FERN SOCIETY OF VICTORIA

NEWSLETTER

Volume 32, Number 5
September/October 2010

Fern Society of Victoria Inc.

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Objectives of the Fern Society of Victoria

To bring together persons interested in ferns and allied plants
To promote the gathering and dissemination of information about ferns
To stimulate public interest in ferns
To promote the conservation of ferns and their habitats

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Subscriptions

Single	$17.00
Pensioner/student	$14.00
Family	$19.00
Pensioner family	$16.00
Overseas	$25.00 (overseas subscription payments by international bank cheque in $Aus, by airmail please)

Subscriptions fall due on 1 July each year

Meeting venues

The Kevin Heinze Garden Centre, 39 Wetherby Road, Doncaster [Melway 47 H1]
Other meetings as advertised in this Newsletter

Timetable for evening general meetings

7:30 Pre-meeting activities – sale of ferns, spore, books, merchandise and special effort tickets. Also library loans and lots of conversation.
8:00 General meeting
8:15 Workshops and demonstrations
9:15 Fern identification and pathology, special effort draw
9:45 Workshops and demonstrations
10:00 Close

Next Meeting - Badger Weir Park, Healesville

Sunday 19 September 2010

Plan to arrive from 11 am at Badger Weir Park, Healesvillefor self-catered lunch, guided walk at 1 pm.

An insert with maps and fern notes is provided with this newsletter, and the same information is printed on pages 12-13.

[NB the Sunday excursion will take the place of the normal Thursday meeting in September, so there will be NO meeting at the Kevin Heinze Garden Centre in September]

See page 14 for further details and for a calendar of events for the remainder of 2010.

Above: Tree ferns at the Forest Gallery, Museum Victoria, Carlton Gardens (photo: Robin Wilson)

Cover image: *Osmunda regalis* Permission granted to use under GFDL by Kurt Stueber. Source: www.biolib.de. Hand-colored engraving from Flora Batava (1844) reproduced under the terms of the GNU Free Documentation License, Version 1.3, the terms of which are provided at the link in this Newsletter on page 7.

President's Note

At our July meeting we enjoyed another very thoughtfully-prepared and educational illustrated talk by Terry Turney – his subject this time was 'The battle between animals and plants – (the eaters and the edible!) – the "animals" being very broadly defined, and the "plants" including lots of ferns, of course.

We had Michele Adler join us again at our August meeting, this time to explain in detail the accepted protocols for the preparation of herbarium specimen sheets and to advise on and demonstrate the practical aspects of collecting, drying, mounting and storing specimens. When she last spoke at an FSV meeting Michele was on the staff at Burnley Horticultural Campus of the University of Melbourne – she has now retired from that position, but still keeps closely in touch with Burnley. Our Committee is keenly interested in seeing the Society assemble a library of mounted specimens of ferns, and if this is to have optimal value the sheets should observe the accepted protocols, such that professional botanists would accept them as authoritative and reliable specimens of the species and their provenance.

Please don't forget the opportunity to publicise the FSV excursion to Badger Weir Park, Healesville on Sunday 19th September 2010 for our 'Discovering Victorian Ferns' walk (and do please come yourself if you are able). It's a great opportunity to assist non-members to learn about and to appreciate native ferns. Numbers of non-members have indicated the intention of attending, members of selected clubs and societies have received invitations, and there's a general invitation on the Royal Horticultural Society of Victoria website events list. We've included a flyer about the excursion in this Newsletter. Please see whether you can get it on to a Library or other public noticeboard, or hand it to someone who may have potential interest in coming along.

There'll be no meeting at Kevin Heinz Centre in September.

In October we will have a Fern Sales Night following the 2010 Annual General Meeting. All members are invited to consider nominating to Committee (there are several vacant positions – and the position of President is still open for nominations; I'd be happy to hand that over!)

In November, Ken Harris, Convenor of the Friends Group at the Morwell National Park, who is extremely well acquainted with the botany of that region, will talk at our meeting at the Kevin Heinz Centre.

Finally, our last activity of the year will, as usual, be the Christmas Lunch at KHC which we have scheduled for Sunday 5th December. Put the date in your diary to enjoy fun and fellowship there. Pick out something interesting for the 'Blind Auction'! Any volunteers to assist with arranging catering would be much appreciated – please contact Norma Hodges on 9878 9584.

Hope to see you at upcoming FSV activities.

