

KWONGAN & WANDOO TRIP REPORT 2017

ViRA NATURA
TOURS

Kingia australis, Stirling Range

Everyone had decided to fly into Australia a few days early to get over jet lag and have a look around the local area so rather than meeting at the airport we had an extra day to enjoy. This began in the pleasant environs of King’s Park a combination of a well maintained botanic garden with some superb displays of native plants as well as a large tract of native bushland. We spent our time in the latter to familiarise ourselves with the flora we were to experience during the tour. There were the first of many wonderful *Anigozanthus manglesii* with their unique green ‘kangaroo paws’ on bright red stems. Also common were fine stands of apricot-coloured *Diuris corymbosa*, though some seemed feisty enough to be considered *Diuris magnifica* (size seems the only distinction between these two). And these mingled with the pink heads of *Sowerbaea laxiflora*, various *Conostylis*, the viola relative *Hybanthus calycina*, flowery bushes of *Hypocalymma robustum*, the Running Postman *Kennedia prostrata* with large red, claw-like flowers and creamy flowered *Hakea prostrata*. The showy orchid *Caladenia flava* was sprinkled throughout and as we wandered more orchids turned up with a few deep red-lipped Carousel Spider Orchids *Caladenia arenicola* and delicate pink *Caladenia latifolia*. Other areas of bushland held much the same and despite the odd shower we had an enjoyable walk.

After lunch at the visitor centre we drove the short distance to Wireless Hill where the bushland was even more interesting. A scrambling plant of *Thysanotus patersonii* was beset with mauve, fringed flowers and there were the first of many orchids with *Caladenia arenicola* growing with *C. longicauda*. Here too were more superb stands of *Anigozanthus manglesii* but this time joined by its smaller, fiery-coloured cousin *A. humilis* and various colour variants were on show from yellow to near red. Looking carefully, we found many more orchids with the delightful Dancing Spider Orchid *Caladenia discoidea* with its fringed lip, stands of *Lyperanthus serratus* and more fine groups of *Caladenia arenicola*. Scattered across the area were a good number of the native cycad *Macrozamia fraseri* and we found both male and female flowering cones. Throughout the bush had been the tall pink *Gladiolus caryophyllaceus*, a South African invader, which lovely though it was it was being pulled up in large numbers to control its spread. A final treat was a perfect flower of *Banksia grandis*, with a tall cylinder of yellow flowers amongst coarsely pinnate leaves.



Anigozanthus manglesii

Leaving the city, we picked up necessary food supplies and then headed north along the Brand Highway. The vegetation began to change with ever increasing amounts of *Banksia* and then after an hour or so extensive tracts of low kwongan heath. We stopped at the Phoebe Reserve a florally diverse area with varied habitats. Around the car park and seasonally wet flats were hundreds of rich blue *Chamaescilla corymbosa* mixed with even more pink-infused *Buchardia multiflora* and bushes of *Acacia lasiocarpa/pulchella* smothered in yellow flower balls. Searching among the flats we soon found a rich assortment of orchids with the ruby-lipped Blushing Spider Orchid *Caladenia lorea*, delicate white *C. dimidia*, a few delicate yellow Bee Orchids *Diuris decremental/septrionalis*, and another *Diuris* sp. The soft yellow of *Caladenia flava* was abundant throughout the walk in almost all habitats. Walking on and we found the first Blue China Orchid *Cyanicula gemmata* and then in clearings among the trees were lovely drifts of the everlasting daisy *Rhodanthe chlorocephala*. There was little else in this area of eucalypt woodland until we found the related *Rhodanthe manglesii* (with amplexicaul leaves) However, crossing a bridge we entered kwongan heath with *Caladenia vulgaris* on the fringes of this and then dense stands of a *Hakea lissocarpha*(?). Although the season seemed a little later than normal here we still found a steady stream of new plants. Also throughout the sandy ground were countless rosettes of *Drosera erythrorhiza* and the scrambling stems of *D. pallida* with whorls of little round leaves. The shrub diversity is very high in kwongan and we saw a beautiful *Isopogon linearis* with turbans of pink flowers, electric blue *Lechenaultia biflora*, a stag's-horn leaved *Synaphaea* sp, *Calectasia narragara* and sprawling plants of *Thomasia macrocalyx* with many nodding pale pink flowers. Reaching a stonier ridge, the flora changed again with increasing numbers of *Asteroloma microdonta* beset with dozens of bright translucent red berry-like flowers. It's cousin *A. xerophyllum* was not far away and this had similar-shaped flowers except they were white with a whorl of furry petals at the mouth. Standard kwongan shrubs such as *Gastrolobium polystachyum* began to appear, this one the source of the powerful poison 1080, used extensively in Australia to control foxes. Some attractive domes of *Conostylis canterinata* were seen, one of at least three species found here (*C. aculeata* and *teretifolia* were the others) and then as we descended the slope Jan spotted the first Purple Enamel Orchid *Elythranthera brunonis* a stunning little plant, the shiny perianth with deep purple-red spots on the reverse. Several more were seen as we walked onto the car passing more spider orchids and clumps of *Anigozanthus humilis* breaking into flower.



