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MARCH MEETING

Speaker: Marj Seaton Topic: Arnhem Land

Write-up by John Thompson

In July/August last year Marj and Norm went on an Outback Spirit tour to Arnhem Land, starting at Nhulunbuy on the Gove Peninsula and finishing in Darwin.

The town of Nhulunbuy is reached via air from either Darwin or Cairns. It is a mining town created in the 1960's to mine bauxite, the ore from which aluminium is extracted.

A walk along the beach featured the Coastal or Horsetail She-oak, *Casuarina equisetifolia* and Beach Morning Glory, *Ipomoea pes-caprae*. No swimming is allowed at this beach or any other due to the presence of stingers (Box or Irukandji Jellyfish) and crocodiles.

Another walk along the Gayngaru Wetland Track yielded some different species, Northern Black Wattle or Ear-pod Wattle - *Acacia auriculiformis*, Weeping Paperbark - *Melaleuca leucodendra*, Screw pine - *Pandanus spiralis* and in areas of open water, water lilies *Nymphaea violacea* and a smaller white flowered species.

In the surrounding countryside there were Darwin Stringybark - *Eucalyptus tetradonta*, an occasional Darwin Woollybutt - *Eucalyptus miniata*, a few *Grevillea pteridifolia* and *Brachychiton paradoxus*.

Day two of the trip was spent exploring the Gove Peninsula, firstly travelling to Yirrakala and meeting the Yolngu people from whom they received a 'welcome to country' in the form of a smoking ceremony followed by traditional dancing.



Moving further west several art centres were visited, each having a distinctive style of painting. In the afternoon they went to Macassan Beach. The Macassans from Sulawesi (Indonesia) having been travelling to the northern shores of Australia since the 1400's to trade with the local peoples for Trepang (sea slug or sea cucumber or beche-de-mer). Stone circles indicated the camping sites of the Macassans. Turkey Bush - *Calytrix exstipulata* and *Grevillea dryandri* were seen in the vicinity.

Day three involved a lot of travelling to reach the camp at Murwangi. The roads were mainly red dirt with sealed crossings at the main rivers, some with bridges but little attempt has been made to improve the roads due to the local land council's reluctance to allow outsiders onto traditional lands.

The cabins at the camp at Murwangi were pretty swish complete with en suites. The camp was only 200 metres from the Arafura wetlands. A morning cruise through the wetlands featured many bird species including the Comb-crested Jacana and other wildlife such as wild horses and crocodiles. Both native and exotic grasses are to be found around the along with the Freshwater Mangrove; *Barringtonia acutangula* and *Corypha utan* (syn. *C. elata*), left, which lives for c.70 years then flowers, fruits and dies.



The wetlands were the filming location for Rolf de Heer's 2006 film, "Ten Canoes" and in the afternoon Frankie, one of the actors in the film along with the camp manager gave some insight as to the uses the local flora provided to the indigenous peoples. Some of the plants and their uses include:

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1. *Brachychiton paradoxus* – flowers were consumed as were the seeds after cooking and the bark used to make twine.
2. Milkwood - *Alstonia actinophylla* – the poisonous sap was used a glue with ochre in their paintings, now the modern adhesive, Aquadhere® is preferred.
3. Ironwood - *Erythrophleum chlorostachys* – timber used for woomeras, clap sticks, digging sticks, it is also used in smoking ceremonies at funerals. All parts of the tree are poisonous.
4. Red Bush Apple - *Syzygium suborbiculare* has large reddish purple fruits that the local people enjoy greatly.



The next day driving to Ramingining, north of Murwangi, another stop was made at an art centre where the local ladies wove mats from the stripped and dyed pandanus leaves, left. A trip to the local store revealed the disturbing sight of shelves full of sugar – unfortunately the locals had got more than just a taste for the sweet stuff. It was then westwards to Barrumundi Lodge. Outside the lounge there was a ‘Smelly Cheese Tree’ - *Morinda citrifolia*, the fruits of which are used for dyeing.

Fishing for barramundi was on the agenda for the morning with Marj and Norm being among those who successfully caught a fish. Several bird species were noted during the morning including a Jabiru, Collared, Azure and Sacred Kingfishers, migratory Whimbrels and Rainbow Bee Eaters.

The following day they headed further west through the stony country of west Arnhem Land and into areas of grey sand. *Livistona inermis*, Kapok Bush - *Cochlospermum fraseri*, River Pandanus - *Pandanus aquatic*, Screwpine - *Pandanus spiralis* and Quinine Bush - *Petalostigma pubescens* were amongst some of plants noted. The destination for the night was Mount Borradaile. A late afternoon walk on the escarpment revealed some local plants e.g. *Jacksonia dilatata*, some local wildlife, the very colourful Leichhardt’s Grasshopper, right, and some indigenous rock art.