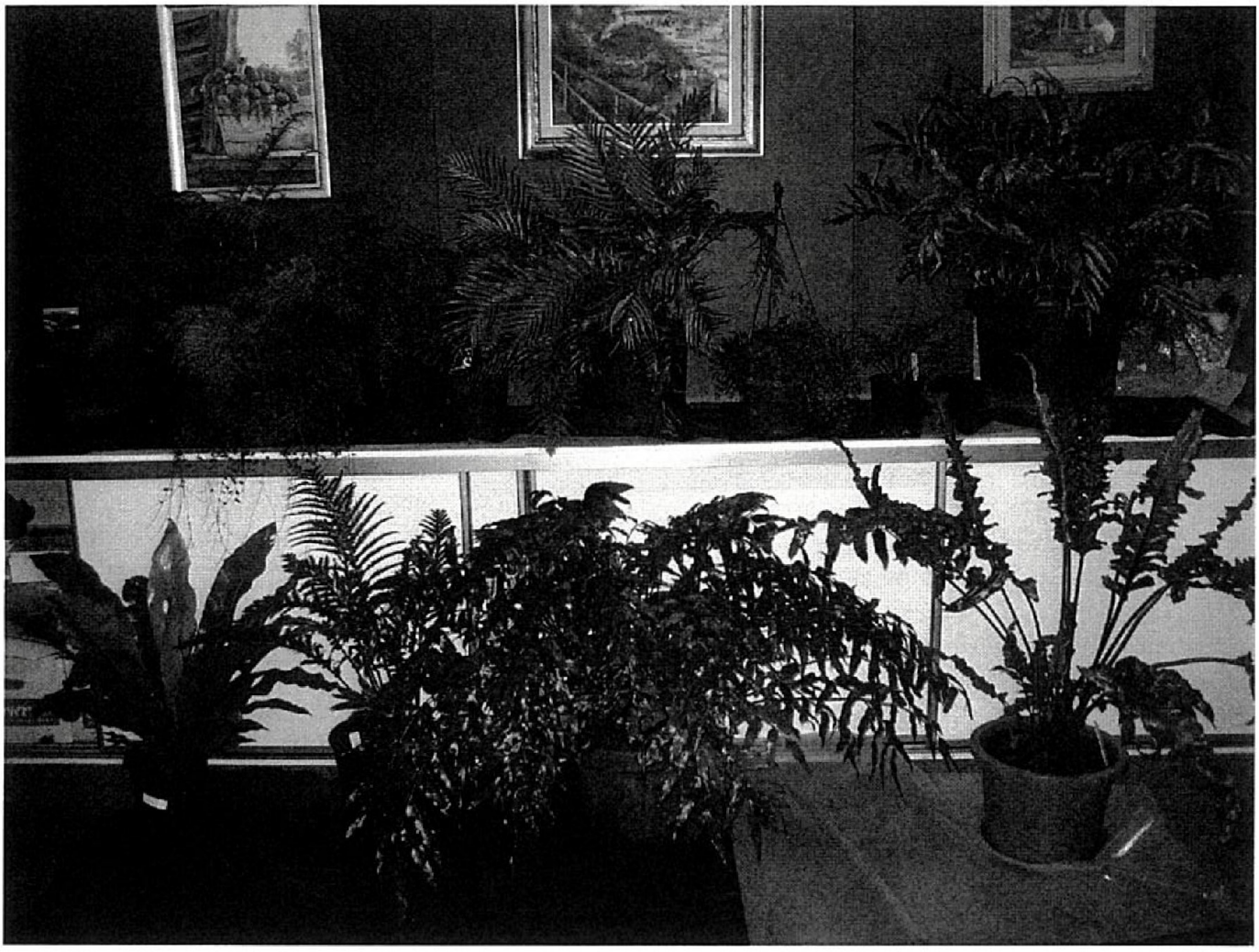
Barry Stagoll

Editor's Note

Just following on from our President's comment about the forthcoming October AGM, I trust all the budding editors out there among the FSV membership are bursting to nominate for the highly prized position of Editor of this newsletter.

I will be very glad to hand over if anyone would like to come forward and happy to help anyone get setup with the (free) page layout software that I have been using.

Robin Wilson



The August FSV meeting fern theme was "Ferns with pups". Exhibited ferns are illustrated above. Photo: Mirini Lang.

Fern Society at Bunnings

Don Fuller

Some Bunnings Stores have organised monthly gardening talks on a Wednesday morning in their DIY areas. The Bayswater Store asked the Fern Society if it would be prepared to talk at one of the sessions on Wednesday 23rd June. We agreed to do so and I agreed to do the presentation.

