

STEP NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2024



Looking towards our entrance from where our Kurrajong are planted, photos this page Andy Russell

Hello all.

Another busy year is ending, and once again, I must acknowledge and thank all the volunteers who have assisted throughout the year down in Forest 20. This also includes the National Arboretum staff who have helped with mulch, rock and gravel deliveries. As we enter summer we are slowing down on our tree-planting, focussing more on watering, tidying, mulching and building rock edges and low walls.

The gardens have been very colourful, especially some of the smaller plants like Chocolate Lilies *Dichopogon fimbriatus* and the rare Omeo Storksbill, *Pelargonium* sp. *Striatellum*. These forbs (small non-grassy perennial plants) play an important role in attracting native insects, as the beautiful photo sheet distributed by Andy this month clearly showed.



Dichopogon fimbriatus *Pelargonium* sp. *Striatellum*

It has been a busy spring from a community involvement perspective as well.

A *Landcare ACT* tour titled *Women in Nature* occurred at STEP in October. The event was well attended- it was a pleasure to accompany the group as they explored the gardens and undertook educational and mindfulness activities. A walking tour taken by Jenny W. in November raised awareness of the importance of native grasslands and was also part of the *ACT Festival of Nature*.

We participated in the Christmas Harvest Stall up in the National Arboretum Village Centre on 1st December. This provided an opportunity to further promote our STEP gardens and raise some funds. Items such as decorations, cards, pictures and novelty plant pots were made by STEP volunteers (thanks Judy, Lainie, Margaret and David).

Our visitor numbers continue to increase, and have included a group of artists from *NatureArt Lab*, who used our ecosystem plantings (in particular, the peas and wattles) for inspiration and research.

Working bees will continue Thursday mornings throughout the Christmas period, although the numbers of attendees will vary due to holidays and family commitments.

Wishing everyone well for the summer and festive season.

Regards Jane Cottee

President STEP

AGM Matters

On Thursday 21st November the Annual General Meeting was held down near the shed at STEP.

The following office bearers were appointed

President	Jane Cottee
Vice President	David Shorthouse
Secretary	Elizabeth Minchin
Treasurer	Ross Dalton
Membership Secretary	Andy Russell

Committee Members

Digby Gascoine

Bill Handke

Hugh Milloy

Terry Murphy

Judy Smith

Georgie Till

Public Officer Chris Ikin

STEP table at the Christmas Harvest Stall, National Arboretum Canberra



Margaret, Jane & David manning our stall
Sundav December 1

STEP – A Spot for Insect Collecting

By Bill Handke

We know that STEP has lots of attractions apart from its plantings: its 8 Focal Points, the birds, frogs, snakes (?), and also the varied insect life. Other great things are the interests and knowledge of our fellow STEPPers.

From time to time Andy’s “Of Interest in Forest 20” – the monthly What’s In Flower sheet - will feature an insect on a flower. Always a good learning experience.

Recently, when visiting on an off-Working Bee Day, I came across one of our STEP members, Stuart Harris, doing a sweep for insects in the grasses near the Entrance. Stuart is well known for his discovery and identification of Peacock Spiders: *Maratus harrisi* is named after him. Stuart has an incredible knack for finding these minute but brilliantly-coloured spiders. When birding with Stuart, you will find that he spends more time looking in the ground leaf litter than he does for birds in trees – and more often than not he will find one. He says that from time to time he does a sweep of the STEP grasses. But so far Peacock Spiders have avoided being spotted. Hopefully before too much longer Stuart will find a *Maratus stepii*. Wouldn’t that be good!



Stuart Harris sweeping site the



Results of one sweep

Some Peacock Spiders



Maratus harrisi

These three photos were identified from the website PECKHAMIA which provides a catalogue of Australian Peacock spiders of which there are 102 species and still counting. Editor



Maratus speciosus South-west WA



Maratus amabilis S-e Australia



Maratus volans East coast Qld to Victoria

PeaNuts on another Pea Hunt

by Bill Handke, Terry Murphy and Jens Svensson

Members of the Pea Flower Study Group of the Australian Native Plant Society are, lovingly we hope, referred to as PeaNuts. So it was that again this spring a few PeaNuts went out to the area east of Tarago, a couple times, to check out what native peas were flowering.



Tim, Jens and Ella

All this is good information for building up the native pea collection in STEP. Importantly for us, we were accompanied by the knowledgeable Tim Hayes from the Southern Tablelands Group of the Australian Plant Society, based in Goulburn.

And again, there were heaps of flowering peas: 16 species in flower on our first trip in early October– and for us PeaNuts, sights to revel in. Some of the delights were large shrubs of *Aotus ericoides* (Common Aotus) along Strawberry Creek Road; *Daviesia leptophylla* (Slender Bitter-pea), *Dillwynia phlycoides* (Small-leaved Parrot-pea) and *Pultenaea scabra* (Rough Bush-pea) along Reader Road, which is not too far from Goulburn on the way to Windellama. We have the *Aotus* and *Pultenaea scabra* in STEP at the moment, and are growing seedlings of the other two. Along Wolgan Road, Tim found a flowering *Dillwynia prostrata*. We hadn't seen this before: it is a small-leaf but dense groundcover called Matted Parrot-pea. It is only naturally found in the Southern Tablelands and Victoria.



