AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY — Geelong —

Correa Mail

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MAY MEETING **Graham Patterson**

Our speaker at the May meeting was Graham Patterson, author of "*Coastal Guide To Nature And History: Port Phillip Bay*". Graham's book details the human and natural history of the Port Phillip area, and the topic of his talk was the natural and human history of Geelong and Bellarine Peninsular area, from Point Lonsdale to Williamstown.

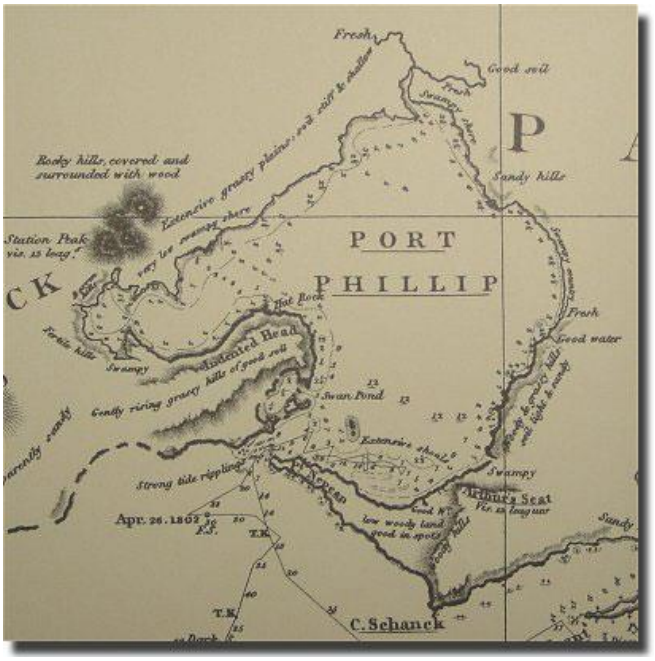
Graham explained that he has set himself the task of walking the entire coastline of Victoria, from the South Australian border to the New South Wales border. With the exception of a couple of stretches near Wilson's Promontory and the Ninety Mile Beach he has made it from South Australia to Marlo in East Gippsland.

He began by giving us a geological history of Port Phillip, explaining the way in which the bay was formed when the land subsided along several fault lines. He detailed several areas where different rock types could be seen today. The area has some good fossil deposits with shells, corals and bryzoans visible in the rock at Curlewis and near Moorpanyal Park. The area was volcanic and many of the rocks are of volcanic origin.

Lava blister on the Williamston beach.

The aborigines who first inhabited the area are the Wathaurong or Wadda-Warrung. They were a tribe consisting of some twenty five clans or family groups, forming part of the Kulin Nation. Their traditional boundaries follow the coastline from the Werribee River to Lorne peninsula and inland in a north westerly direction towards Ballarat.

Matthew Flinders is credited with the European discovery of Port Phillip Bay in 1802, however, the Lady Nelson, captained by John Murray, preceded him by some months. Flinders climbed the You Yangs, and 'guessed' at the size and shape of the bay from his view atop the highest peak. It was not until 1803 that HMS Cumberland was sent to explore the bay thoroughly, and one of the crew, Charles Grimes, became the first European to walk the full shoreline.



Matthew Flinders' map of Port Phillip.

Fishermen soon set up camps in the bay, with many Chinese camps at St. Leonards and elsewhere, and a Maori camp at Rosebud. In 1870 a mineral spring was

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discovered at “Clifton”, the property of Mr. Bates. In about 1871, Bates leased the land adjacent to the Springs to Mr. Levien, a landholder at nearby Murradoc, who created a pleasure ground. A pier was built, with salt water and sulphur baths. Steamers ran excursions from Geelong, and regular coach services were provided by Cobb & Co. from nearby Portarlington and Drysdale. Other buildings, including a boiler house, mineral water bottling plant, kiosk, and manager's cottage were built in the vicinity of what became known as "Fairy Dell".
By the late 1800s many industries had been established in the area and lime kilns were operating at Limeburner’s Point.

Baths at Clifton Springs.

There are many interesting plants in the coastal areas, and Graham encountered many of them on his walks. One of the very important ones is Beaded Glasswort, *Sarcocornia quinqueflora.* This was and is an important plant as a food source for the local aborigines, as a stabilising plant on the edges of saltmarshes, and as food for the critically endangered Orange-bellied parrot.

Swamp mat – *Sellaria radicans* – grows on land that is exposed as marsh water recedes in the warmer months.

White Mangroves, *Avicennia marina,* occur in many places along the southern shores of the bay. Locally a good population can be found at the mouth of Hovell’s Creek in Limeburner’s Lagoon.