The format was for a talk of approximately 45 minutes followed by morning tea. There were no restrictions other than plants could not be sold. We were able to bring in any plants needed for the talk and were invited to draw on any Bunnings stock, both plants and goods, to use in the presentation. We were also able to distribute notes or Fern Society promotional material.

A group of 20 plus people, mainly seniors, appeared right on the 10.30 am start time and it was evident that they were regulars at these presentations and were keen gardening enthusiasts. The format of the presentation was as follows:

1. A brief outline of what is a fern.

2. Growing ferns from spore.

3. Discussion about and showing some ferns that can be easily grown in Melbourne (outdoor and protected area).

4. Some comments on the care of ferns.

The ferns on display were as follows.

- *Adiantum formosum*, *A. hispidulum*, *A. raddianum* cvs Fragrans, Gracillimum, Micropinnulum, Pacific Maid, Blue Moon, Variegated.

- *Asplenium bulbiferum*, *A. bulbiferum* x *surrogatum* (Island Beauty)

- *Blechnum gibbum*, *Davallia pixidata*, *Microsorum* sp.

- *Nephrolepis exaltata* cvs. Chantilly Gold, Roosveltii, Smithii.

- *Polydodium formosanum*, *Rumohra adiantiformis*.

- *Pteris cretica* cv Wilsonii, *P. umbrosa*.

There was considerable interest in the presentation, especially the section on growing ferns from spore and the many ferns shown which they had not seen before. There were many questions with the result that the presentation went over the hour and more questions were asked over morning tea, which incidentally was very substantial. The hardest question to answer was 'where can I buy some of these ferns?'

An observation - I often have cause to shop at Bunnings and usually have to seek to find a staff member to get information. However on this day, around morning tea time, I was amazed at the number of staff moving around the area.

In summary it was a useful exercise to promote ferns and the Society but because of the age of the group and the locality it is unlikely to add to our active membership.

'Extinct' fern rediscovered - *Anogramma ascensionis*

The following story was drawn to our attention by Terry Turney. The text and image is taken from the web page http://medlibrary.org/medwiki/Anogramma_ascensionis and are reproduced here under the terms of the GNU Free Documentation License, which includes the stipulation that this material cannot be redistributed without repeating the terms of the GNU Free Documentation License which can be found at http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html.

The Editor

Anogramma ascensionis (Ascension Island parsley fern) is a species of fern in the Pteridaceae family that is endemic to Ascension Island, a volcanic island in the South Atlantic Ocean. It is one of eight putative species in the *Anogramma* genus. It was thought to have become extinct due to habitat loss, until four plants were found on the island in 2010. Over 60 specimens were then successfully cultivated at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Even though it has been rediscovered, the fern is still officially listed as extinct by the International Union for Conservation of Nature while its conservation status is being reassessed.

The small fern has delicate yellow-green leaves which appear similar to small sprigs of parsley. It was first recorded in 1842 by an amateur botanist, Dr A.B. Curror, and then officially described and named by Joseph Dalton Hooker after a visit he made to the island in 1843. It is endemic to the steep slopes of Green Mountain on the island. Another specimen was recorded in 1889, with few or no reports of specimens again until 1958, when a British scientist collected one on the north slope of the mountain. Further searches were conducted in 1976, 1986 and 1995 but were unsuccessful, and in 2003 it was officially declared extinct.

There are ten species of plants endemic to Ascension Island, with seven of them still known to survive. The island lost much of its native habitat due to invasive animals and plants, beginning with goats introduced in the 16th century by Portugese explorers. Other non-native animals, including rabbits, sheep, donkeys, and rats—along with over 200 non-native plant species—have destroyed much of the original habitat and plants. The introduction of non-native plants and animals was hastened by Joseph Dalton Hooker himself, who advised the British government to import numerous species of trees, fruits, vegetables, and grasses, specifically proposing that plantations of large trees be planted on Green Mountain. Competition from invasive and non-native maidenhair fern (*Adiantum*) is believed by scientists to be partly responsible for the demise of *A. ascensionis*.

The fern was rediscovered during a routine plant survey being performed by a team from the Ascension Island Conservation Department. Because it was found growing in dry rock, on a very steep ridge, the four plants had to be watered and kept alive long enough to produce spores. Two of the plants produced spores before they died. After harvesting, the spores were quickly airlifted to Kew Gardens, where they were placed in a sterile environment to produce sporelings. Sixty new ferns were raised at Kew, along with more on Ascension Island. Since then, a small number of plants were discovered growing near the original four.

