

HFNC Excursion to Claude Austin State Forest, 18 Oct. 2015

Rod Bird

Participants: John & Glenys Cayley, Hilary Turner, Rod Bird & Diane Luhrs, Reto Zollinger & Yvonne Ingeme.

The main group left Hamilton Visitor Centre at 9 am and travelled from Cavendish on the Glendenning Rd, meeting Hilary at a T junction with the Yarramyljup Rd at 9.45am. We travelled west along that road to enter the forest at the SW end, via Rigby Rd that ends as a narrow track in the forest at the E-W Pipe Line track.



Our first stop was in open woodland a km from the edge of the forest, where we had morning tea. During that interlude we spotted a Koala in a tree. This was our first record of Koalas in the area.

The forest was very dry and the usual colourful Spring wildflower display of wattles, heath, pea-flowers, grevilleas and fringed myrtles was absent.

The trees in the forest include River Red Gum (*E. camaldulensis*), Yellow Box (*E. melliodora*), Yellow Gum (*E. leucoxylon*), Brown Stringybark (*E. baxteri*), Silver Banksia (*Banksia marginata*) & Drooping Sheoak (*Allocasuarina verticillata*).



We had a few stops as we passed through flats, creeks and rocky ridges. *Brachyloma daphnoides* (Daphne Heath – see the photo above), *Grevillea aquifolium*, *Leptospermum myrsinoides* and *Calytrix tetragona* were flowering but past their best.

We found *Comesperma calymega* on a rocky ridge (rhyolytic rock) where we looked for (but did not find) Horned Orchid (*Orthoceras strictum*) seen in Dec. 1996. Orchids were extremely scarce in the western block in 2015.



We continued east along the Pipe Line Tk, wondering at the stupidity of planting native shrubs (probably sourced from elsewhere) on the edge of the road through the woodland where they will end up being graded away. The adjacent vegetation would, in any case volunteer in any space there, given time. Very few of the plants in the tree guards had survived the dry times and competition from nearby trees and other vegetation. It seems that this folly was a compensation for plants removed elsewhere, possibly from works conducted to service or install water pipes. The choice of planting site was obviously not well made.

Nearing the Rocklands Dam we took a track to the north (left off the E-W Pipe Line track) that ran along the edge of an anabranch of the Glenelg River and then crossed over the rocky bed of the main stream. That track led us to the Rockland-Toolondo Channel on the side of a hill. The water was flowing swiftly in the channel. The water in Rocklands was about 28% of capacity.

We drove east on the channel track for a little while and then off to a long pool in the Glenelg River, where we had lunch. There were some large River Red Gums on the bank and a good depth of water in the pool.



After lunch we retraced our path to the Pipe Line Tk and drove south until we found a track leading east again. We followed this up a steep, rocky hill and down to a sandy beach on the south side of the Rocklands Reservoir, perhaps 500 m from the dam wall. Across the water was the boat launch area and higher on the hill were the Rocklands buildings. There were a few boats on the water, one or two apparently there for the fishing.

It seemed that the track that we were on continued around a spur and possibly linked up with other tracks. This track is used by boat owners but they must have experienced some difficulty in the travel.

Melaleuca squarrosa was flowering on the margins of the reservoir. We looked for wildflowers on the slope above the track and found a few, including *Gompholobium ecostatum* (see photo, right).

We drove back to take a track running south. After a few km we were running adjacent to farmland on the west side. We stopped in an area known for orchids in 1987 and had a walk among the wildflowers that were more abundant there than elsewhere in the forest. Our search revealed several orchids, including *Caladenia tentaculata*, *Microtis* orchids and *Diuris pardina*. There also were *Craspedia glauca*, *Podolepis jaceoides*, *Microseris lanceolata*, *Grevillea lavandulacea*, *Pultenaea pedunculata*, *Pultenaea sericea*, *Pultenaea humilis*, *Hibbertia* spp., *Goodenia geniculata*, *Stackhousia monogyna*, *Prostanthera denticulata*, *Coronidium scorpioides* and several other species (see list). Only a few *Caladenia carneae* and *Glossodia major* were seen in the visit.



We came to a fork and decided to investigate that, since it was well-used and had high speed humps on it to drain water away. This track was obviously used by vehicles towing trailers because every hump had been driven around. The track led first to a bay in the reservoir. We walked across a damp flat to the water, some 100 m from the usual high water mark. *Goodenia humilis* was flowering on the bed of the reservoir. We were uncertain as to where the vehicle track ended so we retraced our path to the fork and took the alternative track. Very soon we found that this ended at the locked gate of the former "Misty Downs" property owned in years past by Arthur Stevens, so we drove back to the track from whence we had come. The "Misty Downs" gate was the way we used to enter the forest, but one had to drive past the house to get to the gate. We were never comfortable doing that for it impinged on the occupants' privacy.

