

Top End

Native Plant Society

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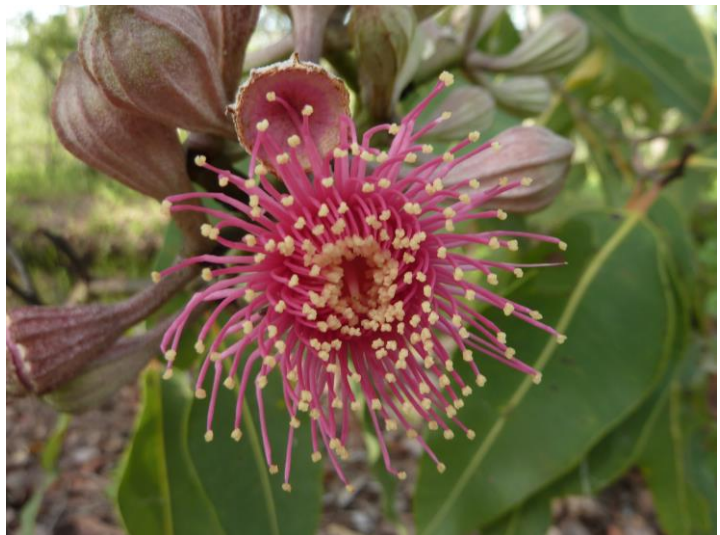
December 2014 Newsletter

General Meeting Times

The next TENPS meeting will be held on *Thursday January 22nd 2014*. Meetings are usually held at 7:30 pm on the third Thursday of each month at Marrara Christian College, on the corner of Amy Johnson Avenue and McMillans Road. The meeting is followed by a chance to meet with other members and access the TENPS reference Library over a cuppa. Bring your plants along to swap, sell or have identified. The guest speaker presentation commences around 8pm. All are welcome.

Field trips are usually on the weekend following the Meeting, details provided in the newsletter or at the meeting.

What's in Flower?



Corymbia ptychocarpa photographed by Sarah Hirst at Douglas River.

Natives mean more!

www.topendnativeplants.org.au

Upcoming TENPS Speakers

January 22nd: Jon Schatz – Groote Eylandt vegetation. *Please note that due to the Christmas break this meeting is scheduled for the **fourth** Thursday in January.*

February 19th: TBA

March 19th: TBA

TENPS Field Trip & other events

January 18th: Lee Point and Buffalo Creek. This field trip will be to the bush between Lee Point and Buffalo Creek. This area has been suggested as possible Atlas Moth Habitat. Perhaps a tricky bit will be to run.

*Meet at Lee Point carpark at 9.00am on Sunday 18th January. Please note that this trip is on the **third** Sunday which is before the general meeting that has been scheduled on the fourth Thursday in January due to the Christmas break.*

February 21st: TBA

March 21st: Field trip to Rozak House at Lake Bennett: a unique and self-sufficient property on the hilltop overlooking the lake.

April 18th: TBA



Smilax australis photographed by Sarah Hirst at Douglas River.

TENPS President's Report 2014 Annual General Meeting

Voluntary community groups such as the Top End Native Plant Society are as dynamic as the members involved. The members make the group and of course the Society strives to service the wishes of members. Reflecting on the diversity and enthusiasm of members, I am pleased to report a broad range of activities over the last year. We have had speakers at monthly meetings, field trips, stalls and plant sales and a very successful film night at the Deckchair Cinema. These activities have been supported by services such as production of a regular newsletter and maintenance of a library for members to use. Thank you to all who have made things happen and participated in the events.

Of course these events do not happen by themselves and there is often unseen work by members, particularly the committee to make things materialize. There are lots of unsung deeds such as responding to emails or being here to open the building for meetings, so a special thank you and acknowledgement to the outgoing committee for their efforts in the smooth running of the Society. At the risk of singling out individuals I wish to acknowledge the input of our outgoing Secretary and Treasurer, Peter Ebsworth. Peter is retiring from service on the committee after 4 years of active involvement. Thank you Peter for your significant contribution over the years. We had the pleasure of recognition of Russell Dempster for his long-standing contribution with a certificate of appreciation at the Chief Minister's Volunteer Awards in May. If one was to look at innovation awards, Ingrid Nadjarian would get my award for the year. Ingrid has taken us down a slightly different path by bringing Top End Native Plant Society and CALMA Gardens together to conduct a very successful fundraising event with a screening of the classic Humphrey Bogart film, Casablanca, at the Deckchair Cinema. The 189 paying film goers ignored the spots of rain early in the evening and turned up for a classic film, Burgers with the Bogart and an excellent selection of cakes and treats for desert. The efforts of members in making this happen were amply rewarded by an enjoyable evening and successful fund-raising. There are plans being hatched for another such event next year.

