



Society for Growing Australian Plants (Queensland Region) Inc.

Cairns Branch
PO Box 199
Earlvile Qld 4870

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Society Office Bearers

Chairperson	Tony Roberts	4055 1292
Vice Chairperson	Mary Gandini	4054 2190
Secretary	Ing Toh	4031 0551
Treasurer	Robert Jago	4055 2266

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

To access our Library for the loan of publications, please contact David Warmington
Newsletter Editor: Andrew Picone andrew.picone@jcu.edu.au

Dates to remember

NEXT MEETING: 21 November 2009- Last meeting for 2009 and Christmas break up.
Cairns Botanic Gardens 11am meet at the service area near the nursery. Please let Tony Roberts know: travelling_botanist@yahoo.com.au

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

Book Review

A Field Guide to the Eucalypts of the Cape York Peninsula Bioregion

John Clarkson with illustrations by Will Smith, Queensland Government.

This booklet assumes prior knowledge of what a eucalypt is and one's ability to know as much. However it does come with some introductory notes on how to identify eucalypts and bloodwoods.

Intended for use in the field, the book categorises Cape York's eucalypts and bloodwoods into seven different bark types; smooth, box, tessellated, stringy, ironbarks, half barks and other barks.

Forty species are covered in this field guide in which each has a page of information including; derivation of name, defining features, confusing species and notes together with drawings of buds, fruit and leaves and an accompanying distribution map for Cape York Peninsula and adjoining bioregions.

An interesting feature about this field guide is that in the *notes* section there is acknowledgement of differing opinions over taxonomy. For example Clarkson notes that some authors don't accept *Corymbia* and it provides the alternative name.

I've found this book useful and recommend it. It is free and comes in both book and CD format from Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) in Mareeba.

Barron Gorge National Park

On Saturday October 17, Bronwyn and I set off for Toby's lookout in the Barron Gorge National Park. We set off on the assumption of my own advice that there was not much climbing and it was a relatively un-strenuous walk. Nice one; it was over a year since I'd done this walk and was more of a slog than I'd recalled.

Anyway, as it was only Bronwyn and myself, we discussed if we should make a species list. I thought we could focus on a specific group, maybe gymnosperms. Bronwyn agreed. Thus, we made note of every species of gymnosperms we encountered in the rainforest and open forest along the walk (ignoring the innumerable broad-leaved angiosperms).

We set off along the Yalbogie Track, an old forestry road. Passing Cadagi Corner we came to a sign pointing to The Kauris. Following this track we went past the Chinese Kauri, so-called because of a Chinese character etched into its bark back in the old tin mining days which is only faintly visible today. Regardless, it was a fine specimen of *Agathis robusta* (pictured) of which there were a few more scattered through this area. In fact, I haven't done a walk in the wet tropics where I



words and photos by Andrew

have seen as many Kauri Pines as I have seen in this part of the Barron Gorge National Park (including the Gandal Wandun track). There are numerous tall *Podocarpus grayae* in this area as well. That makes two gymnosperms so far.

After crossing the upper reaches of Stoney Creek, where we saw a barred frog, the track climbs out into dry open forest of bloodwood and eucalypt and *Cycas media*. Toby's Lookout, so named after a Mrs Toby who camped in the area while looking for gold, provides a view across the Stoney Creek valley to Glacier Rock.



We continued on to where the track returns to Stoney Creek just before falls which can be seen from the Kuranda railway where we stopped for lunch.

Walking back we stopped at Cadagi Corner to look at the Cadagi *Corymbia torelliana* and heard a noise in the undergrowth. Thinking it might be a cassowary, as we'd seen a few scats, I scoured the bush with my binoculars. But to no avail. Along the final leg to the car there were a few curious noises. Lizards scampering quicker than the eye could see were high-tailing off the path as we rounded corners. Thinking they may be Boyd's forest dragons I tried to follow a few into the scrub. We finally caught up with one who ran up into an eroding old road cutting which started to crumble. As it panicked for a better retreat it revealed itself to be a juvenile monitor of some sort.

Back at the car, we discussed our species list; the three gymnosperms as mentioned above with the third being *Cycas media*.

Errk Oykangand National Park: words and photos by Andrew Picone

Kowanyama means ‘place of many waters’ and is an Aboriginal community in the south west of Cape York Peninsula where the Mitchell River meets the Gulf of Carpentaria. Recently, the Kowanyama People were awarded native title over 2,731sq km of land from the coast near the Coleman River north and inland to the Mitchell-Alice Rivers. This happened on October 22 this year.

The following day, October 23, the Queensland Government entered into a joint management agreement with Kowanyama over what has been known until now as the Mitchell-Alice Rivers National Park. The park’s new name and land tenure is the Errk Oykangand National Park (Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal land).

Proclaimed in 1977, the then Mitchell-Alice Rivers National Park was declared without much regard for Aboriginal interests or aspirations. Today, as the Errk Oykangand National Park (CYPAL), it’s most significant conservation values are cultural sites of the Kunjen and Oykangand language groups who now have a strong say in management.



Corypha utan palms.



The Mitchell River at the ‘Shelfo’ camp site. *Barringtonia acutangula* in flower.

Relative to the rest of Cape York Peninsula there are few rare, threatened or endemic species. Despite this, there are few dedicated conservation reserves in this part of the region. The park ensures representation of typical western Cape York or Northern Gulf regional ecosystems including wetlands, box and bloodwood savannahs, monsoonal closed/open forests fringing lagoons and open forests along watercourses.

Found within the park and throughout Kowanyama are the dramatic Corypha palms *Corypha utan*. The only other occurrence of these palms in Australia is in Lakefield National Park in Queensland and a couple of sites in Arnhem Land in the NT. These imposing palms with their huge foliage seem almost incongruous with the surrounding grassy plains and savannahs of the area. It almost seems absurd that there should be such colossal palm trees in a landscape where all the ground storey is burnt and the bloodwoods have shed their leaves to stay alive. Especially in late October.

Access to water and an absence of fire results in some tall and well developed monsoon forest of Leichhardt Tree *Nauclea orientalis*, Milkwood *Alstonia actinophylla*, and many other broad-leaved angiosperms, interspersed with River Red-gum *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* and various Melaleuca species. These habitats are also where the Corypha palms reach their best development and are spectacular refuges of green.

Along more open sections of river bank, particularly along the Mitchell River are twisted and stunted cohorts of Melaleuca with the freshwater mangrove *Baringtonia acutangula*.

There are several campsites within the Kowanyama lands which are managed by the Kowanyama Aboriginal Land and Natural Resource Management Office (KALNRMO). KALNRMO



are also responsible for the day to day management of the Errk Oykangand National Park. Kowanyama's campgrounds are primarily aimed at recreational fishing folks but are equally exciting for naturalists. Campsites are spread out from the estuary of Topsy Creek (above) on the dunes of the Gulf of Carpentaria to a couple of locations along the Mitchell River, further inland and a place called Shelfo at the edge of the Errk Oykangand National park (CYPAL). A Kowanyama fishing and visitor guide with a map to campgrounds is available (although difficult to locate – I have some spare copies). KALNRMO who manage the campgrounds can be contacted on (07) 4060 5187.