

Ballarat Naturalist



Trailing Goodenia
Goodenia lanata
(Club Logo)

Succulent Plants of Australia

Speaker: Attila Kapitany, Author and Nurseryman,

Attila is President of the Cactus and Succulent Society of Australia and is part of the family nursery business where he manages the succulent section. Seeking new species and researching is a passion for him and it follows that he spends much of his time pursuing work in this field.

The best succulents come from Africa while Australia is at the bottom of the list for species numbers. Nevertheless some are still very interesting plants. Degraded soils are a good clue for succulent plant sites. Because of the drought in present times, Attila finds many people are becoming interested in these drought-loving plants.

His wide and varied slide collection included:

- *Bryophyllum delagoense* Mother of millions
A native of Africa and now multiplying at a greater rate than Prickly Pear in Australia. It is a smooth erect perennial plant with pinkish to grey stems with buds at the leaf tips which produce plantlets that drop readily and take root. The plant is toxic in every respect and is a worry to cattlemen. Much scientific work is now being carried out to help control the weed.
- *Portulaca oleracea* Purslane
A prostrate sprawling plant with rosettes of fleshy leaves and a common weed of our home gardens. It is edible and can be used as a calming influence.
- *Opuntia stricta* Common Prickly Pear
An erect succulent cactus. Much of the plant is edible, e.g. cochineal is produced from the fruits.
- *Carpobrotus modestus* Inland Pigface
One of our local species with attractive flowers.
- *Adansonia gregorii* Baobab
Is really a succulent tree with a huge swollen bottle-like trunk which is spongy and water holding.

•*Hoya sp.*

Hoya

One of Attila's favourites and found growing in tropical Australia. The plant is attractive in both leaf and flower form and the white flowers are delightfully fragrant.

•*Tetragonia tetragonioides* N.Z. Spinach or Warriagal Greens

A prostrate plant. It has fleshy leaves and can be cooked as a substitute for spinach.

The final slides for the evening showed us some of the colourful scenery along the Phillip Island seaside slopes which included a charming array of spring flowering succulents.

John Gregurke suitably thanked the speaker for his most interesting presentation.

Pat Murphy

FNC Ballarat Minutes of General Meeting 3 June 2005

Some Correspondence

IN: ANU reply/summary to our submission on their questionnaire *Private Sector Conservation Enterprises*.

OUT: Submission via email on Draft Fire Protection Plan.

Affiliation fee to Environment Victoria. As we have 47 members now, \$25 is payable (< 50 members)

Business Arising from correspondence: Nil.

Reports

Treasurer's Report: Opening Balance \$4050.86 Closing Balance \$4504.71

Community Plan meeting re Dereel Swamp (Summarised in newsletter). Nicole Butterworth reported that a landholder burnt the reeds and grazed cattle at the swamp.

General Business

Names to John Gregurke for Herbarium bus trip in July.

John Gregurke: latest news on ANN Get-together 2006.

Mid-month excursion to Bushranger Reserve (Scarsdale-Cape Clear Rd) Monday June 13 leaving at usual time, usual place; bring lunch.

Books from Kit Williamson for sale. Some retained for the library.

Show and Tell

Anne Rowland: 50cm long brown feather picked up on Bruny Island – probably a White-bellied Sea-eagle. Photos of white wallabies – 150 of them on the island happily dwelling alongside normal wallabies.

Field Reports

Tony Johns: in May, Drummond St South: large number of Eastern Spinebills heard.

Nicole Butterworth: in Millewa State Forest 2 Wedgetailed Eagles landed on bonnet of Toyota Hilux.

Les Hanrahan: at Bungaree, a platypus in potato paddock..

John Mildren: 5 families of White-winged Choughs – 36 in all – at

Greg Binns: in Gippsland, flowering in bushland NE of Morwell were Mosquito Orchids and Trim Greenhoods; in Moondarra State Park, lyrebirds, one mimicking 5 native bird calls.

