SGAP Cairns

NEWSLETTER 208 MARCH 2021

SGAP revisits Babinda Golf Course

Don Lawie

Our first excursion for the new year was a return to the green field of Babinda Golf Club. The height of the wet season was upon us and we looked for a site that was botanically interesting and had shelter in case of rain. Babinda, Australia's wettest town, is well set up for rainy days and we were welcomed by Golf Club members Peter and Patsy who are also SGAP members.

On our visit in [*Editors note: uncountable years ago*] we had to to dodge the golfers as they played a round but today the god of rain had performed an apotropaic release from their sysiphean task and we had the course to ourselves. About fifteen of us enjoyed a leisurely lunch and a discussion of plants on the specimen table. Stuart displayed a magnificent metre long stem of *Banksia robur* with two large inflorescences, a small piece of fruit- bearing Finger Lime and a flowering *Brachychiton vitifolius* stem from the dry country to our North. A cutting of Matchbox Bean *Entada phaseoloides* gave no indication that it could grow to an immense size, and an early inflorescence of Hollandaea Roaring Meg (now *Hollandaea riparia*) showed the beauty that is ever present in our Wet Tropics forests.

We set off for a stroll around the course. It was formerly a cane farm constructed on marshy land – as evidenced by the numerous large flowing drains. The fairways are delineated by rows of single trees, almost all of which are species native to the area, supplied by native plant enthusiasts including Nigel Tucker and Rob Jago. They were planted about thirty years ago and are a lesson in how rainforest trees will grow when not associated with the close growth of their natural habitat. Sizes were fairly uniform with heights of about 5 metres, trunks 30 to 50 centimetres and a spread of up to 10 metres.

Some notable species included the so-called Daintree Penda *Lindsayomyrtus racemoides* (which grows naturally at Harvey Creek, along with other rare species) which was dropping numerous small round fruit, *Ristantia pachysperma*, Sour Hardwood – restricted to a small area of the Wet Tropics and an important hardwood timber tree and suffering from an attack of myrtle rust. A notable specimen, not native to the Babinda area, was possibly *Austromullera valida*, from the high country of Mt Lewis, home of many rarities.

Cattleya, placed by Bob Giddins in a golf course bottlebrush.

The beautiful Babinda Golf Course is maintained by active volunteer members; it is unfair to name just one

but Bob Giddins, son of Bob Giddins Senior, a noted orchidologist in his day, has made an indelible mark on the course. Almost every tree of any size carries, like a triumphal crown, at least one orchid. Some are tropical exotics that Bob has chosen or their affinity to our climate but many are local natives that thrive in their new habitat. Pride of them all is a magnificent flowering specimen of *Dendrobium nindii*, a species that in nature is restricted to the rivers of Johnstone, Russell and Mulgrave in the super-wet tropics. At least half a dozen pseudobulbs of up to 3 or 4 metres in length proudly displayed heads of gorgeous lilac flowers in a show of nature rarely seen outside the natural habitat.

Nature is protective of her wonders: in return for the welcome shade of the trees we paid a price of hundreds of Green Tree Ants which toppled on us from the branches and bit and held on until removed. Only the most stoic of photographer can take an unshakey picture in such circumstances.

It was inevitable – a short rain shower chased all but the most dedicated of us back to the verandah for a last cuppa and chat before heading for home.

This unremarkable-looking water weed is Eleocharis retroflexa*, a State-listed Vulnerable species found only in a few lowland waterways to the north and south of Cairns. It seems this species needs sun and clean water to survive.*

Species list, compiled by Rob Jago and Stuart Worboys

* indicates a non-native species.

	Family		Species	Common Name
Eudicots				
	Anacardiaceae	*	*Mangifera indica*	*Mango*
	Apocynaceae		*Cerbera floribunda*	*Cassowary Plum*
	Araliaceae		*Heptapleurum actinophyllum*	*Umbrella Tree*
	Araliaceae		*Hydrocotyle oraria*	
	Asteraceae	*	*Emilia sonchifolia*	*Purple Emily*
	Clusiaceae		*Calophyllum inophyllum*	*Beauty Leaf*
	Euphorbiaceae		*Macaranga polyadenia*	
	Euphorbiaceae		*Macaranga tanarius*	
	Fabaceae		*Aeschynomene indica*	*Budda Pea*
	Fabaceae	*	*Inga*	*Ice Cream Bean*
	Fabaceae		*Macroptilium lathyroides*	
	Fabaceae		*Millettia pinnata var. pinnata*	
	Lamiaceae	*	*Tectona grandis*	*Teak*
	Linderniaceae		*Bonnaya antipoda*	

