



Society for Growing Australian Plants Cairns Branch

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OCTOBER 2015 EXCURSION REPORT – IN SEARCH OF RAINFOREST GIANTS

Don Lawie

Cairns SGAP's October trip was to the Boonjie Scrub to look for the fabled jungle giants *Stockwellia quadrifida*. The Scrub lies on the western slopes of Mount Bartle Frere, Queensland's highest mountain, in an area of high and frequent rainfall, at an altitude of about 700 metres. The so-called track (more a rough, poorly marked trail) to the *Stockwellias* branches off the road which leads to the start of the Mount Bartle Frere walking track. Coralie was the only one of us who had been there recently, so she was elected Expedition Leader.

Rain fell steadily throughout the trip, varying from light mist to dinkum tropical rain. We had all come prepared with hats and raincoats and didn't let a bit of rain deter us, but it made sightseeing quite difficult. To look up was to get an eyeful, and the footing was so difficult that one had to stop to look at anything. Stopping for even a few seconds gave the hordes of leeches a chance to commence climbing up to meet their counterparts who dropped on us from the tree branches and those that leapt on us as we brushed any leaves on the narrow, unkempt track. They were very affectionate – blood brothers one could say.

The early part of the track is an old, degraded logging road which deteriorates into a sort of a trace of slippery, steep yellow mud with a runnel of water in the middle. Most of us had trekking poles which were invaluable in ascending and descending but nevertheless falls were inevitable. That presented a bigger target for the leeches.

Botanical scrutiny was not easy under the circumstances but we were able to record some items: Cassowary scats, often large were thoughtfully deposited on the track, indicating a healthy population of the big birds. Fallen fruits which cassowaries eat were plentiful, notably including the intriguing Wax Berry or Cloud Fruit, *Irvingbaileya australis*. The fruit consists of a thin, bright green covering on a soft waxy white type of aril about the size of half a thumb. (Who was going to wave a ruler about in this weather?). Cassowaries eat it, and Satin Bowerbirds arrange them in their bowers.

Irvingbaileya is named after a prominent 19th century American botanist. There is only one species in the genus and only one genus in the family Irvingbaileyaceae, but they have now been placed in the family Icacinaceae.

There were plenty of uneaten fruit on the ground, a good sign that cassowaries are well fed since October/November is hatching time for new chicks. Various species of laurel were plentiful, including *Beilschmeidia tooram*, *Endiandra montana*, and the large *E. insignis*. A rarely seen palm, *Oraniopsis appendiculata*, is a feature of the Boonjie Scrub – a handsome feather palm which must have horticultural potential.

We found a bower of the



But the Stockwellias: are they as big as we remembered?

Tooth-Billed Catbird (well, not difficult, it too was in the middle of the track). Instead of using his usual lure of upturned leaves of Brown Bollywood (*Neolitsea dealbata*) this bloke had some pale green, upturned leaves of a species of *Polyscias*. We heard him making all the calls of the

forest birds but didn't see him – he probably couldn't see us either in the murky drizzle.

Numerous flowers of the Jucunda Vine (*Neosepicaea jucunda*) littered the ground, and a young vine of about 10 cm diameter snaked its way to the canopy. These can grow quite large. A surprise find in this dense primary forest was a Davidson's Plum (*Davidsonia pruriens*) in fruit. I usually associate these with more open country.

But the *Stockwellias*: are they as big as we remembered? My last visit was about twenty years ago and on the way home we visited the Twin Kauri trees at Lake Barrine: they looked like saplings after the

Stockwellias. The first *Stockwellia* to appear is on a ridge and is quite a large tree but nothing to get excited about; it's a bit of a teaser. The next is a really big tree with massive buttresses, then one comes to a damaged tree with a hollow core

which one can climb inside. Several others were in sight and there may be even bigger ones further on but we had achieved our aim; Pauline wanted to go further but I was almost knackered. It would have been foolish to stop and rest in such leech country so we had a short pause and returned to the vehicles, muddy, bloody, wet but triumphant with myself in a falling-down state. My sincere thanks to the Team for their support.



Cassowary's breakfast - Cerbrea inflata (cassowary plum), Irvingbaileya australis (wax berry), Austrobaileya scandens (austrobaileya), possibly Syzygium papyraceum (paperbark satinash) and a Sapindaceae for desert.

We adjourned to beautiful Lake Eacham for a mid-afternoon lunch and a welcome hot drink from our thermoses. Was it worth it? Oh, Yes. Would I do it again? Only in a helicopter!

