

## Report on Wednesday Walk – Yerrabi Track, Namadgi National Park – 25 January 2017

By the time we reached the Boboyan Trig carpark to start our walk, we were enveloped in a white mist which kept us unexpectedly cool all morning until we got to the highest part of the track. The beginning of the track descends gently through a forest of mainly Broad-leaved Peppermint trees (*Eucalyptus dives*) towards a swampy grassland. The low understorey on the slope consisted mainly of *Podolobium alpestre* and *Persoonia chamaepeuce* with a few *Exocarpos strictus*. An interesting find at the edge of the track was an Anchor Plant (*Discaria pubescens*) covered in an unusually large number of small green seed capsules. As we strolled down the lower and much moister end of the slope, *Bulbine bulbosa* and *Podolepis hieracioides* brightened up the scene with their yellow flowers.

The track traverses one edge of the swamp, with a wide vista of Snowgrass (*Poa sieberiana*) to the left and a crescent of Black Sallee (*Eucalyptus stellulata*) sheltering the far side. Amongst the grass tussocks were more *Bulbine bulbosa*, and near the path in the more open areas *Hypoxis hygrometrica* and a few *Geranium antrorsum* nestled close to the ground. But the most noticeable plant, adorning the edge of the path for some distance, was *Trachymene humilis*. These are in the Carrot Family (Apiaceae) and bear multiple-flowered flat white flowerheads on short stems. Some shrubby vegetation included *Leptospermum myrtifolium*, white-flowering *Baeckea utilis* and a few *Hakea microcarpa* in seed.

After the flat stroll, we came to an upward path through Snow Gums (*Eucalyptus pauciflora*) and Mountain Gums (*E. dalrympleana*). The understorey there is mostly the mountain form of *Acacia dealbata*, and the silvery blue-green foliage against a backdrop of dark misty forest brought to mind intricate embroidery. Amongst the wattles, a few *Olearia megalophylla* were growing and a large *Clematis aristata*, heavily laden with almost-ripe seed-heads, covered a fallen log.

As we approached the Boboyan Trig at the top of the track the mist cleared. Burgan (*Kunzea ericoides*) was growing thickly in places, still bearing its white flowers. The mountain form is a bit different to those growing locally at lower altitudes — they are lower-growing and have brighter green leaves. Scattered amongst the rocks around the trig were lots of pink-flowering *Pelargonium australe* and a few *Veronica perfoliata*.

In the vicinity of the Trig, the geology changes markedly from the dark and flaky 410 million-year-old metamorphosed sedimentary rocks we'd been walking on to dark-flecked pale grey granite. The latter is Shannon's Flat adamellite and is even older than the shale, some 475 million years old. As well as giving an incredible insight into the Earth's history, the smooth granite proved to be an ideal lunch spot.

The track continues down some steep and elderly concrete steps through a narrow cleft in the rocks, eventually ending on a wide expanse of granite from where you can see most of the mountain peaks in the National Park. On a good day, that is! By then, we had come out of the cloud, but it extended mistily right along the valley below. So we had to assume the vista displayed on an information board was there in the mist somewhere. Some other plants were found there, anyway — a few *Pomaderris phyllifolia* and some *Phebalium squamulosum* ssp. *ozothamnoides*. And several clumps of *Dianella tasmanica*, heavily laden with still-green fruit, were growing in the shelter of the rocks. Some little native animal obviously found them tasty, as there were several piles of fresh skins with the fleshy parts entirely eaten out.

There were other signs of wildlife along the way. The birds stayed mostly amongst the trees, but we heard Gang-gangs, Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos and Leaden Flycatchers plus other unidentified calls. We saw a beautiful gold and brown mottled lizard, probably a species of *Ctenotus*. And twice we saw furry caterpillars hosting multiple bright red mites (as pictured in Roger's *Insects of Southeastern Australia*, p.159). But the insect highlight was a female Mountain Cricket in warning display mode, exhibiting the bright red and blue colours below her raised dark wings.

We even found some food as the *Exocarpos strictus* plants were bearing their pale pink fruit (or, more correctly, the edible swollen pedicels — the fruit is the tiny hard seed at the tip). Altogether it was a lovely walk, without experiences ranging from standing on massive rocks old enough to defy imagination to watching tiny insects carry out the intricacies of their short lives amongst the vegetation.

Text by Jo Walker; Photos by Jean Geue (JG) and Warwick Daniels (WD)



*Bulbine bulbosa* (WD)



*Stylidium ameriea* (WD)



Fog in the dry forest where *Eucalyptus dives* dominates (JG)



Morning tea in the mist and fog (JG)



*Exocarpos strictus* and friend (JG)



*Leptospermum myrtifolium* (JG)



*Exocarpos strictus* (JG)



*Persoonia camaepeuce* (JG)



*Discaria pubescens* with seeds (JG)



Burnt *Eucalyptus stellulata* stags (JG)



*Eucalyptus stellulata* (JG)



*Podolepis robusta* (JG)



*Senecio linarifolia* (JG)



Lunch on granite rocks (JG)



View from near the Boboyan Trig (JG)