



**Menai
Wildflower
Group**



Newsletter of Menai Wildflower Group October 2016

President's Report

Spring has sprung into a colourful array of pretty mauves and sunny yellows with bright peas and wattles glowing with vivid colour. It is a joyous time in our gardens with birds taking advantage of early blooms and rain that has turned leaves a lush green. What a start to spring we are experiencing.

The APS NSW Get-together was fabulously organised by the Tamworth Group with such a broad program of talks. The outings were especially interesting for me as this region is one of the top birding areas in NSW,

For those who attended the Waratah walk guided by Lloyd, a wonderful array of local plants in flower was enjoyed and a few Waratahs as well.

Sharon and I led the walk around Muogamarra Nature Reserve in August. Those who joined us were pleasantly surprised by the spectacular display of wildflowers. We met many people who find this reserve such a treasure and who visit each year.

Keep the next meeting in mind to experience Lloyd's special interest in the pink flannel flower. Also, it's your last chance to get your photos in for the 2017 calendar entry competition.

Jason Cockayne



Coming Local Events

(See Special Interest for others)

1 Oct Working Bee at IRFB 9am start

1 Oct Propagation at IRFS nursery 1pm

**12 Oct Menai Wildflower Group meeting
Guest speaker – Lloyd Hedges
“Pink Flannel Flower” 7pm**

5 Nov Working Bee at IRFB 9am start

5 Nov Propagation at IRFS nursery 1pm

**9 Nov Menai Wildflower Group meeting
AGM 7pm**

**9 Nov Menai Wildflower Group meeting
Guest speaker – Chad Bernek
“Frogs in the Garden” 7pm**

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From the Treasurer

An updated membership renewal form can be found on our website.

Sharon Pearson

This is your **current editor's final newsletter**. Failing body parts and non-cooperative computer and software have made it impossible for him to continue.

The upcoming AGM will be YOUR CHANCE to rise and shine in the annals of Menai Wildflower Group Newsletter history.



If any member knows of someone who would like to do a talk for our group in 2017 please give their details to a committee member.



Special Interest

Deadline for contributions to next newsletter will be Wednesday 23 Nov'16.

Any items suitable for inclusion in the newsletter may be sent to the Editor (Post to Secretary or e-mail fergsrus@ihug.com.au) before the deadline.

Working Bees at IRFB start at 9am and include weeding, mulching and lunching.

Propagation days are now a regular part of running the nursery at Illawong Rural Fire Station. The next two will be at 1pm on Saturdays 1 October and 5 November.

Nursery group held at the Tip Nursery. Please contact Lloyd Hedges if you wish to start attending.

The Group's Website Home Page can be easily accessed by doing a Google search using the phrase "Menai Wildflower Group" and selecting what should be the first option offered.

Visit a neighbouring group

When you joined the Menai Wildflower Group you became a member of the NSW APS and therefore are welcome at other APS group meetings, bushwalks, etc. This gives members a lot more activities to participate in.

Visit the APS NSW website www.austplant.com.au/ and check out what other districts are doing, particularly our neighbours:

Easthills <http://easthills.austplants.com.au/> and Sutherland <http://sutherland.austplants.com.au/>.

Lloyd Hedges

PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

MWG invites keen photographers to submit entries to this year's photographic competition. The 13 winners will have their photos included in our forthcoming superb 2017 calendar. Entries should show elements of native plants or fungi from our local geographic region and all photos will be judged on technical skill & artistic merit.

A maximum of 5 photos per person can be submitted via email or alternatively, you can submit on a USB flash drive by post or by hand.

Email: jimariley35@hotmail.com (overall file size maximum of 3MB – if your photo is accepted for the calendar you will be asked for a high-res image)

Post USB: Menai Wildflower Group
PO Box 3104
BANGOR NSW 2234

Drop off USB: To a MWG Committee Member on the following Saturdays between 9am-3pm: 2 July, 6 August, 3 September or 1 October at the Illawong Rural Fire Station (adjacent to the roundabout).

Deadline: by 3pm on 1st October 2016

Successful entrants will receive a native plant and a copy of the calendar at our 14 December meeting.

