



**Menai
Wildflower
Group**



Newsletter of Menai Wildflower Group October 2015

President's Report

Spring has sprung and the Grevilleas are contending with the Bush Peas for the attention of insects and native bees. The birds are busy picking pieces for nesting material and the cockatoos of all kinds rip, tear and please themselves to show us “this is how you prune bushes -no mucking around”.

If you ever wanted to enjoy the armchair adventure of the Larapinta Trail, make sure you don't miss Ralph Cartwright's talk at our October meeting. This sounds like a unique insight into this iconic adventure.

Our November speaker is Pam Forbes who will share her experiences with Q station. Pam has participated alongside her partner Greg Jackson in many of the outings with M.W.G. filling the gaps on historical facts and finding artefacts relating to any of the sites hidden treasures. Pam's insights should make this evening meeting a night of education and fascination.

Propagation in the compound has continued with a few ideas been shared around. Anyone who would like to enjoy the company of others this is great time of year as the spring weather approaches.

See you all at our next meeting

Jason Cockayne



Coming Local Events

(See Special Interest for others)

14 Oct Menai Wildflower Group Meeting
Guest speaker – Ralph Cartwright
“Larapinta”- 7pm

17 Oct Working Bee at IRFB 9am start

17 Oct Propagation at IRFS nursery 1pm

11 Nov Menai Wildflower Group Meeting
AGM
Guest speaker – Pam Forbes
“Q Station-flora & fauna”

21 Nov Working Bee at IRFB 9am start

21 Nov Propagation at IRFS nursery 1pm

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From the Treasurer

APS NSW has decided to raise the membership fees in order to cover extra admin and publishing costs. The fees have increased by \$3 for each category and this was effective from 1Jan 2015. An updated membership renewal form can be found on our website.

Sharon Pearson

ATTENTION –MEETING START TIME

We are trialling a new start time. The doors will be open from 6.30pm and the meeting will start at 7pm. Why not come along at 6.30pm for a wander around the garden or chat over a cup of tea.

Special Interest

Deadline for contributions to next newsletter will be Wednesday 25 Nov'15.

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 17 October and 21 November.

Nursery group held at the Tip Nursery, Lucas Heights Waste Management site most Monday mornings from 9.30am to 1pm. 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

MWG Calendar 2016

Photos must be submitted by the end of the October meeting.

August Guest Speaker

Our August speaker was Matt Mo (NSW Department of Primary Industries) talking about new insights into Powerful Owl behaviour.

Powerful Owls had been researched in the 20th Century, but until recently their day-to-day behaviour had not been logged, photographed and analysed in such detail. Recent Powerful Owl monitoring has been assisted by Birdlife Australia, Chris Lloyd and a dedicated team of amateur researchers. These researchers have regularly searched out these owls in their local area and watched them for many hours and days. It has been due to this group of researchers (including some MWG members) that new behaviour has been observed - Matt's talk provided details and photos on these.

Fledging events – fledglings coming out of the nesting hole; young owls that had landed on the ground were able to fly up into a tree, where previously we only knew them to hop from branch to branch back to the canopy.



Photo courtesy of Matt Mo

Mobbing by other birds – as in other studies, Noisy Miners and Pied Currawongs did a lot of mobbing in the early evening, but there have now been observations of mobbing by

the Tawny Frogmouth and the Common Brushtail Possum.

Roosting in mangroves – this has been observed to be quite common in the local area.

Male combat – POWLs are territorial and Peter and Antonia Hayler of Choosypix Photography were successful in observing and photographing two male owls fighting – they perched close to each other and then leapt up with their talons to attack the front of the other bird.



Photo courtesy of Peter and Antonia Hayler (Choosypix Photography)

Development of skills in fledglings –these include the fledglings catching insects independently, chasing birds, ‘foliage-snatching’, tearing and nibbling tree bark (reason not fully understood).

Successful kills observed – these included a Common Brushtail Possum, Flying Fox, birds.

Also the first account of catching a fish – this was by a juvenile after it was seen perching over the water in the mangroves.



Photo courtesy of Peter and Antonia Hayler (Choosypix Photography)

As further monitoring of Powerful Owls is required to fully understand these magnificent creatures more volunteers are required. If you are interested or have heard them in your local area and would like to know how to see them in action, contact Chris Lloyd (pezoporus@bigpond.com).

Look out for this upcoming scientific paper to be published in September:

Mo, M. and Waterhouse, D.R. 2015. Development of independence in Powerful Owl (*Ninox strenua*) fledglings in suburban Sydney. *Australian Field Ornithology* **32**: 143-153.

Sharon Pearson



Isopogon formosus in the Presidential Garden



Leptospermum “Outrageous” also in Presidential Garden

September Guest Speaker

Western Australia Adventures Part 2

In 2012 Lloyd and Mary Hedges set out in the famous “ute” for more desert exploration and this was the subject of the talk given at our last meeting. This time they were to head in the general direction of the Grand Central Road.

We always wondered how “the ute” could perform as a camping vehicle, so Lloyd took this photo to show a compact, efficient vehicle with built-in everything, all necessities in fact! But would Mary agree? Lots of preparatory work seen there.



The purpose of this trip was to collect more eucalypt capsules for Mary’s jewellery-making hobby (obsession). All who have admired her work would understand the importance of this, but we had the bonus of seeing many of the rare plants that they photographed along the way. Mind you, not everyone would have enjoyed meeting that Western Taipan, or even the camel, but the flora was stunning in such harsh conditions.