Aotus ericoides



Aotus ericoides

Although consumed, focussed, and perhaps marginally obsessed about peas, we were able to notice and appreciate the variety of species from a few other families of plants. These included *Tetratheca bauerifolia* (Heath Pink Bells), *Comesperma ericinum* (Pyramid Flower) and *Patersonia sericea* var. *sericea* (Silky Purple Flag).

Kennedia prostrata Running Postman



The second trip in early November was to a 1000ha property east of Tarago on the road to Nerriga, owned by Ella Rosso, a friend and bush neighbor of fellow STEPper and pea hunter, Jens. Ella was keen to know what peas and other plants were flowering on her property. On the way there we stopped at a spot along the Mayfield Road (at the end of the bitumen) a few kms from Tarago where there was, as always, a wonderful display of *Dillwynia trichopoda*. This pea has quite a distinctive seed pod at the end of a very long peduncle.



We have quite a few small plants of this growing in the Parade of Peas. The roadside around there had three *Daviesia* (the Bitter-peas) flowering profusely: *D. latifolia* (the large and leathery-leaf Hop Bitter-pea), *D. mimosoides* (Narrow-leaf Bitter-pea), and *Daviesia leptophylla* (Slender-leaf Bitter-pea). We have the first two in STEP. We spent time searching the sides of Sturgis Road which borders and runs through Ella’s property and had good finds of *Dillwynia sieberi* (Sieber’s Parrot-pea – excellent specimens are in Section C at STEP), *Dillwynia sericea* (the well-named Showy Parrot-pea) which we struggle to keep alive in STEP, and *Dillwynia trichopoda* with lots of bright blue insects. A particularly striking blue-flowering plant – not a pea - was *Philothea salsolifolia* (picture on this page shows it to be pink; camera lying! Editor) This visit was not as productive on the pea front as we had hoped: but Ella’s lunch-time cake made up for it. For those who are interested in seeing flowering peas out that way next Spring, some other roads to visit are Yarralaw Road, Claypit Road, Sandy Point Road, and Mogo Road.

Philothea salsolifolia

At the moment out at the Bombay Reserve, off Bombay Road, 7 kms west of Braidwood, there is a wonderful display of the bright yellow-flowering *Gompholobium aspalathoides* – one of the Wedge-peas. Bombay Reserve is on the Shoalhaven River and a good spot for a picnic and swim (it is the swimming hole for Braidwoodians). The Bombay area around there is the type specimen location for the rare and endangered Bombay Bossiaea. We have seedlings of that.

The species range in the Parade of Peas will, hopefully, be expanded in the autumn with seedlings that are currently under cultivation, including a number we saw on these trips.



Dillwynia prostrata



Dillwynia prostrata



Daviesia leptophylla



A White-winged Chough *Corcorax melanorhamphos* feeds its young, photo Jenny Andrews

A visit to Wamuran, Queensland

On a recent (protracted) visit to Wamuran, Queensland, I met a man who was part of a local landcare group. Wamuran is a small village west of Caboolture and in the past, much of the farmland was devoted to growing flowers. The land has now mostly been divided for lifestyle blocks with reserve land along Waraba Creek. The person I met up with, Colin Moorehead, took my daughter and I on a very informative tour of the creek corridor.



The entrance to the Reserve



Judy with Colin Moorehead of the Wamuran Landcare Group



It had become a tangle of lantana, ochna, cats claw vine and camphor laurels until about 15 years ago. Then a landcare group, supported by the local council, was formed and they have undertaken clearing of nuisance plants (and trees) and revegetating with native species. Some remnant trees remain, including a *Eucalyptus grandis* Flooded Gum, estimated to be 31m high and 280 years old. Other remnant species include Spotted Gum, Swamp Mahogany, Red Cedar, Black Bean, Sandpaper Fig, Crow's Ash and Tallow Wood. The success of the project can be measured by the return of native wildlife: koalas, platypus, pythons and 50 species of birds. Wild Turkey nests abound in the leaf litter.

There is difficulty getting rid of the camphor laurels due to their rapid growth. Col showed us an old plough from the original farm which was encased in the trunk of one of these trees.

The Landcare group is only small – some 6 members at present – but what they have achieved is quite remarkable. A walking track along the creek through new and established vegetation adds interest to this site and I wish them well for the work they continue to do.

Note their tree guards – the circular ones are cardboard with holes for air circulation.



