



Acacia brunioides

Australian Native Plants Society (Australia) Inc.

ACACIA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER

Group Leader and Newsletter Editor
Bill Aitchison
13 Conos Court, Donvale, Vic 3111
Phone (03) 98723583

Seed Bank Curator
Victoria Tanner

Email: acaciastudygroup@gmail.com

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Note: If you wish to view or download previous Study Group Newsletters, they are available on the Study Group website.

The address is:

<http://anpsa.org.au/acaciaSG>

From The Leader

Dear Members

I would like to start this newsletter by congratulating one of our Study Group members, **Eric Anderson**, on being awarded membership of the General Division of the Order of Australia in the recently announced Queen's birthday honours. The award was made in recognition of Eric's significant service to conservation and the environment. Many Study Group members will be aware of Eric as author of Plants of Central Queensland, and I am sure all members join me in congratulating Eric on his recent award.

The Queen's Birthday Honours also saw the late **Jack Fahy**, founder of the Wattle Day Association in 1998, appointed to the Order of Australia (OAM) for his "service to National Wattle Day celebrations".

Terry Tame (1934-2016) was well known for his expertise relating to Acacias, for example he was the author of Acacias of Southeast Australia. He was a member and active contributor to our Study Group for a decade or so from 1988. A biography of Terry's life has now been prepared by Phillip Kodela and Allan Tame, and can be accessed at <https://www.anbg.gov.au/biography/tame-terrence-michael.html>.

In our previous newsletter No. 144, I advised that our Study Group has agreed to set up a display of photos at the forthcoming ANPSA Biennial Conference in Albany. I asked if any members who had a photo of an Acacia that might be of interest and suitable to include in our display could email the digital image to me. Thank you to Victoria Tanner, Ben and Ros Walcott and Eric Anderson for the photos they have provided, but there must be some other members who can help. I have quite a large collection of Acacia photos here, but I would much prefer to set up a display using photos from a

number of members. If you can help, that would be much appreciated.

I have received a request from a member who is looking for seeds of *Acacia whibleyana*. If you have access to seeds of this species, please let me know.

As for all Study Groups, membership fees fall due on 1 July each year – so it is now that time of year. It would be greatly appreciated if you could attend to this payment. Details regarding membership fees and payment options are shown on page 10. Some members have paid some years in advance, and some have still not paid for the last twelve months – if you wish to check on what date you are currently paid up to, please let me know. And if you do not wish to renew your membership, could you please let me know so that I can amend our membership records. Our membership fees remain the same as last year.

Bill Aitchison

Welcome

Welcome to the following new members to the Study Group.

Chris Hallahan, Shoalhaven Heads, NSW
Audrey van den Berg, Orbost, Vic
Prue Wright, Gravelly Beach, Tas

Chris Hallahan advises that she moved to Shoalhaven Heads 5 years ago after living for 37 years on a beautiful block at Berry, NSW. It had rich deep loamy soil and was sheltered from the wind. But now she is on a large, suburban block of beach sand, with strong salt-laden winds and 11 gum trees dropping “junk” on everything. Her new garden has been a huge learning curve and very disheartening at times. Chris comments that she loves gardening, not just natives, but anything with bright flowers. She is desperate to attract small birds and butterflies.

Her loveliest plant is *Acacia iteaphylla*, Flinders Range Wattle. It is about 2 metres tall, a lovely rounded shape of bushy weeping branches, and at the time of writing (early June) had been covered in bright yellow flowers for nearly 4 months. Chris is wondering if one would thrive out the front in more wind?

Audrey van den Berg tries to propagate local Acacias but also looks for unusual ones as well. She has just planted seeds of 6 species but it is a bit cold. An *Acacia podalyriifolia* tree was a mass of gold brightening up the street but a bit of rain spoilt it somewhat. The hot sun last October burnt a lot of the seeds

before they had time to mature. At the time of writing (10 July) *Acacia triptera* was in flower. Audrey was interested to read that *Acacia mitchellii* grew so tall as one that she was shown at Providence Ponds was prostrate.

Prue Wright is a close friend of **Marion Simmons** (a former leader of the Acacia Study Group), and advises that Marion has now moved from her home of many years to an aged care facility – our best wishes to you Marion (who still remains a member of our Study Group).

