

HFNC Excursion to Grampians Boroka & Wartook Lookouts –21 Oct 2018

Dave Munro and Rod Bird

Present: HFNC members who attended were Rod Bird, Diane Luhrs, Jane Hayes, Peter Hocking, Kay Aldridge, Dave & Lyn Munro, Daryl & Lyndal Delahoy, Ross Simpson, Kate Kennedy, Hilary & George Turner, Wendy & Peter McDonald. Rod's cousin Steve McWhinney & Lyn Harvey from Beaufort and 10 members of the Friends of the Grampians/Gariwerd (FOGG) were also there. Also present were a couple from Kiama visiting the Grampians who saw the advertising of the event by FOGG.

The FOGG had a very successful trip to this area last year and had compiled an impressive plant list of over 70 species, largely due to the botanical knowledge of Neil Marriot. We invited that group to join us on this excursion to the Mt Difficult Boroka and Wartook Lookouts for a repeat visit. Rodney Thompson from FOGG contacted the National Park manager to ensure that access to the Wartook lookout was open.

The Hamilton party left on a cool, overcast morning and met with others outside the Dunkeld School. The drive along the Grampians Road was most pleasant with all the peaks of the southern Serra Range hidden in blankets of cloud. The approach to Mt. Abrupt was particularly striking. Along the road we passed patches of *Leptospermum*, *Conospermum mitchelli* and the last flowering of several acacias. After Halls Gap, on the Mt. Victory road, these were replaced by colourful yellow and orange pea-flowering shrubs and magenta blooms of Pink Bells (*Tetratheca ciliata*).

We met up with the FOGG group at Boroka Lookout (formerly Mt. Difficult Lookout). Those who had not been there for some time were amazed at the amount of new infrastructure which included an extended car park, fences and viewing platform, not to mention the scatter of rubbish. The view to Lake Bellfield was magnificent, the Elephants Hide also showing to good effect. The views to Lakes Fyans and Lonsdale were rather subdued by haze.



View to Bellfield from Boroka Lookout DL



Common Bird-orchid, Boroka Lookout DL

Rodney Thompson (President of FOGG) volunteered as leader for the day as he and his mother, Judith had reconnoitred the route earlier. The plan was to travel to the start of the track to the Lake Wartook Lookout with a couple of stops along the way. Before we left we found a large colony of Common Bird-orchids (*Chiloglottis valida*) on the slope beside the car park.

Our first stop was at an outcrop of what appeared to be weathered igneous rock. The soil there was quite different from that of the surrounding sandstone-derived soils. The Yellow Rice-flower (*Pimelea flava*) was present in large numbers, as were Rough Bush-peas (*Pultenea scabra*) and Variable Prickly Grevilleas (*Grevillea aquifolium*).



Yellow Rice-flower RB



Variable Prickly Grevillea GT



Rough Bush-pea & granite rock DL

Two prostrate wattles were seen here: Heath Wattle (*A. brownii*) and Thin-leaf Wattle (*A. aculeatissima*).



Heath Wattle DL



Thin-leaf Wattle DL

A large uniform patch of a low daisy plant (presumably a *Celmisia* sp., possibly *C. pugioniformis*) was found in an open area on short but steepish rocky slope about 50 m from the road. The lack of open flowers was a source of frustration for those trying to identify the plants.

Orchids were hard to find but we did see a few *Caladenia carnea* (or *C. fuscata*) and *Pterostylis diminuta* (Crowded Greenhood) nearer the road.



Single Bladder-wort RB



Crowded Greenhood RB



Celmisia sp.? RB

Near the bottom of the slope was a damp area which supported a good crop of 'Fairies Aprons', which appeared to be Single Bladderwort (*Utricularia uniflora*). Small Wrinkle-wort (*Siloxerus multiflorus*), not so pale Pale Sundew (*Drosera auriculata* or *peltata*), moss and lichen covered much of the surface.



Pale Sundew DL



Small Wrinkle-wort and moss RB

Our next stop was another kilometre or so along the road. It was in grey, sandy soil and there were some plants in flower, including Cats Claws (*Grevillea alpina*) and Mountain Hickory-wattle (*Acacia obliquinerva*). This area had also been burned within the last 10 years. Near a rocky rise were several plants of Bentham's Bush-pea (*Pultenea benthamii*), a colourful very prickly small, sparse shrub. Pink Bells (*Tetradlea ciliata*), Common Heath and Wattle Mat-rush (*Lomandra filiformis*) were also seen.



