just have to manage as well as they can at Kobble. I don't get time for propagation, but Geoff is building a shadehouse at Moore, so I just might be able to get back to that someday.

A FEW SNIPPETS: Page 10 is taken from a British magazine published in Dundee, Scotland - "The People's Friend", which is something like our popular women's magazines were back in the 1950's (am I a dinosaur?), with a couple of serials, several short stories which all have happy endings, and other delightful bits and pieces, and NO SCANDALS and only rarely features film stars in a pleasant way. This article from the April 28th issue, written by the Scottish Polly Pullar could have been by an Australian writer about our own wildflowers and what is happening. I love Polly's stories about animals and flowers, whether native or introduced, and have been wanting to include one in a newsletter for ages. I hope you enjoy reading it.

Page 9 will be devoted to the genus Epacris, and is from the March 2007 Epacris Study Group newsletter. This is a well-prepared newsletter, focussing on one or more (related) species, and always has a colour shot of the particular Epacris.

If you are interested in the terrestrial (ground) orchids of south-east Queensland, don't go rushing out and buying expensive books until you have seen what our local boys at the Queensland Herbarium are producing. Study Group member Pat Barry and I attended a lunchtime seminar in May on "Orchids of South-east Queensland" given by Peter Bostock and Wayne Harris, Herbarium botanists. Peter did most of the talking, delivering a lot of information relating to all the name changes, while Wayne presented the "picture show" of slides of mainly ground orchids, but included epiphytes. They are preparing an orchid guide (south-east Qld. mainly) which the Herbarium will have available later in the year. I'm looking forward to it.

ON HIBBERTIAS: Only a short note this time - We have noted mainly H. vestita and the very similar H. stricta at Beerwah and the Glass House Mts. areas. Foliage is very similar, but H. vestita flowers are much larger, leaves thicker, H. stricta spreads wider as a ground cover and recovers very quickly after the fires.

Snake Vine
Hibbertia scandens



MELASTOMA and its name changes: Back in the 70's, on a Moreton Island plant list (by SGAP), it was

Fire and Epacris

A second interesting series of questions was received late last year from Wendy, a member of the APS NSW Parramatta & Hills group.

"I am interested in the fire response of Sydney Shale and Sandstone Epacris, specifically *Epacris purpurascens* var. *purpurascens* and *Epacris pulchella*. In West Pennant Hills the former is declared 'Vulnerable' under the NSW TSC Act, with clearing, changed water conditions and runoff, and frequent fire listed as its key threatening processes. The recommended fire regime is an interval of 10 - 15 years. The latter one is similar looking and growing in similar places.

I am concerned that three populations of the *Epacris purpurascens* var. *purpurascens* are to be burned in a hazard reduction operation, and may not recover. The populations are probably about 5 years since fire at least (the fire history at the exact sites is not well known) but I know that further north, in Kenthurst, *Epacris pulchella* seedlings took 2 years (after a hot October fire) to appear and *Epacris purpurascens* var. *purpurascens* seedlings have not emerged on one property 3 years after a cooler spring burn. So these plants may be only 2 or 3 years old.

Does anyone know how long the juvenile period is for these plants?

How long after flowering is seed set?

Do *Epacris* mind a medium intensity burn? (ie. will some survive?)

Do you know if more survive a cooler burn than a hot summer fire?

What are the triggers for germination?"

Wendy goes on to say "Any answers to these questions would be greatly appreciated. . . We would like to be sure the proposed fire will not harm plants of *Epacris purpurascens* var. *purpurascens* or *Epacris pulchella*."

Due to the urgency of the situation with the proposed burn imminent, an interim reply was sent to Wendy, but she has raised some very interesting questions and it would be great if some of our members could throw some light on these aspects.

How much do we know about the effects on fire, in regard to various species of *Epacris*.

Unfortunately this year we will have had plenty of opportunity to undertake a study on the subject, with extensive bushfires in many parts of Australia.

We would therefore like to ask all members to take a notebook, camera or other recording equipment on bushwalks in the coming months to check up on how species of *Epacris* are coping or not coping in your region.

Maybe you already have thoughts on the questions provided above. Please let us know. This is one of the real values of having APS plant Study Groups.

Our special PROFILE PAGE in this Newsletter features *Epacris purpurascens*.

As stated earlier in this newsletter, on our May outing to Beerwah, we paid special attention to the regrowth of *Epacris pulchella*. The area we looked at hadn't experienced a HOT burn in September 2006, and had recovered very well. We found healthy regrowth of the Epacris, with several in flower, mainly pale pink, from rootstock, and evidence of seed germination. We have no idea how long it would take for seed to germinate, but will continue to check this particular area. At Pine Ridge Conservation Park on the Gold Coast, there was a very severe burn in February 2004, and regrowth of many plants has been slow. *Epacris pulchella* has come back, and flowering, but probably from rootstock. Will continue to monitor, but seed germination should have occurred by now.