	Linderniaceae		*Torenia crustacea*	
	Loranthaceae		*Amyema conspicua subsp. conspicua*	*Mistletoe*
	Loranthaceae		*Dendrophthoe*	
	Melastomataceae	*	*Tristemma mauritiana*	
	Meliaceae		*Dysoxylum gaudichaudianum*	*Ivory Mahogany*
	Meliaceae		*Toona ciliata*	*Red Cedar*
	Moraceae		*Ficus virgata*	
	Myrtaceae	*	*Eugenia brasiliensis*	*Grumichama*
	Myrtaceae		*Lindsayomyrtus racemoides*	
	Myrtaceae		*Melaleuca leucadendra*	*Weeping Paperbark*
	Myrtaceae	*	*Psidium guajava*	*Guava*
	Myrtaceae		*Ristantia pachysperma*	
	Myrtaceae		*Syzygium angophoroides*	*Yarrabah Satinash*
	Myrtaceae		*Syzygium bamagense*	*Bamaga Satinash*
	Myrtaceae		*Syzygium forte subsp. forte*	*White Apple*
	Myrtaceae		*Syzygium hemilamprum*	
	Myrtaceae		*Syzygium tierneyanum*	*River Cherry*
	Myrtaceae		*Xanthostemon chrysanthus*	*Golden Penda*
	Oleaceae	*	*Fraxinus uhdei*	*Tropical Ash*
	Onagraceae		*Ludwigia hyssopifolia*	
	Onagraceae		*Ludwigia octovalvis*	
	Phyllanthaceae		*Glochidion sumatranum*	
	Plantaginaceae		*Limnophila aromatica*	
	Proteaceae		*Grevillea baileyana*	
	Proteaceae		*Helicia nortoniana*	
	Proteaceae		*Macadamia integrifolia*	*Macadamia*
	Proteaceae		*Neorites kevedianus*	*Fishtail Silky Oak*
	Rhizophoraceae		*Carallia brachiata*	*Carallia*
	Salicaceae		*Scolopia braunii*	
	Vitaceae		*Leea novoguineense*	*Bandicoot Berry*
Monocots				
	Araceae	*	*Syngonium*	*Arrowhead Vine*
	Arecaceae		*Archontophoenix alexandrae*	*Alexandra Palm*
	Arecaceae	*	*Cyrtostachys renda*	*Lipstick Palm*
	Cyperaceae		*Eleocharis retroflexa*	
	Heliconiaceae	*	*Heliconia psittacorum*	
	Orchidaceae		*Dendrobium discolor*	*Golden Orchid*
	Orchidaceae		*Dendrobium nindii*	
	Pontederiaceae		*Monochoria vaginalis*	
Ferns				
	Blechnaceae		*Stenochlaena palustris*	*Climbing Swamp Fern*
	Polypodiaceae		*Drynaria rigidula*	*Basket Fern*
	Polypodiaceae		*Playtcerium hillii*	
	Polypodiaceae		*Pyrrosia longifolia*	*Felt Fern*
	Ophioglossaceae		*Ophioderma pendula*	

Name change

A recent paper published in the prestigious American journal, Novon, has argued convincingly for the umbrella tree genus, *Schefflera*, to be split. The genus, previously known as a pan-tropical group comprising 600-800 species, is now only recognised in the Americas, whilst all Australian species have been transferred to the un-euphoniously named *Heptapleurum.* Our Australian species are now correctly known as *H. actinophyllum, H. bractescens,* and *H. ellipticum,*

Don and Pauline pose with an enormous ant-infested Blue Antler Orchid, the find of the day.

White Mountains National Park

Tina Marton

Late September last year I had the pleasure of visiting North-Western Queensland on a whirlwind trip with family. After hearing of botanical nirvana within White Mountains National Park and the timing of my passing meaning there was a chance of seeing wildflowers, a visit was set into the agenda.

In preparation for the trip I sought out literature which led me to contact the marvellous Keith Townsend to purchase one of his identification books. It was a pleasure to meet Keith in Townsville and to purchase another of his books to add to my collection. Much to my delight, while discussing what to anticipate at White Mountains, Keith quietly drew a map with key highlights. It proved very handy.

