

Wednesday Walk to Percival Hill Reserve, ACT 3 May 2017

Percival Hill Reserve is bordered by the Barton Highway and the suburbs of Nicholls and Crace and has been farmed in the past, but there are sizeable areas of natural vegetation and a diverse range of species growing in the heavy soil and amongst the small outcrops of sedimentary rocks.

We started the walk through the gate at the end of Schow Place and walked up the open grassy hill into a woodland area of *Eucalyptus polyanthemos* (Red Box) and *E. bridgesiana* (Apple Box). The taller understorey plants were mainly *Kunzea ericoides* (Burgan) and *Bursaria spinosa* ssp. *lasiophylla* with a few sapling *Acacia implexa* (Hickory Wattles). Forming a rather dense lower understorey were thickets of *Leptospermum multicaule* — the form here is lower-growing and more compact than other populations we've seen. This species has several common names, but the most descriptive is probably Dog-tangle! Some contrast to the green of the surrounding areas was provided by the greyish foliage of patches of *Chrysocephalum apiculatum*. As we walked along, a pair of Scarlet Robins accompanied us, flying from post to post along the fenceline as we approached.

After walking up to the trig at the top of Percival Hill (662m), from where we could see Black Mountain and the surrounding distant hills above the suburbs and cleared areas, we turned towards the slope that leads down to the dam close to the Barton Highway and the golf course. We walked through an area of very old *Eucalyptus mannifera* (Brittle Gums) — which had lived up to their name as the ground was littered with dry grey branches. *Leptospermum multicaule* was still the main understorey plant there, but in the nearby open ground there were some *Leucochrysum albicans* (Hoary Sunray) showing a few white flowers. The *Hibbertia obtusifolia* (Grey Guinea-flower) were doing a bit better, displaying lots of golden flowers. Amongst some nearby rocks, *Cheilanthes austrotenuifolia* (Rock Ferns) were growing. And an interesting find was a scatter of *Wahlenbergia luteola* plants waving their blue flowers in the breeze. This Bluebell has distinctive yellow or fawn undersides to the petals.

On a slight rise, we walked over to look at what seemed to be a *Callitris* of some sort. It turned out to be a *Kunzea ericoides* (Burgan bush) but a much denser and more neatly formed one than the others we had seen earlier.

The slope down to the lower part of the Reserve was mostly dry forest with a cover of *Eucalyptus mannifera*, *E. rossii* and *E. bridgesiana*. There were some heath and pea plants growing there — *Melichrus urceolatus* (Urn Heath) and *Brachyloma daphnoides* (Daphne Heath) along with *Pultenaea procumbens* and *Dillwynia sericea* (Showy Parrot-pea).

Towards the base of the slope, where the soil was moister, there were some *Cryptandra amara* var. *longiflora* and the leafy rosettes of *Leptorhynchos squamatus* (Scaly Buttons). And, in open areas amongst slightly taller plants, there were literally carpets of *Astroloma humifusum* (Cranberry Heath), a few of them bearing their bright red tubular flowers. There were *Lissanthe strigosa* (Peach Heath) there too — including one neat and very compact bush nearly half a metre tall, a very different form to those usually seen. As we turned along the track at the lowest part of our walk, we were walking under some *Eucalyptus blakelyi* (Blakely's Red Gums).

Although the Percival Hill Reserve is surrounded by urbanisation, it holds an interesting array of the local flora.

Jo Walker