



August 2021

Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Newsletter



Visitors to the Intertexta Forest were excited to see these elegant pods of the Mulga Bean (*Vincetoxicum lineare*, previously called *Rhyncharrhena linearis*) spreading over a flowering and fruiting Dead Finish (*Acacia tetragonophylla*). More on page 5.

Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month (except December and January) at 7:00pm at the Olive Pink Botanic Garden.

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NEWSLETTER

The next newsletter will be September 2021.
The deadline for the September newsletter will be 23 August.
Please send your contributions to Barb Gilfedder: bjfedders@gmail.com

ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Wednesday 11 August at 7.00pm – Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club **Annual General meeting and Members' Night**.

Please consider nominating for a Committee position, if you are able, otherwise please just come and vote.

The AGM usually only lasts about half an hour and will be followed by a **Members' Night**. Please bring natural history items of interest to share, or a small collection of photos on a USB stick to show.

Wednesday 8 September at 7.00pm – **General Meeting - Joe Schofield** will talk about 'Understanding and working with fire to sustain ecological health at Newhaven.

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY - ALICE SPRINGS

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Wednesday 4 August 2021, 7.30pm - General Meeting at Olive Pink Botanic Garden. **Kate Stevens** will be talking about Native Pasture Grasses.

Sunday 22 August – explore the area around Ewaninga along the Old South Road. Meet at 7.45am for an 8.00am start at the beginning of the Maryvale Road (just off Airport Road).

Wednesday 1 September 2021, 7.30pm - General Meeting at Olive Pink Botanic Garden. **Bec Duncum** will be showing photos of wildflowers of the Chewings Range (Section 5 of the Larapinta Trail – Birthday Waterhole to Hugh Gorge)

Olive Pink Botanic Garden

Saturday 7 August 12pm Native Plant Sale OPBG.

Trees, shrubs and ground covers, bush tucker and medicine plants in tubes and pots. A perfect time for Spring planting. This is part of the Eco-fair activities.

Saturday 28 August 4.30pm Book Launch of new book by Peter Latz "Tough, tantalising or tasty"

This is part of the NT Writers' Festival.



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Wednesday 11 August 2021
Olive Pink Botanic Garden
at 7.00pm.

Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club

Committee Members

President	Barb Gilfedder	8955 5452
Vice-President	Margaret Friedel	0417 849 743
Secretary	Connie Spencer	0429 966 592
Treasurer	Neil Woolcock	0428 521 598
Property Officer	Rosalie Breen	8952 3409
Member	Lee Ryall	0417 401 237
Public Officer	Anne Pye	0438 388 012

Other Club Responsibilities:

Newsletter – Barb Gilfedder bjfedders@gmail.com
Facebook Organiser – Meg Mooney moon3@inet.net.au

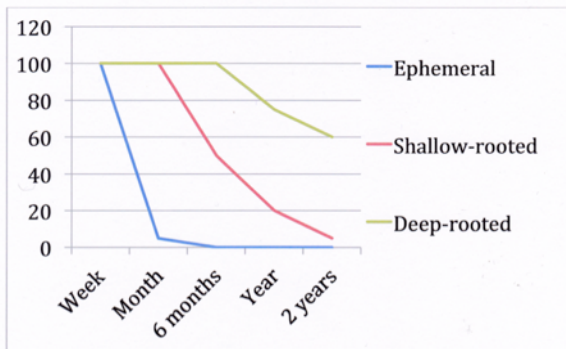
Australian Deserts: Ecology and Landscapes

Steve Morton talks about his new book, with Mike Gillam's beautiful photos, due for publication by CSIRO Publishing in early 2022. Presented 14th July 2021 and summarised by Marg Friedel. All photos are Mike's.

What are the major forces shaping our desert flora and fauna? First of all are very long-term forces, such as glacial and interglacial periods, which alter entire landscapes (think Simpson Desert with sand dunes forming in periods of extremes aridity and stabilising in wetter times) and which sift out species that aren't well adapted to prevailing conditions.

