

APS EAST HILLS GROUP NEWSLETTER



October 2019

NEXT EHG MEETING: ONE WEEK LATER THAN USUAL

7.30 pm, Wednesday 9 October 2019

Members' night

Come prepared to talk about something related to native plants!

Bring a plant or a book or photos or a short presentation – share your plant-related ideas, frustrations or passions with the group!

Also, please bring specimens for the plant table and something to share for supper.

LUGARNO-PEAKHURST UNITING CHURCH

909 Forest Road Lugarno (opposite the Chivers Hill Lugarno shops)

VISITORS ARE WELCOME

WELCOME to the October 2019 edition of the APS East Hills Group Newsletter. Yes, you're right - it is early!

This issue begins with a note from our President. Heed his warning – the newsletter may be early, but the October meeting will be late: it will be on the second Wednesday of the month instead of the first Wednesday.

This issue also includes notes, photos and a poem from Karlo's presentation at our September meeting, an article and photos from Liz and Graham from their presentation at the August meeting, and words and photos from our Group's visit to Sylvan Grove Native Garden. You will also find the plant table list from our September meeting, along with yet more photos!

I am very grateful to Karlo Taliana, Liz Cameron and Graham Fry who put together contributions to the newsletter and got them to me in time for the early publication date. I wasn't able to attend the EHG meeting or the Sylvan Grove visit, and the newsletter would have been very bare without their efforts.

Jan Douglas
Editor

<http://austplants.com.au/East-Hills>



A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Spring has certainly sprung, with our gardens putting on their best displays. While in Sydney we have relatively lucky with reasonable rainfall late in August, it is not so away from the coast. Liz and I were recently up in Mudgee and it was very sad to see the state of the country, very little grass and we wondered what were the stock eating, as the ground looked so barren. It is a shame that we city dwellers often don't experience or really see the effects of drought, we are so insulated from it, with the only impact being an slight increase in the price of vegetables and fruit.

On a more positive note, we had a great talk from Karlo on the flora of Georges River National Park at our September meeting. As a person who has lived in the St George area all my life I was amazed at some of great places and plants that Karlo showed in his presentation that I was not aware of. It makes me want to go out and explore those areas as well.

On Sunday, 8th September we had our regular Sylvan Grove garden walk. We had around 33 people and again, Jim Mackay took the group on an informative stroll around the gardens. The gardens were looking great with the rock orchids just coming out - some people said they thought the gardens this year were particularly colourful. I would like to thank our members who helped on the day providing food, assisting with the catering and providing information about the gardens to our visitors. We might have also got a new member from the day.

Finally, at the September meeting we realised that for the October meeting many of us would be away. It was suggested that perhaps we should postpone the meeting to the second Wednesday in October when most of us would be back in Sydney. As there was no objections and combined with the fact we had no formal speaker arranged we agreed that the next meeting will be on Wednesday 9th October. As it will be a members' night perhaps you might like to think about giving a short presentation on some aspect of botany or natural history.

Graham Fry
President, East Hills Group



Photos above by Jan Douglas: Flowers at Sylvan Grove, 14 September 2019.

FROM OUR AUGUST MEETING

SOME SPECIAL LANDSCAPES IN SCOTLAND AND IRELAND

Graham Fry and Liz Cameron

We visited Scotland and Ireland for four weeks in May and June, 2019 and the flora of three landscapes caught our attention: a Scots Pine forest in Abernethy Reserve, Cairngorms, Scotland; a raised bog at Girley, Co. Meath, and the Burren limestone formation in Co. Clare, both in Ireland.

Abernethy Forest is the largest remnant of the ancient Caledonian pine forest that once stretched from Perth to Inverness. It was formidable enough to discourage the Romans from advancing into northern Scotland but most of the pines were later felled for ships' masts, coppiced for charcoal burning, and cleared by fire to graze stock. The dominant tree is the Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), the national tree of Scotland (and native also to northern Europe).

