



*Society for Growing Australian Plants
Cairns Branch*

NEWSLETTER

Newsletter No 231

June, 2023

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Excursion Sunday, 18 June, 2023.

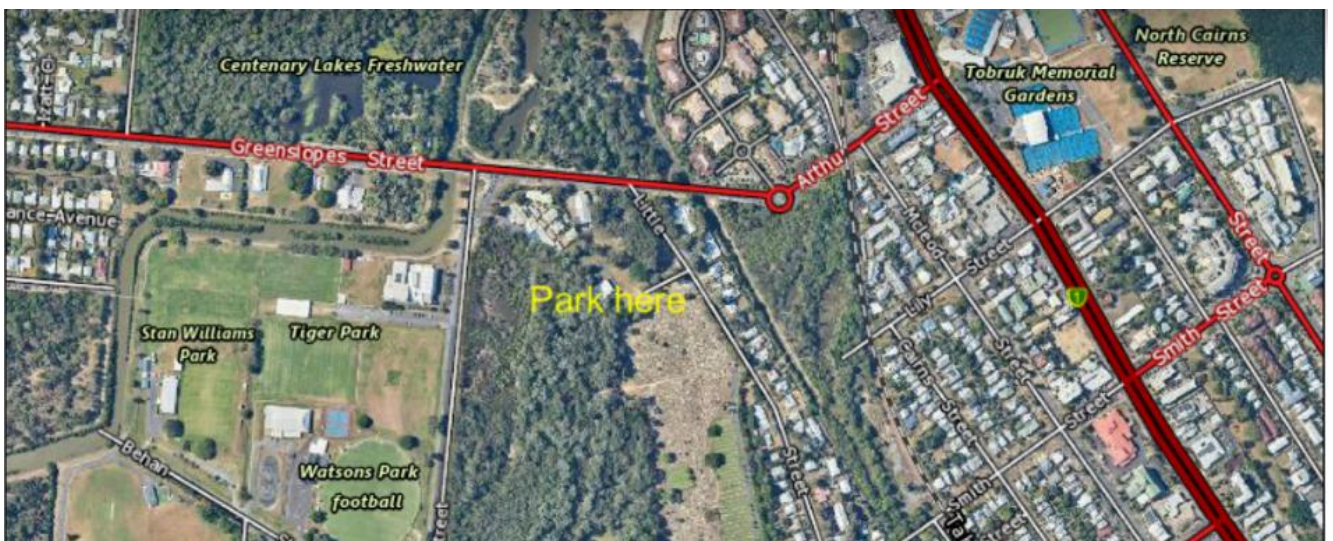
Remnant bushland adjacent to Martyn Street Cemetery

Meet at the shelter at Centenary Lakes, Greenslopes Street, for lunch at noon. Drive to Arthur Street and park near the Cairns Revival Centre, 58-60 Arthur Street, to start the walk at 1 p.m.

Stuart says: This month's excursion is an exploration of a tiny remnant of Central Cairns original vegetation. Contrasting with the rainforest of the Whitfield Range and the mosquitoes and pandans of the Central Swamp, we'll be exploring Melaleuca and bloodwood woodlands on old sand dunes over a kilometre from the current shoreline. We'll be hoping to find pencil orchids, ant plants, red beech trees and flowering Acacias. The walk is flat, and we will return through the main Martyn Street Cemetery, which has a few graves of interest.

Don't forget the mosquito repellent!

Ed: Please email secretary@sgapcairns.org.au to indicate attendance and at the same time name what you might like to borrow from the library. The list concludes this newsletter.



BALANAPHORA FUNGOSA
By Don Lawie



Each year, with the onset of our Cool Weather period, the floor of the rainforest erupts with masses of curious domes which persist for several months. They are about two cm in diameter, yellow coloured with a circlet of small white flowers around the base.

These are the flowering heads of a root parasite, *Balanaphora fungosa* which appear above ground to carry out their reproductive cycle and having done so they turn black and return to their plutonic sojourn.

The domes comprise masses of female flowers and the circlet of white flowers are the male flowers. *Balanaphora* have no chlorophyll which explains their colour; they are dependent for some of their nutrients on the roots of nearby plants which they envelop with their own root system.

As far as I know the pollinating agent is not known; it must be prolific since *Balanaphora* spread widely on the forest floor, preferring niches between above ground roots of their companion plants which, all unaware that they are being robbed, protect the pretty little parasites.