Next is the current climate, with its temperature extremes and erratic rainfall patterns. Across Australia's deserts, rainfall varies from summer dominated in the north to winter dominated in the south, but with a great degree of unpredictability. In the US and Indian deserts by comparison, there are times when rainfall can be expected even if the amount can't be predicted. Here in Alice we are not guaranteed of receiving rain in any month of the year.

Plants and animals have to cope with this and there are several strategies. Plants can be categorised as ephemerals, shallow-rooted and deep-rooted perennials, all using different strategies to survive. Some grow quickly, set seed and die, while others endure by accessing soil water at lower depths.

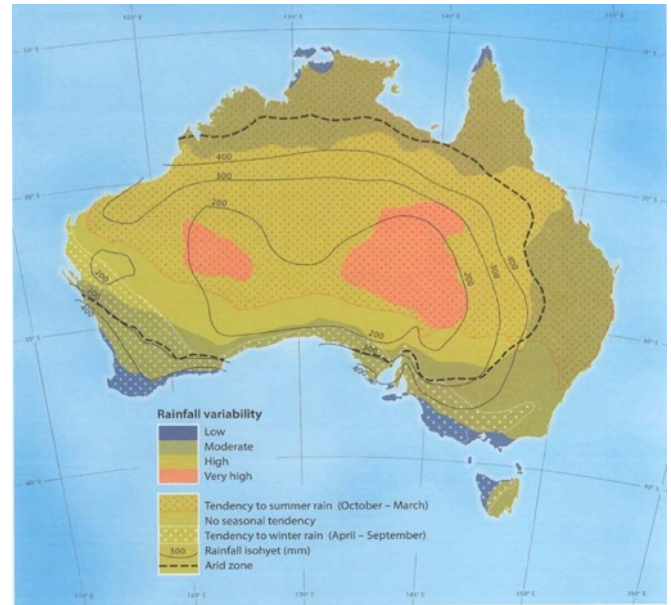


Plant-available moisture following rain

breeds continuously. Such a flexible strategy stands these birds in good stead for surviving climate change because they can keep adapting - an example perhaps of evolution being a work in progress.

Plant photosynthesis is not limited by the supply of CO₂ or sunshine, so plants produce copious quantities of carbohydrate, which can be used to deter herbivores. On infertile soils, spinifex for example produces plenty of leaves but these are not nutrient rich and so are not very palatable. Plants also defend themselves by producing toxins, to ensure that they retain precious nitrogen and phosphorus for themselves.

Plants can also use plentiful carbohydrates to enhance fertilisation and seed distribution. Many flowering plants produce nectar to attract insects and birds. Some produce (white) elaiosomes with their seeds to draw ants, other produce (red or yellow) arils to appeal to birds.



With little rain, most ephemerals focus their resources on seed production rather than growing leaves but when rain is plentiful, short-lived plants like the oat grasses continue growing and become 'facultative perennials'. In our deserts there are 1,400 species of perennials and hence great diversity, and 500 species of ephemerals.

Amongst herbivores there are some grasshoppers, such as yellow-winged grasshoppers and plague locusts, that respond massively to rainfall but there are 500 species of grasshoppers which do not form plagues. There is an even greater diversity of moths, some 10,000 species, and these, like the grasshoppers, depend on plants for food.

The zebra finch is a remarkable example of adaptation to climate. Here, it is an opportunistic breeder and will breed after a period of rainfall at any time, to the south it breeds in spring and summer, and in the north it



Singing Honeyeater on Eremophila latrobei



Spinifex-dominated landscapes support a great variety of termite species



A digger wasp manoeuvring a grasshopper into a hole.

As a consequence, Australia is a centre of ant diversity in both arid and rainforest environments. In the desert there are some 7,500 species, an important component of the consumer population. As an example, ten per cent of worker ants of red furnace ants collect exudates, and the remainder gather dead insects.