Lloyd made some observations about many species seen along the cliffs near the coast at Kalbarri, including the ruby salt bush, often found growing on the edge of what would have been salt streams, in South Australia and even along Still Creek, in our own district. He showed photos of *Melaleuca psamophila*, many *Calothamnus* replacing the *Callistemons* otherwise expected, *Dryandra* species, *Euc. torquata*, *Petrophile*, the cat’s paw *Anigozanthos*, an orange form of *Eremaea*, *Lambertia multiflora*, just to list a few.

In the Lesueur National Park, the Hedges recorded *Pimelea*, *Verticordia*, *Isopogon divergens* and *Xanthorrea*, then at Kings Park they saw many magnificent natives, including *Prostanthera magnifica* and many daisies.

The Darling Ranges provided a good camping spot. Here they photographed *Banksia ilicifolia*, *Hibbertia stellaris* in seasonal swamps and saw *Kunzea*, *Hakea*, *Leucopogons* and many very large ground orchids.

The Stirling Ranges revealed *Dryandra nobilis*, *Beaufortia*, ***Banksia Coccinea***, *Dragon orchids*, the pansy orchid and many *Acacia*. Lloyd and Mary were lucky enough to be given access to a heritage property where *Sandalwood* growing is being trialled.



Banksia Coccinea

The South Coast of W A had many kangaroo paws (Rufus red) and a most attractive ***Regelia velutina***.



Regelia velutina

Lloyd recommends that anyone wanting to watch whales should head for the Great

Australian Bight in July to see them in great numbers.

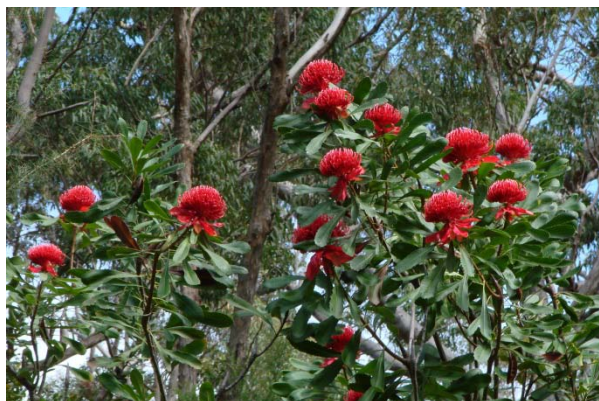
In all, the Hedges were away for six weeks, travelling 12000 KM and feeding 1100 litres of fuel into the trusty ute, which gave them no mechanical worries on this trip.

Will we be seeing Part 3 of this story any time soon?

Pam Pitkeathly

Waratah Walk 27th September

Well the Waratah Walk lived up to its name! We could see the bright red flowers from a distance, as could the honeyeaters and spinebill who were feasting on them. The Waratahs (*Telopea speciosissima*) were fully out in flower and provided a wonderful display.

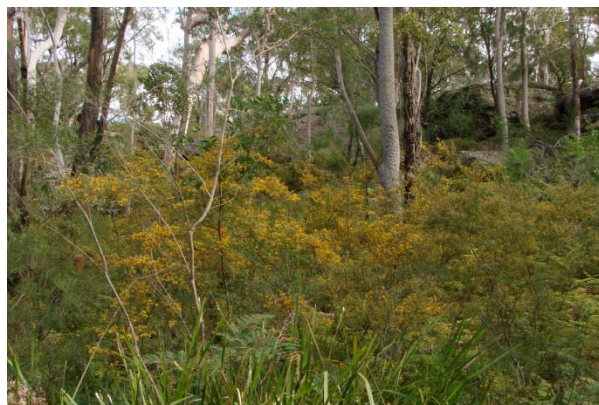


The Waratah walk was in the area behind the Barden Ridge Sports Complex and is an amazing place to walk amongst the gums and Gynea Lilies. Lloyd Hedges knows this area well and lead us through this interesting place.

There were many other plants in flower – we came across *Comesperma volubile* also known as Love Creeper, so called as it twists around itself and other plants.



Pultenaea hispidula and *P. flexilis* were providing a good mass display of yellow.



Ricinocarpus pinifolius (Wedding Bush) was providing some contrast to the other brightly coloured plants.



This little explored area is an underrated botanical jewel and should be better protected, from trail bikes in particular that are eroding the walking tracks. It would be a shame to

make this area too difficult for locals to explore on foot.

For those that missed out this year and if you are lucky, Lloyd might do another Waratah Walk next year!

Sharon Pearson



Angophora costata

IRFB gardens

The open day at IRFS drew many admirers; the following photos show why.



Lechenaultia boloba and *Grevillea petrophiloides*



Illawong Rural Fire Station

Group Meetings

Monthly meetings (except January) of the Menai Wildflower Group are usually held at 7:00pm on the second Wednesday each month, although we have introduced day-time meetings for some of the months. The venue is the Illawong Rural Fire Brigade Headquarters. New members and friends are welcome.

Please address all correspondence to the Secretary,
PO Box 3104 Bangor NSW 2234

Website is www.menaiwildflower.austplants.com.au

E-mail is menaiwildflower@austplants.com.au

President	Jason Cockayne	9570-8559
Vice President		
Secretary	Annette Tuckfield	9543 - 1490
Treasurer	Sharon Pearson	9570-8559
Editor	Alan Ferguson	9543-8216
APS-NSW Delegate	Mary Hedges	9543-1216
General Committee	Pam Forbes	9543-6224
	Margaret Olde	9543-2242
	Marion Payne	9543-1040
	Pam Pitkeathly	9771- 9789