East Russell Excursion Report
By Helen Lawie

It was a perfect Autumn day in the tropics for our visit to the Penny's at Josey Park, East Russell. Nestled between the Graham Range and the Russell River, the property is bordered by both World Heritage rainforest and cattle pasture. We enjoyed homemade treats on the verandah before exploring Patsy's shade house. A plethora of seedlings of different ages chronicled Patsy's achievements and disappointments in propagation. The combination of passion, knowledge and perseverance was evidenced in a range of rainforest trees ready to plant. It was a joy to get our hands dirty and contribute to this reforestation project. Transplanted species and locations were carefully noted as our trees joined an earlier round of planting.



A towering Milky Pine (*Alstonia scholaris*) marked the centre of the planting. Once shading a chook house it now stands guardian to the next generation of trees.

Our walk for the day followed the road on a small hill closer to Babinda. The road had

previously circled around the base of the hill until the Kruckow family obtained permission to shorten their timber getting route by cutting over the top in the 1950s. Today the road is bitumen and winds between a drop-off on one side and the face of a steep cutting on the other. Home to cassowaries and glow worms, wet season waterfalls and misty clouds, the rainforest is thick and green.

On the low side of the road a huge *Musgravea heterophylla* (Briar silky oak) rose high into the sky. Immature fruit were spotted and, alert for seed collection, we wondered when to return. Bob Jago dashed out hopes: the seed pods would likely ease open far above us in the canopy, seeds catch on the wind and drift away. At our feet was the proof: old weather worn pods splayed open and empty on the ground. With a breeze in our faces, we turned to follow it's trajectory in a classic case of 'here's one I prepared earlier': a 10 cm high *M. heterophylla* seedling!

Then we discovered young trees at every height. They provided ample opportunity for us to ID them. Bob explained the Greek hetero/different – phylum/leaf of the species name with examples of the juvenile lobed leaf, intermediate leaf, and mature oblong leaf.



A study of ferns was to be the next lesson of our rainforest classroom . *Cyathea rebecca* crowded the ridge with their glossy green dimpled leaves. We attempted to ID the young ones, but agreed the gracile trunk of older plants was a helpful diagnostic amongst myriad ferny undergrowth. Surprisingly the odd *Cyathea cooperi* had lost its usual allure. Their lacy fronds looked powdery and muted in comparison to *C rebecca*.



Lycopodium cernuum

Dicranopteris linearis *

Little beauties like coral fern *Lycopodium cernuum* (thriving despite occasional mowing by the Council slasher) were dwarfed by the stupendous Giant King Ferns *Angiopteris evecta*. Often found growing by a creek, *A. evecta* droop profoundly without constant water. Their location on the side of the hill indicates regular rainfall or effective cloud stripping. Another plant escapee from the “Jurassic World” set is the cycad *Lepidozamia hopei*. The tallest plant in the Cycadeacea family, one of them was over 2m tall suggesting a staggering age approximately 200 years.

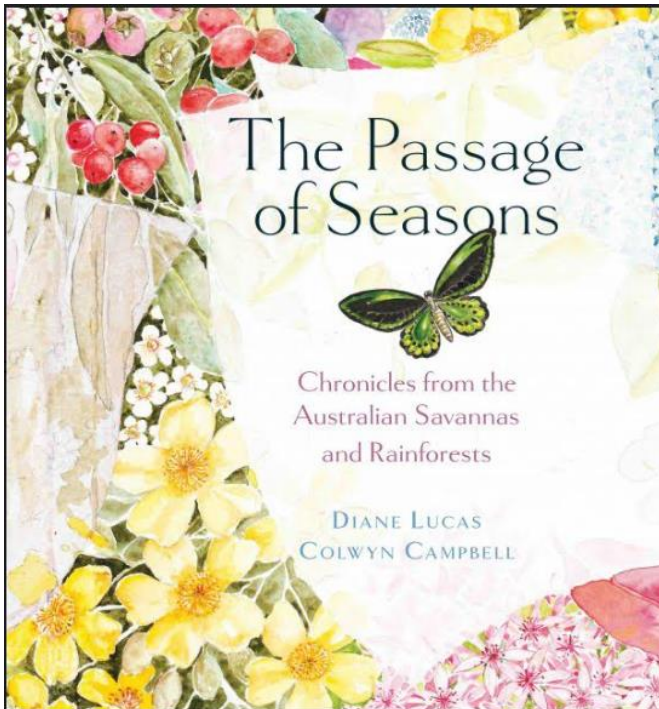
One of our last finds for the day was evidence of the cassowary as species distributor. What else could explain a deposit of germinated seeds? Propagator Lois estimated “two trays of seedlings” enjoying close quarters in a plot of desiccated fertilizer. Careful counting backed

her up with 36 little *Syzygium cormiflorum* (Bumpy Satinash) beginning their life cycle.