An abundance of termite species is also a product of plentiful carbohydrates. Whatever plant material is not eaten by herbivores will eventually die and be left for detritivores, such as termites. Spinifex-dominated landscapes for example, despite their low fertility, support a great variety of termite species, which then attract specialised termite eaters - the reptiles. A wealth of excess carbohydrate also leads to fuel build up in wet years and inevitable fire.

Of the 400 species of reptiles, goannas are 'top of the pile', but there is also a vast array of invertebrate predators. The digger wasps for example, of unknown diversity, eat grasshoppers and crickets. There is something in excess of 10,000 species of invertebrate predators and almost all are unstudied.

Steve drew our attention to other adaptations to the deserts' unpredictable climate and resource availability. Some birds are sedentary, others are nomadic and some are migratory. The bee-eater is generally migratory but some overwinter here if conditions are good. Banded stilts, which usually frequent coastal salt lakes, have been recorded travelling over 2000 km in a few days over the inland, either for purposes of breeding on freshly filled salt lakes, or as exploration. Other adaptations, familiar to us but no less extraordinary, are those of the burrowing frogs and the explosion of shield shrimps in puddles of water after rain.

All this is summarised in Steve's final table: Life in Australian deserts. [\(left\)](#)

Many thanks Steve for an enjoyable and informative talk, precursor to the launch of a future best seller!

Life in Australian deserts
A wide spectrum of life histories
Notable opportunistic, boom-and-bust species
Abundant perennial plants
Distinctive facultative perennials
Ecosystems rich in carbohydrate
Abundant termites, especially in poorer soils
Abundance and diversity of ants everywhere
A wealth of invertebrates
Abundant burrowing frogs
Abundance and diversity of lizards
Birds with remarkable mobility
Inconspicuous and mostly nocturnal mammals
A vast array of aquatic ecosystems, mostly ephemeral



Intertexta Forest Wander – 10 July 2021

Photos by Anne Pye, Rosalie Schultz and Barb Gilfedder

Barb Gilfedder - The name Intertexta Forest comes from the trees that are growing there, *Eucalyptus Intertexta*, Bastard Coolabah. Many of them have multiple trunks that Peter Latz told me was due to the trees being burnt at some stage. It is one of my favourite places to visit with a wide diversity of plants. It is protected on the east by a chenopod plain and to the north by claypans. An ephemeral creek runs through the middle, bringing nutrients when it flows and floods. Peter Latz and others have fenced the area, keeping out vehicles and have also kept the invasive Buffel Grass largely under control.

Megg Kelham - For once I am lost for words. If what we saw on Saturday's visit was that the Intertexta Forest looking not so good, then I look forward to visiting when it looks good. The sheer number of chenopods - a plant group I have never taken much notice of before - was astounding. As astounding as the smallness of the grass seeds Aboriginal women ground to make flour (*Panicum decompositum*). Not sure I would ever manage to remember the proper names of the majority of the plants we saw. Love being around those who do remember and love to share. Thanks Barb for organising this trip. Look forward to the next one.

Rosalie Schultz - With my parents visiting we were fascinated by the words: *intertexta*, is from Latin words meaning 'between' and 'tissue', referring to the inter-woven bark fibres. The deep shade from the mallee *Eucalyptus Intertexta* trees was wonderful.

A paper daisy also caught my eye: *Rhodanthe floribunda*: Rhodanthe is Greek for Rose flower, with floribunda meaning abundant flowers.



Jane Bannister - The Intertexta forest was something I had heard about for years, and it always felt as though it was like a Secret Garden, so it was with great anticipation I joined the group to wander through this forest. It did indeed feel like something I would imagine a secret garden to be. It felt like a truly magical place, full of beauty and surprises and as though it had been forgotten by the outside world, and where time had stood still. What magnificent trees the *Eucalyptus intertexta* are, so majestic, and so interesting that they grow *away* from water, whereas the *Eucalyptus coolabah* prefer to grow *in* water. The creepers and vines, so many, added to the mystery of the place. Such a rich assortment of chenopods on the edge of the forest, far too many to remember, but maybe the *Sclerolaena cuneata* will stick with two spines pointing out and one pointing backwards and a chance to refresh my memory of *Dissocarpus paradoxus* and good to see the Lotus plant again, which we saw at Conlons Lagoon.