We have had an array of speakers talking about a diversity of topics at meetings. In January Louise Finch talked about the Australian Native Plant

Society of Australia conference excursion including the Bunya Mountains; in February we had Don Sands on Conservation management plans for threatened Lepidoptera in Australia; in March the 2013 TENPS Scholarship recipient Jenni Low Choy spoke about Groote Island; in April Diego Cortes and Michael Stauder on Territory Wildlife Park surveys and Old Growth Forest; in May, Tom North, Seed Bank Manager from the National Seed Bank located at the Australian National Botanic Gardens in Canberra ; in June Michael Braby talked about the range expansion of the Tawny Coster butterfly; in July Emma Lupin informed us about Land for wildlife; in August we had Neil Smit on seagrasses; in September Melissa Fontes who is a landscape architect from Outsidesign; in October Sue McKinnon informed us about cycad surveys at Territory Wildlife Park; and finally tonight I will talk about priority areas for conservation in a peri-urban area near Darwin. What a great array of speakers and topics! This list includes nationally and internationally recognised experts within their field. I also note that half of the speakers are members of the Society which indicates the calibre of the expertise and breadth of knowledge held within our own group.

A similarly diverse list of field trips occurred throughout the year with the Australia day long-weekend trip to Kakadu National Park; Atlas Moth at Dundee Beach; old growth forest at Berry Springs, Darwin River conservation agreements; Howard Sand Plains; Land for Wildlife at Virginia, Mangroves with Kristen Metcalfe; plant propagation workshop at Territory Wildlife Park and rainforest on Cox Peninsular. This coming weekend we will visit the George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens and follow our walk with a sociable cuppa and cakes to celebrate the festive season.

These field trips exemplify the collaborative nature of the Society. The conservation agreements trip in April was a joint trip with the NT Field Naturalists and attracted over 30 participants. The May trip was a joint outing with Greening Australia, covered a broad range of topics and attracted over 50 participants. Stepping outside of the sphere of the Top End, this year we have agreed to become a member of the Australian Native Plant Society of Australia which is a national group with a keen interest in native plants. While the formalities of this collaboration are still to be finalised, the connection with this body means all jurisdictions will be represented at a national level and provide TENPS with an opportunity to be involved in

national conversations about looking after the plants of northern Australia. The message here is clear, that TENPS is outwardly looking, which I believe is necessary if we are to positively influence the conservation of the plants and habitats many members hold as precious. Along this vein we put in a submission to an early draft of the Darwin Regional Land Use Plan. At an on-ground level we have got our hands dirty pulling weeds to protect a population of the near threatened *Citrus gracilis* at Sayer Road.

There are numerous examples where TENPS have provided advice, from addressing email queries on plant names; Louise Finch guiding a Heritage Walk at Palmerston on a wet day in April, or information on cultivation at our plant stalls and sales. We had a stall at the Tropical Garden Spectacular and participated in two open gardens events this year, at Jasmin Jan's in May and Willie and Mai Burgess' in August. I note with some sadness that the open garden scheme is being disbanded at a national level, though I am pleased to report that the committee have been discussing options as to how we could run a couple of open garden type events each year, so stay tuned for more on this topic. We have also pursued our educational role with support for Yeresha Herath, an honours student at Charles Darwin University through the Top End Native Plant Society Scholarship and maintained our web site.

In closing I am pleased to report on the diversity of activities undertaken by TENPS during the year and reiterate my thanks to all who have contributed towards and participated in those activities. The diversity and expertise within our own group is a strength that I want to acknowledge and it is the collective enthusiasm of members that puts the Society in a very favourable position for the future.

From the President; Dave Liddle

TENPS Committee Meeting

Committee meetings are held every second month and members are most welcome to attend. The next committee meeting will be on Wednesday **4th February 2015** at 7.30 pm. Venue TBA.