Marion still gets to the local APS Group’s plant propagation afternoons, but Prue is now looking after some of the wattles that Marion had been propagating before her move.

Prue has had a couple of questions regarding the plants that Marion had been propagating, of which I am unsure of the answers. I would appreciate any input from members in relation to these questions – let me have your thoughts and I will pass on to Prue.

(a) Marion had been growing some *A. stenoptera*. Prue has potted on 3 of these, but advises that they have always looked “off” and are gradually becoming more and more yellowed. She wonders if the problem is that it is just too cold in Tasmania to grow this species. Does anyone have experience in growing *A. stenoptera*? What might the cause of the yellowing be?

(b) Marion was also propagating some *A. lanigera*. Prue notes that the young phyllodes of this species are meant to be woolly, but Marion’s small plants don’t seem to be. Am I right in thinking that there can be variability in the extent to which young phyllodes of this species are (or are not) woolly?

From Members and Readers

Bernadette Cheesman (Wendouree Village, Vic) attended the 10th Anniversary Black Saturday State Memorial Service, held at the Exhibition Building in Melbourne on 4 February 2019. She was impressed with the use of wattle at this event, and took the following photograph.



Victoria Tanner (Canberra, ACT) has recently returned from 2 weeks on Kangaroo Island, which included a 66km walk. Victoria comments that *Acacia leiophylla* was outstanding. She was, however, disappointed to learn of a decision to build two luxury private accommodation villages on prominent fragile coastal sites in wild and unspoilt parts of Flinders Chase National Park. This decision has been endorsed by the South Australian Department of Environment and Water. The Department's decision also means that an additional 3km of road will be bulldozed through native vegetation and an additional 7km of cleared walking track will be required. Further information is available at http://www.friendsofglenthorne.org.au/wp-content/uploads/KI_PublicparksNOTprivateplaygrounds.pdf.

Victoria has also drawn attention to a Key to the Wattles of Greater Brisbane, which she found of interest. Victoria comments that it is downloadable from the DPI website via the State Library – enter the title in search (or direct).

Fred Mazzaferri (Jimboomba, Qld) was recently surprised at the behaviour of one of the wattles in his garden (of unknown species). Fred writes:

“This may well belong in your “Fred’s a real amateur” file. But at least I found it amazing when this unknown *Acacia* lost its head, leaving a branch each side, perfectly horizontal that within a month, although these were a good 2-3 cm thick, both began to bend upwards, unaided, as close to the trunk as possible, finally reaching this position, almost vertical, within 3-4 months!”



Fred Mazzaferri's wattle

Australian Plants for Containers Study Group

The Acacia Study Group is one of (currently) 18 Study Groups set up by the Australian Native Plants Society (Australia). One of these Study Groups, the Australian Plants for Containers Study Group, has been in recess for some time, but has now been reactivated by **Ros and Ben Walcott** (who are members of the Acacia Study Group).

Many people live in smaller units and apartments with balconies or have small areas for gardens and so growing Australian plants in containers is a great way to have a small garden of native plants. Also growing in containers allows one to have plants that otherwise won't tolerate local conditions. Ros and Ben plan to produce a newsletter twice per year with contributions from interested members. Membership is free and all newsletters will be distributed by email.

They would like to receive a picture or two of favourite or interesting native plants in pots with a short description. If you wish to be added to the mailing list of this Study Group, just email one of them at roswalcott5@gmail.com or benwalcott5@gmail.com and they will add you to the distribution list. Remember, membership is free to all members of ANPSA affiliated Societies.

The May Benny Wattle Story by Len Hubbard

In the spring of 2003 Chinchilla Field Naturalists were invited by Jack and May Benny, members of the Lake Broadwater Natural History Assn. to join with them for a visit to check out the nearby Streachworth Forestry. The prime reason being to have a look at a new wattle May had found on previous trips. Samples of this wattle had been sent to the Queensland Herbarium for identification and the results had always come back as “unknown species”. Looking at my old photos of this outing the following people can be recognised. Val Hando, Rod and Wendy Smith, Frank Truscott, Len and Joan Hubbard, Jack and May Benny, Terry Rayner, Malcolm and Marjory Wilson and others. The wattle in question was in full flower when we were there. It can be best described as a bushy shrub to 3m high, has ball flowers on 6/8mm peduncles, phyllodes mostly straight, 20/50mm long and 2.5/5mm wide, with raised midrib, glands at base and on the mucro.