Sclerolaena cuneata



Dissocarpus paradoxa



Lotus cruenatus



Atriplex spongiosa

Countless Budgerigars were moving around in the forest, many Diamond Doves, and on the way out in the open, some lovely Crimson Chats – one of my (many) favourites!

This was a wonderful morning exploring this magic place that felt like a true Wonderland. Many thanks to Barb and Connie for taking us there! I couldn't count the number of times I have driven down Ilparpa Road and had no idea this wonderful forest was right there. *What a truly delightful morning!*

Ellery Creek Big Hole to the saddle for lunch

By Marg Friedel

On a sunny Sunday 18th July, a 13-strong group of us gathered at Ellery Creek Big Hole for the 4 km walk eastward to the saddle, where Stage 6 of the Larapinta Trail drops down into the Alice Valley before heading east and northeast towards Hugh Gorge in the Chewings Range. The first treat was the masses of *Ptilotus clementii* on the initial limestone rises that got our bushwalking legs going. Further along we encountered more spectacular *Ptilotus* displays (*clementii*, *exaltatus*, *sessilifolius*, *obovatus*) and the biggest spreads of *P. schwartzii* any of us had ever seen. There were also plenty of other more modest flowering displays: see Connie's list for names.



The creamy flowers are *Ptilotus clementii* and the pink ones *P. exaltatus*.

Along the way, everyone delighted in the flashing fly-pasts of Budgies and the busy-ness of Zebra Finches, as well as less frequent sightings of shyer birds. On the climb up to the saddle, the calls of the Budgies seemed magnified by echoes from the exposed rock strata. Check Joss's bird list and her favourite sighting for the day, probably shared by many.



White rocks near the saddle.

On previous walks to the same destination, Marg Friedel had been intrigued by white rocks near the 28 km mark, about 1 km from the saddle, having initially perceived them to be scattered pieces of a broken polystyrene box. Those thoughtless tourists, she thought! Not so. Rosalie Breen and Meg Mooney thought that the fluffy-looking rock could be calcite, deposited in cracks through the main dolomite rock. But there was a complication: dolomite is a type of limestone rich in calcium and magnesium carbonate, and Bob Read, who Meg recommended be asked, suggested it could also be magnesite. He said "Unfortunately the answer to this one is ambiguous. It may be calcite, but this fluffy texture is often magnesite, magnesium carbonate. Physically they are very similar. They can really only be distinguished by chemical testing." He also said that formation from ground water not far below the water table was likely. Recommended tests to distinguish between calcite and magnesite suggest that calcite was present, possibly mixed with other minerals. Thank you to our geological gurus for the insights.

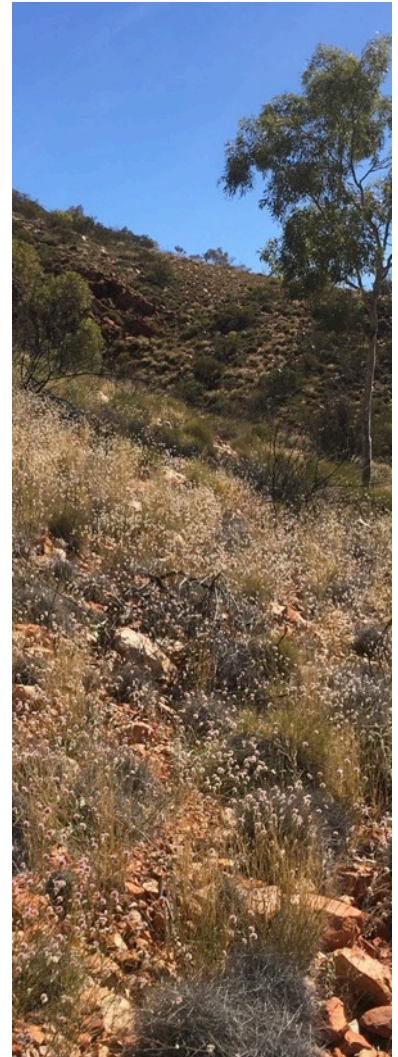
Lunch on the saddle afforded wonderful views across the Alice Valley to the Chewings Range and no-one was in a hurry to leave, especially since one of our visiting walkers, Jessie, was celebrating her 71st birthday and her friend Jan had brought a cake to share for the occasion.