At a bird observatory in Abernethy Reserve we heard a very informative talk about the structure of a Scots Pine forest (see photo). Scots Pine is one of only three conifers native to Scotland (the others being Juniper *Juniperus communis*, and Yew *Taxus baccata*) and it thrives best in a forest of mixed tree species. Early colonisers are Juniper and deciduous species of birch (*Betula* spp.) and willow (*Salix* spp.) which deposit leaf litter and allow enough sunlight to reach the ground to promote development of a dense shrub layer of heaths (Ericaceae). The dominant heaths at Abernethy were the deciduous soft-leaved blaeberry (or bilberry) *Vaccinium myrtillus*, the evergreen cowberry (*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*) with leathery leaves, and heather species. In growing over old tree stumps and rocks, these shrubs form soft hummocks which characterise Scottish pine forests. Scots Pines germinate well in the soil formed by these colonising plants, grow slowly, and live much longer (up to 700 years) than the other trees. They form an open canopy that allows adequate light for the understorey and ground layer to flourish and support a diverse fauna. (This contrasts with dense monocultures of pines (*Pinus radiata*) planted in Australia).



Note 1: The Australian heaths, formerly placed in the family Epacridaceae, are now considered so closely related to the family Ericaceae that most botanists consider them a sub-family of the Ericaceae (<http://anpsa.org.au/epacris1.html> January 2017)

Note 2: The genus *Vaccinium* also includes blueberries.

In Abernethy the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and Forestry are jointly regenerating Scots Pine forest. (After the pines were cleared, the land was drained and lodgepole pines planted to further dry out the soil preparatory to planting fast-growing North American conifers – larch and spruce – that can be harvested every 30 years or so). To regenerate the land, the exotic conifers are being removed and drainage ditches filled in to restore bogs typical of the forest, where water insects like dragonflies and damselflies can

breed. Patches of original bog woodland remain, in which the Scots Pines grow even more slowly, so are much smaller and could be very old.

The lower trunks of the Scots Pines are dark brown, scaly and fissured, but the upper trunks are smooth and pinky-red - the colour of the red squirrel. We were fortunate to see two red squirrels in the forest. Other animals typical of Scots Pine forest include pine martins, crested tits, and siskin and crossbill finches; ospreys and goldeneye ducks nest around the shores of the lochs.



In Ireland we visited a raised bog at Girley, north-west of Dublin. Raised bogs are a rare and threatened ecosystem in Ireland, and also in Europe. They started to form about 10,000 years ago, at the end of the Ice Age when glacial moraines blocked streams, resulting in the development of large shallow lakes. These became overgrown with vegetation, especially *Sphagnum* mosses which soaked up rainfall like a sponge; the areas became water-logged and acidic, slowing down decomposition of the vegetation and leading to the development of peat. Raised bogs comprise hollows and hummocks that support plants with different soil moisture needs. The high bank of Girley Bog is springy from deep layers (up to 10 m) of decayed *Sphagnum* on which a few Scots Pines, birches and willows grow. In the hollows are several species of *Sphagnum*, lichens (*Cladonia*), sundews (*Drosera*) and other insectivorous plants such as butterworts (*Pinguicolla*) and bladderworts (*Utricularia*), and feathery white cottongrass sedges (*Eriophorum*).

Up until 2011, peat was cut from Girley Bog for fuel but now the cut areas are being restored by methods similar to those used in the restoration of the Scots Pine forests. Drains have been blocked to raise the water table, plantation conifers removed, and local tree species like birch planted in suitable places; bare peat on cutover bog is being re-vegetated with transplanted *Sphagnum*. Beside the more common blanket bogs in other parts of Ireland we saw peat turfs cut and stacked to dry. Most of the extracted peat is used in electricity generation but it is planned to phase that out by 2030; peat is still burnt in some households.

At Girley a small patch of 'cutover' bog (where peat removal has resulted in a quagmire) is a popular spot for 'bog-jumping'. Graham was amazed to see primary students on an end-of-year school excursion, happily leaping into the sticky dark brown mud.



Photos above: High bank and/or hedgerow; peat drying; Children in bog.