November Field Trip Report – George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens

The November field trip to the George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens was led by Ben Wirf who enthusiastically shared his time and knowledge with TENPS members. Everyone met at Eva's Café in the old Wesleyan Church and then headed off toward the woodland area via the impressive flowering Sausage Tree (*Kigelia africana*) and the oldest known tree in the gardens, a huge Boab, *Adansonia gregorii*. This tree was visible as a small tree in an old photograph from the 1930's.



TENPS tour path indicated in yellow.

Ben explained that all plants since the mid 1990's have been documented on the Gardens database and a program to replace the old style labels has begun and will continue over the new few years.

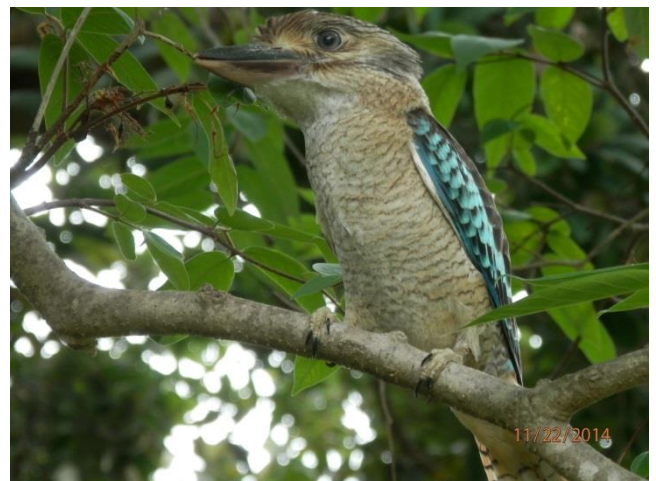
Along the creek/drain near Gilruth Avenue we got up close and personal with a group of transplanted Nypa palms (*Nypa fruticans*) where I was surprised to learn that this species does not actually form a trunk.

We then stopped for a photo under a massive Cluster Fig, *Ficus racemosa* (below).



TENPS members under the *Ficus racemosa* photographed by Sylvia Hurse.

From there we strolled through the newest area Africa/Madagascar garden which is still under development and were impressed by the variety of Boab trees and related plants that have been transplanted to this area. Clearly relocating even large trees is not a problem at the Gardens!



This kookaburra was photographed by Sylvia Hurse near the gully.

Later we strolled up the gully to the Tiwi Garden which represents plant of the Tiwi Islands. Time was a limiting factor, and unfortunately we did not get to see everything we would have liked to. On the plus side of course that means we will have to visit again soon! Perhaps you will be able to join us next time we visit the George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens.

Special thanks to Ben Wirf for such an interesting and informative morning and also to Sharon Wilson with whom this visit was arranged.

Article by Sarah Hirst

NT Field Naturalist Club Events

Monthly Meetings are held at **Charles Darwin University**, in **Blue Building 1, Room 1.54** Business Faculty, usually on the second Wednesday of every month (except January), starting at 7:45 pm.

Field Trips are a great way to explore the best of Darwin area's nature spots in the company of like-minded people. These are usually held on the Sunday following the monthly meeting and often related to the topic of this meeting. Additional outings are held from time to time, and everyone is welcome.

January 2015 Field Trip: Sunday 25th - 12.30pm.

The next field trip will be a tour of the wet store at the Museum and Art Gallery of NT in Fannie Bay. Lunch will be at Cornucopia Café at 12.30pm, followed by a tour of the wet store led by Richard Willan and Gavin Dally. RSVP for lunch to Richard Willan richard.willan@nt.gov.au or 8999 8238 w.