Five year old plantings



Camphor Laurel growing around an old plough

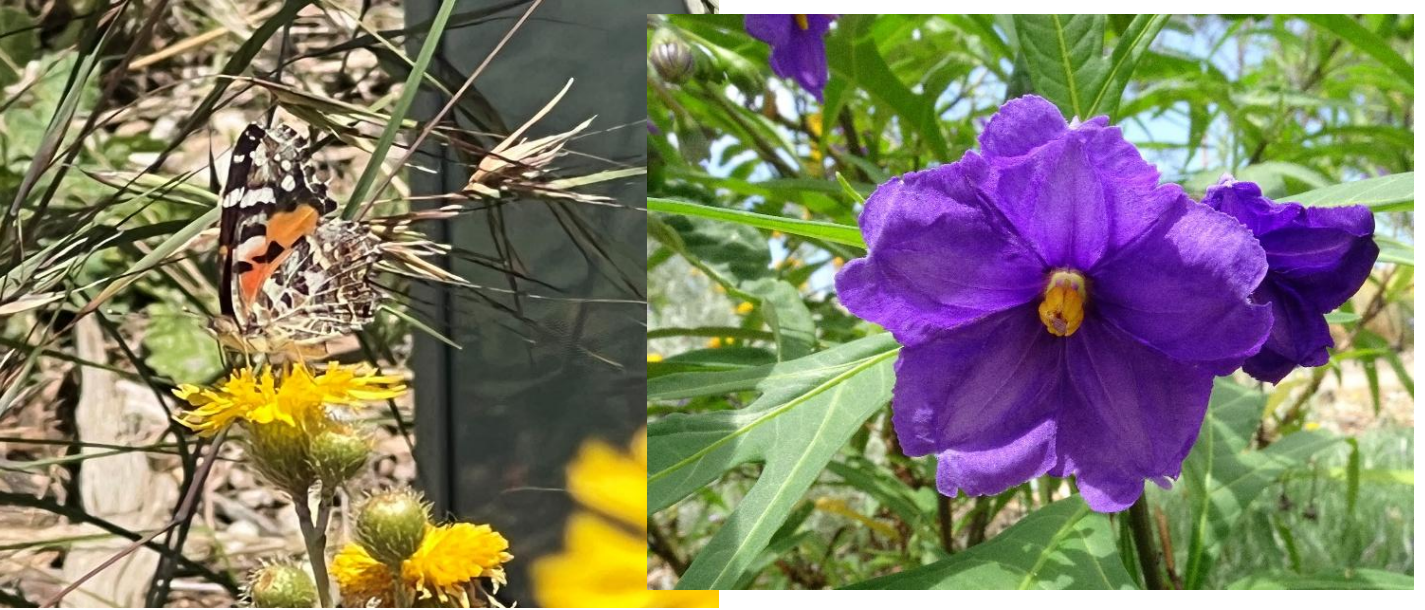


Circular tree guards with holes for air circulation

Judy Smith 3/12/24

Some recent photos from Forest 20

by Andy Russell



Vanessa kershawi Australian Painted Lady

Solanum linearifolium Mountain Kangaroo Apple



Chrysocephalum semipapposum Tall Everlasting

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The STEP Newsletter is produced quarterly in March, June, September, and December. Contributions are welcomed. This newsletter has been edited by Andy Russell.

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Lomatia myricoides Long-leaf Lomatia



Pelargonium australe Austral Storksbill. A variable species to .5 m



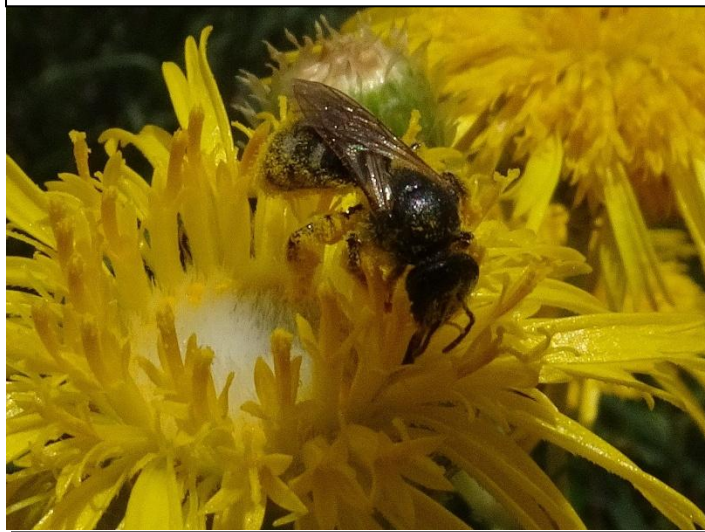
Cullen microcephalum Dusky Scurf-pea



Thereutria amaraca Spine-legged Robber Fly on *Podolepis jaceoides* Showy Copper-wire Daisy



Pollanisis (genus) A Forester Moth on the Showy Copper-Wire Daisy



Lasioglossum (*Chilalictus*) genus and subgenus A Halictid native Bee on Showy Copper-wire Daisy



Castiarina decemmaculata Ten Spot Jewel Beetle on *Westringia eremicola* Slender Westringia



Mordellidae (family) Pintail Beetles on *Kunzea ericoides* Burgan Two pages of photos Andy Russell