



## Society for Growing Australian Plants (Queensland Region) Inc.

Cairns Branch  
PO Box 199  
Earlville Qld 4870

Newsletter No. 78  
June 2008

### Society Office Bearers

<b>Chairperson</b>	Ann Mohun	40 ... ..
<b>Vice Chairperson</b>	Mary Gandini	40 542 190
<b>Secretary</b>	Greg Keith	40 981 130
<b>Treasurer</b>	Robert Jago	40 552 266

**Membership Subscriptions- Qld Region-** Renewal \$39.00 (\$29.00 concession), New Members \$44, each additional member of household \$1.00

**Cairns Branch Fees** -\$10.00 Full Year

To access our Library for loan of books, please contact David Warmington

### Dates to Remember

**Cairns Branch Meetings and Excursions – third Saturday of each month.**

**NEXT OUTING** will be held over Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> and Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> June, in Cooktown. It's the annual working visit to the Cooktown Botanic Gardens. See below for more details.

**Tablelands Branch – Sunday following the meeting on the 4th Wednesday of the month.**  
Any queries please contact Chris Jaminon 4095 2882 or [hjaminon@bigpond.com](mailto:hjaminon@bigpond.com)

### Also of Interest

#### JCU Public Lecture Series 2008

#### The future of our coastal cassowary populations, Dr Nicky Moore

*Climate change is predicted to increase the intensity of cyclones in our region. with this in mind, what can we learn about the impact of cyclone Larry on the Mission Beach cassowary population?*

**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> June, 5.30 – 7.00 pm. Crowther Theatre, James Cook University, McGregor Road, Smithfield. RSVP Sue Kelly 40421456 or [susan.kelly@jcu.edu.au](mailto:susan.kelly@jcu.edu.au)**

## NEXT OUTING: Cooktown Botanic Gardens

Our annual working visit to the Gardens is scheduled for Sat/Sun 21/22 June. Daniel Collins is now in charge of the Gardens, and is very keen for SGAP to continue our association with them. This will be our seventh consecutive year. Plans are for us to re-furbish the SGAP and Banks and Solander Gardens as usual, then do anything that Daniel requires. A feature this year will be the placement of thirty-plus flowering size Cooktown Orchids which have been organised by Tablelands Branch SGAP and paid for equally by Cairns and Tablelands. These orchids do not occur naturally in the immediate Cooktown area but have become so associated with the name of the town that visitors always ask to see them and since Botanic Gardens are representative of many plant types we feel that it is appropriate to place them there.

To alleviate expenses somewhat we have arranged with the Cooktown Race Club for us to stay at the Racecourse this year. It is situated on the Airport (McIvor) Road, just past the cemetery. There is power available, hot showers, a mowed area for vans and campers, and a covered area for those who sleep in swags etc. We have agreed on a fee of \$ 5.50 per head per night, which Pauline & I will collect and pass on to the Race Committee. The area will be unlocked for us on the Friday morning and we can stay on until the Tuesday if any of us feel like extending the weekend. If anyone has any questions, please phone us on 40 671 577.

*Don Lawie*

### Trevethan Falls

These Falls have been suggested as a site for our “reward outing” on the Sunday arvo of our Cooktown Botanic Gardens visit this year. Pauline & I were in the vicinity in May so we did a recce. The Falls are situated on a side road off Mt Amos Road, which runs east from the main Cooktown road about 20 km south of Cooktown. The Falls turnoff is clearly marked 9.9km along Mt Amos Road, and we drove 3.5km along this tertiary road, parked and walked the last half km to a cleared area. From here there is a very steep, narrow foot track which leads to the base of the Falls or to a rock area with a good view.



There are some difficult creek crossings on Mt Amos Rd., and the Falls road is serious 4WD stuff, and though we did well with our Subaru Forester we finally decided it would be foolish to go the whole way. It took us 35 minutes driving time from the main road and 8 minutes walking to the cleared area. It is definitely not accessible to normal vehicles, nor for people who are not fit & active.

BUT, the Falls are a truly impressive sight, perhaps 30 – 40 metres high and about half as wide, tumbling on a vertical fall from a basalt cutback into a big inviting pool (*pictured, above*). There are big rocks all over the place and the pool is ringed with very large old Kanuka Box trees. There is cool shade, rocks to picnic on, ferns and orchids – we saw four species on our visit. The cleared area would be a beaut camping spot for self-sufficient people and is refreshingly clear of rubbish.