NOTE: *Stockwellia quadrifida* is the sole described species in the genus, a wider scrutiny and less strenuous part of the Family Myrtaceae. Found only in an area of the Queensland Wet Tropics rainforests at an altitude of 700 – 900 metres (probably also in the unexplored vicinity) the trees grow to a height of 40 metres. They were discovered, in 1971, in a co-operative effort by State Forestry men Vic Stockwell and Stan Gould in a joint aerial photography survey followed by ground-truthing. Their unique status (their nearest living relatives occur in Arnhem Land and New Guinea) was recognised and all logging in the area was immediately halted. The species name refers to the way in which the typically myrtaceous flower opens in four parts [Editors Note: A little more detail on the story can be found on page 15 of the Australian Systematic

Botany Society Newsletter No. 113, found here: <http://www.asbs.org.au/newsletter/pdf/02-dec-113.pdf>].

The Stockwellias are an Australian botanical treasure hidden away in a barely accessible forest. They deserve access.



Oraniaopsis appendiculata (Image by tanetahi, commons.wikimedia.org)

Boonjie Species List

Don Lawie

Basal Angiosperms

AUSTROBAILEYACEAE

Austrobaileya scandens

LAURACEAE

Beilschmeidia tooram

Endiandra insignis

Endiandra montana

Monocots

ARECAEAE

Oraniaopsis appendiculata

Eudicots

APOCYNACEAE

Cerbera inflata

ARALIACEAE

Polyscias sp.

BIGNONIACEAE

Neosepicea jucunda

CUNONIACEAE

Davidsonia pruriens

ICACINACEAE

Irvingbaileya australis

MYRTACEAE

Stockwellia quadrifida

?*Syzygium payraeum*

SEPTEMBER EXCURSION – COMBINED GROUPS

BARBECUE AT BABINDA

Stuart Worboys

September's SGAP outing was a long-planned gathering of north Queensland SGAP groups. Invitations were sent to all groups from Townsville north, and we were pleased to have visitors from the all over. For such a big meeting, we chose one of the richest and most biodiverse spots in north Queensland – the Babinda Boulders. Here, at the foot of Queensland's highest mountain, -

Rob Jago and myself lead two groups down to the lookout over the gorges and channels that have been the subject of so many tragic accidents. This is Rob's home territory, and he had a story for everything green. He pointed out a couple of rare, Wet Tropics endemics growing right next to the carpark – *Diploglottis pedleyi* and *Neostrearia fleckeri*. For the visitors from drought-stricken Townsville, this was a rare opportunity to view lowland rainforest at its best. Rob's full species list can be seen on the next couple of pages.

Whilst we were out botanising, Boyd and Coralie were busy at the barbecue, pulling together a fantastic feed of sausages, sauce, bread and salad. There was even some honey-soy marinated tofu for those not inclined to munch on a “mystery bag”. After lunch, we took the opportunity to discuss the future of SGAP in the tropical north. Most groups find it difficult to attract new members, and questions were asked about what changes, if any, should be made. I'm not sure that answers were arrived at, but the discussion was both lively and frank.

Thanks to everyone who contributed to making this day a success. I trust we can hold another joint meeting next year.

Boulders Picnic Area Species List

Rob Jago

"cv" = cultivated

* = exotic

Ferns and fern allies

CYATHEACEAE

Cyathea cooperi
Scaly Tree Fern

LYCOPODIACEAE

Phlemariurus phlegmaria
Tassel Fern
Phlegmariurus phlegmarioides
Layered Tassel Fern

Basal Angiosperms

ANNONACEAE

Cananga odorata
Woolly Pine

ATHEROSPERMATAEAE

Doryphora aromatica
Northern Sassafras

LAURACEAE

Beilschmiedia tooram
Tooram Walnut
Cryptocarya grandis
Cinnamon Walnut
Cryptocarya murrayi
Murray's Laurel
Cryptocarya pleurosperma
Poison laurel
Endiandra bellendenkerana
Bellenden Ker Walnut
Endiandra cowleyana
Rose Walnut
Endiandra globosa
Ball-fruited Walnut
Endiandra insignis
Hairy Walnut
Endiandra sankeyana cv
Sankey's Walnut
Litsea leefeana Bollywood