The next day was spent around Mount Borradaile looking at more rock art and some of the local vegetation including the unusual Sweet Snakeskin Lily - *Amorphophallus glabra* and the deadly Strychnine Trees - *Strychnos lucida* whose fruit was used in the early 1900’s to kill foxes and rats. An evening cruise saw several bird species in evidence including Egrets, Darters, Masked Lapwings, Raja Shelducks, Magpie Geese, Sea Eagle, Kites, Ibis and Rufous Night Herons.



It was then northwards toward the Cobourg Peninsula. Stopping at Angulare Creek some different plant species were noted, Lasiandra - *Melastoma affine* (syn. *M. polyanthum*), *Bossiaea bossiaeoides* and Cocky Apple - *Planchonia careya*, left. Tonight’s destination was the Seven Spirit Bay Resort within the Garig Gunak Barlu National Park.

On the penultimate day of the tour a trip was made to the Victoria Settlement, where in 1838 a third but futile attempt was made to establish a defence post on Australia’s northern coast. The settlement was abandoned in 1849. All that is left is the stone built remains of the settlement.

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The final morning of the tour before flying back to Darwin, a four wheel drive trip was taken to Trepang Creek where the unusual Mangrove Ferns - *Acrostichum speciosum* were seen along with Nypa Palms - *Nypa fruticans*, which grow in estuarine conditions with only the long (up to 7 metres) fronds being above water. The sap from these palms is very sugar rich and has been touted as being even sweeter than Stevia.

Many thanks to Marj for sharing her images and stories from an area of Australia that few people get to visit.

MARCH SPECIMEN TABLE

Catherine first with a lovely stem of *Banksia "Birthday Candles"* now 1m high after about 15 years, and two *correas*, one uncertain, the other *C. alba*.

Marj brought in a *Macrozamia communis* which she is growing from seed. The label showed that it was surface sown on 5th May 2015. It took two years before there was any sign of activity and about another three and a half years before a leaf appeared. Not even snail paced!



Mandy showed us seven plants. Two different *Backhousias*, *B. citriodora* (lemon myrtle) and *B. vertifolia* which is having its second flowering for the season. This last has no aromatic leaves unlike the lemon myrtle. *Calothamnus quadrifidus* was a striking addition to the table, as its growing tips were a very pretty pink. *Lambertia orbifolia*, with its red flowers (which only last one day but appear regularly through the season) has been very successful for Mandy. Hers is 2-3m high. Two unidentified *correas*, *Ptilotus obovatus* and the very attractive *Buckinghamia celsissima* (Ivory Curl Tree) made up the rest of her specimens.



As is his habit, John was last to describe his offerings. He gave us a large spray of *Lomatia fraxinifolia*, left, a north-eastern Queensland tree which can grow at an altitude of 1000m. This indicates its need for more water over summer in Melbourne. John's is currently 3 - 4m high. In its early stages sun protection is recommended.

A 1½ m long flowering stem of *Lepidosperma laterale* gave him an opportunity to spruik the advantages of some of the sedges. This one slowly suckers to spread through the garden. The most common species in our area is another sedge, *Lepidosperma concavum*, sadly hard to grow from seed and usually propagated by division.

The bird attracting *Correa reflexa*, Anglesea form, has narrower leaves and flowers, usually starting in January, than we are used to seeing in our area. It grows 3/4m high and about 1-2m wide. Finally the single flowers of *Lambertia uniflora* from WA were compared with the four of *L. orbifolia* as shown in Mandy's specimen.

FROM THE APS VIC QUARTERLY MEETING

Catherine reported on some of the items discussed at the Quarterly meeting held in Ringwood on March 2nd. These included:

An agreement with Neutrog is being finalized whereby an APS logo is to be printed on the Bush Tucker packaging with a small royalty to go to APS Vic. Neutrog also agrees to present to APS Vic once a year.

5.

APS Vic is to be present at MIFGS again. APS Vic fridge magnets with our logo and website address have been ordered to give away at the event. Samples were presented at our last meeting. If district groups would like to have magnets, they can be bulk ordered through our district group representative.

It is proposed that APS Vic fees could be payable via the website from next year. This option is still being considered and it would allow easier management of district group and APS Vic fees. It would still be possible for members to pay fees directly (direct debit, cash or check to local group).

