

This Weeks Wednesday Walk (April 10) - the Power Line Circuit, Nerriga Road.

The pylons of the main power line south of the Nerriga Road are accessed by a number vehicle tracks leading off the main road. The third trail after Billy's Hill (Touga Rd) leads through woodland, with a diverse heath understory, onto a series of interconnecting rock platforms, dominated by Heath Myrtle, *Baeckea brevifolia*, and known for its orchids growing in the moss- and lichen-covered peat patches.

Before setting out, we had a look at the regeneration along the path of the gas pipeline that was chopped up in early 2018. There were fine flower displays from the aptly named Sunshine Wattle, *Acacia terminalis*, and the small white cushions of *Cryptandra propinqua* and *C. amara* as well as an occasional flower on *Goodenia heterophylla*. A couple of problematic *Pomaderris* were seen in bud. A remarkable range of low heathland shrubs have germinated in the disturbed ground along the pipeline since its construction and provide a great flower display in spring.



Sunshine Wattle, *Acacia terminalis*



Cryptandra propinqua



Pomaderris ?andromedifolia



Goodenia heterophylla

Once on the track, the surrounding woodland is dominated by one of the scribbly gums, probably *E. haemostoma*. We encountered a large range of *Leptospermums* that we normally identify in summer from their flowers but the large capsules of the Round-leaved Tea tree, *L. rotundifolium* were unmistakable. *Bossiaea heterophylla* and Prickly Broom Heath, *Monotoca scoparia*, were also seen in flower.



Scribbly gum probably *E. haemostoma*.



Bossiaea heterophylla



Round-leaved Tea tree, *Leptospermum rotundifolium*



Prickly Broom Heath, *Monotoca scoparia*

After emerging from the woodland, the track wends its way among a series of sandstone platforms, dominated by clumps of Cross-leaved Heath, *Calytrix tetragona*, and Heath Myrtle, *Baeckea brevifolia*, and shallow mats of peat covered with moss and a translucent Coral Lichen, *Cladia retipora*. This is an interesting species because it was the first Australian lichen to be described in a scientific publication. The specimen was collected from Tasmania in 1792 by that great French plant collector, Jacques-Julien de Labillardière.

We soon spotted our first orchid, a Parson's Bands, *Eriochilus cucculatus*. We then discovered several dried stems of another large orchid that, after some considerable discussion, was identified as the Horned Orchid, *Orthocerus strictum*. We have never seen this orchid here before and it would be worth checking the site out next summer around January. After more searching, we found some spent flowers of a Tiny Midge Orchid, probably *Corunastylis nuda*. We expected to find large numbers of Tiny Greenhoods, *Speculantha furva*, seen on previous visits at this time, but a rosette and a small plant were all we saw. We continued searching until the end of the track at the next pylon and the only plants seen in flower were *Leucopogon ericoides* and Jam Tarts!, *Melichrus procumbens*. We also relocated the foliage of Yellow Star Flower, *Asterolasia trymaloides*, at the edge of the track under the tea trees. We normally encounter this plant in subalpine grasslands.



Rock platform with Heath Myrtle, *Baeckea brevifolia*



Coral Lichen, *Cladia retipora*



Parson's Bands, *Eriochilus cucculatus*



Basal rosette of a Tiny Greenhood, *Speculantha furva*



Horned orchid, *Orthocerus strictum*



Tiny Greenhood, *Specularantha furva*

We returned by the same route and spent more time checking out plants growing along the pipeline, mostly the different peas. The Pomaderris are a puzzle, are there two species or just one variable species of *?andromedifolia?*. A slightly disappointing trip orchid wise but not unexpected since it followed an extremely dry summer and autumn.