C.Hall, J.Gregurke, P.Guay June 6th The 4 cygnets seen on Lake Wendouree last month now reduced to one. Two dead swans found – last year's cygnets.

C.Hall: on Lake Wendouree, Black Ducks and swans mating. Lake level down to minus 1 metre.

Excursion arrangements: Fungi with Les Hanrahan – Barkstead-Blakeville area, lunch at Sailors Falls. Bring hand lens and small mirror.

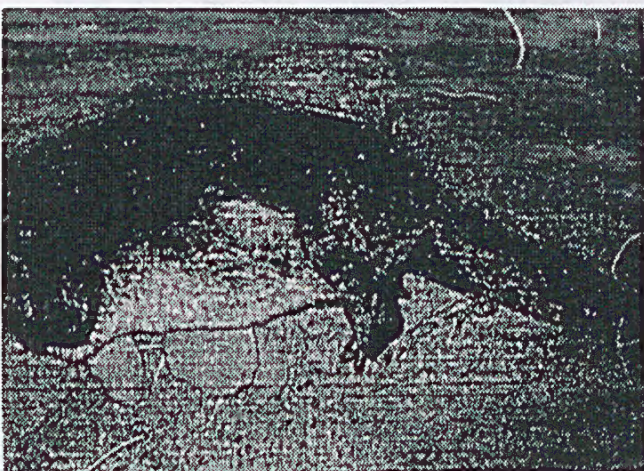
Excursion - Fungi Foray

Leader: Les Hanrahan

Innocuous high cloud was the feature of a calm, still, almost balmy day as 15 of us set out for the Wombat State Forest, inquisitive to know if a drier than usual season would limit our sightings.

We turned into Black Swamp Road and came to a largish dam on a drainage line used as a storage for irrigating nearby paddocks. A White-faced and a White-necked Heron were seen. We were shown a photo of a dead platypus – tangible evidence of platypus inhabiting this installation. These fearless little creatures happily pervaded man's domain, however ignorant of inexplicable obstacles. A perennial question since time immemorial – is man able to live in harmony with nature?

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Part of the Platypus found



Fly Agaric *Amanita muscaria*

We came to Springbank Road and a sign pointing to Leigh Creek at 3 Km. Advancing along this road we saw another dam on the right. This one with Black Swans and the resplendent chestnut-breasted Shelduck in this watery environment. Next turn was into

Barkstead Road – a small flock of corellas flew up. These roads were taking us through agricultural land and occasional pine plantations. Quite a few Kookaburras were seen. We then stopped at a clearing in one of these pine plantations. On the ground was a white feathery, hairy fungus with two “eyes”. “A slime mould”, said Les. Our own Peter Billing commented that it resembled something straight out of “Dr. Who”! The same Peter Billing made the not improbable suggestion that the slime mould was growing on a clod where a kangaroo might have urinated.

Fungi noted were Slippery Jack *Suillus luteus*, *Tubaria* spp. and Fly Agaric, *Amanita muscaria*.



Water in lake in Barkstead



No water here in Werribee river

Ken McDonnell interestingly said he believed forestry people in Britain have to import Fly Agaric into the plantation to get pines growing successfully. My own research at the Creswick Forestry School Library suggests that there is a symbiotic relationship which is highly beneficial to the tree. Pine roots infected with hyphae are capable of enduring a higher degree of soil drought than roots not infected, which collapse, i.e. fungi may well help the pine tree cope better with drought.

Other fungi noted here were *Laccaria* spp., *Mycena vinacea*, Variable Crep *Crepidotus variabilis*. Genny Binns found mould on a fungus in its death throes. A whole patch was there – preying on its own – weird happenings in this dim ghostly world.