[References supporting this article can be found at the original web link: http://medlibrary.org/medwiki/Anogramma_ascensionis]

Mounting Fern Specimens

Notes by Mirini Lang based on a talk and demonstration by Michele Adler at the FSV meeting on 19 August 2010

Michele is a former staff member and lecturer at the University of Melbourne, Burnley Campus. She talked about the requirements for Herbarium Specimen Mounting of plants. Official herbaria require special storage facilities and carry out ongoing maintenance of their specimens (to prevent deterioration due to mould and insects, etc.). It was assumed that people collecting ferns and mounting specimens would probably not go to such lengths in caring for them. However, it is interesting to know what is involved in making plant specimens last for hundreds of years.

Collecting Specimens

Consider the following issues:

It is important to collect a representative sample of the plant (with identifying features), including roots/rhizomes and flowers/seeds/spores if possible. In the cases of ferns, if the plant is very large then take part of the frond showing its attachment at the primary rachis.

The specimen is allowed to be bent to fit on to an A3 page.

Select a clean, disease free and relatively dry specimen.

Note the locality at which the plant was collected (the more precision the better - GPS coordinates preferred, or at least a sufficiently specific description so that the plant can be found again if needed. Include description of the habitat if found in the wild and of the fronds, particularly if it is large and only a small sample was collected. Also note collector's name, date collected.

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Discovering Victorian Ferns

Sunday 19 September 2010

Badger Weir Park - Healesville

Hosted by - *Fern Society of Victoria Inc.*

http://home.vicnet.net.au/~fernsvic/

Non-members welcome (no charge)

Arrival time: from 11.00am

Meet for lunch (self-catered) in the picnic area (FSV meeting place will be indicated with a banner). Bring a chair – onsite seating limited

Guided Walk to commence: 1pm - Duration around 2 hours

The Park is rich in ferns. On a FSV visit in 1996 28 distinct indigenous species were noted. All but 2 of these were readily found during a later visit made in 2005 – the inability to locate the other species was put down to parts of the Park having been scoured by very heavy rains a few weeks earlier.

Most of the species in the Park can be found along the (mostly-elevated) vehicle track leading to the Slip Track. The greater proportion of the remaining species occur along the Slip Track, whilst a few appear to be confined to the Stringybark Track and the walk alongside the Coranderk aqueduct to the Weir (park map is on next page).

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The species represented include

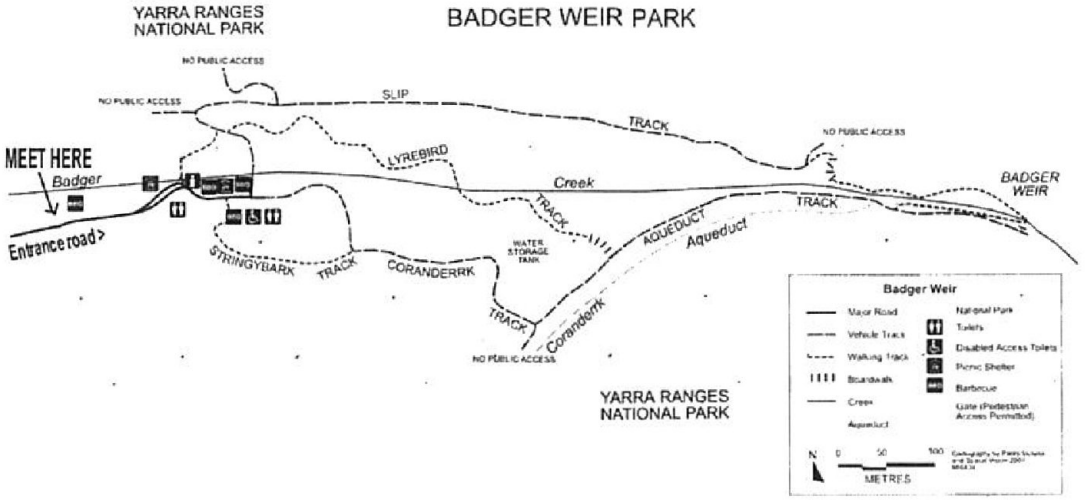
- **Tree ferns - 3 types** - *Dicksonia antarctica* (Soft Tree-fern), *Cyathea australis* (Rough Tree-fern) & *C. cunninghamii* (Slender Tree-fern)
- **Ground ferns - 18 types which usually grow terrestrially** - *Adiantum aethiopicum* (Common Maidenhair), *Asplenium bulbiferum ssp gracillimum* (Mother Spleenwort), *Blechnum cartilagineum** (Gristle Fern), *B. chambersii* (Lance Water-fern), *B. fluviatile* (Ray Water-fern), *B. nudum** (Fishbone Water-fern), *B. minus** (Soft Water-fern), *B. patersonii* (Strap Water-fern), *B wattsii* (Hard Water-fern), *Calochlaena dubia* (False Bracken), *Diplazium australe** (Austral Lady-fern), *Histiopteris incisa* (Bat's Wing Fern), *Hypolepis muelleri* (Harsh Ground-fern), *H. rugosula* (Ruddy Ground-fern), *Lastreopsis acuminata* (Shiny Shield-fern), *Polystichum proliferum* (Mother Shield-fern), *Pteridium esculentum* (Common Bracken), *Todea barbara** (Austral King-fern)