Terms & Conditions

Photos must be of the natural world within the Sutherland & St George areas

Local native plants or fungi

Your original work

Maximum of 5 images per person

By entering the competition you grant permission for MWG to use your image in their 2017 calendar and to promote the activities of the MWG.

August Guest Speaker

Garden Grevilleas with Peter Olde

There are more than 400 species and over 600 hybrids. I'd like to introduce some ideas and perhaps a different approach to growing.

In the early days of SGAP there was a lot of interest in growing natives. It was seen as patriotic and basically we only grew species. These days lots of Grevillea hybrids are grown which are often similar -large and flashy. Why not grow some local grevillea species as well, e.g. *G. sericea*. There is a wide variety of colours and forms in just this one species. *G. Collaroy Plateau* (first discovered by George Cayley in 1805) is a natural hybrid between *G. speciosa* and *G. sericea*. Cayley did not collect it but diarised the wide range of colours on the plants he saw.

Instead of spreading different cultivars throughout the garden, why not grow them together tightly but introduce a variety of colours at the same time? Or perhaps devote a small section of the garden to the variation in one species. Or perhaps intermingle different species that may not be so colourful with the tropical hybrids you can buy at the nursery? You can have a groundcover at the front, a medium shrub above and behind, then a larger plant at the back. You could select plants that are strongly bird-attracting, and plant them outside the window where you can watch birds while hidden in the house. Many grevilleas are highly aromatic, especially those with white flowers. Mix them with a winter-flowering wattle and sit back and enjoy the subtle perfumes in the middle of a winter's day. *Grevillea triloba* is excellent for this purpose. So is *G. simplex* MS, not officially named yet.



Grevillea banksia (Photo: B Walters)

G. banksii (very floriferous and one of the most important grevilleas in the palette of hybridizing) is worth growing. It comes from Queensland. Inland it grows to 5-6 m but towards the coast will be lower or even prostrate on the seaside heathlands.

G. baueri subsp. *baueri* or subsp. *asperula* come from the southern highlands. It is a compact shrub that flowers in winter-spring.

G. lanigera is widespread in NSW and the form Mt Tamboritha from Victoria's Wilson's Promontory is very popular and widely grown.

For gardeners with not much room *G. infundibularis* from Western Australia is a good choice. It is prostrate scrambler and can grow close to, even intermingling with other plants.

G. diminuta from near Canberra with its grey foliage and pendulous foliage is low-growing compact plant worth trying.

G. maxwellii is hardy and grows well in Sydney. It is a rare plant from Western Australia and spreads its foliage in a rather layered manner, in the style of Japanese horticulture.

Low growing *G. 'Nindery Sunrise'* and the floriferous *G. 'Pink Midget'* suit all conditions.

G. acropogon (from WA) is a long lived prostrate ground cover. An extremely rare plant in the wild but, like *G. maccutcheonii*, another rare plant from WA, it grows surprisingly well in gardens.

G. 'Bronze Rover' and *G. 'Aussie Crawl'* are dense ground-huggers, as is *G. 'Carol Ann'*, which came up in a garden in Oakdale, NSW.

G. dryandroides from the WA sandplains is a beautiful species but must be grafted to grow in NSW. Another dense ground cover is *G. obtusifolia*, with bright green foliage, and is a good choice for beginners.

The Poorinda hybrid, *G. 'Royal Mantle'*, is the best-ever-produced ground cover and is very attractive either cascading over a wall or as a standard.

One of the most attractive grevilleas is *G. 'Peaches and Cream'* which flowers for most of the year. *G. 'Cream Passion'* is similar, but has larger flowers. *G. 'Flamingo'*, with pink flowers that droop, is worthy, with its intense lemon colour.

Another very attractive garden plant is *G. leptobotrys*, which forms a low clump, with dainty mauve flowers.



Grevillea 'Honey Gem' (Photo: A.Ferguson)

G. 'Honey Gem' is long lived and hardy and flowers for most of the year. A number of appealing hybrids produced from it include *G. 'Blood Orange'*, *G. 'Birdsong'* and *G. 'Just Peachy'*.