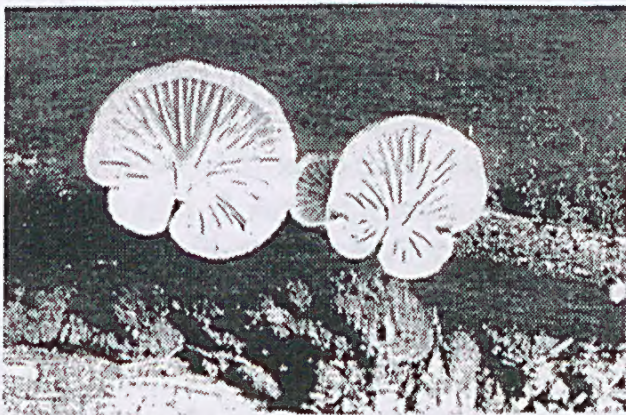
Ramaria sp



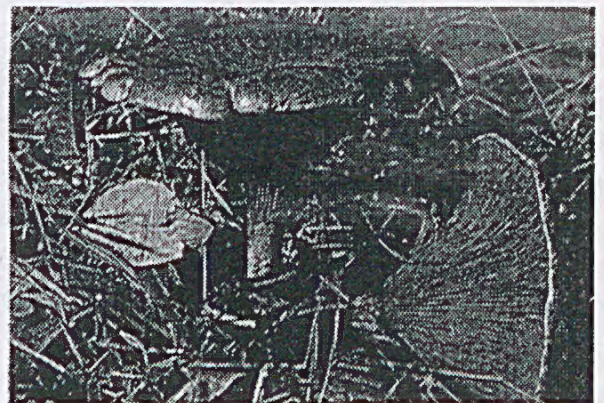
Rosette Fungi *Podoscytha Petaloides*

After a cup of tea, we departed the scene at 11.15am and arrived at the locality of Barkstead 5 minutes later. Our party turned into Rockland Road at an intersection out of Barkstead and then halted along this road. We were in Messmate country where bracken fern grew abundantly. Here a veritable fungal feast to the eye was had by all! We found *Tricholoma* spp., sinuate gills and white spores (as seen with a mirror), White-crowned *Mycena* *Mycena albidofusca*, *Cortinarius* spp. including Emperor Cortinar *C. archeri*, Yellow Jelly Bells *Heterotextus miltinis*, *Russula persanguinea* with its red top and pure white underneath, *R. clelandii* with its pink stem, an *Amanita* sp. with ochrous gills, Funnel Pax *Paxillus infundibuliformis*, Sulphur Tuft *Hypholoma fasciculare*, Spatular *Hohenbuehelia* *Hohenbuehelia* spp., Pagoda Fungus *Podoserpula pusio*, *Pholiata* spp., *Bisporella citrina* – different morphology, Coral fungi of different species, Yellow-stemmed *Mycena eipterygia* and Slimy White *Mycena Mycena austrororida*.

We departed the scene at 12.40pm and arrived at Sailor's Falls for lunch ten minutes later. A flock of Crimson Rosellas including immature birds with a lot of green on them flew through the trees at this popular location. The cloud cover had largely cleared and the sun shone just like a summer's day. We were on the road again at 1.40pm passing through Korweinguboorra 7 minutes later and then turning in to the Werribee River Picnic area off the Bunding-Blakeville road at 1.55pm. Here our fungi species list was extended e.g. *Dermocybe* spp., *Gymnopilus* spp., a bracket fungus - Polypore – *Gloephyllum* spp (found on the root base of an old fallen tree in the bed of the Werribee River which was not flowing – it consisted of only a few stagnant pools). Rainbow Fungus *Trametes versicolour*, *Crepidotus* spp., another bracket fungus with much paler quite distinct gills compared to *Gloephyllum* found on piled-up debris in the riverbed, a red dusty fungus on a waterlogged stick, quite possibly Purple Jelly Drops *Ascocoryne sarcoides*.