  * *these develop a caudex (trunk) as they become older and are therefore alternatively described as (smaller) tree ferns.*

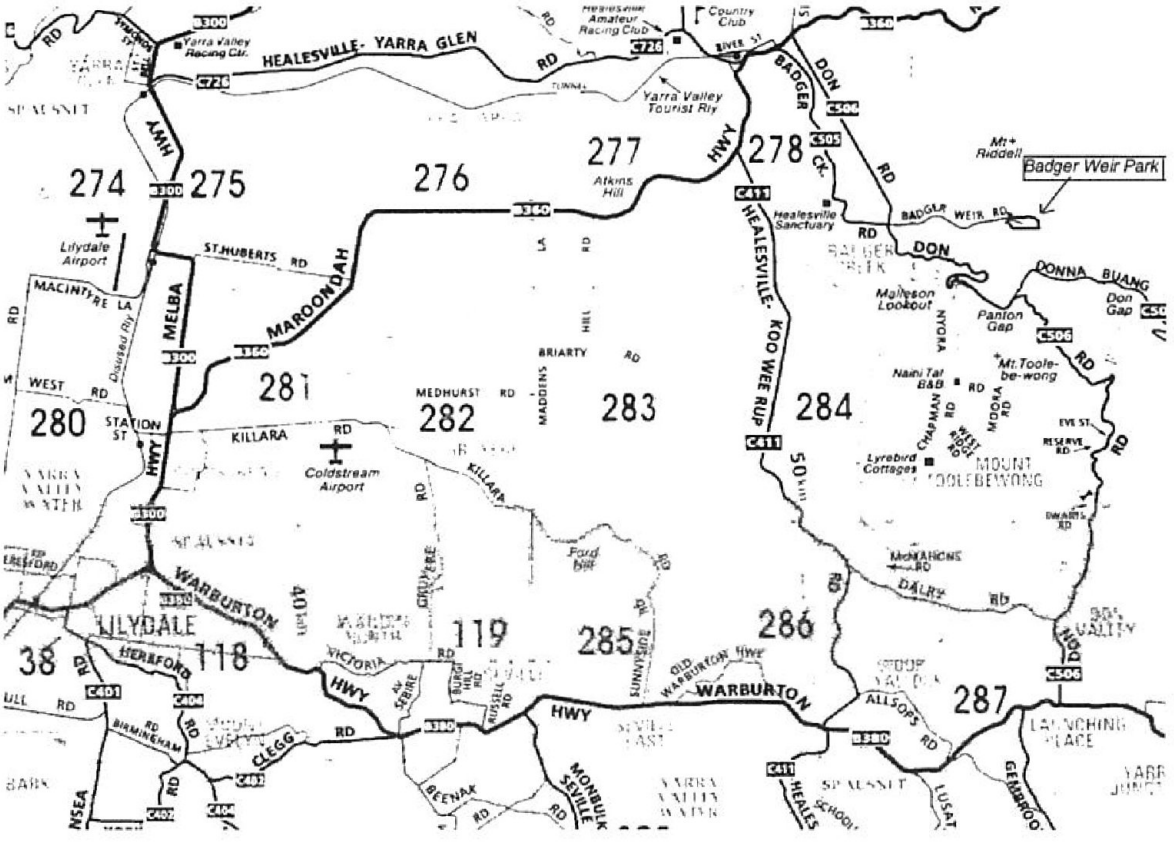
- **Epiphytic ferns - 7 types which grow exclusively or typically on other plants, especially frequenting tree fern trunks** - *Grammitis billiardieri* (Finger fern), *Hymenophyllum australe* (Austral Filmy-fern), *H. flabellatum* (Shiny Filmy-fern), *Microsorum pustulatum ssp pustulatum* (Kangaroo Fern), *Polyphlebium venosum* (Veined Bristle-fern), *Rumohra adiantiformis* (Leathery Shield-Fern), *Tmesipteris billardieri* (Long Fork-fern)

Observation of these ferns demonstrates that some have very specific micro-climatic requirements if they are to thrive. For instance Filmy-ferns cannot survive without constant relatively high humidity and limited exposure to high light levels. The other epiphytic types also prefer humid situations, and some *Blechnum* species (in particular *chambersii, fluviatile* and *patersonii*) and *Cyathea cunninghamii* require continuously damp situations.