In subsequent years, we would ask Mrs Benny “Have they named this wattle after you yet?”, with negative results. Mrs Benny has since passed away.

Last September 2018 Alan Gibb, Wangaratta, visited us here in Chinchilla. As an old friend of May Benny, he had heard of this wattle's existence. I suggested to Alan that we should try and find this wattle again and see if it had been identified. Having only photos and no recollection of its exact location I

contacted Malcolm Wilson in Dalby. He kindly sent me a GPS position along with a (by the way), rumour has it that recently a Forestry grader had cleared the break, tree line to tree line, with no wattles surviving the experience.



Acacia ixodes and Alan Gibb

Photo Len Hubbard

Alan, Joan and myself travelled to Lake Broadwater and on to Streachworth Forestry. We activated the GPS and in due course located the area in question. On arriving at our destination, to our total dismay some 12/18 months ago a massive wild fire had consumed the area. Many of the large cypress and eucalypt trees had been reduced to unrecognisable black stumps. Coppicing eucalyptus were everywhere. On the once bare areas Mrs Benny's wattle was taking over. The fire had done its job on its seeds and the new plants from mere millimetres to two and a half metres are growing in profusion. It is now the local dominant species. We photo and press some samples to be sent away for formal identification. Due to the dry situation at this time only a few poorly formed flowers were found. Joan and I return in November looking for a few seedpods, but none were located.

I recently sent my samples to the Queensland Herbarium. Resident Botanist Jian called requiring more information on our find as to its location and to confirm the acacia species as *Acacia ixodes*. He was excited about having it found out of its distribution areas. The nearest known location of this species is 150 kms to the south west at Westmar. *Acacia ixodes* grows on sandy soils with *Callitris columellaris*, from Dubbo, Gilgrandra, Bourke, Westmar to Jericho. Based on *Acacia gnidium* var *latifolia* is now known as *Acacia ixodes*. The name refers to the resemblance of the phyllodes to the leaves of the genus *ixodia*. Common name "Motherumbung". Streachworth Forestry also has some large areas of *Acacia chinchillensis* growing there. Earthmoving equipment may have caused the relocation of these species.

Mrs Benny will be remembered not for a new species but for extending the distribution of this particular acacia species far from its known localities. We thank May for sharing her knowledge with us.



Phyllodes and flowers of May Benny Wattle

Acacia cyclops

by Bill Aitchison

Acacia cyclops occurs naturally in coastal and near coastal areas of south western WA and in parts of South Australia. Further to the east, it has become weedy in some coastal areas of South Australia and Victoria (in Geoff Carr's paper published in our previous newsletter No. 145, it was listed as being one of the ten worse weedy *Acacia* species in Victoria).

Despite its weedy nature in parts of Australia, in at least one area of its natural distribution, it is struggling. **Kate Detchon** has been trying to germinate *Acacia cyclops* seed for a revegetation project north of Perth, in an area where the species is showing signs of disease. In its early stages, plants display stunted sections, buds don't develop into flowers or pods, there are shortened internodes, very small leaves and yellowing of the foliage. As the disease progresses, the whole plant becomes stunted and yellow, with some branches completely dead. The plants in the area where Kate is involved do not sucker either (they should under normal circumstances). The branches on the wind affected side of the plant die first – plants that don't get wind affected will still die - but the process is

slower. The species composition in the area is changing, and with negligible recruitment by native species, the vegetation is changing into dead sticks and weeds.



Acacia cyclops with more severe disease, whole plant stunted and yellow, some branches completely dead Photo Kate Detchon

Kate is more generally concerned that in this area there has been a big decline in Acacias in the last 10 years. There is very little seedling recruitment, and no suckering even of *A. rostellifera*. The Acacias seem to be struggling to cope with things they should be used to. She wonders what has changed?



Thickening and shortening of stems in Acacia cyclops Photo Kate Detchon

She has wondered whether it is some type of insect larvae inside the stems. She notes that Dodder (*Cassytha spp*) are rampant in the area and so are many insects which could be vectors. The insects and dodder are native and under normal circumstances would not significantly affect the acacia

population, but in their weakened state, the acacias appear to have little resistance to them.