Southern Sea-heath, Frankenia pauciflora is a low growing or prostrate shrub, with tiny white or pink flowers. Sea Box, Alysia buxifolia is a shrub which mat reach two metres, with glossy, green leaves. It produces small, white star shaped flowers, followed by bright red fruits. Also called dysentery bush, it is edible and was used by aborigines and Europeans to treat dysentery and stomach upsets.

Flowers of the Sea Box – *Alysia buxifolia*

Cushion Bush - *Leucophyta brownii* is a small shrub that grows up to 1 metre in height, and has a very compact, rounded habit. The plant is silver with scale-like leaves that lie against stems lined with woolly hairs. Yellow button-like heads flower from late spring to summer and are pollinated by various insects. Heads appear silver when budding, and fruiting heads appear grey-brown. It grows readily in the gardens around Geelong.
Hairy spinifex, *Spinifex sericeus*, is a perennial grass with long runners. It is a colonising plant, important for dune stabilisation.

Banksia integrifolia, the Coastal Banksia is widespread in southern and eastern Australia. It was one of the first plants collected by Joseph Banks in 1770.

ON THE TABLE with Nicole Leach

Nicole provided her quirky humour to a most enjoyable plant table at the May meeting.

Eucalypts were a feature of the May table with a couple of varieties of *E. pachphylla.* It seems to have a

variety of common names, depending on where the tree is growing – Red-capped Mallee, Red-fruited Mallee, Red-budded Mallee and Thick-leaved Mallee were all suggested. It is a multiple branched tree to 7 metres, thought usually much smaller, with large, lemon-yellow flowers, and bright red buds, caps and fruits which gives rise to many of its common names.

***E. pachyphylla* – Image by Shadow Dog Photos.**

E. gomphacephala – or Tuart – is a large tree to 35 metres. A much sought after hardwood timber for furniture and carriage making, it has large white flowers.

A hybrid *E. leucocoxolon x E. macrocarpa,* with large white flowers created some interest. Grown by Matt Leach it is an attractive plant, but considered too big for a surburban garden.

There were many Correas, mostly hybrids and well-known crosses, with one or two unknown seedlings which just popped up in members' gardens.

***Corybas hispidus* – Photo Frank Scheelings**

One of the more interesting plants on the table was brought along by Roger Wileman. It was a lovely flowering specimen of the orchid, *Corybas hispidus,* the Bristly Helmet-orchid. It is a terrestrial orchid, found in the montane areas of the east coast of Australia. In Victoria it is the largest species of Corybas, and easily distinguishable by its Autumn flowering period.

A number of interesting Banksias were on the table, too. *B. menziesii* is a long-flowering plant with lovely gold and red flowers. *B. oblongifolia* (previously *B. asplenifolia*) is a plant of coastal eastern Australia as is found from Rockhampton south to about Wollongong. Banksia oreophylla, despite its name, has nothing to do with chocolate cookies. It is a small shrub t 1.25 metres with golden inflorences darkening to purple as the flowers mature. It is found in the southern parts of Western Australia.

Among the others of particular interest were a pink form of *Kunzea baxterii*, the "Bega form" of *Epacris impressa* with small but vibrant red/orange flowers and a prostrate form of *Acacia alata.*

PLANT OF THE MONTH ***Hakea francisiana***

Ros Eddington won the raffle last month, and, as Plant of the Month, chose *Hakea francisiana* which was brought along by John Bell. John writes …

This plant was named after George Francis who was the first Director of the Adelaide Botanic Gardens. *Hakea francisian*a grows from the Eyre Peninsular in SA through to Geraldton in WA and associated inland areas. My plant is about four metres tall and has flat and linear leaves. The flowers appear in showy clusters of red spikes about ten centimetres in length. It is a very showy tree and this year the flowers have appeared quite early. The display is usually good for up to six weeks. *H. francisiana* definitely needs to be grown in a free draining situation. The fruits can appear in clusters or in singles and are prominently beaked . It was once included with *Hakea multilineata.*

Hakea francisiana

UPCOMING EVENTS

June Meeting – Tim Uebergang from Melbourne University will talk about the 160 year old System

Garden, where plants are grouped together in families/subclasses. Displaying plants in this way provides a wonderful opportunity to see the similarities and differences in form and flower structure between members of the same family.