They are new growth in this ancient living, peopled, altered, accessible, rich rainforest that some folks are lucky enough to call home.

Book Review

Stuart Worboys



The Passage of Seasons

Chronicles from the
Australian Savannas and Rainforests

In the late 1970s, a stunning facsimile of a natural history diary became an international bestseller. Edith Holden's *Country diary of an Edwardian lady* documented through detailed observations, delicate watercolours and short poems the gentle beauty of the change of seasons in the English countryside.

The creative friendship of two northern Australian women, Diane Lucas and Colwyn Campbell, has resulted in a modern tropical Australian *Country Diary*. Diane lives just south of Darwin, and Colwyn's home is in the high misty rainforests of Paluma, not far from Townsville. The book takes the form of an

exchange of letters between the two over the period of a year. In each letter we read of the delight taken from growing and harvesting home produce, from observing the behaviour of their resident wildlife, and from exploring the surrounding countryside.

We learn from Diane that *Winter, Spring, Summer* and *Autumn* are poor descriptors for the Top End seasons, and even *wet season* and *dry season* are too coarse to describe the subtle changes that occur in the landscape over the course of the year. The local Aboriginal groups with whom Diane works recognise several seasons, including *kunumeleng*, the late dry season of November:

We have just had a three day camp in Litchfield Park, for a seasonal festival to celebrate the season of kunumeleng... We see what is happening in the bush around us at this time of year. When we arrived, the children and I walked to find the fruits of an-djarduk, the red apple tree. There are usually lots hanging on the trees, but we just collect the red shiny fruits that have fallen to the ground... If they are still hard we put them on our campy Nature table and wait for them to soften.

Meanwhile in Paluma, bushfires are disrupting power supplies, and a grim find in the garden reminds us of the nature's way:

During last night's blackout, instead of television or a book to entertain me I enjoyed a concert performance by a massed choir of mole crickets, field crickets and frogs. The smell of smoke hung in the air throughout the night... I found a pile of feathers, soft, pale pink, lilac and white, beneath a tree in the street outside my house: all that remained of a fruit dove, probably killed by a brown goshawk which I have seen over the past few days in and around the surrounding gardens.

The book is illustrated with Colwyn's watercolours and pencil sketches. She clearly delights in capturing the small details of the natural world

around her: on page 49 a foolish brush turkey struts along a fence railing, while on page 160 the colourful *Grevilleas* that appear in the *kurrung* (late hot dry season) are delicately reproduced.

I recommend this book to anyone with an interest in the north's natural history. This is a richly personal book of observations from two rarely documented localities, and it is a delight to read.

Declaration: I provided a review of scientific names used in this book, and received a copy of the book in recognition of work.

The Passage of Seasons

Diane Lucas and Colwyn Campbell. 229 pages, paperback.

Published by Waterlily Publications, 2022 (anbinic@gmail.com). Available from <https://www.dianelucas.com.au/product/passage-of-the-seasons/>, \$49.95 plus postage.

Ed. How lovely for Colwyn to have these memories. She now lives in Cairns and is a member of the Cairns Branch.

ORDER OF AUSTRALIA MEDAL



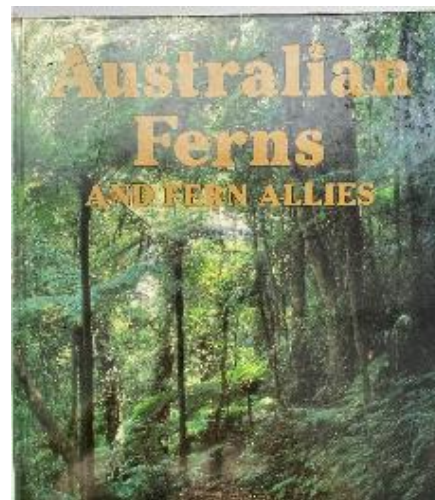
Donald Lawie OAM, Ted Lawie, grandson,
Dr Jeannette Young, Governor of Qld,
Luke Kulimbao, PNG Consul.