Kate also wondered about the possibility of phytoplasma disease affecting the *A. cyclops*.

Kate would be interested in any suggestions as to what is causing the deaths of these *A. cyclops* plants – please let me know your thoughts, or other comments you may have, and I will pass on to Kate.

I referred Kate's query to **Trevor Edwards (Croydon, Vic)** who works in the field of plant biosecurity. Trevor commented as follows:

"I am not a plant pathologist so take the following advice with that in mind. This damage looks to be an endoparasite which is distorting the normal development of the stem tissues, probably near the point of cell elongation. My guess would be stem nematode, you might take a look at *Ditylenchus dipsaci*, especially the oat form which has a fairly broad range of hosts including numerous crop legumes. It is not a big jump from one legume genus to another, especially considering that the parasite is capable of jumping between cereals, and legumes.

Phytoplasmas are one of the diseases we are continually on the lookout for. The mystery surrounding their diversity is being disentangled with DNA and the Dept of AG is routinely running sequences of suspect material we find, but our knowledge is still in its infancy. These bacteria are insect-borne and appear to jump host species very easily, causing massive stunting and distorted growth. If you are looking for information on these pathogens it is best not to limit your search too tightly to particular hosts because they switch easily. These images are not what I would typically expect of phytoplasmas."

Phytoplasma Disease

Until I received the query from Kate regarding *Acacia cyclops*, I had never heard of Phytoplasma (and I suspect this would apply to some other members of our Study Group)!

Hence I don't claim any expertise on this topic, but I did read two papers from which I gleaned some insight, as follows:

In 2007, a paper was published in the Journal of the Royal Society of Western Australia, titled Detection of phytoplasma in *Allocasuarina fraseriana* and *Acacia saligna* in Kings Park. In this case, the symptoms on the affected plants included bunched growth, witches' broom and 'little leaf'. The process of identification of phytoplasma in these plants involved the extraction of DNA from leaf and root samples, and analysis of this DNA confirmed the presence of phytoplasma.

It was noted in the paper that this was believed to be the first report of phytoplasma affecting casuarina and acacia trees in

WA, although there had been previous reports of phytoplasma disease in WA in a range of cultivated and native plants.

It was stated that insects that have been shown to be vectors of phytoplasma associated disease and which are also present in WA include leafhoppers, plant hoppers and psyllids.

The second paper that I read was one that Kate forwarded to me, titled Phytoplasmas – The “Crouching Tiger” Threat of Australian Plant Pathology (published in 2017 in *Frontiers in Plant Science*). One of the aims of this review was stated as being to raise awareness of the importance of this group of plant pathogens. It was suggested that the threat they pose to agricultural, ornamental and natural vegetation is not fully appreciated, making them worthy of the “crouching tiger” description.

It was noted that there are 33 groups of phytoplasmas reported internationally, of which only 6 groups have been recorded in Australia – hence highlighting the need for ongoing biosecurity measures to prevent the introduction of additional pathogen groups.

More on Acacia species as weeds

by Neil Marriott

I was most impressed with Geoff Carr’s excellent article in the last newsletter on Acacias as weeds. This has long been a bugbear of mine, despite the fact that I dearly love our wattles! What really annoys me is that despite the now wide knowledge amongst government authorities that common plants like Cootamundra Wattle *Acacia baileyana*, Early Black Wattle *Acacia decurrens*, Flinders Range Wattle *Acacia iteaphylla* and Sallow Wattle *Acacia longifolia* are declared environmental weeds, nothing is done to eradicate them, even when in prominent locations such as our highways and byways and state and national parks!!

Way back in the 1970’s and 1980’s the Stawell Field Naturalist Club warned Parks Victoria that *Acacia longifolia* did not belong in the Grampians and had the potential to become a weed in the park. This suggestion was scoffed at and we were told that this acacia was in fact a disjunct western population. We now know that they were planted, along with *Hakea laurina*, *Hakea drupacea* etc by the Forest Commission to “beautify” the Grampians before it became a National Park in 1984. I can remember, as a boy in the 1960’s seeing these exotic natives planted on roadside cuttings on the Halls Gap-Dunkeld Rd. Thank goodness the Hakeas did not also go feral.