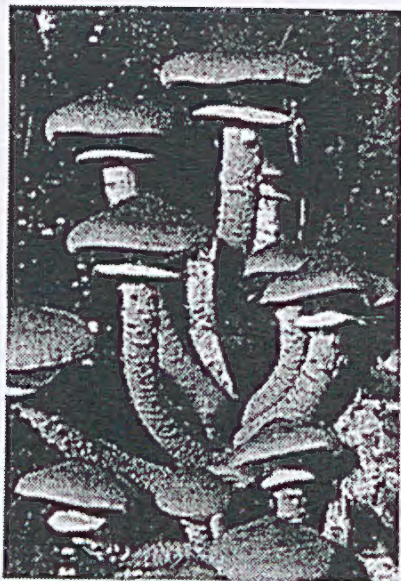


Variable Crep *Crepidotus Variabilis*



Funnel Pax *Paxillus infundibuliformis*

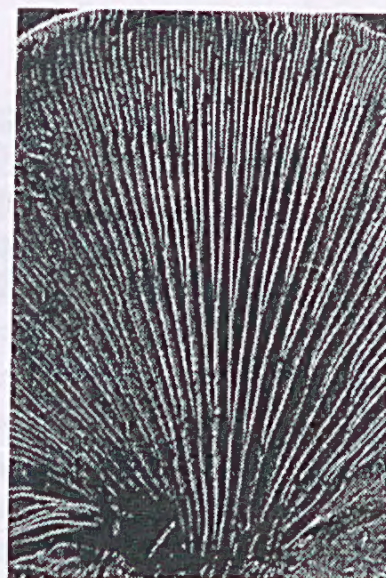
We departed at 2.30pm, and turned into Paradise Road for a final inspection of this fungal wonderland, finding Green Cortinar, a *Dermocybe austroveneta* (Les said the bunch of fruiting bodies was bright green a week ago but now grey), a possible sighting of a Dung Ball *Stropharia* spp., a Pretty Horn *Calocera* spp., *Boletus* spp., *Russula clelandii* (white or cream gills) *Tricholoma eucalypti*, Parasol Mushroom *Macrolepiopta clelandii*, *Sterium* spp. (found on a stick), Beefsteak Fungus *Fistulina hepatica*, a Horsehair Fungus *Marasmius crinisegui* at this stop.



Honey Fungus



Amanita muscaria



Fly Agaric

After assembling to thank our leader on the thoroughness of his preparation for the outing we returned to the city, replete.

Tony Johns.

Mid-month Excursion to Bushranger Reserve, Monday, 13 June, 2005

Leader: Pat Murphy

The committee's consideration of the Draft Fire Protection Plan for the Ballarat Area prompted Pat to consider the fire history (or lack of it) of Bushranger Reserve. As a result an impromptu outing was suggested to inspect this patch of bush along the Scarsdale-Cape Clear Road opposite the turn-off to Piggoreet and Devil's Kitchen. Fourteen members attended.

West of this Cape Clear Rd. is a small patch of woodland dominated by Yellow Box, Scentbark, Brown and Red Stringybark, Narrow-leaf Peppermint and Messmate Stringybark with a small number of Candlebarks. Judging by the disturbed ground some gold prospecting had occurred so we assumed that the woodland was old secondary growth. Also several wattles were present including *A. melanoxyton* and *A. acinacea*. The ground cover was dominated by *Dianella revoluta* (Black Anther Flax-lily), Small Grass Trees and tussocks of *Poa* sp. with *Hardenbergia* prostrate beneath our feet. The rain of the last few days had plumped up the moss and lichen, adding a green tinge to the landscape. Plants in flower included Common Correa *Correa reflexa* and Cranberry Heath *Astroloma humifusum*. Patches of Tiny Greenhood *Pterostylis parviflora* were found. Of interest was the sooty mould found on many shrubs of Sweet Bursaria *Bursaria spinosa*.

The structure of a culvert underneath the Piggoreet Road caught our eye with a bluestone lintel and tapered bricks around a terracotta drainpipe.

After lunch in the relative shelter at Devil's Kitchen where two Peregrine Falcons and a Brown Falcon were seen overhead, we visited the eastern block of Bushranger Reserve.

