



Society for Growing Australian Plants (Queensland Region) Inc.

Cairns Branch
PO Box 199
Earlville Qld 4870

Newsletter No. 93
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Chairperson	Tony Roberts	40 551 292
Vice Chairperson	Mary Gandini	40 542 190
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Treasurer	Robert Jago	40 552 266

Membership Subscriptions- Qld Region- Renewal \$40.00, New Members \$45, each additional member of household \$2.00 **Student** - \$35.00, **Cairns Branch Fees** -\$10.00 Full Year

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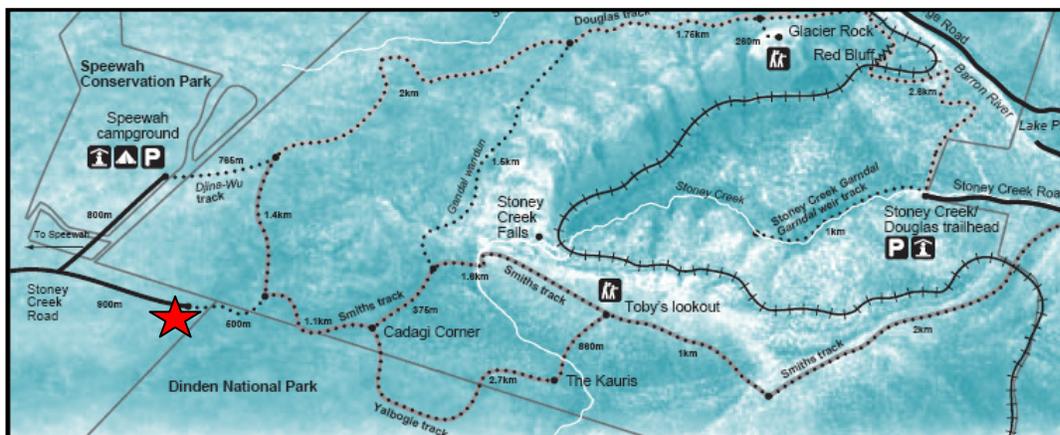
Newsletter Editor: Andrew Picone andrew.picone@jcu.edu.au

Dates to remember

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

NEXT MEETING: As advised by email of October 4, the proposed Mt Windsor fieldtrip is not on for October. And Yarrabah isn't on either. If anyone is interested in walking to Toby's lookout via Cadagi Corner and The Kauris in Barron Gorge NP please see map below get in touch with Andrew 0401 686 782. or andrew.picone@jcu.edu.au. Proposed meeting time 9am.

Tablelands Branch Excursion– Sunday following the meeting on the fourth Wednesday of the month. Any queries please contact Chris Jaminon 4095 2882 or hjaminon@bigpond.com



From red star to Toby's Lookout 10km return via The Kauris. Not much climbing. Access via speewah. Meet at 9 am at start. Note start is not at campground.

Chilling out in Chillagoe Words and Photos by Bronwyn Hookey

The Chillagoe trip was a great journey through the outback, looking at cave art, amazing plants that seem to defy the odds, crawling into the limestone caves, checking out the fossils at Mary's and gazing at the stars through state of the art telescopes at the Chillagoe Ecolodge. It was an overall action packed event, well done Ing!

It was great that Graham and Emily his daughter from the Tablelands branch joined us and contributed a great deal of botanical knowledge. We also had the pleasure of meeting Jenny Chapman from Oxford University Botanical Gardens. Jenny was keen on sighting the *Gyrocarpus americanus* as part of her overall understanding of the species insitu for further research back in the UK.



