

## Coffs Harbour Group NEWSLETTER No.152: July 2021



### 2021 COMMITTEE

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**Ordinary Member:** Phil O'Shea

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### APS Coffs Harbour Membership

We warmly welcome our new members:

Tanya Hammond

**APS NSW Website**

[www.austplants.com.au](http://www.austplants.com.au)

Keep up-to-date with news, program of outings and meetings via our pages:

[www.austplants.com.au/Coffs-Harbour](http://www.austplants.com.au/Coffs-Harbour)

### Phil O'Shea: Glenugie Excursion

Twelve hardy members gathered to examine the floral diversity of the Glenugie Peak area on the 11th of April, 2012. Glenugie Peak is an outlier of dolerite rock, which has intruded the surrounding Mesozoic sandstones. Its relative altitude and basic volcanic soils have created and preserved some unusual and "out of range" plant assemblages. The peak is reached via a rough track heading north from Franklins Road. Recent torrential rain had made much of the walking track a bit slushy underfoot but the real climb was up the old eroded access road to the summit.

Some unusual plants, which we saw included (descriptions and notes by Doug Binns; images by Rowan McCabe)

#### *Corynocarpus rupestris* subsp. *rupestris*

A small tree that is rare in NSW, at its southern limit at Glenugie Peak where it is common in the rainforest. It is the only genus in its family, Corynocarpaceae, which contains only six species in total worldwide and is related to Cucurbitaceae, a family that contains mostly vines. Small stems are often ringbarked by a caterpillar, which causes the stems to break and the plant to reshoot.



*Corynocarpus rupestris*

*Caesalpinia subtropica*

Large prickly vine with interesting corky outgrowths on the older stems, common on the summit area of the peak. Close to its southern limit at the peak, but there are also small, disjunct populations in the upper Macleay valley.

*Eucalyptus melliodora*

Canopy tree which mainly grows on the tablelands and western slopes, often on fertile soils. The population on Glenugie Peak is isolated and is the only coastal population in northern NSW.

*Cryptocarya floydii*

Tree that is rare in rainforest at Glenugie, on the summit ridge and upper slopes of the peak. This small population is isolated from the rest of the population of this species, which is in the gorges of the upper Macleay and Guy Fawkes Rivers, growing on steep rocky slopes.

*Bulbophyllum minutissimum*

This tiny orchid, among the world's smallest, seems to be uncommon in NSW but is easily overlooked. On the peak it is very localised and grows on the large branches of *Ficus obliqua*.



*Bulbophyllum minutissimum*; *Proiphys cunninghamii*

*Proiphys cunninghamii*

A deciduous, bulbous plant with attractive white, daffodil-like flowers. One of very few native amaryllids, along with *Crinum* and *Calostemma*. The plants on the peak are one of only two populations in NSW. At Glenugie, it is locally common on slopes in rainforest.

*Aristolochia meridionalis*

A small, inconspicuous twiner, which is uncommon at Glenugie and very rare in NSW, but more common in Queensland. It is superficially similar to *Polymeria longifolia*, an unrelated species which occurs on the western slopes and with which it may have previously been confused at Glenugie. It is a host plant for larvae of the butterfly *Cressida cressida*, a species which is very rarely recorded breeding in NSW. We were lucky on the trip to see a larva of this butterfly on a plant of *A. meridionalis*.



*Aristolochia meridionalis*; Larva of *Cressida Cressida*



*Marsdenia pleiadenia* Near the southern limit of its known range; *Murdannia graminea*



*Typhonium brownii*

The flattish ground on the peak was a welcome sight. The peak was formerly used as a bush fire lookout and the 360 degree views are worth the effort. Some interesting plants on the peak included *Hoya australis*, *Alpinia caerulea*, *Typhonium brownii* and *Platycerium superbum* .



*Platycerium superbum*; *Hoya australis*; *Alpinia caerulea* (Morrie Duggan)



Resting at the peak.

Congratulations to Roger for making it to the top on his 79 year-old legs. Thanks to Morrie Duggan for organising the excursion and his earlier reconnaissance to check out access.

### **Morrie Duggan: Alex Floyd's talk on Grassy Headlands**

At the June APS meeting we were treated to a talk by botanist, forester, local APS member and living legend Alex Floyd on the flora of some of the local coastal grassy heath headlands. Alex spoke of some of the more interesting species to be found on various headlands, interspersed with some eclectic anecdotes such as the Roman origins of the name for the genus *Scaevola*.

The presentation commenced with a pictorial tour through many of the small heath species on Woolgoolga Headland including *Hibbertia vestita*, *Pultenaea maritima*, *Thyssonotus tuberosus*, *Polymeria calycina*, *Goodenia heterophylla*, and the aforementioned *Scaevola* (*S. calendulacea*).

From Boambee Headland, Alex showed us some lesser-known species such as *Chamaecrista maritima*, *Wollastonia biflora* (now changed to *W. uniflora*), *Plectranthus cremnus* and *Myoporum boninense* subsp. *australe* as well as better-known species such as *Dianella caerulea* and *Xerochrysum bracteatum*.

An especially interesting part of the talk concerned Muttonbird Island and the close relationship between the vegetation and the nesting muttonbirds. The birds rely on the shelter and easy nest-digging conditions provided by the dominant fleshy-leaved *Commelina cyanea* and associated *Senecio linearifolius* var.

*maritimus* and *Canavalia rosea*. The plants in turn benefit from the nutrients delivered via the droppings of the birds and their chicks. Modification of the habitat by early Europeans through burning of the vegetation, and subsequent dominance of grassy species with their tough fibrous roots and inferior sheltering ability, had a drastic effect on the nesting of the birds leading to a serious decline in their numbers.

Alex then looked at Look at Me Now Headland, which is home to the endangered species *Zieria prostrata* as well as the Slender Stackhousia (*S. viminea*). He told us about an episode involving fencing off part of the headland from the resident wallaby population, which dined exclusively on the Kangaroo Grass. This led not only to near starvation of the wallabies but also to smothering of other species where growth of the grass went unchecked in the fenced off area.

Finally, we heard from Alex about the similarity between the exotic *Hibiscus trionum*, accidentally introduced from South Africa in grain shipments by early colonists, and the local (and New Zealand) species *Hibiscus richardsonii*. He told of how he observed that the latter had developed a remarkable ability to arch over the normally upright styles to touch the anthers and enable self-pollination.

We are indebted to Alex for coming out to talk to us at an evening meeting, and of course for his contribution to the Society and to botany in general over so many years. Thank you Alex.

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**Contributions to Newsletters can be sent to  
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