

HFNC Excursion to Portland's Loreto Reserve, Picnic Hill Reserve & Cape Nelson on 22 July 2023

Rod Bird & Diane Luhrs

Participants: We had a party of 14 people on this excursion: R & I Graney, D Luhrs & R Bird, P Hocking, G Cayley, J Samuel, S Patterson, P & W McDonald, G Turner & S Henry, V. Keiler, J. Logan.

We left Hamilton at 9.0 am on a day that promised some rain. We found, however, that rain did not arrive until we were leaving Cape Nelson in mid-afternoon.

We stopped at **Bolwarra Primary School** parking area, where the Graney's met us for a picnic cuppa and introduction to the day's excursion and history of the Loreto Reserve. Ruth, our leader for the day, then led the convoy across Henty Highway and onto the **Caledonia Hill Rd to Loreto Reserve**. We began at the northern entrance. This bushland reserve lies along the top of the escarpment and exists entirely as a result of action taken by Loreto nuns to ensure that the land was not sold for development.

This reserve is infested with Sweet Pittosporum (*Pittosporum undulatum*). The tree is a bountiful source of fruit for many birds and mammals; where other forests are cleared or now degraded, this tree may be the means of ensuring the continued presence of some fauna in the region. Perhaps there is a place for 'problem' trees in a few reserves and roadsides where they can be contained. It was obvious that *Sparaxis bulbifera*, Bridal Creeper (*Asparagus asparagoides*) and Periwinkle (*Vinca major*) are entering the reserve along the tracks – the best way to limit the spread is to work back from the furthest infestation. Despite the Pittosporum and other weeds, we enjoyed the time we spent in the reserve.



Ruth addresses the group at Loreto Reserve



Trail through Loreto Reserve



Sweet Pittosporum with fruit



Brown Stringybark



Brown Stringybark trail

The Loreto Reserve has some large Brown Stringybark (*Eucalyptus baxteri*) and Messmate (*E. obliqua*), as well as Blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*) and shrubs. We saw three species of orchids and Austral Indigo (*Indigofera australis*) in flower. The orchids were the Black-striped Greenhood (*Pterostylis melagramma*), Nodding Greenhood (*P. nutans*) and Veined Helmet Orchid (*Corybas diemenicus*).



Veined Helmet Orchid



Black-striped Greenhood



Austral Indigo

We saw Eastern Yellow Robins and 2 Koalas (the latter asleep in trees until we disturbed them); we also heard a number of other birds (see Wendy McDonald's list).



Black-striped Greenhood



Koala, rudely awakened



Messmate Stringybark

Fungi seen included those from the genera *Agaricus*, *Arhennia*, *Cortinarius*, *Geoglossum*, *Laccaria*, *Laetiporus*, *Mycena*, *Russula*, *Postia*, *Stereum* & *Tremella*.



Stereum sp.



Laetiporus sp.



Russula sp.



Agaricus sp.



Stereum sp.



Lichen



Laccaria sp.



Tremella fuciformis



Geoglossum sp.



Cortinarius sp.



Arrhenia sp.



Postia sp.

Susan and Diane were the last to finish the walk, having been delayed by the many colourful fungi – the other walkers were waiting at the gate for them. A sleepy Koala perched in a Stringybark over the trail near the entrance attracted some attention.

Susan and George left our excursion after this walk as they had business to do in Portland. Ruth led the rest of the party to the **Portland Harbour Yacht Club** area before we continued on to a lunch spot at **Picnic Hill Reserve**.



The little reserve contains remnants of native tree and shrub flora, including Brown Stringybark (*Eucalyptus baxteri*), Manna Gum (*E. viminalis* ssp. *cygnetensis*), Silver Banksia (*B. marginata*), Drooping Sheoak (*Allocasuarina verticilata*), Sweet Bursaria (*Bursaria spinosa*) and Soap Mallee (*E. diversifolia*), as well as some understory plants.