As people who have done this walk will appreciate, the return journey gives the opportunity to enjoy all the wildflowers again but also requires everyone to climb back up and over those first limestone rises, when their legs are no longer feeling quite as fresh. We were grateful for the large, shaded table and benches in the picnic ground for a brief rest and catch up before heading back to town.

Partial Plant Species List for Ellery Creek East to Saddle July 2021- Connie

Genus	Species	Subsp	Family	Common Name
Abutilon	sp.		MALVACEAE	
Acacia	aneura		FABACEAE	Mulga
Acacia	macdonnellensis		FABACEAE	Hill Mulga
Acacia	melleodora		FABACEAE	Waxy Wattle
Acacia	tetragonophylla		FABACEAE	Dead Finish
Anemocarpa	saxatilis		ASTERACEAE	Hill Sunray
Capparis	mitchellii		CAPPERACEAE	Wild Orange
Corymbia	opaca		MYRTACEAE	Bloodwood
Enneapogon	oblongus		POACEAE	Rock Nine-awn
Enneapogon	polyphyllus		POACEAE	Woolly Oat-grass
Eremophila	christophori		SCROPHULARIACEAE	Dolomite Fuchsia Bush
Eremophila	elderi		SCROPHULARIACEAE	Sticky Fuchsia Bush
Eremophila	freelingii		SCROPHULARIACEAE	Rock Fuchsia Bush
Eremophila	latrobei	latrobei	SCROPHULARIACEAE	Native Fuchsia
Eremophila	latrobei	glabra	SCROPHULARIACEAE	Native Fuchsia
Eucalyptus	sessilis		MYRTACEAE	Finke River Mallee
Eucalyptus	socialis	eucentrica	MYRTACEAE	Limestone Mallee
Eriachne	mucronata		POACEAE	Mountain Wanderrie
Goodenia	ramelii		GOODENIACEAE	Goodenia
Goodenia	vilmoriniae		GOODENIACEAE	Purple Hand-flower
Grevillea	wickhamii		PROTEACEAE	Holly-leaf Grevillea
Harnieria	kempeana	kempeana	ACANTHACEAE	Harnieria
Jasminum	calcareum		OLEACEAE	Poison Creeper
Psydrax	latifolia		RUBIACEAE	Native Currant
Pterocaulon	sphacelatum		ASTERACEAE	Apple Bush
Ptilotus	clementii		AMARANTHACEAE	Limestone Pussycats Tails
Ptilotus	decipiens		AMARANTHACEAE	Ptilotus
Ptilotus	exaltatus		AMARANTHACEAE	Large Pink Pussy-tails
Ptilotus	incanus		AMARANTHACEAE	Ptilotus
Ptilotus	obovatus	obovatus	AMARANTHACEAE	Smoke Bush
Ptilotus	schwartzii		AMARANTHACEAE	Horse Mulla Mulla
Scaevola	glabrata		GOODENIACEAE	
Scaevola	spinescens		GOODENIACEAE	Spiny Fanflower
Senna	artemisioides	oligophylla	FABACEAE	Oval-leaf Cassia
Senna	glutinosa	glutinosa	FABACEAE	Cassia
Sida	phaeotricha		MALVACEAE	Hill Sida
Sida	sp. limestone		MALVACEAE	Sida
Streptoglossa	sp.		ASTERACEAE	
Themeda	triandra		POACEAE	Kangaroo Grass
Ventilago	viminalis		RHAMNACEAE	Supplejack
Zygophyllum	tesquorum		ZYGOPHYLLACEAE	



Part of one of the biggest spreads of *Ptilotus schwartzii* any of us had ever seen.