A very different landscape is The Burren in Co. Clare, near the west coast of Ireland. Burren is Irish for 'great rock' and the area contains vast grey limestone outcrops. This glaciated karst landscape is a rare and very localised formation in Europe. Areas of exposed limestone rock

have been dissolved by water over millions of years to form a pavement composed of flat surfaces (clints) intersected by numerous crevices (grikes) which collect soil and support plant growth. Although the limestone is basic, soils accumulating in some waterlogged grikes may become quite acidic, providing a range of soil conditions and promoting great plant diversity. Other factors contributing to plant diversity on The Burren include its proximity to the warm Gulf Stream, high light intensity, the temperature-moderating nature of the limestone pavement, and a traditional practice of grazing stock mainly in winter, called 'Winterage'.

Winterage involves low density grazing by stock during the relatively mild winters. The livestock eat the grass and weed species that have the potential to dominate the grassland, and keep hazel scrub and woodland from encroaching on herbfield and limestone pavement, but are removed before spring, allowing the dormant herb flora to emerge and flower without being eaten or trampled. A trail sign in Slieve Carron Nature Reserve said it was jointly managed by National Parks and a farmer who grazed cattle there between October and April, at a stocking rate to 12 cows/ha.

We had a delightful walk in this Nature Reserve, climbing over a stone style and strolling down through limestone pavement and herbfield where Graham photographed many colourful flowers. They included vivid crane's-bills (*Geranium*) and a variety of pink and white flowers of the rose family. On deeper calcareous soils on the lower slopes, a Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) scrub provided dappled shade and supported a different flora, including late-blooming bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and a bugle (*Ajuga*). The Burren flora includes a mixture of Arctic-Alpine and Mediterranean species, and a wealth of orchids (24 of the 28 species native to Ireland).



Photos above: Limestone on the Burrens; Burnet Rose; Cranes bill.



Photos above: Spotted orchid; Loch.

**FROM OUR SEPTEMBER MEETING
PLANT TABLE – SEPTEMBER 2019**

List: Liz Cameron

Thanks to everyone who brought specimens.

There are no plant notes this newsletter (partly because the newsletter is so long already!) but you will find some photos below the list. (The first photo is by Graham Fry and the others are by Karlo Taliana.) How many of the plants can you identify? Maybe you could bring your answers to the October meeting!

<i>Acacia linifolia</i>	White or Flax Wattle
<i>Alyogyne huegelii</i>	Native Hibiscus or Lilac Hibiscus
<i>Banksia undata</i>	Urchin Dryandra
<i>Calytrix tetragona</i>	Common Fringe Myrtle
<i>Chorizema cordatum</i>	Heart-leaf Flame Pea
<i>Coronidium elatum</i>	White Paper Daisy or Tall Everlasting
<i>Dendrobium sp.</i>	
<i>Eremophila mackinlayi</i>	Desert Pride
<i>Eremophila nivea</i>	Silky Eremophila
<i>Grevillea crithmifolia</i>	
<i>Grevillea georgeana</i>	
<i>Grevillea humilis</i>	
<i>Grevillea lavandulacea</i>	Lavender Grevillea
<i>Grevillea 'Mt David'</i>	
<i>Grevillea Winpara Gem ?</i>	
<i>Hypocalymma angustifolium</i>	Pink-flowered Myrtle
<i>Indigofera australis</i>	Australian Indigo
<i>Isopogon latifolius</i>	
<i>Leptospermum polygalifolium</i> (previously <i>L. flavescens</i>)	Tantoon or Yellow Tea Tree
<i>Melaleuca fulgens</i>	Scarlet Honeymyrtle (mauve flower form)
<i>Prostanthera calycina</i>	Limestone Mintbush
<i>Pultenaea daphnoides</i>	Large-leaf Bush-pea



FROM OUR SEPTEMBER MEETING
GEORGES RIVER NATIONAL PARK

A presentation by Karlo Taliana

Over the past 12 months, Karlo has put golf aside to explore Georges River National Park, particularly the parts north of the River. During his talk, Karlo showed many photos of flora great and small, common and uncommon, and shared the excitement of new discoveries and the variety of ecosystems in the Park. Here's what Karlo had to say about his presentation, followed by 16 of his many photos:

My talk was more than anything a display of the diversity of native plant species that can be found in the Georges River National Park, with more emphasis given to my experiences on the north side of the River where I spend much of my time. After seeing all four seasons over the past year, much of my efforts have been to accumulate the best possible photos of the best specimens of the various species that I have come to identify (now almost 250 species, although the total number of species in the Park would be over 1000). In the process, I've come across rare colour forms, many 'seldom seen' species and even species not previously known to have occurred previously north of the River in the Bankstown LGA. This includes *Banksia ericifolia* at Picnic Point (found in May 2019) and the only *Telopea speciosissima* to be found in the past 30 years. The exact location of the only previous Waratah that was ever found 30 years ago at Mickeys Point (east of Little Salt Pan Creek) is no longer known.

Much of my knowledge has been gained from valuable time spent with Colin Gibson (President of the Bankstown Bushland Society) and some contact with Robert Miller (former President of the EHG and Garden Curator at Sylvan Grove Native Gardens).



L to R above: *Angophora costata* (Sydney Red Gum); *Diuris maculata* (Leopard orchid); *Epacris longiflora*; *Thysanotus tuberosus* (Common Fringed Lily)



L to R above: *Actinotus helianthi* (Flannel Flower); *Thelymitra ixioides*; *Isopogon anemonifolius*



L to R above: *Pterostylis nutans* (Nodding Greenhood); *Styphelia triflora*; *Banksia spinulosa*.



L to R above: *Acianthus fornicatus* (Pixie Caps) ; *Burchardia umbellata* (Milkmaids); *Bossiaea heterophylla*



L to R above: rare white *Mirbelia speciosa*; Wasp on *Lambertia formosa* (Mountain Devil)

Below: *Telopea speciosissima* (Waratah) at Mill Creek.



FROM OUR SEPTEMBER MEETING

'Forest of Dreams'

Karlo Taliana

'Rise and Shine', it's now time to go!
Our Bushland's treasures are waiting
For me to roam, to live my dreams
I'm off to catch my bounty



The morning sun greets the birds
And their chorus warms my soul
Flowers are the Masters, the bees their slaves
Everything knows its role



Yeramba's giants stand tall protecting the land
Past spirits will never grow old
Nature's secrets encrypted on Scribbly gums
I feel lost but free from the World
Mosses and lichens adorn ancient boulders
Sandstone sculptures, Our Creator's artwork
Cockatoo flocks from above screech their warnings
As Angophoras anchor their feet to the floor



Pixie Caps braving the mid-Winter chill
Greenhoods rise and stand proudly
Caladenias gracefully dance in the breeze
So precious is the 'Land of Plenty'
The Banksia Men whisper as I approach them
Without looking, I know they are watching
I give them a wink and politely move on
In my walk through the 'Forest of Dreams'



Wattles and Bluebells, gold Peas and Drumsticks
Stylidiums crafting their magic
Styphelias posing in their fancy frills
Mountain Devils still trying to taunt me



Fringed Lilies and Flannel flowers lining the tracks
Grevilleas do their best to look fancy
Spinebills and Honeyeaters enjoying the feast
Fairy Wrens are too busy romancing



The light is now fading, calm sets on the River
I feel so blessed to catch moments like these
The day often ends with a Kelso beach sunset
Where I can relive the whole day in my dreams



Words and photos © Karlo Taliana 2019

SYLVAN GROVE NATIVE GARDEN, PICNIC POINT SUNDAY 8 SEPTEMBER 2019

Words: Liz Cameron

Photos: Karlo Taliana and Graham Fry

East Hills Group invited various local community groups with an interest in native flora to visit to Sylvan Grove Native Garden, Picnic Point, with us on Sunday 8th September.

We were fortunate to have a fine sunny day for our visit, although it was still rather windy in the treetops. Cups of tea and coffee warmed up the early arrivals and more refreshments were enjoyed after a walk through the grounds. Many thanks to EHG members who contributed the generous home-cooked morning tea.