One of our “proud” Cairns members suggested we could record this occasion in the newsletter, so who are we to quibble.

Her Excellency the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM, Governor of Queensland presented an Order of Australia Medal to Cairns SGAP Life Member, Donald Lawie, at a ceremony on 12th May, 2023. The awards, witnessed by relevant dignitaries, friends and family. The OAM recognised Donald's community, professional, military and voluntary contributions.

Also awarded on the day was Mr James Hill, OAM. Jim too is a past president of Cairns SGAP.

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Our very industrious secretary has catalogued our branch library and taken photos of the covers of all the books. This one written by D L Jones and S C Clemesha indicates that the

Dicranopteris at East Russell is var *subferugenia*

These books are available for members to borrow. The full list, including authors is printed below.

Reminder re Cooktown in July

Plants required in following categories:
understorey species SGAP and B & S.
species relative to the Cooktown region that are competition and shade tolerant.
collected or recorded by Banks and Solander.
plants with waterlogging tolerance..

Also needed assistance with plant identification

CAIRNS BRANCH LIBRARY BOOKS

A CORAL REEF HANDBOOK	Australian Coral Reef Society
A DOCTOR IN THE GARDEN	John Pearn
ALL ABOUT AUSTRALIAN BUSH GARDENS	Betty Malone / Jean Walker / Barbara Mullins
ATLAS OF TROPICAL SEEDLINGS -LAURACEAE VOL 1	Peter Newling
AUSTRALIAN FERNS & FERN ALLIES	D.L. Jones & S.C. Clemesha
AUSTRALIAN NATIVE PLANTS	A.M. Blomberry
AUSTRALIAN TROPICAL ORCHIDS	Bill Laverack/ Bruce Gray
BOTANICA - THE ILLUSTRATED A-Z OF OVER 10,000 GARDEN PLANTS	Gordon Cheers (publisher)
BOTTLEBRUSHES PAPERBARKS & TEA TREES	John W. Wrigley & Murray Fagg
IDENTIFICATION GUIDE (Spanish Language)	Claudio Donoso Zegers/ Carlos Ramirez Garcia
ENCYCLOPEDIA OF TROPICAL PLANTS	Ahmed Fayaz
EUCALYPTS VOLUME 1	Stan Kelly
EUCALYPTS VOLUME 2	Stan Kelly
FIELD GUIDE TO PLANTS OF THE DRY TROPICS	Keith Townsend /SGAP Townsville
FLOODPLAIN FLORA	I.D. Cowie / P.S. Short / M. Osterkamp Madsen
FLOWERING PLANT FAMILIES OF THE WORLD	V.H. Heywood/R.K. Brummitt/A. Culham/O. Seberg
FRIENDS AND FOES OF AUSTRALIAN GARDENS	F.D. Hockings
FRUITS OF THE AUSTRALIAN TROPICAL RAINFOREST	Wendy Cooper/ William T. Cooper
MANGROVES TO MOUNTAINS	SGAP Logan
MANGROVES TO MOUNTAINS VOLUME 2	SGAP Logan
MEDICINE & BOTANY	John Pearn
ORCHID GENERA ILLUSTRATED	Tom & Marion Sheehan
ORCHIDS AUSTRALIA - x3	Official Publication of the Australian Orchid Council
PALMS IN AUSTRALIA	David Jones
PLANTS OF CAPE YORK - THE COMPACT GUIDE	John Beasley
PLANTS OF MAGNETIC ISLAND	Betsy R. Jackes
RAINFOREST PLANTS 1	Nan & Hugh Nicholson
RAINFOREST PLANTS 2	Nan & Hugh Nicholson
RAINFOREST PLANTS 3	Nan & Hugh Nicholson
RAINFOREST PLANTS 4	Nan & Hugh Nicholson
RAINFOREST PLANTS 5	Nan & Hugh Nicholson
RAINFOREST PLANTS 6	Nan & Hugh Nicholson
THE FAMILY ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ART	Bernard L Myers / Trewin Copplestone (editors)
THE MACQUARIE DICTIONARY OF TREES AND SHRUBS	Pat Kreuiter / Richard Tardif (editors)
TOP END NATIVE PLANTS	John Brock
SGAP BULLETIN X 5	SGAP Queensland Region