Lunch at Picnic Hill



Lookout on Picnic Hill PH

After lunch, we walked to the top of the lookout to the view over the port, Lawrence Rocks, Lady Julia Percy Island, Cape Grant, Portland and Cape Nelson. Picnic Hill was named by Major Mitchell in 1836 when he and the Hentys were on the way to explore Cape Nelson. Mitchell used this hill top to take bearings on other prominent landscape features. According to the notice board, the hill was 'left undisturbed until the late 1940s' when it was acquired by the Murrell family. A walking track was constructed along the SW edge in 1957 and in the early 1970s part was divested to the Portland FNC. Subsequently the land was passed to the local Shire and several bodies now assist in its management.



Cape Grant, Lawrence Rocks & Julia Percy Is.



Cape Nelson Lighthouse

The leaves of a Brown Stringybark on the hill are exceptionally large and wide. Plants found flowering on Picnic Hill included Silky Guinea-flower (*Hibbertia sericea*), Common Correa (*Correa reflexa*) and Seaberry Saltbush (*Rhagodia candolleana*). The Portland FNC produced a brochure in 2017 ('Plants at Picnic Hill Reserve') that lists 40 native species (with 33 photographs) on or adjacent to the reserve.



Leaves of a Brown Stringybark



The reserve has a Trust-for-Nature covenant on it.

A considerable amount of re-planting has been done by the Cape Nelson Landcare/Coastcare Group.

There is a problem with weeds such as Periwinkle and Cleavers (*Galium aparine*) in some sections – no doubt the whole area was at one time grazed by stock as well as having garden rubbish dumped there.

Our next stop was just short of the **Cape Nelson Lighthouse** where Ruth wanted to show us some orchids on the Great South West Walk.

However, Rod, Glenys, Sarah, Ivor and Diane lost the leaders and thought that they must have continued on across the road near the GSW walk sign. That diversion took the five to the cliff adjacent to the Cape Nelson Lighthouse – a spectacular viewing place. Incidentally, we noted that the scaffolding around the lighthouse was being dismantled, the work that we observed on our last visit having just finished.



Cape Nelson Lighthouse and cliffs

A phone call to Ruth revealed that she and the others were back near the cars! They had slipped onto another part of the GSW walk. We walked back along the road from the lighthouse and found Ruth. Fortunately, the threatening clouds had not broken and we had time to see the Striped Greenhood (*Pterostylis striata*), Small Gnat Orchid (*Cyrtostylis reniformis*) and Slaty Helmet Orchid (*Corybas incurvus*) and a few other flowering plants, including Cranberry Heath (*Styphelia humifusa*), Common Correa (*Correa reflexa*), White Correa (*Correa alba*) and Coast Beard-heath (*Leucopogon parviflorus*).



Slaty Helmet Orchid



Cranberry Heath



Small Gnat Orchid



Striped Greenhood



Common Correa



White Correa



Coast Beard-heath

Then, as the rain was just starting, we thanked Ruth for her help on the day and made our way back to Hamilton.

Striped Greenhood



Appendix
Bird List for Loreto Reserve, Portland & Cape Nelson area

Common Name	Loreto Reserve	Portland Harbour	Picnic Hill/Cape	Enroute
Australasian Gannet			*	
Australian Magpie				*
Australian Shelduck				*
Australian Wood Duck				*
Black Swan				*
Black-shouldered Kite				*
Buff-rumped Thornbill			*	
Common Blackbird	*			*
Crimson Rosella	*			*
Eastern Yellow Robin	*			
Fantailed Cuckoo	*			
Galah				*
Grey Fantail	*			
Grey Shrike-thrush				*
Laughing Kookaburra	*			
Little Pied Cormorant		*		
Magpie-lark				*
New Holland Honeyeater	*			*
Pied Currawong	*			*
Raven			*	*
Red Wattlebird	*		*	
Silver Gull		*		
Singing Honeyeater			*	
Superb Fairy-wren	*			*
Welcome Swallow			*	
White-throated Treecreeper	*			
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	*			