Today, *Acacia longifolia* is close to totally out of control in the Park, particularly around Roses Gap, where it has developed into impenetrable thickets in many areas. This part of the park used to be open woodland with a rich groundflora of native shrubs and herbs, dominated by beautiful displays of *Micromyrtus ciliatus*. Today, the groundflora is mostly all gone where the thickets have developed, destroyed by the dense overstorey that totally excludes the survival of any other

plants. This has been exacerbated by numerous wildfires in this area; it seems that the intense heat of the resultant fires through these dense Sallow Wattle thickets kills practically everything else, and then up pops another, even denser outbreak of this insidious wattle!

Many tens of thousands of dollars and thousands of hours of backbreaking work have been carried out in recent years to try and get on top of the acacia, however it is now a major uphill battle, and I don’t like their chances but so hope that I am wrong!! Fortunately, when I was the Regional Manager of Trust for Nature for the Grampians region, I encouraged the Trust to make war on Sallow Wattle, and this was taken up with gusto by all the covenanters around the Grampians, and in particular in the Wartook valley. Most of these private properties are now completely free of this weed, so it can be done!

Another serious wattle outbreak in the west of Victoria is in Trawalla State Forest adjoining the Western Highway just east of Beaufort. Here is an extensive colony of Early Black Wattle *Acacia decurrens*, again, almost certainly planted by the Forest Commission for beautification back in the 1960’s. Numerous letters to the Department of Environment and to VicRoads, where the worst outbreak now occurs along the edges of the Western Highway have all fallen on deaf ears! This state forest protects numerous rare and endangered plants, including the only occurrence of *Ac aspera* subsp *parviceps* for this region. This is also the only known location away from its type location in and around the Brisbane Ranges, many kilometres from here!

Geoff mentions the serious effects of fire on the sudden explosion and expansion of many non-indigenous wattle species, and we experienced this here when a wildfire ran through our property and former member Ian Mitchell’s (now deceased) property over the road from our place. *Acacia brachybotrya* and *Ac euthycarpa* germinated everywhere, including plants popping up on our place, hundreds of metres from Ian’s original plants. More amazing was a single plant of *Acacia binervia* that popped up in one of our gardens at least 1 km south of Ian’s plants!!

Another plant that has shown serious weed potential is the beautiful *Acacia boormanii* subsp *gibba* named in honour of our own wattle champion Alan Gibb!! This is really disappointing for me as I have great respect for Alan and his Acacia is a rare beauty. But sadly Rodger Elliot pointed out to me a number of years ago, when he was sourcing seed for the APS Maroondah Wattle Seminar, that *Acacia boormanii* has a serious history of being invasive, and subspecies *gibba* is no exception. For us, *Acacia boormanii* subsp *gibba* doesn’t even need a fire to germinate – we regularly pull up self-sown seedlings that pop up every year often many metres away from the plant in our garden. Sorry Alan!!

More on Geoff Carr's Article on Weeds

Jenny Simons (Burradoo, NSW) commented as follows

“Such an interesting article. Thanks for arranging to publish it.”

Victoria Tanner (Canberra, ACT) notes that in Canberra there are much more serious weeds than wattles. She suggests that we should be focussing on the continuing import and widespread selling of exotics which have become and are serious weeds such as gazania, African Daisy, numerous bulbs, pines, numerous deciduous trees, briar rose and exotic grasses. She also notes that other native species can spread as weeds. For example, in a reserve near where she lives, many grevilleas have spread from houses into the reserve on a number of sides, and she recalls seeing hakeas as a weed on Norfolk Island in the National Park.

Victoria acknowledges the severe problem of some wattles (such as *Acacia longifolia* in the Grampians) but comments that this wattle provides food for native animals including possums – and she actually bought a few herself for the possums as they have nowhere to go to feed due to the numerous dogs and traffic. She notes that *A. longifolia* is not a weed in Canberra (as yet).

Victoria also comments that it is not only through cultivation that plants can become weedy. Plants (such as brachychiton and many exotics) can grow in new places or not in such great numbers due to being spread by birds. Due to the increase in currawongs in Canberra, many exotics and some natives are now growing where they never used to grow. She suggests that the only way to stop this would be to stop the currawongs but birds seem to be 'spreading' to new areas where they previously did not live (eg crested pigeon, rainbow lorikeet, corella).