At 10.15 am Graham Fry welcomed thirty-three visitors including members of East Hills, Menai Wildflower and Sutherland Groups of APS, and some members of Oatley Flora & Fauna and Georges River Council Bushcare. Jim Mackay, Canterbury Bankstown Council's horticulturist, then outlined the history of Sylvan Grove, which was opened in 1970, and guided the group round the grounds, pointing out many highlights.



L to R above (by Karlo): Walk in progress; *Ranunculus lappaceus* (Common Buttercup); *Rhododendron lochia*; *Grevillea venusta*.



L to R above (by Karlo): *Androcalva loxophylla*; *Darwinia taxicola* subsp. *macrolaena*; *Boronia pinnata*



L to R above (by Graham): Karlo photographing the walk; *Leucopogon lanceolatus*; *Dendrobium speciosum*.

Rock Orchids (*Dendrobium speciosum*) were in the early stages of flowering but carpets of greenhood orchids (*Pterostylus*) of a number of species were scattered through the grounds. Close to the entrance, *Rhododendron lochiaie* shrubs were covered in blooms (as they are for many months of the year) and another striking feature near the picnic shelter was a *Grevillea bronwenae* covered in fire-engine-red furry flowers. Marie O'Connor has one in her front garden and Jim advised providing these shrubs with good air circulation to reduce the incidence of scale.

Kate Porritt admired the large flowering spike of a Giant Spear Lily (*Doryanthes palmeri*) native to NE NSW and SE Qld; when fully open its weight causes the stem to droop low, in contrast to the ramrod stems of our local Gynea Lily. Liz took a close look at some of the many bees, flies, butterflies and birds that were visiting the rich smorgasbord of flowers in Sylvan Grove.

Some shrubs were flowering prolifically – *Leucopogon affinis* (previously known as *L. lanceolatus*) was a mass of white flowers, the best Karlo had seen, but Jim noted that *Hovea elliptica* (Tree Hovea from Western Australia) had a disappointing flowering this year. Visitors took away seeds of Swamp Lily (*Crinum pedunculatum*) that were on offer for planting.

The well-graded and well-signposted paths impressed first-time visitors and one commented what a shady retreat it would be in summer when she planned to bring her grandchildren to enjoy it. Ashlie Stevenson saw many changes since she worked at Sylvan Grove but recognised saplings she had planted that were now tall trees.

At least seven other people visited the gardens during the morning, some accepting our offer of morning tea and information on APS and Oatley Park brochures.



L to R above (by Graham): Orchid flowers; Orchid flower and friend; ?*Phebalium*.



L to R above: by Karlo.

COMING EVENTS – CHECK YOUR DIARY!

You can find more district group events on the APS NSW website at <http://austplants.com.au/calendar>

<p>Wednesday 9 October 2019 From 7.15 for 7.30 pm ONE WEEK LATER THAN USUAL!</p>	<p>East Hills Group meeting – Members' night - Come prepared to talk about something related to native plants! Bring a plant or a book or photos or a short presentation – share your plant-related ideas, frustrations or passions with the group!</p>
<p>Saturday 12 October 1 pm</p>	<p>Menai Wildflower Group – Dr Max Greenlees on Cane Toads Illawong Rural Fire Brigade Headquarters, Old Illawarra Road, Illawong. For a map: https://austplants.com.au/Menai-Activities</p>
<p>Wednesday 16 October From 7.45pm for 8pm</p>	<p>Sutherland Group meeting – Linda Groom - Walking to save Kosciuszko National Park GyMEA Community Hall, 39 GyMEA Bay Rd, GyMEA For a map: https://austplants.com.au/resources/Pictures/Sutherland%20District%20Group/GyMEA%20Community%20Centre.png</p>
<p>September – October 2019</p>	<p>ANPSA Biennial National Conference: Blooming Biodiversity. See your journal <i>Australian Plants</i> and https://meetingmasters.eventsair.com/QuickEventWebsitePortal/bloomingbiodiversity/eventinfo</p>
<p>Saturday 16 November</p>	<p>APS NSW quarterly gathering hosted by Northern Beaches Group</p>

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