

## Wednesday Walk – Gungahlin Hill, ACT – 17 May 2017

We began our walk to Gungahlin Hill at the Dooka Street entrance (off Langtree Crescent) in Crace. This area is on the western side of the Gungahlin Grassland Nature Reserve and is mostly dry sclerophyll forest with a few open areas.

The short track up to the reservoir was bordered by Scribbly Gums (*Eucalyptus rossii*) and Brittle gums (*E. mannifera*). Scattered amongst the understorey of *Cassinia longifolia* and *Daviesia mimosoides* were clouds of cream flowers on the *Acacia genistifolia*. Almost all of the *Daviesia* bushes had very narrow leaves, and there was some discussion as to whether they were *Daviesia mimosoides* or *D. leptophylla* — on closer investigation the venation on the leaves seems to indicate they were *D. mimosoides*.

After the reservoir, the track descended gently through further similar forest with more *Acacia genistifolia*, but also some stands of Silver Wattles (*Acacia dealbata*). And, as the forest opened up a bit, some of the smaller shrubs and herbaceous plants had claimed a space. Amongst them were Daphne Heath (*Brachyloma daphnoides*), Urn Heath (*Melichrus urceolatus*), *Pultenaea procumbens* and Flax-lilies (*Dianella revoluta*).

Further down the hill, we came across several very ancient *Eucalyptus rossii*. They had huge gnarled tree trunks, some with wide growth at the base. Most had been severely damaged by fire some time in the distant past. Some were hollow and areas of dead wood could be seen on the others. But the new wood is still slowly extending, covering these old injuries in a cloak of new white bark.

Before the lowest part of the walk, there was an open area covered in a variety of grasses — Wallaby Grasses (*Austrodanthonia carphoides* and *A. eriantha*), Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*) and Red-leg Grass (*Bothriochloa macra*). They were interspersed with daisies — grey-green patches of *Chrysocephalum apiculatum*, *Vittadinia muelleri* and *Xerochrysum viscosum* — and a few Rock Ferns (*Cheilanthes austrotenuifolia*).

In the lower areas with moister soil, Weeping Grass (*Microlaena stipoides*) was evident before an area of introduced grasses took over. The dominant trees in this area were Blakely's Red Gums (*Eucalyptus blakelyi*).

We returned to our starting point along the western edge of the reserve beside the Barton Highway. Although the forest there was similar to that at the start of the walk, there were a few plants there that we hadn't seen previously. There were a few Blue Devils (*Eryngium rostratum*) and some Trigger Plants (*Stylidium graminifolium*) and several small and scattered populations of *Cryptandra amara* var. *longiflora*.

While we were sitting on a log having lunch, we were entertained by a small flock of White-winged Choughs, two Mudlarks and a White-throated Treecreeper — and watched by a large Raven in a nearby tree, probably hoping for some leftovers.

Although it was a fairly short walk, we saw a good range of vegetation in the small area we covered. And it was heartening to see those ancient trees, surrounded by a modern and much younger city, not just surviving but still re-generating.

Text: Jo Walker; Photos: Helen Brewer (HB) and Paul Edwards (PE)



Ancient *Eucalyptus rossii* with Jo Walker (HB)



Elderly bulbous scribbly gum  
*Eucalyptus rossii* (PE)



Morning tea in Gungahlin grasslands area (HB)



Original Gungahlin Hill woodland, start of walk (HB)



*Xerochrysum viscosum* (HB)



*Solenogyne dominii* flowerhead (HB)