In his paper, Geoff Carr proposed that the Acacia Study Group should remove from our Seed Bank list 43 species that are naturalised in Victoria. Victoria comments that, as a Study Group, it is natural that we should maintain as full a seedbank as is possible for the numerous reasons that seeds may be requested. For example, we do receive some seed requests for purposes such as research. In addition, our Study Group has an Australia wide membership, and there are some obvious issues in approaching the issue from a narrow Victorian perspective – what is classified as a weed in Victoria will not necessarily be a weed across the whole of Australia.

Geoff's paper prompted us to review the seed requests that we have had from Study Group members in the last few years.

This indicated that members are generally very selective in the species requested.

For example, for the two worst weedy species in Victoria, *A. longifolia* ssp *longifolia* and *A. longifolia* ssp *sophorae* we have had no requests for seed. In fact, of the ten worse weedy species, we have only had requests for two of them, being *Acacia baileyana* (two requests, both from outside Victoria) and *A. saligna* (one request, from Victoria).

From the larger list of 44 weedy species naturalised in Victoria (as listed in Geoff's paper), the two most frequently requested from the Seed Bank have been *Acacia pendula* and *Acacia spectabilis*.

In relation to *A. pendula*, I note that this is a species that I have seen growing as a street tree in Melbourne, looking rather magnificent, and I think it would be sad if our Study Group were to discourage the use of this species in this manner, as it would presumably be replaced by more exotic trees.

In relation to *A. spectabilis*, I would comment that I was recently at the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne where there is a stand of these plants. They were coming into flower and looking spectacular. Whilst I was there a couple of visitors to the Gardens were also admiring them. I suspect people who were not in the slightest native plants people. I don't think that we should lose an opportunity to impress people like this with the beauty of our Australian flora, by not being willing to grow these types of plants in our gardens.

Acacia covenyi – Bendethera Wattle – Blue Bush by Victoria Tanner

Acacia covenyi grows in my own garden (clay) and it is not an uncommon acacia found in both home gardens and native plant nurseries. However, I was not previously aware of its restricted home range until I recently joined a 4WD/camping trip through Deua National Park (Eurobodalla region, NSW). Travelling from Moruya on the south coast via the well-known Bendethera Fire Trail, the aim of the weekend was to visit two caves and camp overnight in the park. To reach Bendethera Cave, a pleasant 4km walk is required with a short climb to the hillside entrance. The cave itself is worth seeing but finding *A. covenyi* in its natural habitat was a surprising and interesting bonus. At first singular shrubs appeared along the path about 3kms in to the walk, then as we climbed higher, the grey-green acacia was clearly visible growing as small trees in large areas (often described by some as thickets), over the surrounding hillsides. Unfortunately, *A. covenyi* was not in flower, which usually occurs in late winter-spring.

The range of *A. covenyi* is said to be restricted in N.S.W. to the eastern hills of the Great Divide from the Deua River to near Kybean. In this area, it grows mainly on limestone slopes and ridges, but also sometimes on quartzite¹. However, this acacia seems to be able to grow in a variety of soils in home gardens including clay, but perhaps its growth could be promoted by growing it in less acidic/alkaline soils or by the use of soil additives to reduce acidity?



Acacia covenyi

Photo Victoria Tanner



Acacia covenyi

Photo Victoria Tanner

Warren and Gloria Sheather's article for ANPS (NSW)² describes *A. covenyi* as a shrub growing to 4m, with globular flower clusters (5-8 individual blooms in each cluster) while World Wide Wattle (website) describes a shrub or tree (1.5m – 7.5m)³. Some home gardeners prune the shrub to a "lollipop shape" and plants have also been used to form a hedge. In Warren and Gloria's article, they warn of collecting seed from cultivated garden plants as they report a close affinity to *A. vestita* and *A. cultriformis*. *A. covenyi* is reported to be closely related to *A. prominens* and *A. barringtonensis* with gland morphology said to be an important distinguishing feature (*Telopea* 1: 436, pl. 20, 1980, M.D.Tindale).