*Don Lawie*

**Car Pooling** reduces our carbon footprint, shares the costs of fuel and helps people get about. I have one spare seat left in my car if anyone is interested to go to Cooktown on Friday (early via the Bloomfield Track) returning on Sunday. If anyone else is looking for a seat or has seats to offer please email me, I'll see what I can do. Cheers, Andrew. PS, don't use the reply button to avoid sending emails to everyone. [andrew.picone@jcu.edu.au](mailto:andrew.picone@jcu.edu.au)

## Trip Report: Cairns SGAP Inspection of Cattana Wetlands

By Don Lawie with photographs by Robin Smith



Cattana Wetlands has had a chequered history: originally a part of the coastal hinterland north of what became Cairns city, it was pioneered as a sugar cane farm, then used as a massive “borrowpit” to supply sand and fill for the various developments in the growing city. When Mayor Tom Pyne’s edict that “no building will be taller than a coconut palm” was breached, Cattana Farm became a target for further built projects. Fortunately for us, the City Fathers decided to call a halt, bought the farm, and directed that it be reserved for future use as a passive recreational area.

Cairns SGAP visited the area some years ago, and had the area’s plans explained to us. Since then, progress has been slow, but now, with help from a grant from the “Queensland 150” Fund, things look like going ahead with increased impetus. Rob Jago was commissioned to do a vegetation survey on the hottest day this summer and came up with a detailed list that includes some very interesting plants.

We met the Regional Council’s man-in-charge, Terry Genever, at the entrance where he outlined the project and gave us a detailed hand-out. Re-vegetation has been carried out in an admirable manner, using planting material sourced strictly from the immediate area so that provenance is perfect.

We walked along the edge of the large water feature, where weed control has been diligently practised. The vegetation here is typically lowland wetland type: *Melaleuca leucodendra* and *Melaleuca quinquenervia*, *Nauclea orientalis*, *Hibiscus tiliaceus*,

*Archontophoenix alexandrae*, and *Pandanus slossilaubachi* grew in profusion behind the cleared waterfront area.



Rob checking out a new species for the reserve. Another previously unrecorded weed.

Rob Jago then declared that there were “some interesting plants” on a sand ridge inside the swamp, if anyone was keen to see them. Were we?? Getting to the sand ridge eliminated all but half a dozen of the party, and the rest continued the walk along the water feature where Mary Gandini confronted the leasehold farmer (and his six big dogs) whom she suspected of littering the area. That was sorted amicably and they went off for smoko. We hardy souls on the sand ridge complete with mud to knee level, found it difficult to decide whether the sandflies or the mosquitoes were more troublesome. These minor problems were forgotten when Rob began to reveal the range of plants we were passing. It was hard to accept that we were at virtually zero altitude and within smell of the sea. The closed canopy rainforest had the look and feel of an altitude system: It was relatively easy to move along, the understorey consisted mostly of younger versions of the canopy trees, and trees that I had always associated with the Tablelands were growing happily here. Lisa picked up the remains of a Rose Butternut inflorescence with its typical “eyelash” shape – indeed the specific name of *Blepharocarya involucrigera* means eyelash. This tree is very common around Lake Eacham and is really a highland tree. We were lashed by the whips of Fishtail Lawyer vine, *Calamus caryotoides* which I have

never before seen at such a low altitude. Just for variety, the thicker-stemmed *Calamus australis* had a go at us also. Brown Pine, *Podocarpus grayae*, is a tree that I associate with the Hypipamee Crater, but here it was. I planted a couple of Brown Pines, in my re-veg area at home about fifteen years ago and they are now nearly two metres high. On this sand ridge we saw two specimens that were at least 15 metres in height and 30 cm diameter. How old they are is anybody's guess but they are an indication that this unique piece of remnant forest is in an undisturbed state. Some timber trees were present – Hickory – *Flindersia iffλαιiana* - and Brown Silky Oak - *Darlingia darlingiana*, and Rob pointed out some interesting Lauraceae, including *Cryptocarya clarksoniana* whose leaves smell like Mortein. I can attest that they did not repel mosquitoes!! Rainforest grass *Leptaspis banksii* grew sparsely on the generally bare ground, where several giant mounds of the Orange footed Scrubfowl showed that there is plenty of food for these frugivores. Although Rob has reported two species of orchids in the area, we saw none, but Robin-the-fern-man was pleased to see numerous Bird's Nest Ferns, *Asplenium nidus*, had fallen from on high and had become ground dwellers. We made our way back across the swamp and joined the others in enjoying a piece of Mary's birthday cake.