MYRISTICACEAE

Myristica globosa subsp *muelleri*
Nutmeg or Babinda-blood-in-the-Bark

PIPERACEAE

Piper macropiper
Piper mestonii

Monocots

ARACEAE

Epipremnum pinnatum

ARECACEAE

Archontophoenix alexandrae
Alexandra Palm

ORCHIDACEAE

Robiquetia gracilistipes

Eudicots

ANACARDIACEAE

**Mangifera indica* cv Mango

APOCYNACEAE

Alstonia scholaris Milky Pine
Wrightia laevis cv Millgar

ARALIACEAE

Polyscias elegans
Celery-wood
Schefflera actinophylla
Umbrella Tree

BIGNONIACEAE

Deplanchea tetraphylla cv
Golden Bouquet Tree

CLUSIACEAE

Calophyllum inophyllum cv
Beach Calophyllum
Garcinia warrenii
Native Mangosteen

CONVOLVULACEAE

Merremia peltata

CUNONIACEAE

Gillbeea adenopetala
Pink Alder
Karrabina biagiana
Brush Mahogany
Pullea stutzeri
Hard Alder

ELAEOCARPACEAE

Elaeocarpus grandis cv
Silver Quandong

EUPHORBIACEAE

Homalanthus novoguineensis
Native Bleeding Heart

FABACEAE

Castanospermum australe
Black Bean
Entada phaseoloides
Matchbox Bean
**Inga vera* cv
Icecream Bean
**Samanea saman* cv Raintree

HAMAMELIDACEAE

Neostrearia fleckeri

ICACINACEAE

Irvinghaileya australis
Cloud Fruit

LAMIACEAE

Faradaya splendida

Potato Vine
Gmelina fasciculiflora cv
White Beech

LECYTHIDIACEAE

Barringtonia calyptata
Cassowary Pine

LORANTHACEAE

Dendrophthoe curvata
Mistletoe

MALVACEAE

Argyrodendron peralatum
Red Tulip Oak
Brachychiton acerifolius cv
Flame Tree

MELIACEAE

Dysoxylum alliaceum
Buff Mahogany
Dysoxylum arborescens cv
Mossman Mahogany
Dysoxylum klanderii
Buff Mahogany
Dysoxylum pettigrewianum cv
Spur Mahogany

MENISPERMACEAE

Carronia pedicellata

MORACEAE

Ficus benjamina
Weeping Fig
Ficus hispida Boombil
Ficus leptoclada
Atherton Fig
Ficus pleurocarpa
Banana Fig
Ficus variegata
Variegated Cluster Fig
Ficus virens
Banyan Fig
Ficus virgata

MYRTACEAE

Melaleuca viminalis cv
Red Bottlebrush
Ristantia pachysperma
Sour Hardwood
Syzygium boonjee
Boonjee Satinash
Syzygium cormiflorum
Bumpy Satinash
Syzygium eucalyptoides subsp
eucalyptoides cv
Bush Apple
Syzygium forte subsp *forte* cv
Flaky-barked Satinash
Syzygium gustavioides
Grey Satinash
Syzygium hedraiophyllum
Gully Satinash
Syzygium leuhmannii cv
Cherry Satinash
Syzygium tierneyanum cv
Creek Satinash

Xanthostemon chrysanthus cv
Golden Penda

PHYLLANTHACEAE

Glochidion harveyanum var
harveyanum
Harvey's Buttonwood
Glochidion sumatranum
Buttonwood

PITTOSPORACEAE

Pittosporum trilobum
Red Pittosporum

PROTEACEAE

Buckinghamia celsissima cv
Ivory Curl Tree
Buckinghamia ferruginiflora cv
Noah's Silky Oak
Cardwellia sublimis
Northern Silky Oak

Carnarvonia araliifolia var *araliifolia*
Caledonian Oak
Darlingia darlingiana
Brown Silky Oak
Helicia nortoniana
Norton's Silky Oak
Hollandaea sayeriana

RHAMNACEAE

Sageretia hamosa

RHIZOPHORACEAE

Carallia brachiata cv Corkybark

RUTACEAE

Acronychia vestita
White Aspen

SALICACEAE

Casearia dallachii
Dallachy's Silver Birch
Sclopia braunii cv Flintwood

SAPINDACEAE

Sarcoteryx martyana cv
Toechima erythrocarpa
Pink Tamarind
Toechima erythrocarpum
Pink Tamarind

XANTHOPHYLLACEAE

Xanthophyllum octandra cv
MacIntyre's Boxwood

WHAT IS "FASCIATION"?

Ian Walker, Bowen

Amongst the joys of plant-watching are the many nuances to be found. Beyond "what species is that?" are a whole range of subtle or not-so-subtle differences caused by genetics, the environment and their interaction.