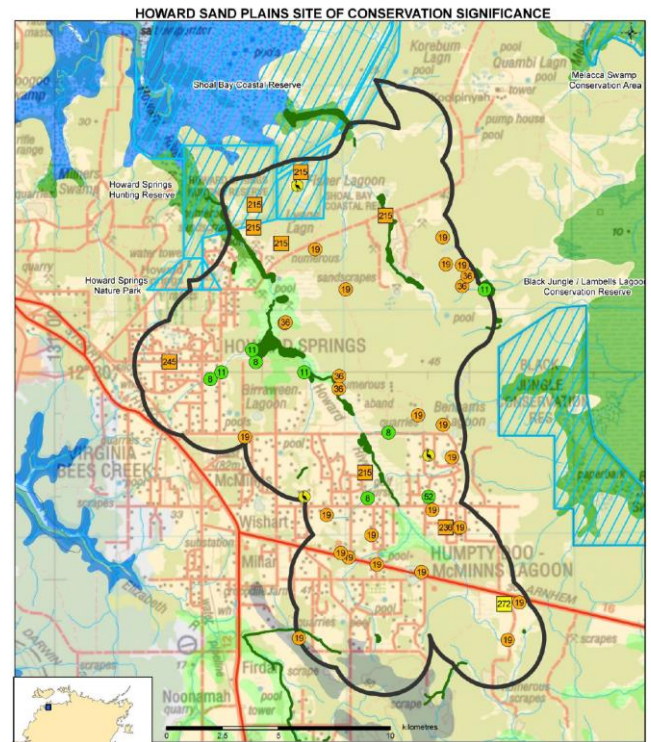
November Meeting Report:

Key localities for management of biodiversity values in a peri-urban landscape in northern Australia. Presented by Dave Liddle

At the recent AGM Dave shared this presentation which he gave recently at Ecological Society of Australia conference in Alice Springs on work by himself, Pia Harkness and Ian Cowie.

The Howard Sand Plains Site of Conservation Significance lies on the outskirts of Darwin in the Northern Territory of Australia and has been subject to increasing pressure from development as the city expands. Biodiversity values include a suite of listed threatened species, an outstanding diversity of carnivorous herbs and sensitive 'sand sheet heath' vegetation. Threats to the biological integrity of the landscape arise from intensification of land use, weed invasion, changed fire regimes and extraction of sand and gravel to satisfy an increasing demand for building material.

The Howard River Site of Conservation Significance includes areas of Sand Sheet Heath as mapped previously by Craig Hemple.



Pia Harkness prepared more detailed vegetation mapping from aerial photographs at a scale of 1:10,000 across the Site of Conservation Significance and conducted field surveys (plots) to define the vegetation communities of the seasonally waterlogged floodplains. These communities are home to a range of typical sand sheet heath species such as *Dapsilanthus spathaceus*, which is the prime habitat for carnivorous bladderworts (genus *Utricularia*) and the Howard Toadlet (*Uperoleia daviesae*). To date Howard Toadlets have only been located by their calls and males typically use *Dapsilanthus* tussocks as an amphitheatre to project their calls.

Other threatened species found within the site include *Typhonium taylori* with its global distribution an area of the Howard sand plain 20km x 8km. *Ptychosperma macarthurii* the Vulnerable Darwin Palm is known only from 8 populations around Taminmin and covers an area of 30km x 20km. *Utricularia dunstaniae* is listed as Vulnerable and known from 11 populations near Darwin, Finnis and Cobourg. *Utricularia* diversity is highest within the Howard Sand Plain Site of Conservation Significance, although other hotspots include

Nitmuluk, Kakadu and Cobourg and although this may be partially due to more sampling efforts (bias) in these areas, it also indicates the HSP site is special.

When *Utricularia* density is measured using vegetation plot data the only plot with more than 7 species in a single 20m x20m plot is within the HSP.

The result of Pia's work is a map of species diversity and those areas with the highest biodiversity values can be given priority for conservation efforts. Vegetation communities have been defined and clear preferences of threatened species became apparent. One interesting observation is that the Howard Toadlet seems to prefer disturbed sites.

Habitat is important for the threatened species and is groundwater dependent. Seepage in the late Wet season maintains the moisture flow across the sand plains into the Dry prolonging the season significantly. Therefore it is important that a buffer of 500m of the surrounding woodland is preserved around priority sand plain sites to provide the required seepage source. Howard Toadlets are not well understood but it is expected that they would also retreat to adjacent woodland areas in the Dry season so the buffer maintains a refuge for them.

Four localities were identified as priority areas occupying a total of 33.8 km²; 12.8% of the area of the Site of Conservation Significance.

Recognition of the key biodiversity values and localities provides a better opportunity to consider these values during planning and decisions on land-use for the Howard Sand Plain. It is hoped that public access to this information will improve community understanding of the outstanding biodiversity values of the Site of Conservation Significance and promote community input into future planning decisions.