Although many of the ground ferns can successfully colonise slopes well away from the immediate vicinity of watercourses by producing offspring from spores germinating in wet periods, some have alternative mechanisms for doing so. A few produce juvenile plantlets which then root directly into the ground (examples being *Polystichum proliferum* and *Asplenium bulbiferum*). Others spread by extending stolons through the soil which bear new fronds (examples being *Adiantium aethiopicum, Blechnum cartilagineum, B. minus, B. nudum, Calochlaena, Histiopteris, Hypolepis* and *Pteridium*).



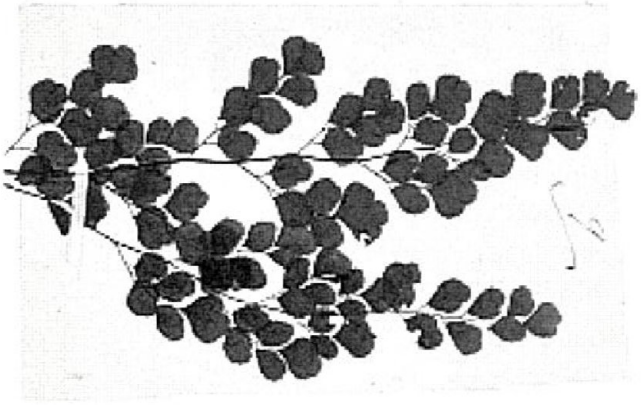
To get to the Park, travel to Healesville on Maroondah Highway, turn right onto Don Road (east of town), turn left onto Badger Weir Rd & follow to the end to reach the Park entrance (travel distance from town about 7km.)



Mounting Fern Specimens (continued from previous page)

Physically label the plant with its name and reference number to the above notes.

Useful items to have when collecting specimens include: tape measure, jeweller's tags (small card on a loop of cord) for labelling, note book, plant press - if pressing in the field -otherwise store (temporarily) loosely in plastic bags (care taken not to let the plant sweat).



A specimen of *Adiantum aethiopicum* collected near Mount Buffalo, Victoria, in 1881 (from the collections of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne).

Drying /Pressing Specimens

Factors to consider here include:

It's important for the specimen to dry quickly to ensure the best colour and prevent moulds or fungi growing. Press the plant as soon as possible after collecting. Pressed specimens do not have to look beautiful. Preserving the plant structure and identifying features is what is important. Hence a large plant may need to be folded to fit onto the page rather than cutting it smaller.

Sometimes plants may need to be spread across multiple pages.

A plant press needs to be light in weight and allow plenty of air circulation around the plant. When the plant is pressed, it only needs to be flattened, not squashed hard. The plant press Michele showed us was a simple one made out of two A3 size pieces of wooden lattice.

Sandwich each fern collected between two clean, dry sheets of newspaper, then place corrugated cardboard (unwaxed) in between each specimen in the press. Multiple pressing layers can be stored in the lattice press; the whole press being tied together with rope. The newspaper needs to be changed every day or two while the specimens are drying.

Mounting

In the Herbarium, specimens are attached with minimal glue (PVA) to the left side of the special herbarium paper (about A3 size) at least 1 cm from the edge. A label is put in the bottom right hand corner stating the plant's name (family, genus, species, cultivar), location (GPS coordinates and other description), collector's name, date, brief descriptive notes about the plant, and reference numbers linking the specimen's sheet to the more detailed notes sheet. The specimen sheet is then put in a paper folder, then into an envelope, then into a cardboard folder. The specimen is then briefly put in a freezer to kill any bugs. Long term storage is in a climate controlled room and fumigated once a year.

Clear plastic collection bags are sometimes used for very bulky items which cannot be

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Mounting Fern Specimens (continued from previous page)

attached to the specimen sheet eg. fruit or large seed pod. To keep the spores on the fern, they may be sprayed with a clear lacquer.

Collection of specimen sheets of ferns can be useful for identification of ferns as photographs cannot always show all features required, especially as these sometimes change over time as new technologies emerge.