References:

- 1 https://apps.lucidcentral.org/wattle/text/entities/acacia_covenyi.htm (B R Maslin)

- 2 [https://austplants.com.au/Acacia-covenyi-Blue-Bush-\(1\)/](https://austplants.com.au/Acacia-covenyi-Blue-Bush-(1)/) (Warren and Gloria Sheather)

- 3 <http://worldwidewattle.com/speciesgallery/covenyi.php>

August Wattle Outing to Gurulmundi and Barakula Forestrys by Len Hubbard

Flowering (F) Budded (B)

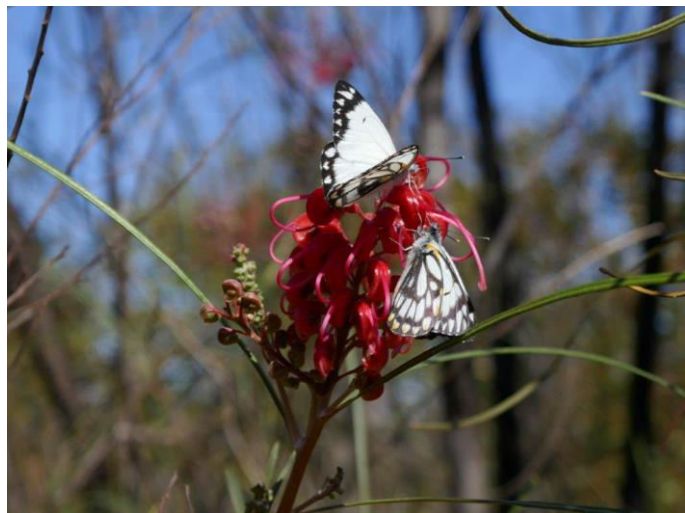
Sunday the 11th August Joan and myself travelled to Miles and enjoyed many *Acacia harpophylla* (F) along the roadsides. North to Kowguran with *Acacia spectabilis* (F) well in moister areas. West to Myrtle Grove with *Acacia blakei* subsp. *blakei* (F) and *Acacia semilunata* (F) dominate here. We turn into Dunns Road and are met with many droughty cattle at the Drillham gate. At the first large gully many *Acacia neriifolia* were in full flower, with the sun behind them, was a photographer's delight. Our first heath area is covered with *Micromyrtus sessilis* (F), all the white looks like the area is covered in a light sprinkling of snow. *Acacia curranii* (F) has its home here and looks fresh and healthy despite the dry conditions. *Calytrix tetragona* (F) has produced a few white flowers. Climbing up on to the shallow soil covered rocky areas *Acacia triptera* (F) and *Hakea purpurea* (F). The yellow and red areas are covered with a new hatching of the caper white butterfly. What a display. A few *Micromyrtus carinata* nearby were struggling to show their yellow flowers. Further along in some deeper moister soil to the west, *Calytrix gurulmundensis* (F) was at the top of its game. The flickering sea of caper whites amongst the yellow was a sight to behold. *Acacia buxifolia* subsp. *pubiflora* (F) also calls this area home. Round the corner and a change of colour. *Grevillea longistyla* (F) stands proudly in the table drain, crowned with the caper whites. *Acacia juncifolia* subsp. *juncifolia* (F) and *Acacia julifera* subsp. *julifera* has just finished flowering but a few bright yellow tails remain. Just short of Gilgulgul township a lone *Hakea lorea* (F) entertains the caper whites.



Acacia curranii

Photo Len Hubbard

Travelling down the Pelham Road *Acacia crassa* subsp. *crassa* (F) and *Acacia ixiophylla* (F) are struggling in the dry conditions along the roadsides. East of the Pelham bridge in the deep moist sand *Acacia burbridgeae* (F) provides a sea of yellow balls along with a few early *Acacia caroleae* deep yellow tails. *Acacia johnsonii* (B) is waiting in the wings. A couple of *Acacia leocalyx* subsp. *leocalyx* (F) are taking advantage of the remaining water in Horse Creek. Overall we found 15 acacias flowering. A great result for such a dry time.



Caper White Butterflies on *Grevillea longistyla*
Photo Len Hubbard

Acacias in The News

Acacia melanoxylon (Blackwood) is normally considered as being a fairly hardy and long-lived species in Victoria, but a report in the Ballarat Courier newspaper (Nature Notes, by Roger Thomas, 17 May 2019) indicates that it is struggling in the Ballarat area. The report states:

“The dry summer has taken its toll on various plants, including our most common wattle, the blackwood.