The side track to the water turned out to be the minor track that once only led to the water in the small bay. Some of us had camped there and fished from a canoe 15 years ago. Now the track was obviously a main thoroughfare and so we drove on and came to the Glendinning camping area. It seems that, with the closing of the old entrance, DEPI had constructed a new entry track through to the State Forest block. That track begins just inside the entrance to the Glendinning amp area, with a road running left up the fence. Another track further in to the camp ground also runs left to join up with that access track.

Since our last excursion here in 2004 there has been a rash of new tracks leading down to – and along – the edge of Rocklands Reservoir. It has become a very popular and crowded place at Easter and other holiday times. Campers have moved further and further north, creating new access tracks and camping areas.

We left the area at about 3 pm, satisfied that we had seen some nice wildflowers and birds, had found out where some of the current tracks led and had re-connected with this wonderful woodland area.

A feature of the day was the chorus of bird song throughout the reserve – due mainly to many Rufous Whistlers. We did not devote much time to bird-watching but recorded 33 species (see list above).

Native flora found to be flowering at the Claude Austin State Forest on 18 Oct. 2015

Botanic name	Common name
<i>Acacia paradoxa</i>	Hedge Wattle
<i>Arthropodium strictum</i>	Chocolate Lily
<i>Allocasuarina pusilla</i>	Dwarf Sheoak
<i>Amyema</i> sp.	Mistletoe
<i>Banksia marginata</i>	Silver Banksia
<i>Brachyloma daphnoides</i>	Daphne Heath
<i>Burchardia umbellata</i>	Milkmaids
<i>Caladenia carneae</i>	Pink Fingers
<i>Caladenia tentaculata</i>	Mantis Orchid
<i>Coronidium scorpioides</i>	Button Everlasting
<i>Craspedia variabilis</i>	Common Billy-buttons
<i>Cymbonotus preissianus</i>	Austral Bear's-ears
<i>Dillwynia hispida</i>	Red Parrot-pea
<i>Diuris pardina</i>	Leopard Orchid
<i>Glossodia major</i>	Wax-lip Orchid
<i>Gonocarpos tetragynus</i>	Common Raspwort
<i>Goodenia geniculata</i>	Bent Goodenia
<i>Goodenia humilis</i>	Swamp Goodenia
<i>Grevillea lavandulacea</i>	Lavender Grevillea
<i>Grevillea aquifolium</i>	Holly Grevillea
<i>Hibbertia</i> spp	Guinea-flower
<i>Isopogon ceratophyllus</i>	Horny Cone-bush
<i>Kennedia prostrata</i>	Running Postman
<i>Leucopogon virgatus</i>	Common Beard-heath
<i>Leptorhynchus squamatus</i>	Scaly Buttons
<i>Melaleuca squarrosa</i>	Scented paperbark
<i>Microseris lanceolata</i>	Yam Daisy
<i>Microtis</i> sp.	Onion Orchid
<i>Neurachne allopecuroidea</i>	Foxtail Mulga-grass
<i>Pimelea humilis</i>	Common Rice-flower
<i>Podolepis jaceoides</i>	Showy Podolepis
<i>Pultenaea humilis</i>	Dwarf Bush-pea
<i>Pultenaea pedunculata</i>	Matted Bush-pea
<i>Pultenaea sericea</i>	Bush-pea
<i>Prostanthera denticulata</i>	Rough Mint-bush
<i>Stackhousia monogyna</i>	Creamy Candles
<i>Thysanotus patersonii</i>	Twining Fringe-lily
<i>Wahlenbergia</i> sp.	Bluebell
<i>Wahlenbergia gracilenta</i>	Annual Bluebell

Birds seen in the Claude Austin State Forest on 18 Oct. 2015

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|---------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Red Wattlebird | 12. Scarlet Robin | 23. Grey Shrike-thrush |
| 2. New Holland Honeyeater | 13. Superb Fairy-wren | 24. White-browed Babbler |
| 3. Weebill | 14. Crimson Rosella | 25. Grey Currawong |
| 4. Brown Thornbill | 15. Galah | 26. Pied Currawong |
| 5. Buff-rumped Thornbill | 16. Gang-Gang Cockatoo | 27. Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo |
| 6. Grey Fantail | 17. Long-billed Corella | 28. Fan-tailed Cuckoo |
| 7. Willie Wagtail | 18. Sulphur-crested Cockatoo | 29. Common Bronzewing |
| 8. Silvereye | 19. Australian Magpie | 30. Laughing Kookaburra |
| 9. Striated Pardalote | 20. Rufous Whistler | 31. Sacred Kingfisher |
| 10. Spotted Pardalote | 21. Brown Treecreeper | 32. Little Raven |
| 11. Mistletoebird | 22. White-throated Treecreeper | 33. Whistling Kite |

Caladenia tentaculata



Dillwynnia sericea



Podolepis jaceoides



Coronidium scorpioides



Grevillea lavandulacea



Pultenaea humilis



Prostanthera denticulata

