

Report on Wednesday Walk — Shanahan's Mountain, Namadgi National Park

8 February 2017

We made our way slowly along Boboyan Road to start our walk at the Shanahan's Mountain carpark. The slowness was made necessary by lots of wildlife claiming their right of way — mostly Red-necked Wallabies, but also several Dusky Wood-swallows and two flocks of Tree Martins resting on the road surface.

We had a quick morning tea when we reached the carpark before starting a steady, but not difficult, climb through open forest of Snow Gums (*Eucalyptus pauciflora*) and Candlebarks (*E. rubida*). Near the start of the walk, there were some *Choretrum pauciflorum* growing near the track, but, as we moved on, most of the low understorey consisted of *Podolobium alpestre* and the spiny Gorse Bitter-pea (*Daviesia ulicifolia*) with a few *Goodenia hederacea* ssp *alpestris* providing a bit of ground cover.

The path eventually got a bit steeper, but we were surrounded by much the same vegetation — albeit with a few additions. The most noticeable of these were the *Exocarpos stricta* bushes. On Yerrabi Track a couple of weeks ago, we found them fruiting, but these weren't anywhere near that stage. We also began to see the silvery-leaved *Podolobium ellipticum* growing up through the lower understorey. Daisies were represented by a few small *Olearia erubescens*, a scatter of *Cassinia longifolia* and a single large *Ozothamnus thyrsoides* with a few *Brachyscome spathulata* flowers providing spots of blue in the undergrowth. We found several Snow Gum saplings hosting large clusters of spherical red galls contrasting with their pale leaves. Another insect find was a large and rather flattish furry caterpillar with two tufts of bright red hairs behind its head. There were also a few large families of Sawfly larvae on the eucalypts, one lot visible only as a line of shiny black heads along the margin of a leaf as the larvae clung to the undersurface while munching in unison along the edge of the leaf.

As we approached the highest point of our walk, the understorey consisted mostly of the mountain form of Silver Wattles (*Acacia dealbata*). Their slender trunks and thin stems were clothed with a dense growth of yellowish-green wispy lichen, a garb that contrasted beautifully with the pale bluegreen wattle foliage and made them appear suitably clad for what is probably often a cold and cloudy place.

At the top of the mountain, a small area of open grassland was home to *Poa sieberiana*, *Themeda triandra* and *Rytidosperma pallidum* growing amongst the rocky outcrops that were the source of the flaky metamorphosed shale we'd been walking on along the track. These Ordovician shales, formed when Canberra was beneath an ocean, have been pushed and turned for hundreds of millions of years. After all that time, the edges of the shale point upwards but are softened by a covering of pale lichens. Adding a few patches of bright green across the stony ground were some entirely flat *Scleranthus biflorus*. And the mountain form of Burgan (*Kunzea ericoides*) gave a bit of shelter as we sat and had lunch looking out across the valley to a vast landscape of tree-covered hills. The trees had put on so much new growth this year that the whole range had the appearance of being folded in velvet.

Just as we turned to descend back down the mountain, we found a female Mountain Cricket (*Acripeza reticulata*) on the path. With a bit of persuasion from the photographers, she lifted her dark wings to display the bright blue and red bands on her abdomen to warn us off.

After passing through a thicket of *Cassinia longifolia*, the vegetation was mostly similar to that we saw as we came up except for some larger populations of *Podolobium ellipticum* and some substantial areas of *Polyscias sambucifolia* and *Grevilla lanigera*. And we did find a few of the smaller plants we'd been looking out for — one *Euphrasia collina*, one little *Acacia gunnii* and a few *Stackhousia monogyna*.

We didn't find the *Olearia ramulosa*, one of the reasons for choosing this walk, but we found enough to keep us exclaiming over discoveries and discussing awkward leaf shapes during another rewarding day.

Jo Walker



Lunch on Shanahan's Mountain, Photo: Lesley Page