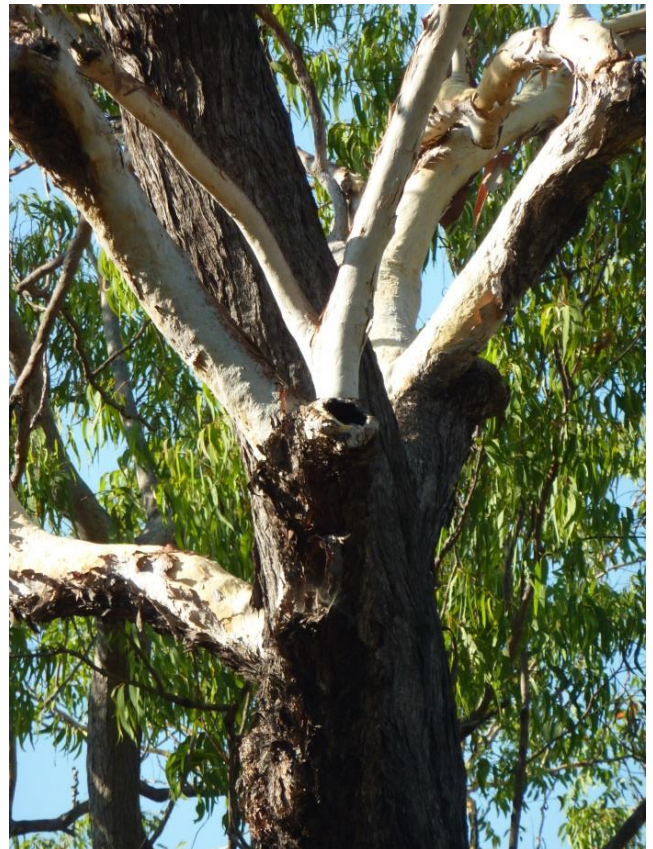
For more information visit the Greening Australia website and check out the range of factsheets and other resources available...

<http://www.greeningaustralia.org.au/project/howard-sand-plains>





Article by Sarah Hirst



Habenaria orchid at Territory Wildlife Park
photographed by Sarah Hirst.



Tree hollow in Eucalyptus miniata at Territory Wildlife Park
photographed by Sarah Hirst.

Fragrant flower		Native replacement
<p>Wisteria</p> <p>Wisteria is a climbing plant found in the United States, Korea, Japan and China. Wisteria flowers come in purple, pink and white colours, showing a resemblance to grape like clusters. Wisteria blooms during the northern spring, with flowers producing a sweet pleasant smell. Not all the species of wisteria flowers produce fragrance. It grows to a maximum height of 20 meters and spread across 10 meters. The climbing nature of Wisteria helps it grow across a wider area which fills with it's sweet smell.</p>	<p><i>Wisteria</i> spp</p>  <p><i>Hoya australis</i></p> 	<p>Wax Flower</p> <p><i>Hoya australis</i> occurs in eastern and northern Australia, from the Northern Territory though coastal Queensland from Cape York to northern New South Wales. It is a vine found on rainforest margins and rocky areas, and is commonly known as Waxvine or waxflower. It is a popular garden plant, noted for its fragrant flowers.</p>
<p>Frangipani</p> <p>Frangipani is a tropical flower native to South America, Mexico and Pacific and Caribbean Islands. Frangipani is national flower of Nicaragua, also known as Hawaiian lei flower among tourists because of its wider use. It produces a pleasant tropical smell; experience the aroma of the frangipani in the evening. Frangipani also used in a wider range of making bouquets and in a tropical spa due to its pleasant smell and relaxation power. It blooms in white, pink, red and yellow colours. Trivia: the frangipani only burn at extreme temperature of 500 degree Celsius.</p>	<p><i>Plumeria</i> spp</p>  <p><i>Cerbera manghas</i></p> 	<p>Cerbera (Sea Mango)</p> <p><i>Cerbera manghas</i> is naturally distributed from the Seychelle Islands in the Indian Ocean eastward to French Polynesia. It occupies coastal habitats and is often associated with mangrove forests. It has been introduced to Hawaii and other tropical locations as an ornamental. <i>Cerbera</i> is a small evergreen coastal tree growing up 12 m tall. The shiny dark-green leaves are alternate, ovoid in shape. The flowers are fragrant, with a white tubular 5 lobed corolla about 3 to 5 cm in diameter, with a pink to red throat. The fruits are egg-shaped, 5 to 10 cm long, and turn bright red at maturity.</p>

By Alex Bakunowicz and Sarah Hirst

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