Editor's Postscript

I would particularly like to thank Mirini for helping out those members (like me) who were unable to attend and hear the presentation on making herbarium specimens. One thing worth adding to the excellent notes above is to be sure that you have permission to take fern specimens. Even if only a frond is taken, normally permission of the landholder is required, or, if on public land, a collecting permit may be required. In Victoria this will probably require consulting the Department of Sustainability and Environment; the relevant web link is: http://www.dse.vic.gov.au [do a search for "permit collecting"].

The following web link at the National Herbarium of Victoria website also contains much useful information about preparing herbarium specimens: http://www.rbg.vic.gov.au/science/information-and-resources/national-herbarium-of-victoria

The Editor

Coming next month ...

I have had to hold over part 2 of Barry White's article on Australian Tree Ferns until the next Newsletter. Part 2 will treat the genus *Cyathea.*

The Editor

Discovering Victorian Ferns

Sunday 19 September 2010

Excursion to Badger Weir Park, Healesville

Hosted by - Fern Society of Victoria

http://home.vicnet.net.au/~fernsvic/

The following information is also provided as a separate flyer for distribution with this newsletter. The content is repeated here within the regular Newsletter pages so that the information is not lost. *The Editor*

Non-members welcome (no charge)

Arrival time: from 11.00am

Meet for lunch (self-catered) in the picnic area (FSV meeting place will be indicated with a banner). Bring a chair – onsite seating limited. Guided Walk to commence: 1pm - Duration around 2 hours. The Park is rich in ferns. On a FSV visit in 1996 28 distinct indigenous species were noted. All but 2 of these were readily found during a later visit made in 2005 – the inability to locate the other species was put down to parts of the Park having been scoured by very heavy rains a few weeks earlier.

Most of the species in the Park can be found along the (mostly-elevated) vehicle track leading to the Slip Track. The greater proportion of the remaining species occur along the Slip Track, whilst a few appear to be confined to the Stringybark Track and the walk alongside the Coranderk aqueduct to the Weir (park map is on next page).

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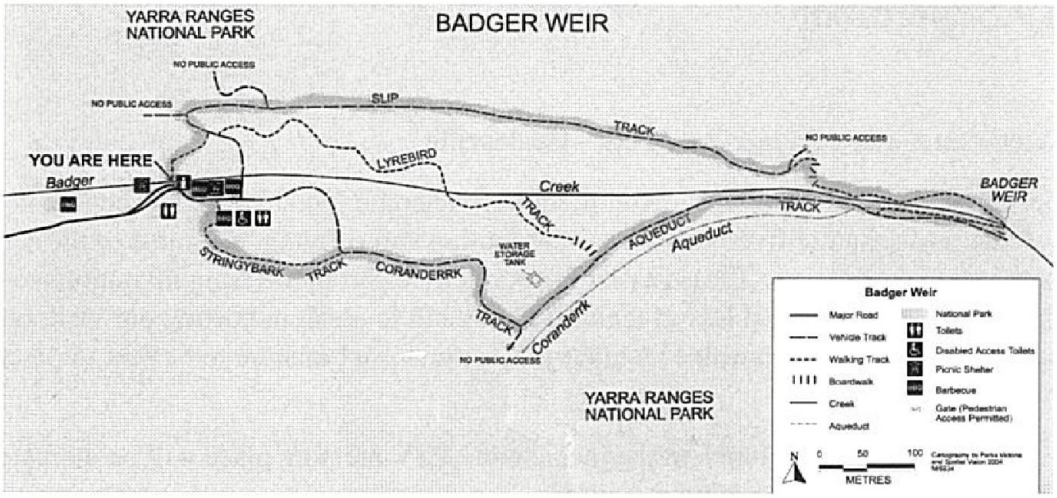
FSV Excursion to Badger Weir Park (continued)



The fern species represented at Badger Weir Park include:

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Calendar of activities September-December 2010

Sunday 19 September

Excursion

Discovering Victorian Ferns Badger Weir Park - Healesville

Hosted by - Fern Society of Victoria Inc. – Non-members welcome (no charge). A brochure is provided with this newsletter as a separate flyer for ease of distribution and copying, and most of the same information is repeated on page xx. Please assist the publicity effort by offering invitations to others who may be interested. We also need lots of members to attend to assist in hosting our visitors during the excursion. Please contact a Committee member to arrange for a brochure to be sent to potential visitors – either by mail or email.

Arrival time: from 11am. Meet for lunch in the picnic area (FSV meeting place will be indicated with our banner). Bring a chair – onsite seating is limited.

Guided Walk to commence: 1pm - Duration around 2 hours - 28 distinct indigenous fern species are recorded for the park. The walking tracks are not difficult.

