

HFNC Excursion to NGT's 'Eaglehawk' property, Bangham Conservation Park and Western Block Little Desert National Park, 16-18 Sept. 2016

Rod Bird

Participants. Due to the wet weather preceding this event and the absence of some members interstate this campout was poorly attended, with only two HFNC members present (Diane and Rod). The weather was excellent and we had a great weekend exploring the Eaglehawk property and corners of the Bangham Conservation Park in SA and the western block of the Little Desert National Park in Victoria.

Bryan Haywood from Nature Glenelg Trust was our host on Friday evening and Saturday morning, with Andrew Lines, a naturalist from Encounter Bay in SA also present. Andrew has been surveying insects (particularly moths and butterflies) on 'Eaglehawk' and assisting with conservation works on the farm.

Friday 16th September

We drove via Cavendish-Balmoral-Harrow-Edenhope-Apsley-Hynam-Frances, finding the 'Eaglehawk' property 8 km north of Frances on the Frances-Penola Rd (4043 sign). Distance 200 km from Hamilton. There were signs of the floods in the previous week, with ephemeral lakes in some paddocks, but no road closures. Lake Wallace at Edenhope had water (it had been dry) but that had not reached the jetty!



Eaglehawk – we arrived at 6 pm, as did Bryan, and Andy had a fire going to welcome us. The evening was calm and mild, with a full moon rising, and we sat around the fire talking after dinner. A Tawny Frogmouth was heard calling at 7 pm, above the cacophony of frog calls and a Southern Boobook put in an appearance too, among the Yellow Gums.

Saturday 17th September

Eaglehawk – At breakfast by the camp fire Bryan gave us a talk on the background to 'Eaglehawk'. Briefly, the property had been partly cleared by 3 previous owners, dating from the mid-60s. The land comprises low sand dunes with Desert Stringybark, Slender Cypress, Desert Banksia, Silver Banksia and heath species and clay flats with Yellow Gum and some Pink Gum. There are no drainage lines and we noted ephemeral swamps from the recent heavy rains. There are 7 small dams on the 684 ha property. There is a program of works here to link areas of bush to the south with Bangham Conservation Park.



Andy showed us some of the collections of moths, butterflies and damsel flies he had made, most from light traps, and his methods of handling and presentation of the specimens.



In the morning we were driven around some parts of the property, noting the different vegetation types and the extent of revegetation works on some of the cleared areas. Andy, Bryan and other volunteers have been busy removing many of the old fences on the property, too. Some areas were a little wet so we did not see all of the property. Broughton's Pea was flowering at one wetland area.

Photos below show two replenished wetlands (Eaglehawk Waterhole is on the right) from recent rains, Broughton's Pea, a Desert Stringybark bush remnant, a Yellow Gum clay flat, ducks on a pond near the camp and an old Desert Stringybark and restoration planting on a cleared dune near the entrance.



The Yellow Gums were flowering and Musk, Purple-crowned and Rainbow Lorikeets were busy among the blossom. There were many birds around camp. We saw Musk Lorikeets in the old sheep yard at the camp, busy chewing seed from Veldt Grass that had been planted in the early days of farming. Red-rumped Parrots were there, too and Galahs were nesting in the tree hollows.



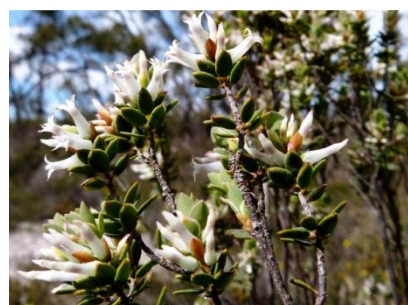
Little Desert National Park – Bryan left late in the morning and we drove out to see what we could of the LDNP, which abuts the border a few km away. We drove north and then east on Wills Rd to Bangham Siding and the Bangham-Frances road, to find an entry to the western block. We found no tracks leading through farmland to the border and the LDNP, despite maps showing their presence. We turned south to Frances and took the road to Minimay, turning north past the Tallageira Homestead and along Koch's Rd which leads into the LDNP. We met a farmer who informed us that the track had some deep, muddy pools, so we parked when finding the first and walked to the entrance, about 1 km away.



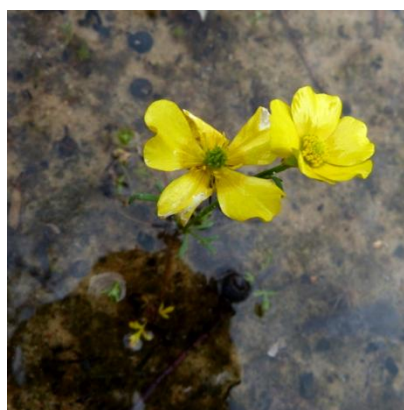
Our approach to the park was through Yellow Gum flat and swamp. At the entrance, **Laidlaws Dam Track** went to the east while the **Tallageira Track** went directly ahead, up a dune and north to the East-West track. A track off the dune top followed the boundary fence west (photo below, bottom right).