Once we reached White Mountains National Park and had our obligatory cup of tea and facility use at the roadside rest stop, we left the highway and ventured into the park. While I was warned our visit was very late in the season, and that the wildflowers were not great even at their peak this year due to the dry conditions, I was delighted with the blooms. The magenta flowers of *Calytrix microcoma* splashed the countryside with accents of bright yellow flowering *Persoonia falcata*. Sparsely dotted amongst this were specimens of *Lysicarpus angustifolius* (thanks also to Keith for assistance in identifying this).

Driving along the set tracks it became evident that there was a fascinating array of different plant assemblages that changed frequently throughout the National Park. The geology and landform of the area made for some captivating landscapes too. Following Keith's hand drawn map further into the park we arrived at a high point of the area. The vista over the rugged

landforms even without wildflowers in bloom could only be described as spectacular. The photo below does not do it justice.

The geology of the region played a large part in this. Layers of pebble conglomerate were predominantly white due to the heavy percentage of quartz and sericite material. The pebbles that cover patches of the park are rounded from being washed in an ancient riverbed or ocean estuary. As the landscape weathers they are slowly released once again. On our return from the lookout tracing our way back to the park exit we noticed a beautiful Black Orchid (*Cymbidium* sp.) in bloom. While our stop at White Mountains lasted only hours, it captivated my travellers and I. We tasted a little of what others had enthused about. Perhaps if conditions allow SGAP Cairns may be able to consider a field trip out this way in 2021. Better still would be to combine with the Townsville Branch. If so, count me in!

Lysicarpus angustifolius

Persoonia falcata

Vista over the rugged White Mountains.

Exploring the upland rainforest with Tablelands SGAP, November 2020

Don Lawie

We had a multi-activity day with our friends in Tablelands SGAP, meeting at the Hypipamee Crater Carpark. Excursions Officer Peter Radke briefed us on the day and mentioned that an early morning recce had revealed a fallen tree that blocked the proposed track, entailing a long uphill slog. A group member spoke up "I live not far away, I'll get my chain saw and clear the track." And He Did!

In the meantime we did the Crater Walk,always interesting and sort of an Uplands version of the Josephine Falls Track. The early part of the walk features a non-botanical but interesting item: an hydraulic ram, pumping away 24/7 to supply water to the amenities block. These rams are marvels of efficiency and endurance – I have admired this one (or its predecessors) for at least 50 years.

"The Crater" at Mt Hypipamee

The Crater itself is a great hole in the stony earth, blown out by the presssure of superheated steam, an awe inspiring reminder of the power of Nature. There has previously been a rich ore of small twig orchids on the shrubs near the Crater but it seemed that erosion had washed most away leaving just one little Tangle Orchid *Plectorrhiza tridentata* to re-occupy the area. Other orchids noted were a large *Cymbidium madidum* in mass flower – blooming late in the season with its orange-yellow flowers redolent with seductive perfume – several *Dendrobium agrostophyllum* were sighted, growing contentedly at the altitude of about 900 metres – they are an upland plant.

Back to the carpark for lunch, chats and discussion about a tree preparing to burst into flower – it was identified, with the help of Cooper's book, as Northern Sassafras *Doryphora aromatica* .

Cone of Agathis atropurpurea

Then to the adventure: we ground uphill past the neatly stacked pieces of fallen tree until Peter called a halt. Here were long lines of collapsed trenches and weapon pits – relics of World War Two where our Diggers trained for the real thing n New Guinea and Bougainville. Growing beside the trenches were numerous Purple Kauri Pines *Agathis atropurpurea* , tall columnar trees with a diameter of about 60 centimetres. The species name means "very dark purple" and the genus *Agathis* is Greek for "a ball of string", apparently a reference to the 'flowers'. Their timber, as with all members of the family Araucariaceae, works well and is quite valuable. The Purple Kauri is noted for its fruit which is pale green and the size of a cricket ball. By contrast the related Bunya Pine *Araucaria bidwlli* has fruit the size of a soccer ball. Purple Kauri was named by Bernie Hyland as recently as 1978; it occurs naturally on granite ridge lines from Mount Pieter Botte to Mount Bartle Frere from 750 to 1500metres altitude.

A last thrill of the day occurred as we were preparing to depart; somebody found a bower of the Tooth Billed Cat/Bower Bird. This bird harvests, with his sharp bill, selected leaves of the Brown Bollywood Tree *Neolitsea dealbata* and arranges them on a piece of cleared forest floor in what he decides is a pattern seductive to a prospective mate. He then mounts a perch and sings the songs of every bird of the forest. We were priviliged to find three of these bowers and we left quietly for the competing birds to resume their concert. It was an enrichng end to a day of making memories.