Bird list for Ellery 18th July 2021 - Jocelyn

Here are the birds I saw, or others told me they saw, on the walk.

I've included numbers of birds (very approx. for abundant birds). Because e-Bird asks for numbers, I'm trying to get into the habit; even though I haven't submitted many sightings to eBird, perhaps I will one day. It's also interesting to look back on how the relative abundance of birds varies at different places and times.

My favourite bird sight of the day was the Budgies up the gully and over the pass to join their mob feeding on the ground halfway down from the pass on the north side.

Budgerigar – 100	Singing Honeyeater – 20	Grey Shrike-thrush – 2	Hooded Robin – 1
Zebra Finch – 100	Crimson Chat – 6	Inland Thornbill – 1	Yellow-rumped Thornbill – 2
Painted Finch – 6	Rufous Whistler – 2	Diamond Dove – 3	Willie Wagtail - 1
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater – 20			

Impressions from Rosalie B

My most obvious impression was that the walk was quite a bit harder than it was 10 or more years ago. This leads to a possible conclusion that kilometres on Larapinta Trail are longer than kilometres on local bike trails.

But such a joy to be out in "Big Time" country again among the giant pondering mountains and meander through the undulating valley among those Ptilotus fields of pink, white and small cotton balls, the spinifex, the mallees, and many other gems.

On the saddle itself were imposing walls and blocks of a dark red-orange conglomerate type rock. Much of the rubble was quite big and angular proclaiming the power of water, which collected and deposited them. *Thanks Marg!*

Hidden Landcare Gems, Todd River walk, Sat June 19th 2021

By Sue Morrish



A group of about half a dozen people joined me one cold June morning to visit some areas along the Todd that have been worked on by Alice Springs Landcare over the last 6-8 years.

Where the Gosse St drain empties into the Todd, the Couch Grass has been removed. Nardoo (*Marsilea* sp.) and Joyweed (*Alternanthera* sp.) have spread everywhere, creating a great frog and tadpole habitat.

Further along between Spencer Hill and the Todd we looked at old River Gums with circles cleared of Buffel Grass at their base. Here we saw other native grasses steadily expanding – Silky Browntop (*Eulalia aurea*), Katoora (*Sporobolus actinocladius*), Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*), Native Oat-grass (*Enneapogon avenaceus*), Woolly Oat-grass (*Enneapogon polyphyllus*) and one plant of Three-awn Wanderrrie (*Eriachne aristidea*).



Eriachne aristidea, Three-awn Wanderrrie

High up on the hill slope I'd found some Rock Isotome (*Isotoma petraea*) which I was keen to show people. But the hill is very steep there, so thanks to those who brought binoculars we were able to locate it from the ground! Interestingly, when I clambered up a few weeks later with my 'good camera' to take photos of the Rock Isotome, there was another plant that Peter Jobson identified as *Plumbago zeylanica* in that same damp rocky cleft.

Back on the river bank Connie helped identify a white flowering perennial as *Heliotropium asperrimum* or Rough Heliotrope. Its leaves look a bit like Fruit Salad Bush (*Pterocaulon* sp.), but are rougher, and it has small flat white flowers in cymes. It was growing next to some very large Sturt Desert Rose bushes (*Gossypium sturtianum*) that have expanded into the Buffel-free area under a large River Gum.