As intended we met at the Hub in Chillagoe and from there we proceeded to the Mungana Caves where we looked at the cave art. We then continued our journey to the Carpentaria Caves where we meandered through the woodland checking out the shrubs and trees on the way. Thanks Graham for not only identifying lots of species but also compiling the species list. The great bower bird in the area had an impressive bower complete with tin cans, shells, broken glass and stones placed strategically around a dense grass



bower that showed an amazing effort. Thanks Ing for showing us the bower. As the temperature was soaring we made haste for the cave entrance where we found the *Graptophyllum excelsum* – (I think which is rare in the Queensland legislation) in flower (only one for the whole trip). A peregrine falcon kept watch as we entered the cave, it is amazing how cool



the caves were. We wandered through looking at the “cave coral” and some signs of life. Ing found a skink lizard (*Eulamprus sp.*) and I think it was Andrew who spotted the bat (*Hipposideros diadema* (diadem leaf-nosed bat –is a rare species in the Queensland legislation). Lots of photos were taken. Lunch was eaten in the cool retreat of “Pixieland” within the cave. We decided after much deliberation and walking in circles to eventually leave the coolness of the cave and brave the afternoon sun again. Wow how do plants live and produce flowers in such hot and dry conditions? It was time to head back to camp for a siesta and regroup for a late arvo adventure to search for the *Macropteranthes montana* (vulnerable Commonwealth and Qld legislation) . During the adventure certain people exhibited high performance driving skills to ensure that we succeeded in our quest and sure enough we found a large stand of these unusual looking trees. Reduced leaves of large scale like arrangement

grew on long slender branches of the *Macropteranthes montana*. An amazing looking tree which has quite distinguishable adaptations to the extraordinary harsh habitat it grows in. We stopped and took photos whilst taking in the general landscape then returned to camp for dinner and star gazing. The star gazing at the Chillagoe Ecolodge was incredible. The moon was not out so we had maximum visibility of the stars and huge telescopes beamed images of Jupiter back to us. The day was full and everyone felt suddenly tired so off to retire. In the morning we met up at Mary's down by the creek where we looked at her fossil collection and sat on the bank of the creek swapping stories. Not sure if the others continued to the "Ledge" but I hope they had fun.

Well done Ing for organizing an action packed adventure, I am sure everyone agrees. A great bunch of people to spend the weekend with. I look forward to the next trip with final arrangements still being confirmed.



Chillagoe

Words and Photos by Barb Collins

We left Cairns at 6.00am arriving in Chillagoe after a good run at 9.00am to meet up with the others at the Visitors Information Centre. We dodged lots of little wallabies on the way. It was already very warm.

We had Don and Pauline, Bronwyn, Andrew and Misaki, Graham and daughter Emma, Jenny from Oxford who was there to look at the habitats of specific trees for research purposes back in the UK and Ing and I. In a very unfortunate incident, Tony and Trudy had their car side-swiped on the Kuranda Range, were not injured, but then of course couldn't continue the trip.

We checked in to the Eco Lodge and campground, then set off to Mungana and the QPWS controlled Archways, a series of limestone Karsts and cave complexes. After looking at some Aboriginal art under an overhang at one site and checking the surrounding vegetation types, we moved further afield to the track leading into the

Carpentaria cave complex. We walked the track in search of *Graptophyllum excelsum* which was expected to be in flower. Unfortunately all bushes we came across were bare. It was extremely dry and hot and every plant exhibited heat stress. *Brachychiton australe*, however, dotted the Karsts and obviously flourished, with full, distinct 'maple leaf' cover.

The sought after *Gyrocarpus americanus*, bare of leaves, showed off its smooth golden trunk to good advantage and was due to burst forth into flower and new leaf once the early storms struck. One sraggy *Lysiphyllum cunninghamii* sported a few sparse scarlet flowers and we came across a flowering *Cymbidium* high in a *Eucalypt* tree. Several *Terminalia platyptera* were rather striking with a plethora of brown winged seeds still attached. A lot of rubber vine was noticed, intricately twining up the trees in what would

appear to be a much more, moist environment close to gullies near Karsts.