There were many plants in flower (see Table 1), among those Common Fringe-myrtle, Shrubby Dampiera, Daphne Heath, Silky Bush-pea and Gold-dust Wattle (photos below). There were hundreds of Pink Fingers, Wax-lip Orchids, leaves of Red-beaks and perhaps Fringed Hare-orchid but no other orchid species were seen. It seems that the best time for wildflowers here this wet spring may be in October!



Bangham Conservation Park – The afternoon remained sunny and we drove back through Frances to the park, which has a frontage to the Frances-Penola Rd, a few km north of ‘Eaglehawk’. We walked in from the road, rather than driving through water at the entrance. The vegetation there is very similar to that of the LDNP and Eaglehawk’s bush. Rabbit-ear Orchids, Yam Daisy, Brush Heath, Pink Fingers and Thick-fruit Buttercup were conspicuous with flowers (see photos below). We also found species in flower that we did not see elsewhere. These included Marron-hood Orchids and Grey Mulga. We heard a Southern Scrub-robin calling from a thicket of *Callistemon rugulosus* but could not see it.

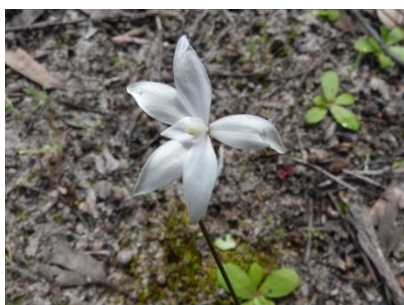


Back at Eaglehawk camp we sat around the camp fire (fed from the many old Stringybark posts that Andy and others have been removing from the farm) before a chill wind sent us early to bed.

Sunday 18th September

Eaglehawk – some rain fell during the night but the sun was out at dawn and some bird-watching was done before breakfast. Birds were attracted to a large Desert Stringybark in the cleared area near the entry track. That tree also bore masses of capsules that Red-tailed Black-cockatoos would relish. Some clouds appeared but there was no further rain.

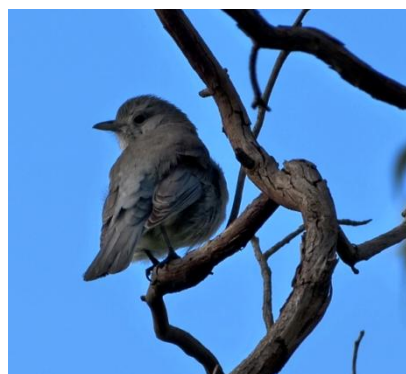
This morning we strolled through some bushland. Species in flower included Spiny Wattle, Western Correa, Leafy Templetonia, Paper Flower, Foxtail Mulga Grass, Pink Fingers, Kite-leaf Grevillea, Pink Beard-heath, Showy Parrot-pea, Leafless-Bitter-pea, Small Gnat-orchid, Wax-lip orchid and Red-beaks (2 plants among the hundreds of leaves seen had flowers) (see photos below). Brush Heath, Scarlet Sundew, Showy Parrot-pea, Silky Bush-pea, Rabbit-ears and other species were also seen (see Table 1).



Fungi were also plentiful in the bush area. Diane saw and dug up one African Weed Orchid from the bush about 200 m south from the camp, near the west side. Hopefully that pest plant is not widespread.



We saw 2 Red-tailed Black-cockatoos, Grey Shrike-thrush, Dusky Wood-swallows, Brown Treecreepers and many others (Table 2).