G. 'Bulli Beauty', which came up as a seedling in the Grevillea Park in Bulli, is not only a great garden plant but is an excellent cut flower. Others suitable for cut flowers are *G. 'Sylvia'*, *G. 'Moonlight'* and *G. 'Misty Pink'*.

Margaret Olde

In search of Waratahs

Well, on 10 September we didn't see many waratahs, but there were plenty of other floral delights. The *Pultenaea flexilis* (Graceful Bush-Pea) put on a stunning show of yellow, as did *Leucopogon lanceolatus* but in white.

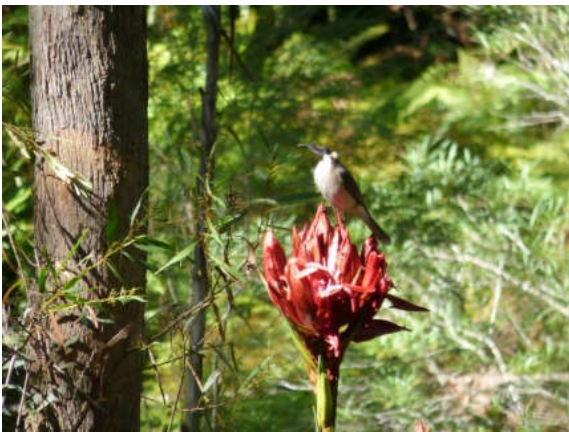


Pultenaea flexilis



Walking past *Pultenaea flexilis*

Many *Doryanthes excelsa* (Gynea Lily) were out and supplying the local bird population with food and a vantage point for some.



Noisy Friarbird & Gynea Lily



Doryanthes excelsa

Some with keen eyesight spotted some *Dendrobium speciosum* – living up to its name of Rock Lily - a few sun orchids – *Thelymitra ixioides* (Sun Orchid), and *Glossodia sp.*



Dendrobium speciosum



Thelymitra ixioides

We also saw *Lasiopetalum rufum* (Red rusty-petals) with its pinkish buds.



Lasiopetalum rufum

Other interesting sights included aboriginal grinding grooves and a beautiful, peaceful trickling creek and the sounds of yellow-tailed black cockatoos in the distance.

A perfect Saturday morning away from the crowds.

Sharon Pearson

September Guest Speaker

Chris Lloyd presented his experience on the amazing work carried out in developing a safe habitat for the White-Faced Storm Petrel on the Five Islands Nature Reserve off Port Kembla.

The Five Islands Nature Reserve is a protected nature reserve located in the Tasman Sea, off the Illawarra east coast of the state of New South Wales, Australia. The 26-hectare reserve comprises five continental islands that are situated between 0.5 and 3.5 kilometres east of Port Kembla. The Five Islands are Flinders Islet, Bass Islet, Martin Islet, Big Island and Rocky Islet.

The National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 requires that a plan of management be prepared for each nature reserve. A 15-year project has been undertaken by a dedicated group to clear out invasive weeds and to develop, implement and monitor effectiveness of management strategies for species, particularly silver gulls and pelicans that threaten the breeding success of birds of conservation significance.

Up until the end of the last Ice Age the islands were part of the mainland; the rise in sea level over the last 18,000 years separated the islands from the mainland, eroding sand and soil from most of the islands, and drastically changed the climate for vegetation resulting in low growing, salt-tolerant species dominating the islands

Billy (William) Wentworth owned an estate on Big Island. Over the years Kikuyu has covered quite a large area which in turn restricts access for nesting sea birds. The dense mat of Kikuyu forms in parts an almost impenetrable barrier to burrowing seabirds such as little penguins, storm-petrels and shearwaters. Any attempt at complete removal of this invasive weed without a strategy for replacement by soil

stabilising plants could degrade habitat for breeding birds and impact on seabird populations. *Rhagodia* has proved to be successful in creating a root system which restricts the entrance to burrows for larger bird species; the plant has a thick rigid root structure, unlike the dominant *Lomandra*.

The White-Faced Storm-Petrel, also known as Stormy Petrel is a small seabird of the storm petrel family and is 19–21 cm in length with a 41–44 cm wingspan. Storm-Petrels have a [cosmopolitan distribution](#) and are found in all oceans, they are strictly [pelagic](#), coming to land only when breeding. They are [colonial nesters](#), most species nest in crevices or burrows and pairs form long-term [monogamous](#) bonds and share incubation and chick-feeding duties.

