

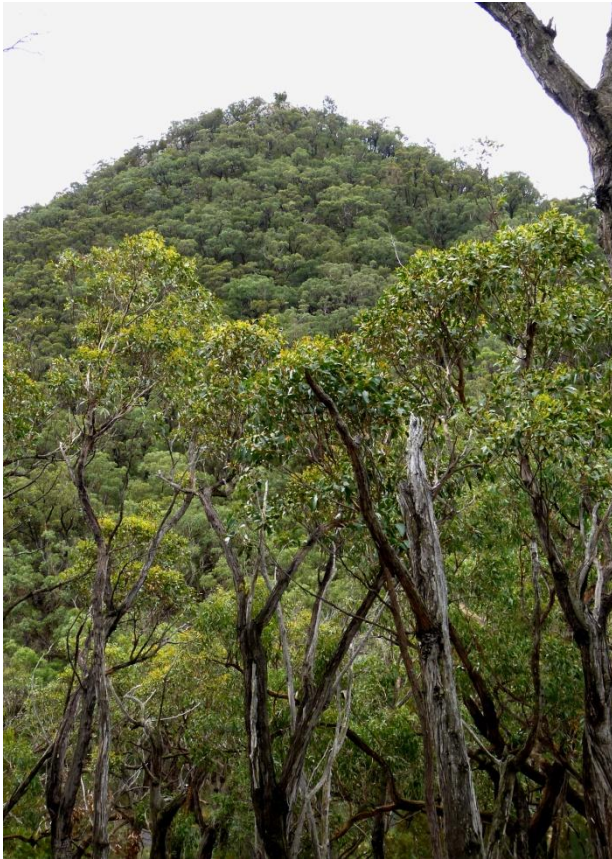
HFNC Yarram Gap Excursion 22 June 2014

Rod Bird, Diane Luhrs, Dave Munro & Reto Zollinger

HFNC members met at the Hamilton Visitor Centre at 9.30 am and Dunkeld at 10 am to travel along the Halls Gap Rd to the Yarram Gap turnoff and then to the parking area at Yarram Gap. The major objective of this excursion was to locate the site where, in 1859 Eugene von Guerard painted 'View of the Wannon Springs in the Grampians with Mt Abrupt, Colony of Victoria'.

Present: Dave & Lyn, Rod & Diane, John & Glenys, Ken & Janeen, Reto & Yvonne, Tim & Valetta (and Fingal 8, Amelia & Olive 6), Sally, Amanda, Hilary and Ross. With 16 adults and 3 juniors this was a well attended excursion. We were fortunate with the weather – a light shower early but mild, with some sun until after we had finished our lunch at the First Wannon Campground and were about to return home.

The party sorted into those who felt able to scramble through the bush, up the steep slope to the peak on the north side of the road, while others chose path going south from the parking area. It transpired that no useful view was obtained of the southern peaks by those who took that route. It may be that a view could have been obtained by walking beyond the path and further south through the bush on that southern peak. Those who took the northern route were rewarded with good views after a stiff scramble up the final 50 m of this 100 m ascent. They were charged with bringing back photographs of the scene from the top.



Tim and Ross were photographed first at the summit, followed by Reto. A 'long-lens' Lumix camera was used from a slight rise south of the car park to spy upon the party at the top. Three of Reto's photos are presented below. The first is a view from a gap in the trees; the second is from a little to the west, through trees (probably nearer the spot where the artist painted) and the third is a panoramic view of the entire scene.



Opinion was that the artist had painted the scene in a realistic fashion, without much licence. It was noted that eucalypts grew now in the middle of the swamp area between the Serra and Mt William Ranges.



There were fine views west and north from the peak (see photos below). Those descending from the peak found it rather steep and slippery. Both parties arrived aback at the cars at about the same time. Some who did not take the climb admired the early wildflowers and abundant fungi along the roadside and in the bush.



Allocasuarina grampiana Grampians Sheoak (endemic in the Grampians – bluish branchlets and red flowers on female shrubs), *Grevillea dimorpha* Flame Grevillea, *Correa reflexa* Common Correa, *Styphelia adscendens* Golden Heath, *Astroloma pinifolium* Pine Heath, *Epacris impressa* Common Heath & *Hakea* sp.



Grevillea dimorpha



Allocasuarina grampiana



Astroloma pinifolium



Styphelia adscendens



Epacris impressa

At our lunch stop we found Vegetable Caterpillar fungus (*Cordyceps* sp.). The presence of fruiting bodies of fungi were a significant element in the bush, reminding us that these are a most important factor in the environment. Fungal hyphae exploit a much greater volume of soil than can the plants and, since plant roots and fungi are intimately associated, minerals and water are obtained by plants and the fungi gain products of photosynthesis. Too frequent fires can disrupt this process and also result in slower decomposition of litter, leading to increased fire hazard and the inevitable community pressure to decrease the interval between fires.