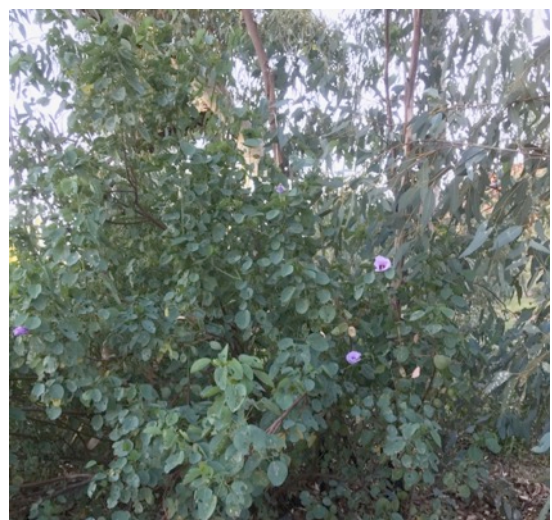
Plumbago zeylanica

The original plan was to return on the West bank along the bike path next to St Philips College, to look at the Bluebells (*Wahlenbergia* sp.) and *Themeda triandra*. We did walk this way but the whole area had been recently mown by the Council, with only one tiny patch of *Wahlenbergia* still visible. I did show everyone a River Red Gum that caught fire a few years back, that Mike Gillam had helped rescue. He had screwed mesh into the tree with tek screws to hold sand over the opening at the base of the trunk, preventing fire from penetrating the heartwood. The tree is still alive today, unlike others in the Todd that have had fire burn out the centre of their trunks and thus become chimneys.

Thanks everyone for coming along and helping me learn more about the plants I see!

P.S. from Rosalie and Connie

One lonely plant of *Dissocarpus paradoxus* drew our attention. It has woolly balls with pink spikes just like a mace and an apt common name of Cannon-ball Saltbush (See page 5). There were also two species of *Ptilotus* in cleared areas under some of the River Gums – Smoke Bush (*Ptilotus obovatus*) and Crimson Foxtail (*Ptilotus sessilifolius*).



Gossypium sturtianum, Sturt Desert Rose

Desert Park Spring wildflowers 24th July 2021 By Rosalie Schultz

Steven Priestley, Nursery Manager at Alice Springs Desert Park introduced us to the park's beautiful springtime flowers. Tony Greenwood, the new Director of ASDP, came along too. Many thanks to you both!

Steven explained the three origins wildflowers in the Desert Park: self-sown, scattered and hand planted: how a plant originates determines how natural it looks. He described how the Park does deep watering, soaking their plants for 8 hours every so often. The recent increases in temperature and decrease in watering have activated plants producing amazing blooms.

We enjoyed a huge range of flowers but I focussed on learning about a few *Eremophila* species with my beautiful book *Australia's Eremophilias: changing gardens for a changing climate*. [Photos below in same order as in the text.](#)

1. ***Eremophila youngii*** – growing on the path to the west of the entrance. This is a compact shrub up to 3m high whose silver-grey leaves have pointed slightly-hooked tips. The flowers are dusky pink to brick red. It is not a local, but grows directly west of here from the middle of WA over to the west coast, with a few specimens collected in the NT. However it is cultivated right across the country.
2. Not to be confused with ***Eremophila maculata***, a more compact and smaller shrub at 0.5 to 3m. *E. maculata* is widespread throughout inland Australia. Flowers can be anywhere from pale to deep pink to red, yellow and apricot. Maculata means spotted and refers to the distinctive spots in and on the flowers.
3. Next was ***Eremophila ovata***, a rounded shrub half a metre high, with grey-green leaves and pale to deep purple flowers. It grows only in central Australia, west of Alice Springs.



4. ***Eremophila willsii***, a compact shrub grows in the centre of Australia from eastern WA across to western Queensland. Stunning flowers are deep pinkish to purplish blue with a dark throat.
5. Up on the sand ridge was the stunning ***Eremophila paisleyi***, a rounded shrub 2m high and wide, described as “floriferous with a wow factor”, a very hardy shrub .
6. My final selection is ***Eremophila glabra***, a shrub from prostrate to tall, up to 3m high. It grows throughout the country, with bright green to silver-grey leaves and flowers ranging from green to yellow to orange to red.