Young blackwoods in many places have been turning yellow for a couple of months, apparently as a result of dryness.

Some have died, but others have not quite reached that stage, although the green colour is going from their leaves.

It remains to be seen whether or not the recent rain will be able to rejuvenate them, or whether they are too far gone.

Most of the affected young trees appear to be less than 10 years old. Older greener blackwoods have produced few buds so far. The buds would normally be clearly visible by now.

It's too late for more buds to form, so we can expect a reduced flowering of blackwoods this spring. This follows a poor year for blackwood flowers last year.

Silver banksias – never common anywhere these days – have suffered from dryness too, with dead specimens prominent in the relatively few places where banksias grow naturally.”

The May 2019 Newsletter of the Wildflower Society of Western Australia includes a report that a plant not seen for nearly 90 years and presumed extinct, *Acacia prismifolia*, has been rediscovered.

The plant was found by botanist Libby Sandiford on the side of a busy highway in Cranbrook, 90 kilometres north of Albany, WA.

Each year the Wattle Day Association presents the Golden Wattle Award in recognition of a person(s) who has brought Gold to Australia through their actions or achievements. The joint winners of the 2019 Award were tennis greats Ashleigh Barty and Dylan Alcott. Ash Barty won this year's French Open and became the world's No. 1 tennis player, and Dylan Alcott won the inaugural 2019 Wimbledon Quad Wheelchair Singles title, having earlier won the French and Australian Open titles.

This is the ninth year in which this Award has been made, the first winner in 2011 having been the cyclist Cadel Evans.

In 2014, an Acacia Conference was held in Mekelle, Ethiopia (where one of the objectives was to exchange knowledge and to share experiences on the contribution of Australian Acacia species to the efforts underway to improve food and feed security and adapt to the changing climate). One species that was particularly reviewed at the Conference was *Acacia saligna*.

A complete compilation of the papers presented at this Conference is available. The full proceedings can be downloaded at:

<http://acaciatreeproject.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/2.07-Proc-Intl-Acacia-Conf-Ethiopia-2014.pdf>

Seed Bank

A list of species in our Seed Bank appeared in our Study Group Newsletter No. 143 (December 2018).

Although we do purchase some seed from commercial sources, we also rely upon donations of seed. If you are able to help with any seed donations they would be very welcome (we would ask you to post any donations to Bill Aitchison, who will forward them on to our Seed Bank Curator, Victoria Tanner). It also helps enormously if you are able to clean, sort

and label the seed correctly. Also, we would like to have provenance information for all seed in the seed bank – so if you donate any seed, could you also provide any information you have in relation to provenance.
Our thanks to Peter Cox for a recent donation of seed.

The procedure for requesting seed from the Seed Bank is as follows. Study Group members are entitled to lodge up to 3 orders per member per year, with 10 packets maximum in each order (negotiable). There is a charge of \$4 in relation to each order, to cover the cost of a padded post bag and postage. The \$4 may be paid in stamps or by direct credit to our Group's bank account. Requests for seed may be lodged in either of the following ways:

1. By email to our Study Group email address, acaciastudygroup@gmail.com (emails to this address go directly to both Victoria and Bill Aitchison). If you make a request by email, you will also need to make the necessary payment by one of the above methods. If you are paying by stamps, these should be mailed to Bill Aitchison, 13 Conos Court, Donvale, Vic 3111
2. By mail (enclosing stamps if required). These requests should be posted to Bill Aitchison (address as in the previous paragraph). Bill will then advise Victoria of the request.

We would like to maintain some data on your results in propagating seed from the Seed Bank. We would therefore ask if you could provide a report on your results, recording information on species, number of seeds sown, number germinated and days after sowing.

Study Group Membership

Acacia Study Group membership for 2019/20 is as follows:

- \$7 (newsletter sent by email)**
- \$10 (hardcopy of newsletter posted in Australia)**
- \$20 (hardcopy of newsletter posted overseas)**

**Subscriptions may be sent to:
Bill Aitchison, 13 Conos Court, Donvale, Victoria 3111**

**Subscriptions may also be paid directly to our Account at the Bendigo Bank. Account details are:
Account Name: ASGAP Acacia Study Group
BSB: 633-000
Account Number: 130786973**

If you pay directly to the Bank Account, please advise us by email (acaciastudygroup@gmail.com).