July Meeting – AGM and Photo Exhibition

WIDER GEELONG FLORA LECTURE

Orchids in the Bush

The Geelong Field Naturlists Club is once again hosting the Wider Geelong Flora Lecture. The speaker is Emily Noble, a self-confessed 'orchid nut', who will be ttalking about our terrestrial orchids, accompanied by some of her beautiful photography. Emily is a professional horticulturalist, the business manager of the Ballarat Environment Network, and secretary of the Ballarat Field Naturalists Club. She and her husband are building a stone home for themselves on a 16 hectare bush block south west of Ballarat. She described the process of caring for the orchids there in her first-prize winning essay: Orchid Conservation at Home, in the inaugural essay competition of the Australian Orchid Foundation in 2012. She has now, 2017, identified forty-nine different species of terrestrial orchid on their block.

FROM APS VICTORIA

There are a couple of events happening locally which should be of interest to members …

17th June - 10.00 am to 5.00 pm. A celebration of 60 years of APS Victoria, hosted by APS Melton with the Committee of Management meeting commencing 10.00 am at Community Centre, 238 High St, Melton. APS Melton are also organizing garden tours by the Friends Group of the Melton Botanic Gardens. The 60th celebrations will be part of an afternoon tea.

24th & 25th June - APS Ballarat District Group Winter Plant Show and Sale. From 10.30 am to 3.30 pm, at the Robert Clark Horticultural Centre, Ballarat Botanic Gardens. A display of flowers and foliage and a large range of plants for sale. Hand painted floral art, books sales and other stall holders.

THANK YOU

I'd like to say a big, fat, joyous and very heartfelt

"THANK YOU"

to Nicole Leach who has volunteered to take on the newsletter while Penny and I are away in August/September. I know she'll do a great job. And thank you to Roger and Sheila and Bruce who also offered assistance. I really appreciate your support.

UNUSUAL LILY

Hunting around on the internet often reveals interesting stories. I found some reference to a lily discovered a few years ago in the Kimberley region of Western Australia.

The lily is an Arum, Typhonium sp., and at only 5 – 10 cm tall, it is one of the smallest arums worldwide. It was discovered Dr Matthew Barrett, a conservation geneticist at King's Park in Perth, who calls in 'nano-arum'.

But the really interesting thing about this lily is its smell. To a human nose it resembles the smell of a burnt out electric motor. But the smell seems to be attractive to the rove beetles, which are this plant's pollinators.

The 'nano-arum' – Photo Dr. Matthew Barrett

Many lilies use strong, and to us, unpleasant smells to attract pollinators. Rotting meat, rotting plant material and animal faeces are all mimicked and the flowers colour often matches the smell – red and black for the rotting meat, for example.

Nano-arum is green, and Dr Barrett believes the colour also attracts the beetles, whose usual diet is rotting plant matter.

CORYBAS ORCHIDS **Ade Foster**

Roger's specimen of *Corybas hispidus* on the Plant Table this month caused me to look back through my orchid books and photos. Here is a brief summary of the *Corybas*, and a bit about the species found most commonly in the Geelong area.

Corybas is a large genus with about one hundred species worldwide. Commonly known as Helmet-orchids, they are found in Australia, New Zealand, New Guinea, Phillipines, Malaysia and across south-east Asia. One species has even been recorded on Macquarie Island.

There are perhaps twenty species in Australia, with eight found in Victoria. *Corybas diemenicus* and C*. incurvus* are the two most commonly encountered around Geelong.

***Corybas diemenicus* – Brisbane Ranges**

They are both generally tiny orchids, less than 10mm as a rule, with a single, dark green, ground-hugging leaf. The flower sits tight on the leaf, or on a very short stalk. They reproduce vegetatively and may produce quite large colonies.

I have found them mostly in wetter areas in and under quite dense vegetation. Unless you are actively hunting for them, they could easily go un-noticed. The leaves appear in the late Autumn with flowering in late winter and early spring. I have seen quite large colonies with only one or two flowers, and at other times, every plant seems to have a flower. I have noticed them flowering strongly after fires, but this could be that the lack of other vegetation makes them more visible.

***Corybas incurvas* colony – Anglesea**

GREVILLEA IVORY WHIP **Ade Foster**

A few years back, I bought a grevillea at our plant sale. Phillip Vaughan told me it was a 'great plant' and I paid happily. It was a grafted plant, so not cheap, but I was looking for something that was a little different in colour, and took a chance. Until now, I will confess to being a little disappointed.

It is a shrub about 2m x 2m, with narrow, greyish/green leaves. I believe it is a hybrid of *G.banksii x G. nana.* The flowers are ivory white with a pale pinkish centre. I had always thought they looked a little 'dirty'.

But, this year, with the very wet autumn we have had, it is spectacular. Flowers are more profuse than ever, a clearer, more vibrant colour, and the birds and insects are swarming to it. A great plant, indeed. Thanks Phil ☺