Cattana Wetlands, with north to the top of the page, will eventually be open to the public as a conservation and passive recreation reserve. Image borrowed from Cairns Regional Council website.

Aerial photo source:  
[http://www.cairns.qld.gov.au/cairns/community/engaging\\_community/files/Cattana\\_Wetlands\\_Dec07.pdf](http://www.cairns.qld.gov.au/cairns/community/engaging_community/files/Cattana_Wetlands_Dec07.pdf)



Mesophyll vine forest with Feather Palms, Regional Ecosystem 7.3.3., has a conservation status as 'Of Concern'. The Cattana Wetlands remnant is in relatively good condition despite being fragmented and previous disturbance.



Climbing Swamp Fern, *Stenochlaena palustris*.

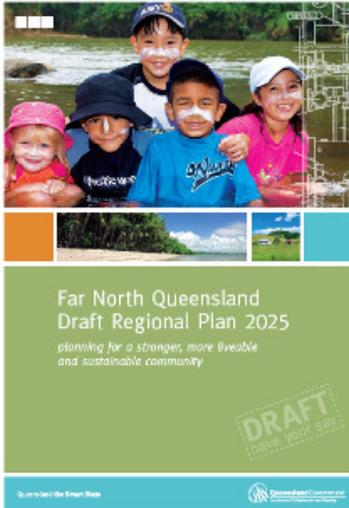


*Pittosporum rubiginosum*, currently the only *Pittosporaceae* known to occur at Cattana Wetlands



Like beans in a pod, four *Castanospermum australe* germinating from their pod.

## FNQ Draft Regional Plan 2025



The *Far North Queensland Draft Regional Plan 2025* is a major policy document aimed at establishing a clear direction for growth and development within the region. It is a draft and is open for public comment until 8 August 2008.

The study area for the plan stretches as far south as Hinchinbrook island, north as far as Ayton, just south of Cedar Bay National Park (I think) and inland about 700 km.

Under the draft plan, there are proposals to limit future development in sensitive areas such as the Daintree, the hill slopes of the region and large urban developments in Myola area may also be curtailed.

The latest CAFNEC (Cairns and Far North Environment Centre) newsletter (Vol 28 # 2. June 2008) provides a good overview of the draft plan. They also provide more detailed coverage on their

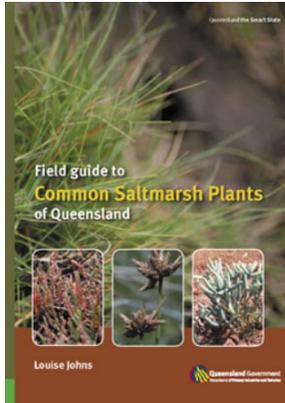
website; <http://www.cafnec.org.au/2025.php>

According to CAFNEC, there is cause to be cautiously optimistic about the direction of this plan. However, as a draft, it is open to public comment and is vulnerable to being watered down. Therefore, writing submissions to this plan in support of, or calling for the strengthening of, sound environmental policies is worth the effort.

*Andrew Picone*

## Book Review

### Field guide to Common Saltmarsh Plants of Queensland by Lewis Johns.



Firstly, this book is free, if you ring the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) on 13 25 23 or order it via the book's website: [http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/cps/rde/dpi/hs.xml/28\\_9149\\_ENA\\_HTML.htm](http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/cps/rde/dpi/hs.xml/28_9149_ENA_HTML.htm) They will send it too you.

This is a useful book with practical and user friendly keys. There are three main chapters;

- Succulent plants
- Grasses, rushes and sedge plants, and
- Other plant types.

There is also an informative introductory chapter describing the nature of Saltmarsh throughout Queensland

The strength of this book is in the two page colour photo format given to most species. The treatment of each species includes a succinct description accompanied by a line drawing, distribution map, flowering period graphic, symbol illustrating plant structure and good quality photographs. Published in 2006.

*Andrew Picone*

**While Tony is away, if you have any book reviews, pictures, notes on growing tropical Australian plants or trip reports you'd like published in this newsletter, please send them to Andrew Picone: [andrew.picone@jcu.edu.au](mailto:andrew.picone@jcu.edu.au) with SGAP marked in the subject.**