There is now the ability for each district group to have its own web page. The APS webmaster can help us set up our page if desired.

Growing Australian is available online. The current issue was available first online, prior to the mail-out.

The seed bank is being cleaned out of old seed. Contact the seed bank officer if interested in obtaining some of this old seed that may still be viable but is past its best use date. Her email address is: apsvicseedbank@gmail.com

The 2020 FJC Rogers seminar will be sponsored by APS Yarra Yarra. The topic is Lamiaceae and planning is currently underway.

A host for quarterly meetings is being sought from District Groups.

Pick of the Bunch - March 2019

Specimen grown by Amanda Loudon

Buckinghamia celsissima F. Muell.

Ivory Curl Tree

Buckinghamia celsissima is a tall tree to 30 metres in its natural habit of the rainforests of northern Queensland but in cultivation in the southern states it is unlikely to grow past 6 - 8 metres.



The juvenile leaves or coppice growth are lobed whilst the mature growth is usually entire. The flower racemes are borne from late summer through to late autumn. They are up to 20cm long and are creamy white, fragrant, very conspicuous and attractive to both birds and insects.

A full sun or part shade aspect with good drainage in a slightly acidic soil is recommended. Despite their rainforest origin they are remarkably hardy and though frost tender when young they recover quickly in the spring. They are moderately hardy to dry

periods but supplementary watering is beneficial. Propagation is from fresh seed or cuttings with the former being the easier method.

Buckinghamia is a member of the Proteaceae family. A family of c.1500 species in c.80 genera occurring mainly in the Southern Hemisphere in tropical and temperate regions with c.900 species in 45 genera in Australia. It includes such genera as *Banksia*, *Conospermum*, *Grevillea*, *Hakea*, *Isopogon*, *Lomatia*, *Persoonia*, *Stenocarpus*, *Telopea* and *Xylomelum*. There are 2 species of *Buckinghamia*, the other being *B. ferruginiflora*, a rarer species only found in the Daintree region. It was only described in 1987 and obtains a similar height but the flowers which are covered in rusty brown hairs, hence the specific name of *ferruginiflora*, which is from the Latin, *ferrugineus*, rusty and *flos*, flower; the rusty flowers, are not as conspicuous as those of *B. celsissima*. It is uncommon in cultivation.

Ferdinand von Mueller described the genus and species in 1868 and named it after Richard Grenville,

the third Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, the Secretary of State for the Colonies from 1866 to 1868.

The specific epithet is from the Latin: *celsus*, high or lofty and the suffix, -issimus the superlative form, a reference to the tall stature of the tree in the forest.

April Meeting

Supper: Petra Cox (Please bring milk)

Write-up: Marj Seaton

2019 DIARY

April 2	Trevor Blake: "Malvaceae"
May 7	Christine Huf. "Forensics and the Plant World"
June 4	Chris Larkin and Janet Hodgkiss: "Pruning Australian Natives"
June 15	APS Geelong host APS Vic Committee of Management Meeting
July 2	
August 6	AGM, Members' slides and photo competition
September 3	Mike Beamish: The Pilbara
October 1	John Arnott: "Care for the Rare"
November 5	Sit down dinner – venue not yet arranged.
December 3	Members' slide night, extended supper and 'clear the decks' gold coin donation plants sale.

Plant Sales and Shows 2019

April 13	APS Yarra Yarra Native Plant and Book Sale, 10 – 4, Eltham Senior Cit's Centre
April 27	APS Geelong plant sale at 'Wirrawilla', 40 Lovely Banks Road
May 4	APS Mornington Peninsula Plant Sale, Seawinds, 10 – 3:30

