

Wednesday Walk – Dalton NSW: Cemetery, Broadway TSR and Little Plains Road – 15 November 2017

In contrast to last week's trip to the mountains, we spent the day in the flat to undulating countryside in the Dalton area. We met at Sutton and travelled via Gundaroo and Gunning to the little town of Dalton.

Our first stop was at the cemetery where we were joined by a busy little Echidna. The cemetery contains a large area of remnant woodland around its edges. The trees consisted of *Eucalyptus blakelyi* (Blakely's Red Gum), *E. melliodora* (Yellow Box) and a few *E. macrorhyncha* (Red Stringybarks). The understorey was sparse in most of the area — there was *Daviesia leptophylla* (Slender Bitter-pea), *Cassinia quinquefaria* and a small population of *Grevillea lanigera* as well as a few smaller shrubs including *Daviesia genistifolia* and *Dillwynia sericea*. The blue flowers of a few small *Cheiranthra linearis* (Finger-flower) were noticeable and in one small area near the entrance *Pultenaea setulosa* was growing. We spent rather a long time there so, by the time we were leaving, *Tricoryne elatior* was unfolding its yellow flowers — it's one of those lily species that opens its flowers about midday. Along the drier side of the cemetery next to the road *Leucochrysum albicans* (Hoary Sunray) was in full flower and a small population of *Calotis cuneifolia* (Purple Burr-daisy) still had a few blue flowers amongst the developing seed-heads.

We stopped for a quick, and rather late, morning tea at the little park in Dalton that contains a display of local rocks bearing ancient plant fossils. Then it was on to the Broadway TSR passing quite a few silver-leaved *Eucalyptus cinerea* (Argyle Apple) along the roadside. The TSR was quite thickly wooded with all of the eucalypts previously mentioned, but may have been more open in the past as there were scattered large sawn tree stumps. Most of the understorey was low-growing except for a few stands of sprawling *Leptospermum multicaule*. *Hibbertia pedunculata* was showing some golden flowers as was *Gompholobium huegelii* (Wedge Pea), and the more orange yellow flowers of *Dillwynia sericea* (Silky Parrot Pea) and *Pultenaea subspicata* added a bit more colour to the rather muted shades of their surroundings. Heath plants were represented by *Lissanthe strigosa* (Peach Heath), *Brachyloma daphnoides* (Daphne Heath) and *Leucopogon virgatus* (Common Beard-heath). In an damper area of ephemeral creeks a patch of *Calotis anthemoides* was bearing a few white flowers. On our way back to the road we came across another large motionless Shingleback Lizard, the second one we'd seen in the area.

We set off then for Little Plains Road where *Cheiranthra linearis* really comes into its own. There were several plants with clusters of a dozen or more bright blue flowers. *Goodenia bellidifolia* was in flower too, it's dainty yellow flowers along the long stems moving in the breeze. Two *Boronia nana* var. *hyssopifolia* were nestled amongst the other plants and covered in pale pink flowers. And the ground-hugging little *Comesperma sphaerocarpum* was growing in open areas and full of its attractive little blue flowers. A few more *Calotis cuneifolia* were seen there too, much more robust plants than those we saw in the cemetery and with paler flowers.

At the end of Little Plains Road we turned left into Blakney Creek Road and stopped at the steep roadside cutting a little further on. *Brunonia australis* grows there, the only place we've seen it in the areas to which our walks have taken us over the years. This year had been very dry, judging by the amount of dust on the roads we'd just travelled, and there were very few in flower. But we did find a few of their light blue flowerheads reaching up amongst the shrubby *Pultenaea spinosa* plants.

Although the Dalton region is part of the Southern Tablelands, it is home to a lot of plants we don't come across very often and some we've only found in that part of the country. Small variations in temperature and rainfall, geology and soil structure, along with aspect, all probably play a part in the sort of plant diversity we found around Dalton.

Text: Jo Walker; Photos: Brigitta Wimmer



Boronia nana var. *hyssopifolia*



Broadway TSR



Brunonia australis flower



Billardia scandens pink



Billardia scandens



Cheiranthra linearis



Brunonia australis



Cheiranthra linearis syn *cyanea*



Dillwynia sericea



Gompholobium huegelii



Hibbertia pedunculata hirsute sepals



Leptspermum multicaule



Goodenia hederacea



Rhytidosperma pallidum



Thysanotus tuberosus



Lissanthe strigosa fruit



Pultenaea spinosa



Pultenaea subspicata



Tricoryne elatior