The principal threats to Storm Petrels are [introduced species](#), particularly mammals, in their breeding colonies; many storm petrels habitually nest on isolated mammal-free islands as they are [unable to cope](#) with predators like [rats](#), [feral cats](#) and foxes.

Work was first undertaken to monitor the activities of the White-Faced Storm Petrel by attaching data to their legs, a tricky exercise given the size of the limbs. First reports showed how far they would travel to breed; the question was would they come back to Montague in the future. The second part of the exercise was to design a mesh structure to assist with access to burrows. Museum specimens of the White-Faced Storm-Petrel, the collection dating back from 1823, were used to measure the general size of the bird to determine which mesh would allow access for the White-Faced Storm Petrel (WFSP) to pass through but not the *Shearwater* spp. which have been pirating the former's burrows elsewhere. The weldmesh will have a relatively short life in the maritime environment and in contact with seabird urates and faeces so the planting of *Rhagodia* is currently taking place. *Rhagodia* has a root structure which seems to protect the WFSP burrow entrances from the much larger Shearwaters. It also seems to like coffee rock to grow in and by sheer luck it was found about half a metre below the surface.

The weldmesh was roughly placed around the test area and approx.10m x 5m was sprayed to kill the Morning Glory & Kikuyu which has been strangling all the seabirds on the island – even those tough, vicious little penguins.

It is known that the WFSPs have been prospecting the island from first hand observations (some were caught about 30 years ago) and they breed on nearby Flinders Island. To increase this prospecting of the test patch a sound attraction system was assembled and installed. The solar powered unit broadcasts WFSP calls out to sea during evening and night; one of the calls used was recorded in 1959. This generally successful approach has been used before, particularly in NZ.

The mesh wire was gradually staked to the ground then bent over at the edges and buried in a trench around the perimeter to prevent the shearwaters coming into the area from the sides. There are little squares of artificial turf distributed about the site which insulate the lids of GRP valve boxes of a specific size. Agricultural tubes coming out of the ground about 70cms from the small turf squares form artificial burrows and tunnel entrances which have an entrance diameter of 60mm, again too small for shearwaters. There are 20+ of these distributed throughout the test area as ready-made burrows for the WFSP.

In time the whole area will be covered with *Rhagodia* and *Commelina* (there is already some surviving stock of the latter) so when the weldmesh breaks down there will be a natural barrier. Any assistance in growing *Rhagodia* from seed for this project would be much appreciated.

The core of this exercise is the decade long strategy of revegetating the Five Islands Nature Reserve and to use the lessons from here and Montague for the other remaining refuges of seabirds in the field.

Accessing Big Island in a 2.5m swell from a tinny straight on to rocks - unloading a few tonne of steel, timber, tools, tubing, provisions and hauling it all up on to the island was a challenging experience. The rain was a fairly constant companion and the evening chorus of

breeding penguins was ‘entertaining’ - luckily the sheds were dry. The weather remained wet, cold & windy – wiring and cutting mesh with stiff fingers was not a pleasant experience, then... the return journey – higher seas, rocks to rubber-duck – the pleasure of seabird science!

Chris’s colourful, fascinating presentation had us all enthralled and full of admiration for the dedicated efforts of those involved in this project.

Marion Payne

Tamworth Regional Get-together

There’s more to Tamworth than the music festival. This is what we discovered when we joined other APS NSW members at the Tamworth Regional Get-together on 20-21 August 2016.

We were welcomed to the area with a smoking ceremony by a local Kamilaroi elder, Lenny Waters, who explained about the local plants and animals that are significant to his people.



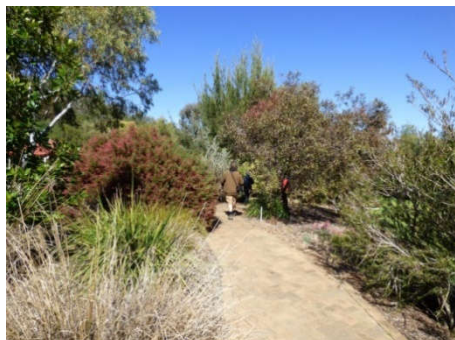
Varied and interesting sets of talks were given on understanding what really is average rainfall; the importance of Travelling Stock Routes for preserving biodiversity and protecting vulnerable plant species; growing native plants for cut flowers; and attractive plants of the Tamworth region.