Upcoming events...

Cairns

Sunday 21 March. Annual General Meeting, 12 noon, 71 Archibald Street, Edmonton. Matt McIntosh's home.

Matt advises "there isn't a lot of room for parking out front. Therefore, if possible, people should car pool. " Otherwise, park on an adjoining street and walk.

Please bring something to throw on the barbecue, and a plate to share.

Tablelands

Wednesday 24 March. 7:30 pm, Tolga CWA Hall. Excursions the following Sunday.

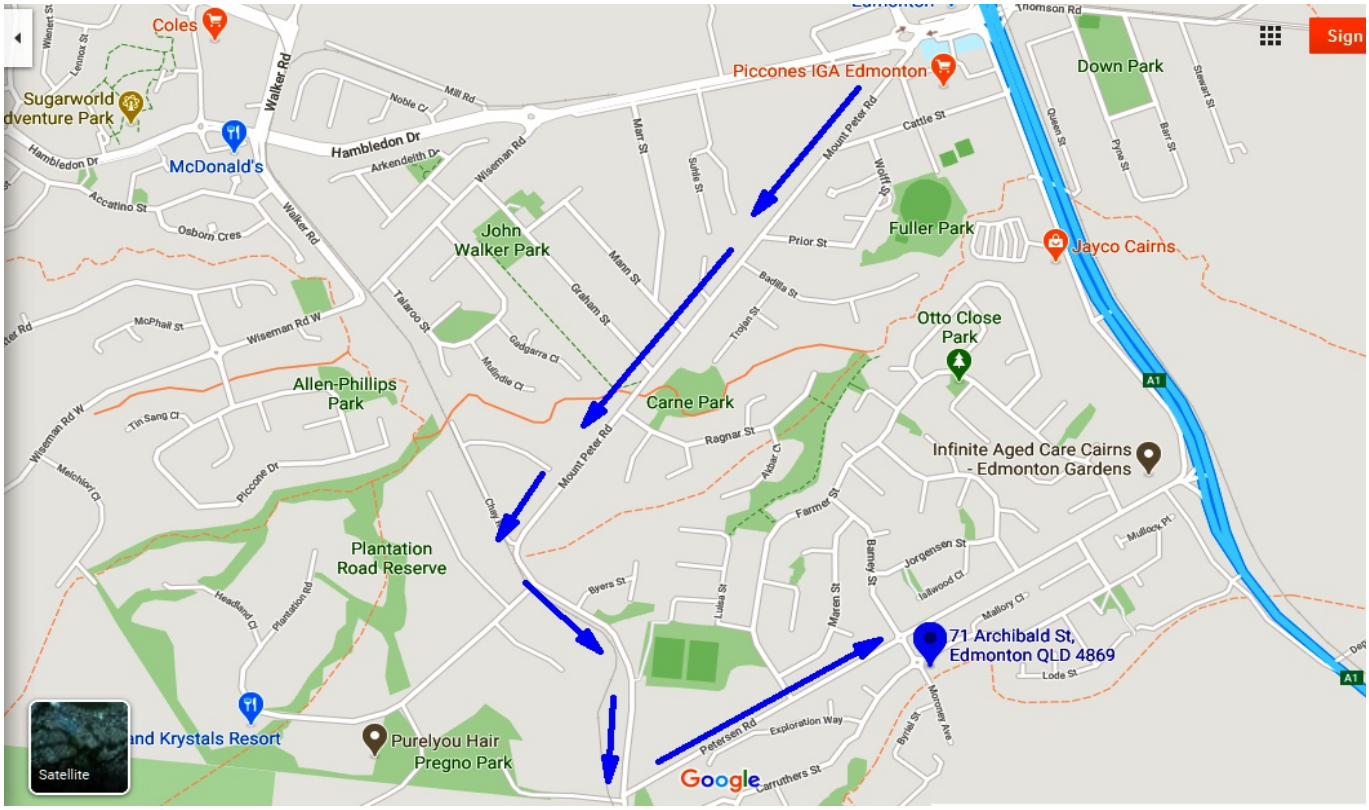
Sunday 28 March. Wolfram Camp. Meet at Dimbulah Council Park (with toilets) at 9:30 a.m.

Excursion officer: Peter Radke, 0418 719 748.

Townsville

Wednesday 10 March. Annual General Meeting, 7 p.m. Oonoonba Community Hall (Shannon Street Oonoonba).

Sunday 15 March. Excursion to the Palmetum. Meet at main entrance at 9 a.m.



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