

Report on Wednesday Walk – Black Wallaby Loop, Googong Foreshores 8 March 2017

We started our walk from the Downstream Picnic Area through open forest with Burgan (*Kunzea ericoides*) the main understorey plant. At ground level, growing on the decomposing coarsely grained granite, *Astroloma humifusum* (Cranberry Heath) formed small grey-green prickly carpets — and one of them was still displaying a few bright red tubular flowers. Another colourful find was a Botany Bay Weevil (*Chrysolopus spectabilis*), its bright turquoise speckles not providing much in the way of camouflage. We also saw a few empty cicada pupal cases clinging to twigs and one lonely sawfly larva on a wattle that had obviously dropped from the overhanging eucalypt.

We were soon on the path high above the Queanbeyan River where, after filling Googong Dam, it cascades towards Queanbeyan over several levels of deeply eroded cream-coloured rocks through an impressive gorge. The river derives its headwaters from creeks in the Bald Mountain area south of Anembo before travelling north and forming the rather zig-zag eastern boundary of the Tinderry Nature Reserve, then flowing on towards Googong.

There was a good range of shrubs along both sides of the path. There were quite a few Narrowleaved Hopbushes (*Dodonaea viscosa* ssp. *angustissima*), but most of them were of bonsai stature as they had been heavily nibbled — probably by the elusive Swamp Wallabies that give the loop its name but didn't make an appearance while we were there. The thorny *Bursaria spinosa* ssp. *lasiophylla* fared better and we saw a few sizeable bushes. Scattered amongst the shrubs were *Lomandra longifolia* and *Dianella revoluta*. And, on an outcrop of rocks on the higher side of the path, we found a large population of *Calytrix tetragona*. There were no flowers or colourful sepals present, but their bright green foliage stood out against the darker vegetation.

There were several species of Pomaderris along the track — *Pomaderris betulina* ssp. *betulina*, *P. angustifolia*, *P. eriocephala* and the rare *P. pallida*. *P. betulina* ssp. *betulina* can grow to almost tree-like stature, and, in places, we were walking under a canopy of very old ones through an avenue of their tall leafless stems.

After getting a close view of the huge dam wall, we climbed upwards for a bit, passing some large quartz boulders. At this corner of the loop, we found a few *Ajuga australis* nestling amongst the leaf litter, some *Hibbertia calycina* and two bright green patches of the ground-hugging *Acrotriche serrulata*.

Then we passed through a stand of *Acacia mearnsii* and made our way across a small dam wall towards a hill to find a lunch spot. We stopped for a while to watch the birds on the water below — Black Swans, Pacific Black Ducks and Coots — and, in the distance, a solitary White Egret. There were a few other birds around as we ate our lunch amongst the eucalypts and wattles and a few *Allocasuarina verticillata*, most noticeably a White-throated Treecreeper busily searching for insects on a nearby tree. A robust Mistletoe on a low branch caught our attention, and, on inspection, we found several clusters of narrowly-tubular, red and yellow flowers. Many of the trees we'd walked under on this walk were hosting Mistletoes and all of those we were able to examine were *Amyema miquelii*.

On the way back to the carpark, we walked along a road flanked on the lower side by neatly-shaped *Acacia mearnsii* trees and small thickets of the suckering *Acacia parramattensis*. On the higher side, above a steep bank of sedimentary rock, dry forest extended up the slope. There were eucalypts visible along all of our walk — *Eucalyptus melliodora*, *E. rossii*, *E. nortonii* and *E. bridgesiana* and possibly a few others. But, it was along this last part of our walk that we saw some very old trees. Several of them had suffered a catastrophe some time in the past, with substantial areas of dead wood still visible under the cloak of living wood steadily extending to repair the damage and restore the beauty of the ancient trees.

Text: Jo Walker; Photos: Gail Ritchie Knight and Jeanette Jeffrey



Amyema miquelii



Amyema miquelii on host tree



Astroloma humifusum with red flower
by Jeanette Jeffrey



Botany Bay weevil (*Chrysolopus spectabilis*) on *Acacia* sp



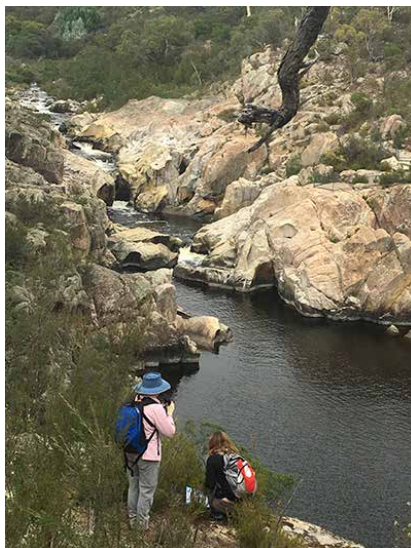
Bursaria spinosa ssp. *lasiophylla*



Bursaria spinosa ssp. *lasiophylla*



Mike and Jo at Googong Dam



Merelyn and Kris overlooking the Cascades, Queanbeyan River downstream from Googong Dam



Queanbeyan River downstream from Googong Dam