An interesting and often spectacular but lesser known example of this is fasciation. This is a flattening of the stem or flowers. The results are often bizarre and hideous but sometimes they can be interesting enough to be used in horticulture *e.g.* the bedding plant cockscomb - *Celosia*.



Fasciated lycopod.

Something has clearly gone wrong with the growing point of these plants and the cause is associated with its damage. As you might expect, this damage isn't restricted to a single cause and a wide range of causes have been found including genetics, bacteria (especially *Rhodococcus fascians*), viruses and physical damage caused by such things as insects, mites, frost, chemicals or mechanical injury.

Last year, while walking along a railway line in Bowen, I found two *Tridax procumbens* plants with fasciated flowers within 50 metres of each other (next page). This is unusual and may just be chance or perhaps indicative of

a common causal agent like spraying along the line or proximity to the Bowen Cokeworks. *Tridax* is a native of the tropical Americas but has long been naturalised in Queensland and around the world. It is an aggressive weed but is reported to have a wide range of potential therapeutic activities. I spend a lot of time removing it from my lawn in Bowen but I have a soft spot for it as it was the first plant I ever keyed out.

I collected seed from these two seed heads (the remainder of the plants were unaffected) and I'll see if the fasciation is carried through to the next generation. Usually it isn't and the mutation has to be maintained by vegetative propagation.

Sometimes fasciation can be a problem in plant collections, as in the propagation of tassel ferns, and sometimes it gives rise to interesting and valuable forms as in the numerous "*Cristata*" forms of cacti and succulents. Either way, it is another dimension to that rich tapestry we call botany. Keep an eye out for it next time you're botanising.



WHAT'S HAPPENING

Cairns Branch Christmas Breakup



Have a tropical
Christmas!

Meetings and excursions on the 3rd
Sunday of the month.

Sunday 15 November, 12 noon.

We'll be winding up the year at the
Australian Tropical Herbarium.
Construction works are causing havoc
to normal car parking arrangements,
so please meet at the front of
Crowther Lecture Theatre, Building
A3, James Cook University Cairns
Campus, McGregor Road Smithfield.

Ashley Field has kindly agreed to
discuss the development of the new
interactive Fern Key, and we will
follow this with

It's Christmas! Bring a plate of
goodies to share! Look forward to
seeing you all.

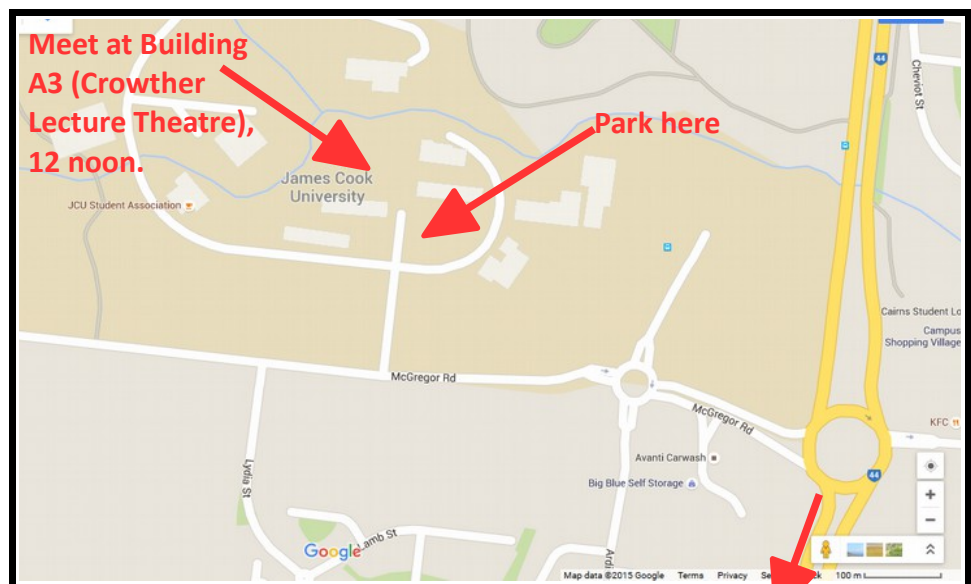
Tablelands Branch

Meetings on the 4th Wednesday of
the month. Excursion the following
Sunday. Any queries, please contact
Chris Jaminon on 4091 4565 or email
hjaminon@bigpond.com

Townsville Branch

Meets on the 2nd Wednesday of the
month, February to November, in
Annandale Community Centre at
8pm, and holds excursions the
following Sunday.

See www.sgaptownsville.org.au/
for more information.



To Smithfield
Shopping Centre,
Cairns

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