

Wednesday Walk – Black Mountain from Frith Road – 8 June 2016

A few hardy members met at the Australian National Botanic Gardens (ANBG) Visitors Centre for a walk through the gardens and onto Black Mountain Nature Reserve. The sun was shining with a very cool north-westerly blowing, making the apparent temperature well below 10 degrees. Once into the gardens, with wonderful botanical distractions all around, the temperature was forgotten. Banksias and hakeas were flowering in all their glory and uniqueness. We passed by the bird orchid patch to see the rosettes developing, and were drawn to unusual Acacias nearby. A few hardy members of the daisy family had survived the cold and recent deluge.

Passing by the Central Australian garden prompted reminders of the local origin of the colourful rock. On the way to identify the prominent red-tipped bushes showing behind, we looped through the Western Mallee garden. The symmetry of beaufortias and regelias prompted later discussion of the meaning of 'decussate'. Startled spinebills and New Holland honeyeaters flew out of the flowering adenanthos as we admired the prolific gum nuts on the *Eucalyptus ficifolia*.

The red-tipped bushes were a form of *Leptospermum polygalyifolium*. Bill spotted an extremely rare six-petalled crowea flower among the normal five-petalled forms. There were some beautiful red flowers tipped with gold on the *Callistemon rugulosus*, in June! Flowers and buds of Western Australian *Lambertia inermis* prompted comparison with eastern Australian *Lambertia formosa*. Even without flowers, the sculptural leaves of *Hakea brownii* were appealing.

The 'random walk' continued along paths and into areas rarely penetrated in shorter visits to the ANBG. We passed by the *Microcitrus australasica* and stopped for a late morning tea at a convenient bench seat among the zierias, marvelling again at what a wonderful, valuable but under-appreciated place (in some quarters, apparently) the ANBG is. *Homoranthus darwinoides* prompted reflection on the complexity of plant identification.

Out through the top gate into Black Mountain Nature Reserve, recording of species followed thick and fast. Of course *Acacia genistifolia* was flowering, probably the most-often recorded plant in flower. *Acacia buxifolia* was in bud, *Exocarpos cupressiformis* had fruit, *Cassinia quinquefaria* was prominent along the disturbed side of the road we followed.

We branched around the strange installation, skirting the dumped offcuts of artificial grass carpet, heading gradually uphill through *Eucalyptus rossii* and the occasional *E. macrorhyncha*, with a very mixed understorey where no plant was particularly dominant.

Interesting features were *Dillwynia phyllicoides*, not the more common *D. sericea*, the many patches of unidentified orchid rosettes, and the contrast between the burnt area on one side of the road with the unburnt vegetation on the other. Gullies were also prominent, with the base of one very steep one densely 'carpeted' in an as-yet unidentified *Leptospermum*.

Late lunch among some very old *Eucalyptus rossii* near a water reservoir was hurried somewhat by the disappearance of sunshine and increased wind strength. We headed downhill towards Black Mountain Drive, with weeding of *Acacia baileyana* seedlings much assisted by very wet soil.

Dodging bicycles speeding relatively silently downhill, we crossed the road and discovered a population of *Mirbelia oxylobioides* on the ANBG side. An early afternoon appreciated in the cold, but senses elevated by all we had seen.