Melastoma names from page 8: *M. malabathricum*, in the 80's I learned that it was *M. polyanthum*, then it became *M. affine* (short & simple). Two years ago, I saw it on the Tin Can Bay Wallum walk brochure as *M. malabathricum* subsp. *malabathricum*, checked with the Queensland Herbarium, and that is what it is now, the poor thing - so many different names, no wonder we find it hard to keep up with name changes.

Well, that's it for now, more next time,

Barbara H.

A Breath of Country Air

THERE is no doubt that, if I could not live in Scotland, I would be very happy indeed to live in the glorious Lake District. I've been visiting it on a regular basis since I was at school, and have made some very good friends there, though I certainly do not know it well. I have also been there many times while studying Fell ponies, and have found the people generally to be very friendly and warm.

The hills, though savage at times, seem to have a different feel to them than those in Scotland, and are a very popular place for walkers and climbers.

When I was there one May, the wild flowers were just beginning to come into their own. May can still be an exceptionally cold month! Though the weather was sunny, a sharp wind still took the breath away and, as squalls of hail drove in off the hills, the old saying, "Cast ne'er a clout till May be oot", seemed to ring very true.

I always feel that yellow is the dominant colour of spring. First there are coltsfoot, daffodils and celandines, then comes that much-maligned but glorious weed, the dandelion, then marsh marigolds, (sometimes called kingcups). I was just contemplating all these flowers when I suddenly found myself having to stop the car to reverse to park in a lay-by. This was because banks of the most stunning cowslips were also now at their very best.

THE cowslip is a plant that has suffered drastically due to loss of habitat. It favours old-fashioned pasture land, something which is sadly becoming very scarce today as more and more farmers drain

their land, plough it up and put in more crops. The former fields of grass dwindle, and old-fashioned flowers like cowslips are the losers. Chemicals, pesticides, modern fertilisers and the relentless cutting of roadside verges are all detrimental to the habitat needed to grow good cowslips. By the 1980s, this divine little yellow flower had largely disappeared from our countryside, along with its

An Old-fashioned Flower



Floral treasure.

wealth of old country nicknames.

The name cowslip is certainly not romantic! It originates from "cow-slop" or cow pat, indicating the places where these flowers like to grow — that is, in pastures full of cow dung.

Culverkeys, bunch of keys, cowslip peeps, freckled face, paigle and coals-sleeps are just a few of its other nicknames. According to folklore, St Peter dropped his large bunch of keys on the way into Heaven one day and they fell to earth. In the spot where they landed grew some lovely cowslips, which has given rise to their bunch of keys name, as they were then used as an alternative to

Renowned nature writer Polly Pullar takes a lighthearted look at rural life.

open the door.

The cowslip has many medicinal uses as an expectorant and a diuretic, and was once used for kidney complaints and catarrh. Bees with their long tongues like to visit the deep petal tubes where they can gather nectar.

Generations of country people have been using cowslips to make potent and delicious home-brewed wine. They were also used in rural areas to form bouquets and posies for Maytime weddings, and picked on May Day celebrations for decorations.

Cowslips and their close relative, the primrose, will hybridise with that other, different-coloured garden escapee, primula, often producing quite interesting new plants.

Oxlips are very similar to both the primrose and the cowslip and are a hybrid cross of the two plants. They are scarce in Scotland, preferring the milder climates of the south and eastern areas of England.

Happily, since the demise of the cowslip and other floral treasures in the 1980s, we have these days become more enlightened. Many more verges and fields are left alone, which has allowed cowslip gradually to creep back naturally.



Photography by Polly Pullar.

In some areas they have been not only successfully reintroduced but also given a helping hand, enabling them to re-establish faster. The Cumbrian lanes were dotted with them, and also punctuated with stunning little early purple orchids.

Old churchyards in recent years have been differently managed. Conservationists have at last realised the value of these places as wildlife habitats where a wide variety of fauna and flora can survive, and cowslips have certainly benefited hugely from these new management policies.

ANOTHER icy blast of hail crossed the distant hills. It would be reaching the verge where I was so absorbed with the cowslips just any minute. Spring may have been in the air, but winter was just having a last fling. I hastily finished taking my pictures, and drove away, happy that the cowslip seems to be making a very welcome return.

We'll take another "Breath Of Country Air" soon.



A welcome return.