Here we saw an active Great Bower Bird bower with an accumulation of bleached snail shells, pieces of green glass and a few flattened aluminum cans. The male bird, invisible to our cursory search, voiced his annoyance at the presence of interlopers in his territory. Not much further away was a huge mound which likely, though fairly surprisingly in this harsh environment, belonged to the Orange-footed or Helmeted scrub fowl. *Abrus precatorius* vines had dry pods bursting forth with their brilliant toxic scarlet and black seeds. Obviously the limestone Karsts are integral to the survival and sustenance of diverse flora and fauna in this harsh environment. A *Lysiphyllum hookeri* took advantage of this area in the gully and showed isolated remnants of an earlier flowering.

Arriving at the NW entrance of the Cave, an astute observer spotted a Peregrine falcon perched high on a ledge on the Karst opposite. Here we also spotted a *Graptophyllum* with a single red flower. Ing now took advantage from the height of a limestone outcrop to remind us that we were to use our torches, stay within sight, keep in pairs and tabs on each other and distributed maps of the cave.

As soon as we entered the cave the temperature drop was amazing and welcome relief from the mid day furnace outside, a cool draught of fresh air flowed through the caverns, allaying any fear of dust and stuffiness. It was only moments before the first cave dweller, an attractive skink, was spotted. I'm sure it didn't appreciate the attention it received but ended up in everyone's photo gallery! Later we spotted a number of spiders but only two tiny bats, too distant to confirm if they were horseshoe nosed or otherwise.

The first large chamber was Grand Canyon and we moved from there along short passages to Central Station then around and back to the tiny pocket called Green Velvet. Not so 'green' with moss at this time of year, but one could imagine it may be quite a pretty sight after the wet. Cavern walls showed several water level marks and in some places were almost a metre high. It was stark

testimony to the fact that flooding does occur and water may lie for some time in sections of the caverns. Natural light filtered through in quite a few places from the openings in the roof and supported a few ferns growing in high ledges. We moved about this section quite a bit looking for a fairly easy access before going though to Pixieland where we relaxed with a lunch break in the cool environment. We watched the sun filter through whilst the rays moved across the floor spotlighting pinnacles of weathered stalagmites. It seemed surreal!

Moving into Flagpole cavern was perhaps the most spectacular section. The Flagpole was aptly named, a narrow combined stalagmite and stalactite column reached floor to ceiling. The surrounding walls were crusty with an intricate coating of 'cave coral' and another wall exhibited well the extinct coral reef that was metamorphosed, tilted and uplifted around the Silurian-Devonian Period. Both brachiopod and crinoid cross sections were prolific in the slate grey limestone wall.

Time was running out and after a little confusion as to 'which way' was out we emerged back into the bright sunshine and headed back to the parked cars. A quick look through the Archways and the fern colony they harbor, then it was back to Chillagoe to seek out the *Macropteranthes* grove. Popularly called the 'African trees', they are an interesting relic and very distinctive. Severely heat stressed, all the trees we saw unfortunately had brown dried out leaves.

We retreated back to the Eco Lodge to cool down after a great day. Thanks Ing and fellow SGAPPERS.



Water level bands below the fossil wall



Giddy Giddy Seeds *Arbus precatorius*



Tangle of Rubber Vine



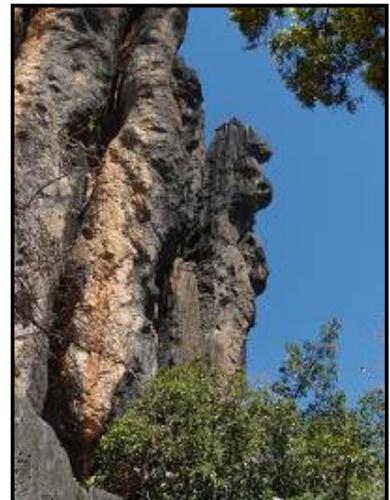
Cave coral feature



Macropteranthes montana



Aboriginal Art at Archways



Towering Limestone Karst