En route Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos flew parallel to us, one with a pine cone in its beak. The former Ballarat-Cressy-Colac railway skirted the eastern boundary of the block (the railway was closed south of Newtown in the early 1950s) and we wandered along the old cutting and embankments for about a kilometre. The cutting revealed exposures of thinly bedded Ordovician shale, steeply tilted and varying in colour from white where the rock had weathered into kaolin, through ochre to the dark red of haematite. Fine laminae had weathered into delicate fluting resembling the leaves of a book.

Along the bed of the cutting several species had taken root including *A. retinodes* and *A. melanoxydon*, and Matted Bush-pea *Pultanaea pedunculata*. Unfortunately many seedlings of *Pinus radiata* had also become established. A late bluebell *Wahlenbergia* sp. and a white *Epacris impressa* caught our eye. As did the remains of last season's Milky Beautyheads *Calochephalus lacteus*. Pat presented me with the curiously-shaped foliage of Goosefoot, *Einadia nutans*. Then later found a Fine-leaf Clematis *Clematis microphylla* which prefers to grow in warmer drier environs such as Happy Valley and Bacchus Marsh.

Arriving at the granite cairn commemorating one Thomas Ulick Burke, we discovered a more recent cairn of scoria, dedicated to the memory of two bushrangers. Thomas Ulick Burke was the agent of the Bank of Australasia who was shot by the bushrangers in 1867 as he returned to Smythesdale from the Break O'Day Company's claim at Rokewood. The bushrangers, George Searle, publican of the Cosmopolitan Hotel at Break O'Day and a labourer Joseph Ballan were hung for their crime in Ballarat Gaol (not *goal* as unfortunately printed on the plaque). The latter cairn was erected by Searle's great granddaughter.

Walking back to our vehicles in the bush between the road and railway line, we came upon the circular shape either of an old whim or perhaps a horse-drawn quartz crusher as there was much surface quartz throughout the reserve. Fungi found included the purple Emperor Cortinar. We found other cortinar sp. hidden in plant litter which had gathered on the slopes of the cutting. A vivid red-brown cortinar, one of the *Dermocybe* perhaps, caught our eye in damper spots. Tall Greenhood *P. longifolia* was seen here too, and in both reserves various orchid leaves were prominent. More Sweet Bursaria plants were covered in sooty mould in this eastern block. Again Small Grass Trees were prominent and the ground was thickly covered in *Poa* tussocks with occasional stalks of Kangaroo Grass.

Perhaps because of the wind and chilly weather few birds were heard other than a Tree-creeper. When Pat had visited the area in more congenial conditions she had been impressed by the number of birds.

Pat holds plant lists for these blocks and, as a result of this excursion, she was able to add to them.

Carol Hall

Calendar

July

- Fri. 1 Meeting: *Natural History of the Arctic* by Helen Burgess
Sun. 3 Exc.: **A bus trip** to *Fungi at the Herbarium* with guide, Tom May
Tues 26th Committee Meeting 7.30 pm at Helen Burgess's place

August

- Fri 5 *Enhancing Farmers' Environmental Performance* by consultant, Peter Hanrahan
Sun. 7 Excursion to *Linton Trust for Nature Block*, Leader, club member, Peter Dalman

Supper duty: July D.Brooke August volunteer please

Note-taker July volunteer please

Committee

- President** Mr. Peter Dalman
Vice-President Mr. Greg Binns
Secretary Mrs. Carol Hall
Treasurer Mr. Les Hanrahan

Miss Helen Burgess.....
Miss Maureen Christie.....
Mrs. Claire Dalman.....
Ms Fran Hanrahan (Editor)
Mrs. Pat Murphy.....

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Meetings are held at the Ballarat Horticultural Centre, cnr. Gregory & Gillies Sts (VicRoads 254 F8) on the first Friday of the month at 7.30pm.

Excursions: Depart from Ballarat Market Place (formerly Creswick Plaza) Creswick Rd., Ballarat (VicRoads 255 M10) at 9.30 am unless otherwise specified.

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