Thursday 21 October 2010

Kevin Heinz Centre

Annual General Meeting and fern sales night

(no fern competition tonight)

Thursday 18 November 2010

Kevin Heinz Centre

Ken Harris: Plants of Morwell National Park

fern competition: Victorian fern.

Sunday 5 December 2010

Kevin Heinz Centre

Christmas Breakup lunch and blind auction (see President's Note page 4)

Fern Society of Victoria Spore Bank

Fern spore is free to members of the Fern Society of Victoria who donate spore. Otherwise the cost is members 20 cents per sample, non-members 50 cents, plus $1.00 to cover postage and handling. Available at meetings or by mail from Barry White, 34 Noble Way, Sunbury, Vic. 3429 Australia, Ph. (03) 9740 2724. There is no charge for spore for overseas members, however to cover postage two International Reply Coupons would be appreciated; or alternatively spore may be exchanged. International Reply Coupons can be purchased at most Post Offices. Overseas non-members may purchase spore at three packets for each International Reply Coupon, plus two coupons per order to cover postage and handling. Alternatively spore

Acrostichum speciosum 4/09
Adiantum formosum 3/08
Adiantum pedatum 2/07
Amphineuron opulentum 4/09
Anemia tomentosa 8/08
Arachniodes simplicior 1/09
Asplenium aethiopicum 12/07
Asplenium australasicum 1/08
Asplenium nidus 5/08
Asplenium nidus cv.5/08
Athyrium filix-femina (red stipe) 12/08
Athyrium niponicum 'Pictum' 2/08
Blechnum ambiguum 1/08
Blechnum braziliense 3/08
Blechnum chambersii 9/07
Blechnum fluviatile 9/07
Blechnum gregsonii 4/09
Blechnum spicant 7/08
Blechnum wataii 12/08
Chingia australis 12/08
Christella parasitica 4/09
Christella subpubescens12/08
Cibotium schiedei 1/07
Cyathea australis 4/08
Cyathea baileyana 12/08
Cyathea brownii /07
Cyathea cooperi 1/09
Cyathea cooperi (blue stipe) 1/07
Cyathea cooperi 'Brentwood' 3/08
Cyathea cunninghamii /07
Cyathea felina 10/08
Cyathea gleichenioides 2/07
Cyathea incisoserrata /07
Cyathea intermedia 2/07
Cyathea lunulata /07
Cyathea medullaris 11/08
Cyrtomium falcatum 'Butterfieldii' 3/08
Dicksonia antarctica 8/08
Dicksonia fibrosa 10/07
Diplazium australe 4/08
Doodia australe 12/08
Dryopteris affinis 'Cristata' /08
Dryopteris wallichiana 1/09
Hypolepis glandulifera 12/08
Hypolepis rugosula 2/07
Lastreopsis acuminata 12/08
Lastreopsis decomposita 6/09
Lastreopsis glabella 4/07
Lastreopsis marginans 1/07
Microsorum punctatum 1/09
Nepholepis falcata 3/08
Ophioglossum pendulum 7/08
Pellaea cordata
Pellaea sagittata 3/07
Pellaea viridis 1/08
Platycerium bifurcatum 'Hula Hands' 10/07
Platycerium bifurcatum 'Venosum' (Mt.Lewis) 10/07
Platycerium superbum 4/08
Platycerium veitchii 10/07
Pleisioneuron tuberculatus 12/08
Pneumatopteris sogerensis 12/08
Pneumatopteris costata 12/08
Polypodium formosum 10/07
Polystichum formosum 6/09
Polystichum proliferum 11/08
Polystichum retroso-paleacum /08
Polystichum setiferum 'Congestum' 12/07
Polystichum vestitum 2/07
Polystichum xiphophyllum 3/08
Pronephrium asperum 2/07
Pteris dentata 1/09
Pteris sp. (Nepal) 3/07
Pteris umbrosa /08
Revwattsii fragile 12/08
Rumohra adiantiformis(Cape form) 2/08
Sphaerostephanos heterocarpus 7/08
Stenochlaerna palustris 2/07
Thelypteris navarrensis 1/07

Thank you to the following spore donors: Marco Calvimonte, Brenda Girdlestone, Don Fuller, Warren Simpson Nada Sankowsky, Sheila Tiffin, Werner Neumeuller, Frank Hardung, Kylie Stocks, Neville Crawford, Wendy Johnston, Claire Shackel, Dot Camp, and Crosby Chase.

The above list was current as of June 2009. Updates can be found at http://home.vicnet.net.au/~fernsvic/Sporlist.html.

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