The outings included visiting the DPI’s Native Agro Trial site where the suitability of growing native species for use in the timber industry is being conducted; exploring one of the few remnants of the Grassy Yellow Box Woodland in the Tamworth area; two gardens by local APS members showcasing native

species that are suitable to Tamworth's cool and dry climate; joining the local bird-watching group for a walk around the Tamworth Botanic Gardens; and gaining an understanding the transformation of a degraded, damp site into the Peel Wetlands by a local ecologist.



Grassy Yellow Box Woodland



Tamworth Botanic Gardens



Peel Wetlands



Acacia decora at Peel Wetlands



White-plumed Honeyeater in a grevillea at the Gray's garden



Eucalyptus torquata flowers at the Carr's garden



Eucalyptus torquata fruit at the Carr's garden

Thanks to APS Tamworth for providing a very enjoyable and informative experience.

Sharon Pearson

Muogamarra Nature Reserve

Well, spring had certainly sprung in Muogamarra Nature Reserve when we visited on 27 August. There were plenty of flowers in shades of pink & purple – from deep rich pinks of the Boronias to the paler pinks of *Eriostemon australasius*, and lilac of *Philotheca salsolifolia*.

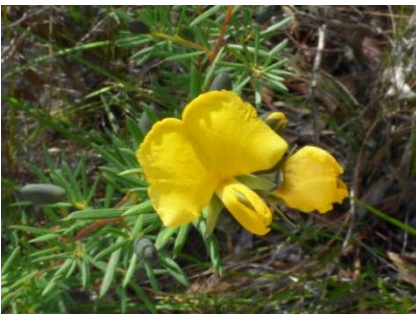


Boronia pinnata



Boronia fraseri

There were peas galore – from yellow & red flowers of *Bossiaea scolopendria* and *Dillwynia floribunda* to the large yellow flowers of *Gompholobium grandiflorum*.



Gompholobium grandiflorum

A few *Glossodia minor* were spotted as well as the semi-parasitic *Olax stricta*, and the very spiky *Acacia oxycedrus*.



Glossodia minor



Acacia oxycedrus

In the exposed ridgetop areas a huge variety of Epacrids – we spotted *Sprengelia incarnata* and *Leucopogon setiger*.

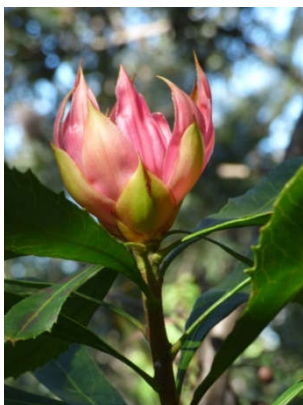


Sprengelia incarnata



Leucopogon setiger

In the open forest area we discovered one Waratah (*Telopea speciosissima*) – its pinkish bracts giving away its location just off the track, but it was still a bit shy of bursting into full flower.



Telopea speciosissima



We walked past an intricately weathered sandstone overhang on our way to stunning views looking down to the Hawkesbury River. We saw a Little Eagle circling over potential prey, a Sea Eagle high in the sky enjoying the thermals, and Pelicans in formation.

The keen bird spotters also saw silvereyes and fairy wrens and we heard lots of bird calls from the bush.

Apologies for the quality of the photos – I have a new camera and I'm still trying to get good macros shots. You will just have to see the wildflowers up close for yourself, so remember to put it in your diary for next year.

Sharon Pearson



Illawong Rural Fire Station

Group Meetings

Meetings are held at the Illawong Rural Fire Brigade each month except January. Most meetings are held on the second Wednesday at 7:00pm. The three winter meetings: June, July, August are held on the second Saturday of the month at 1pm.

The venue is the Illawong Rural Fire Brigade Headquarters. New members and friends are welcome.

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