We were also taken by the *Pimelea microcephala*, Mallee Riceflower, the only *Pimelea* in the region, as we found some attractive flowering shrubs outside one of the aviaries. We had seen this rare plant on a trip to Roma Gorge in June last year. (Check the August 2020 newsletter.)

And one last scenic photo of annual daisies, mainly Pink Everlasting, *Schoenia cassinoides* and Annual Yellowtop, *Senecio gregorii*.



Vale Elsa Corbet – 1926-2021

Long time Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Member and also Life Member since 2007

Elsa was staunchly independent, articulate and had a keen sense of humour. In the first part of her life she trained and worked as a kindergarten teacher, saving money for her passion as a traveller. She liked the roads less travelled before it became popular. She went to Papua New Guinea, India and other exotic places. After a visit to India she got a bus that was supposed to take her to London, but it broke down in Iran in the snow. After six days stranded on the bus, passengers were told to make their own way. She managed to get to London paying for accommodation and transport by selling souvenirs she had bought earlier.

She settled in Alice Springs and in 1966 married Leo Corbet. He had set up Pitchi-Richi Sanctuary, a bush garden planted to attract birds. His friend William Ricketts had installed 20 statues there among the native plants. Leo also collected central Australian memorabilia to create an open-air museum. Elsa hand painted signs to go with them, explaining where they came from and their use. Leo was 24 years Elsa's senior and he died in 1971. Elsa continued caring for the place, living by selling citrus until the bore went salty and killed the trees. She built a little cottage for herself and also established a vegetable garden.



The earliest note of Elsa in the ASFNC records is 7 February 1978 when the Club was formed as the Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club although she could have been in the previously named Central Australian Field Naturalists Club. Connie thinks this because it was Elsa who suggested to Bob that she thought the, or a club, existed in the 1950's. Bob found a reference to a Field Naturalist Club in The Advocate via Trove (see Feb 2015 Newsletter).

Elsa was elected President of the Club 3 April 1979. The AGM was held at Toddy's Cabins. This is the only committee position she held but she was a regular attendee at meetings. Other references were 20 April 1979 when a BBQ was held at Pitchi Richi Sanctuary and bird-watching at the Sanctuary on 15 May 1979 both during her term as President. Connie remembers Xmas breakfast at Elsa's cottage in 2005. Elsa received life membership 13 October 2007 during a working bee at Pitchi Richi (above). Several ASFNC working bees were held at Pitchi Richi to help Elsa manage the Buffel Grass that she loathed. At a Members' night one year she turned up with a lovely bunch of wildflowers she had picked around the Sanctuary and named them all. She loved her flowers, often collecting pieces out bush to add to dried flower arrangements. Every year she won prizes at the Alice Springs show for her arrangements.

She happily moved into a cottage at the Old Timers Home when she felt she needed to, pleased to retire from her battle with Buffel but hoping others would continue the fight. She continued to enjoy our newsletter and shared it with other residents in the home.

One of her neighbours there, Ursula Burmeister sent us this little anecdote.

"A rose story"

"Elsa invited me to "proper" English tea (cups and saucers!) and home-baked scones and told me about her many travels and what life was all about.... She loved her garden, especially the roses and was constantly seen working in it. One late afternoon - dusk settling in - I returned from a walk, nobody to be seen outside - the television screens flickering everywhere.

Only Elsa's house was dark. There she was - sitting in her garden, in front of a rose bush.... I joined her.

"Look at this", she said, pointing at the rose bush.

I tried to look...I was at a bit of loss....nothing breathtaking, just a rose bushat last I saw it. There was a tiny bud.

"It will open in a fortnight," Elsa said, "I'm looking after it."

Many thanks to contributors Bob Read, Connie Spencer, Ursula Burmeister and Rhondda Tomlinson. Compiled by Barb Gilfedder



Christmas party at Pitchi Richi 2005, Elsa in blue dress.



Christmas party at Simpsons Gap in 2002, Elsa in white hat.