Bentham's Bush-pea RB



Common Heath RB



Pink Bells GT



Wattle Mat-rush RB



Common Heath DL



The phylodes of the Mountain Hickory Wattle are large and the main vein is off-centre. The flowers on the shrubs we saw were almost spent.

We drove on another kilometre past patches of pink and white Hairy Boronia (*Boronia pilosa*) and the bright blue-flowered Nodding Blue-lily (*Stypandra glauca*) before reaching our lunch stop, at the beginning of the 500 metres walk to the Wartook Lookout. *Stypandra glauca* (known in some parts of Australia as Blind Grass because it is toxic to stock) was very colourful at this spot.

Mountain Hickory Wattle RB



Hairy Boronia GT



Nodding Blue-lily GT

Most of us elected to have our lunch on the edge of the cliff, with a spectacular view over the plains to the north east of the mountains, before starting the walk. Lakes Fyans and Lonsdale appeared to be quite full while the general outlook was greener than expected. .



Lunch stop at Wartook Lookout car park DL



View south-east along the range GT

The track from the car park to the Wartook Lookout rock has been formed recently as part of the Grampians Peak Trail and is commendably narrow, far too narrow for motorised vehicles.



Peaks Trail near Wartook Lookout RB

The Peaks Trail here consists mostly of slabs of rock placed mosaic-like along the entire 500 m. The slabs were taken from near the trail, in a way that did not damage the locale, rather than importing materials that would likely have caused more damage and introduced weeds. The trail keeps walkers “on-track”, looks good and, as an added bonus, provided habitat for several skinks.

We saw several skinks as we walked along the trail. The skinks were probably the Southern Water Skink (*Eulamprus tympanum*), one of about 14 species (including Shinglebacks and Blue-tongue Skinks) that are found in our region. The trail beyond the peak has not yet been developed.

Wildflowers seen along the way or near the lookout included Erect Guinea-flower (*Hibbertia riparia*), the colourful Grampians Thryptomene (*Thryptomene calycina*, Fairy Wax-flower (*Philotheca verrucosa*), Hairy Correa (*Correa aemula*) and the grey-white Victorian Smoke-bush (*Conospermum mitchellii*).



Skink (possibly Southern Water Skink) on the Peaks Trail RB



One small plant seen about 50 m from the start of the trail provided for some speculation. It appeared to resemble Dwarf Boronia (*Boronia nana*) but differed substantially from the usual form, being rather hairy and having more pointed petals and 4 prominent lobes rather like an additional set of petals surrounding the anthers and stigma (see photo next page).

Due to the dry spring, the wildflower display was perhaps rather more subdued than usual, particularly regarding orchids. We listed 35 species of plants in flower and would have expected to see more. However, we did not make a thorough search and would certainly have recorded mores species had we done so.



Victorian Smoke-bush RB



Apple Galls on Brown Stringybark RB



Hairy Correa DL



Fairy Wax-flower RB



Erect Guinea-flower DL



View SE from near Wartook Lookout RB



Wartook Reservoir from the Lookout RB



White-browed Scrubwren DL



Dwarf Boronia ssp.? MS

Other interesting sightings included White-browed Scrubwrens fossicking in small trees at lunch time, galls on the broad leaves of Brown Stringybark (*Eucalyptus baxteri*) saplings and a few fungi including Puff-balls (possibly *Calvatia* sp.), Yellow Belly-buttons (*Omphalina chromacea*) and Bracket Fungi.

The leaf galls seen were 'Apple Galls', caused by a Psyllid (a lerp insect) of the *Schedotrioza* genus laying eggs in the leaf. The developing larvae induce the host eucalypt to build specific tissue around itself (the gall), supplying nutrients and shelter. Other galls are caused by a variety of other parasites, including wasps, flies, aphids, mites, midges, weevils, nematodes, fungi and bacteria.