Botanical Name #	Common Name #	Eaglehawk	LDNP	Bangham
<i>Acacia acinacea</i>	Gold-dust Wattle		*	
<i>Acacia brachybotrya</i>	Grey Mulga			*
<i>Acacia myrtifolia</i>	Myrtle Wattle	*		
<i>Acacia paradoxa</i>	Hedge Wattle		*	*
<i>Acacia pycnantha</i>	Golden Wattle	*		
<i>Acacia spinescens</i>	Spiny Wattle	*	*	
<i>Astroloma conostenhioides</i>	Flame Heath	*	*	
<i>Brachyloma daphnoides</i>	Daphne Heath	*	*	*
<i>Brachyloma ericoides</i>	Brush Heath	*	*	
<i>Caladenia carnea</i>	Pink Fingers	*	*	*
<i>Calytrix tetragona</i>	Common Fringe-myrtle	*	*	*
<i>Chamaescilla corymbosa corymbosa</i>	Blue Stars	*		
<i>Clematis microphylla</i>	Small-leaved Clematis	*		*
<i>Coronidium scorpioides</i>	Button Everlasting			*
<i>Correa reflexa scabridula</i>	Western Correa	*		
<i>Cyrtostylis reniformis</i>	Small Gnat-orchid	*		
<i>Dampiera dyantha</i>	Shrubby Dampiera		*	
<i>Daviesia brevifolia</i>	Leafless Bitter-pea	*	*	
<i>Dillwynia sericea</i>	Showy Parrot-pea	*	*	*
<i>Drosera glanduligera</i>	Scarlet Sundew	*		
<i>Eucalyptus leucoxylon pruinosus</i>	Waxy Yellow-gum	*	*	*
<i>Glossodia maior</i>	Wax-lin orchid	*	*	*
<i>Grevillea illicifolia illicifolia</i>	Kite-leaf Grevillea	*		
<i>Hakea rupeosa</i>	Dwarf Hakea		*	
<i>Hibbertia sp.</i>	Guinea-flower	*	*	*
<i>Hypoxis vaginata vaginata</i>	Yellow Star	*		*
<i>Kennedia prostrata</i>	Running Postman	*	*	
<i>Lentospermum myrsinoides</i>	Heath Tea-tree	*	*	*
<i>Leuconogon ericoides</i>	Pink Beard-heath	*	*	*
<i>Neurachne alloneuroidea</i>	Foxtail Mulga-grass	*		*
<i>Microseris lanceolata</i>	Yam Daisy			*
<i>Millotia tenuifolia</i>	Soft Millotia	*		
<i>Pimelea humilis</i>	Common Rice-flower	*		
<i>Pterostylis pedunculata</i>	Maroon-hood			*
<i>Pultenaea prostrata</i>	Silky Bush-pea	*	*	*
<i>Swainsona procumbens</i>	Broughton Pea	*		
<i>Templetonia stenophylla</i>	Leafy Templetonia	*		
<i>Tetralochea ciliata</i>	Pink-bells	*	*	
<i>Thelymitra antennifera</i>	Rabbit-ears	*	*	*
<i>Thomasia petalocalyx</i>	Paper Flower	*		*
<i>Ranunculus nachycarum</i>	Thick-fruit Buttercup			*

Botanic and common names according to Morgan *et al.* (2014) "Birds and plants of the Little Desert"

Table 2. Birds seen at 3 sites, 16-18 Sept. 2016			
Species	Eaglehawk	LDNP	Bangham
Australian Magpie	*	*	*
Australian Raven	*		
Australian Shelduck	*	*	
Australian Wood Duck	*		*
Brown Treecreeper	*		*
Common Bronzewing			*
Crimson Rosella	*	*	*
Dusky Woodswallow	*		
Eastern Rosella	*	*	
Galah	*	*	*
Grey Fantail		*	
Grey Shrike-thrush	*	*	
Grey Currawong		*	*
Grey Teal	*		
Jacky Winter	*	*	*
Laughing Kookaburra	*	*	
Little Raven	*		
Little Wattlebird			*
Long-billed Corella	*	*	*
Musk Lorikeet	*	*	
New Holland Honeyeater	*	*	*
Noisy Miner	*		
Purple-crowned Lorikeet	*		
Rainbow Lorikeet	*	*	*
Red Wattlebird	*	*	
Red-tailed Black-cockatoo	*	*	
Rufous Whistler	*	*	
Shining Bronze-cuckoo		*	
Southern Scrub-robin			*
Southern Boobook	*		
Spotted Pardalote	*		
Striated Pardalote	*	*	*
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	*	*	
Superb Fairy-wren	*	*	
Tawny Frogmouth	*		
Welcome Swallow	*		*
White-browed Babbler			*
White-winged Chough	*		
White-throated Tree-	*		
White-plumed Honeyeater	*	*	*
Willie Wagtail	*		
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	*	*	

We believe that small patches of the bush on Eaglehawk would benefit from prescribed burns to regenerate orchids and especially Desert Banksia.

We also consider that direct-seeding of a range of species would markedly speed up the process of restoring the native vegetation on the cleared parts of the property. The technology, equipment and operators (e.g. from Arborline in Hamilton) is available to do such work.

Planting could be confined to those species that cannot be direct-sown, or to fill in gaps. There could also be development of small areas for the production of bush foods.

After lunch we drove to Hamilton via Frances-Natimuk Rd-Bringalbert-Patyah Rd-Edenhope-Harrow-Balmoral. The distance was about 10 km less than by the route we took through Apsley on Friday.

We stopped at Lake Bringalbert (full) and the Johnny Mullagh cricket ground at Harrow; it was flooded (the cutout figure stranded!).

Black Swamp near Balmoral was nearly full – for the first time in many years.

The Wannon River at Cavendish was also in flood, with water near ‘Kenilworth’ occupying almost the entire several hundred metres width of the flood plain.

