

Red Hill Wildflower Walk Sunday 20 November 2017

Guide – Michael Mulvaney

Michael began with an overview of the area in relation to indigenous habitation. Then the 'white settlement' of the Campbells and subdivision of the land into farming plots of about 100 acres (hectares?).

The aboriginal people used white ochre from a pit on the hill.

In 1909 the broader area was declared as the site for the capital of Australia, with consequences for the use of Red Hill.

Part of what is now the RH reserve was used as a sawdust dump. After the fatality involving a young boy playing on the pile, the dump was used for asbestos and cadmium from the Mint.

The area the group walked through is part of the Federal Golf Club lease. This meant there was less grazing pressure and has better orchids density. Michael spoke about it as being an area that the Red Hill Regenerators would like to be returned to the Red Hill Reserve.

Moving on to plants currently in the area, Michael pointed out the beetles, introduced in the 1960s, on St John's Wort. These beetles eat the leaves and the plant eventually dies. He recollected the many, many hours he and Peter Franklin had spent spraying SJW to keep it under some control.

Other plants identified and discussed:

- Rumex brownii – native dock
- Amyema – mistletoe. There are three species. The mistletoe leaf fall attracts beetles and other insects. Some birds, and possums, feed exclusively on mistletoe.
- Hydrocotyle laxiflora - Stinking Roger / Stinking Pennywort – pollinated by flies
- Yellow box (Eucalyptus melliodora) and red gum (Eucalyptus blakelyi, Blakely's red gum) – names came from colour of timber
- Plantago varia, plantain
- Eryngium ovinum, blue devil
- Arthropodium fimbriatum – chocolate lily
- Hardenbergia violacea
- Xerochrysum viscosum – sticky everlasting. The Painted Lady butterfly (distinctive by its row of blue / white spots at the bottom of the open wings) feeds from this plant, as well as Chrysocephalum. Noted a spittle bug on the plant
- Bulbine bulbosa – bulbine lily
- Chrysocephalum apiculatum, Chrysocephalum semipapposum – billy buttons. and clustered everlasting

- *Hibbertia obtusifolia*
- *Thysanotus tuberosus* subsp *tuberosus* – common fringe lily. This and the bulbine and chocolate lily grow from bulbs.
- *Clianthus sieberi*– three species on Red Hill and elsewhere in ACT–
- *Brachyloma daphnoides* –native daphne
- *Chrysocephalum semipapposum* – clustered everlasting daisy.
- *Austrostipa* sp –native spear grass (spear curls when mature and wetted)
- *Vittadinia cuneata* – fuzzy New Holland daisy
- *Leptorhynchus squamatus* -Scaly buttons
- *Microtis unifolia* - Common onion orchid
- Apple box (*Eucalyptus bridgesiana*) – named ‘apple’ because these eucalypts grew near Melbourne orchards and the timber was deemed unsuitable for anything other than crates for the apples. The timber ‘spits’ and ‘sparks in fires. Juvenile leaves are glaucous (bluish grey or bluish green) and ovate. Mature leaves are round
- *Dodonaea viscosa angustifolia* (sticky) – hop bush
- *Geranium solanderi*
- *Dianella longifolia*
- *Acaena ovina* – sheep’s burr (2 spp on Red Hill)
- *Lomandra multiflora* – Many-flowered Matrush
- *Wahlenbergia* – many spp on Red Hill. *W stricta*. *W luteola*. A wasp species lays eggs in the *W* flower.
- *Lotus australis* – austral trefoil
- *Dianella longifolia* – large flower stalk above leaves
- *Cynoglossum suavolens*- Sweet Hound’s Tongue
- *Goodenia pinnatifida*
- *Vittadinia muelleri*
- *Brachychiton populneus*, subsp *populneus*
- *Cassinia longifolia*, Cauliflower bush
- *Acacia decurrens*
- *Bursaria spinosa* – provides good cover for small birds
- *Exocarpus cupressiformis*, Native cherry
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Other flora and fauna discussed:

- Gang gangs nesting in eucalypt hollows and the difficulty in proving the young are actually present. Also the need to keep eucalypts into very old age so that nesting hollows can be formed.
- A meat ant nest – males only live about one day. Nests can contain hundreds of thousands of ants.
- Proliferous pink – a weed, *Petrorhagia nanteuilii*
- Orobanche minor– parasitic herbaceous weed
- *Sorbus domestica* Rowan trees – weeds, introduced from Scotland
- *Berberis aquifolium* Oregon grape, weed
- *Vicia* sp. Vetch, weed
- *Pyracantha* sp. Firethorn, weed
- *Verbascum*, weed, introduced from Texas
- Indian myna trapping project, nests,
- Sugar gliders eat Christmas beetles, create sap tunnels eg on apple box
- Soldier bug on silver wattle – predate on other bugs
- *Celtis australis* Nettle tree, from Afghanistan
- Termite mound
- *Scutiphora pedicellata* – jewel beetle or metallic shield bug
- Cootamundra wattles which hybridise with silver wattles
- Black wattles (*Acacia mearnsii*) – ‘true’ leaves with very small leaflets