Plants seen in flower

| Botanical Name | Common Name | Boroka Rd Stop 1 | Boroka Rd Stop 2 | Wartook Track | Wartook Lookout |
|---|----------------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| <i>Acacia aculeatissima</i> | Thin-leaf Wattle | y | y | | |
| <i>Acacia brownii</i> | Heath Wattle | y | y | | |
| <i>Acacia obliquinerva</i> | Mountain Hickory Wattle | | y | | |
| <i>Acacia oxycedrus</i> | Spike Wattle | | y | | |
| <i>Astroloma pinifolium</i> | Pine Heath | | y | | |
| <i>Boronia nana</i> ssp. ? | Dwarf Boronia | | | | y |
| <i>Boronia pilosa</i> | Hairy Boronia | | | y | |
| <i>Caladenia carnea</i> (or <i>fuscata</i> ?) | Pink Fingers | y | | y | |
| <i>Chiloglotis valida</i> | Common Bird-orchid | | | | |
| <i>Comesperma volubile</i> | Love Creeper | | y | | |
| <i>Correa aemula</i> | Hairy Correa | | | | y |
| <i>Conospermum mitchellii</i> | Victorian Smoke-bush | | | y | y |
| <i>Dodonaea viscosa</i> | Hopbush | | | y | |
| <i>Drosera auriculata</i> or <i>peltata</i> | Pale Sundew | y | | y | |
| <i>Epacris impressa</i> | Common Heath | y | y | | |
| <i>Grevillea alpina</i> | Cats Claws | | y | | |
| <i>Grevillea aquifolium</i> | Variable Prickly Grevillea | y | y | y | |
| <i>Hibbertia prostrata</i> | Bundled Guinea-flower | | | y | |
| <i>Hibbertia riparia</i> | Erect Guinea-flower | | | | y |
| <i>Ixodia achillaeoides</i> | Ixodia | | y | y | y |
| <i>Leucopogon glacialis</i> | Twisted Beard-heath | | | y | |
| <i>Leucopogon virgatus</i> | Common Beard-heath | | | | y |
| <i>Lomandra filiformis</i> | Wattle Mat-rush | | y | y | |
| <i>Philotheca verrucosa</i> | Fairy Wax-flower | | | | y |
| <i>Pimelea flava</i> | Yellow Rice-flower | y | y | | |
| <i>Platylobium obtusangulum</i> | Common Flat-pea | | y | | |
| <i>Pterostylis diminuta</i> ? | Crowded Greenhood | y | y | y | |
| <i>Pultenaea benthamii</i> | Bentham's Bush-pea | | | | |
| <i>Pultenaea scabra</i> | Rough Bush-pea | y | y | | |
| <i>Siloxerus multiflorus</i> | Small Wrinkle-wort | y | y | | |
| <i>Stypantra glauca</i> | Nodding Blue-lily | | | y | y |
| <i>Styphelia adscendens</i> | Golden Heath | y | | | |
| <i>Tetratheca ciliata</i> | Pink Bells | y | y | y | |
| <i>Thryptomene calycina</i> | Grampians Thryptomene | | | | y |
| <i>Utricularia</i> sp. (<i>uniflora</i> ?) | Single Bladderwort | y | | | |
| <i>Viola cleistogamoides</i> | Tiny Violet | | | | |

Birds seen/heard

Buff-rumped Thornbill
Crescent Honeyeater
Crimson Rosella
Eastern Spinebill
Fan-tailed Cuckoo

Gang-gang Cockatoo
Grey Shrike-thrush
Spotted Pardalote
Striated Pardalote
Superb Fairy-wren

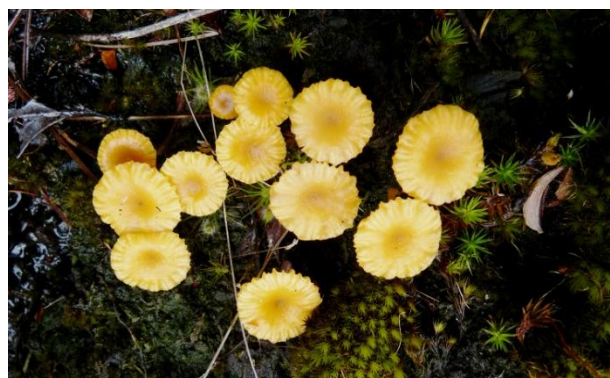
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
White-browed Scrubwren
White-eared Honeyeater
White-throated Treecreeper
Yellow-faced Honeyeater



Grampians Thryptomene GT



Spike Wattle DL



Yellow Belly Buttons RB

Grampians Thryptomene was still in full flower and there may have also been some Heath-myrtle (*Micromyrtus ciliata*) seen at some stage. One yellow-flowered large-leaved plant growing in a crevice at the Wartook Lookout was not identified (see photo below). Perhaps it was a *Picris angustifolia* ssp.?



Puffball (possibly a *Calvatia* sp.) DL



Unidentified 'daisy' at Wartook Lookout DL

At about 3 pm the party broke up and we all departed for home, having had an enjoyable outing to a destination many of us had either not visited or had not visited for many years.

Postscript: The photos were provided by Diane Luhrs, George Turner Rod Bird and Margo Sietsma.