

## Molonglo Gorge Walk, 4 September 2019

The day proved to be a perfect walking day with some sunshine, light winds and a temperature of around 20°C. Even though we have gone through such a dry winter we knew Molonglo Gorge might make up for the lack of flowers and lush vegetation by the views down to the gorge and across to the steep rocky slopes opposite. It didn't disappoint us. The view varied from the still waters of the Molonglo fringed by *Phragmites australis* to the steep rocky slopes rising up on the other side of the river. The track itself – although rocky, narrow and steep in sections – is rather picturesque in its own right, and we admired the low stone wall along part of the trail that looks old but very solid. Unfortunately nobody knew any of its history.

As always the dominant features remain the big old eucs, partly arching over the trail or tracing intricate patterns against the sky like *Eucalyptus bridgesiana*, *E. macrorhyncha*, *E. rossii* and *E. nortonii*. These trees provoke some lively discussions about bark, fruit and leaves, and it seems we need reinforcing time and time again.

All along the track and river the warm yellow of *Acacia rubida* and *Acacia dealbata* in full flower brought more 'sunshine' to the whole area. We also saw a few small *Acacia siculiformis*, and on some slopes much of the understorey consisted of *Pomaderris angustifolia* (in bud) and *Mirbelia oxylobioides*. There was a lot of variation in the *Dodonaea viscosa* ssp *angustissima* (possibly also *angustifolia*?) leaves – some much wider than others, making us acknowledge that nature doesn't always seem to strictly conform to our expectations.

We encountered *Styphelia triflora*, *Phebalium squamulosum* spp *ozothamnoides*, one lonely *Persoonia rigida*, *Leucopogon fletcheri*, *Hardenbergia violacea* and *Hovea heterophylla* flowering, *Craspedia variabilis* and *Stackhousia monogyna* (both in bud), and we were overwhelmed by one absolutely stunning *Cryptandra amara* with its densely packed white miniature bells. Definitely another highlight of the day.

Walking back the same way we had come we nevertheless did see a few more plants we had overlooked before. Apart from a *Clematis microphylla* in flower that had draped itself around and over dead trunk and branches, we debated for a little while before settling on *Omphacomeria acerba*. (Where are our cheat sheets when we need them?)

We had also made a point to look a bit more closely at the ferns that we seem to neglect quite often. A couple of IDs are still outstanding but we knew *Cheilanthes austrotenuifolia* and *Asplenium flabillifolium* spilling down the rock faces.

And last not least we took photos of orchid leaf rosettes for further identification. Having just recently gone for an orchid walk with our local expert Jean Egan it was a bit disappointing not to be able to positively put a name to them ourselves.

But all in all a gorgeous gorge walk – and everybody seemed content, including Arrow, the dog accompanying one of our walkers.

Brigitta Wimmer (text and photos)



Peaceful Molonglo River



Trekking uphill



Rocky slopes opposite



*Pomaderris angustifolia*



*Styphelia triflora*



*Hardenbergia violacea*



*Acacia siculiformis*



*Cryptandra amara*



*Phebalium squamulosum spp ozothamnoides*



*Mirbelia oxylobioides*



The old stone wall



NOT one of the orchid species