PROMOTIONS



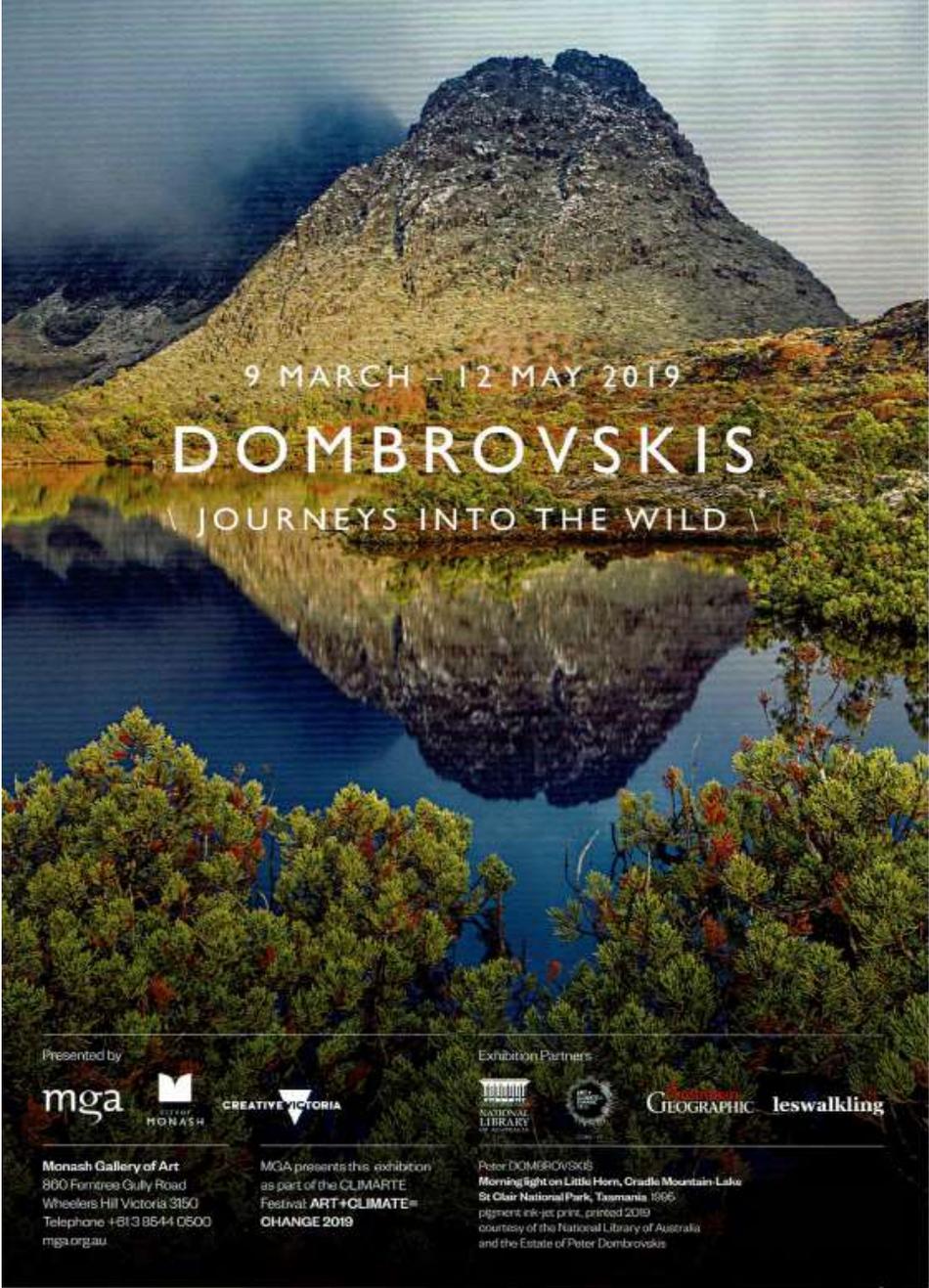
**MELBOURNE
INTERNATIONAL
FLOWER AND
GARDEN SHOW**
PRESENTED BY  **LAWN
SOLUTIONS
AUSTRALIA**

27 – 31 MARCH 2019
ROYAL EXHIBITION BUILDINGS
& CARLTON GARDENS



7.

For those interested in photography, there is an excellent exhibition on at the Monash Art Gallery until May. The gallery is on the corner of Jells and Ferntree Gully Roads. Most of the photographs were taken in the Tasmanian wilderness.



9 MARCH – 12 MAY 2019

DOMBROVSKIS

JOURNEYS INTO THE WILD

Presented by

mga  CREATIVE VICTORIA

Exhibition Partners

Monash Gallery of Art
800 Ferntree Gully Road
Wheeler's Hill Victoria 3150
Telephone +61 3 8544 0600
mga.org.au

MGA presents this exhibition
as part of the CLIMATE
Festival ART+CLIMATE
CHANGE 2019

Peter DOMBROVSKIS
*Morning Light on Little Horn, Cradle Mountain Lake
St Clair National Park, Tasmania 1956*
pigment ink-jet print, printed 2019
courtesy of the National Library of Australia
and the Estate of Peter Dombrovskis

8.

PHOTO GALLERY

At our February meeting, Sapphire showed this map of a woodland mycorrhizal distribution which was compiled by Mark Newbound. It did not arrive in time for the March newsletter so it is being shown here.