Driving on we stopped for some fine stands of *Lechanaultia biflora* growing in heath (which was quite different again) with the pretty scarlet-flowered *Drosera barbigera* and blue *Conospermum nervosum*. The silvery plumes of *Conospermum unilaterale* became more common along the roadside before we stopped by a recent burn to have a look. Here there was a bush of *Verticordia grandis* with spikes of bright red fimbriate margined flowers, a typical feature of this showy genus. The landscape was thick with flowering bushes of *Hibbertia* sp, whilst *Scaveola phlebopetala* spread across the ground with deep purple flowers. The occasional bush of *Lambertia multiflora* and pendant flowered *Diploaena ferruginea* was found and there were many of an attractive silver-leaved shrub *Verreauxia reinwardtii* and the vigorous scrambling stems of *Kennedia prostrata*. Time was moving on and it would have been easy to stop a dozen times, the heaths here are so fascinating, but we had to cover some ground. We passed an area with hundreds of flowering *Banksia prionotes*, (one for another day), and instead pressed onto to try and find the Queen of Sheba. This is the regions iconic orchid and though normally finished flowering by now, this year was late and we stood a chance. However, when we eventually reached the exact site there was no queen. There was instead the pendulous stemmed *Darwinia neildiana*, an interesting plant in its own right. It was worth a try. The good news was that on reaching our accommodation we were told they knew of a place with flowering 'queens' so tomorrow we could try again.

Dinner was in the home of our hosts and very convivial it was too especially when Sandra produced the baby Western Grey Kangaroo she was nursing to many an ooh and ahh!

Day 3 13 Sept – Mount Leseuer

The kangaroos were performing first thing with a cute joey bouncing around and the adults lounging in the sun after a feed. A good flowery day began with a large 'everlasting' daisy *Xerochrysum* sp (syn. *Helichrysum bracteatum*) beside the road. Pushing onto the Mount Leseuer national park we stopped first for some very pretty fringe lilies with both the smaller *Thysanotus patersonii* draped over a bush and the larger flowered *T. manglesianus*. The former proved to be very common and was seen throughout the day among shrubs, even dangling from grass trees. A little further on and there was a diverse shrubby area by the car park with *Lasiopetalum drummondii*, *Calothamnus quadrifidus* coming into flower, the peculiar trailing



Elythranthera brunonis

Darwinia virescens, pinkish-lilac spikes of *Philotheca spicata*, orange *Lambertia multiflora*, and some very nice *Isopogon linearis*. Related *Isopogon dubius* was very common just a few hundred metres along with large flowering bushes of this and the superb grey 'stag's-horn foliage of *Daviesia epiphyllum*. Then it was the turn of the 'dusty' reddish bells of *Blancoa canescens* the flowers coated in loose indumentum. Alongside these was a *Calytrix* and climbing stems of *Drosera pallida* as well as a decent cone-spike of *Banksia menziesii*. And the last batch before lunch included good spikes of *Pityrodia bartlingii* on tall stems and the pretty turbans of white bristles on *Conothamnus trinervis*.

A quick lunch and we were off on our walk to into the low hills of the park, with the vegetation regularly changing as the soil shifted from rocky to sandy or the aspect altered or who knows what, it is after a biological hotspot within a biological hotspot and this was bourne out. Not far into the walk and we entered a wonderful flowering shrub-flanked section and for the next few hundred metres were surrounded by flowers. There was a fine collection of pendulous pink *Thomasia grandiflora*, yellow *Synaphaea* sp, orange *Gastrolobium* sp, blue *Conospermum nervosum*, and the creamy 'rasta-topped' *Petrophile linearis*. Best of all though was the lovely *Hakea neurophylla* a plant that had it all with attractive translucent-veined grey foliage, a good upright habit and pretty pink or pinkish white flowers that were deliciously scented of sweet raspberries, the perfume wafting through the air all along the path. Other delights followed as we gained a bit of height and walked around the other side of the slope where bushy *Dryandra sclerophylla* was common and a dainty *Tetratheca* sp grew on the rocky ground near stands of pale-barked *Eucalyptus drummondii*, the interesting twisted boughs framing the kwongan-clad 'mountain' slopes beyond (for WA this was a significant change in altitude). Unfortunately, this season was too early for the drifts of *Verticordia huegellii*.

We hoped once again to track the elusive Queen of Sheba and so set off in what we thought was good time to reach the location. However, it's never that straightforward in a biodiversity hotspot and there were stops for an absolutely pristine (bang-on) *Banksia menziesii* and then the wonderfully architectural inflorescence of the Black Kangaroo-paw *Macropidia fuliginosa* – joint plant of the day with *Hakea neurophylla* – an exquisite blend of black, lime green and elegantly curved exerted stamens.



Needless to say, by the time we arrived at the Queen's it was probably already too late and we thrashed around for forty-five minutes trying various spots and came to the conclusion they may have already closed. Fortunately, I met up with someone back at the ranch who gave me new GPS details and showed me photos of very fresh *Thelymitra pulcherrima*, so we still had a couple of days to find them.

Day 4 14 Sept – Pindar & Coalseam

Leaving the bouncing kangaroos behind we drove north and then inland, through a largely pastoral landscape of wheat fields with islands of native bush and rocky outcrops. There was odd stop for *Senna pleurocarpa*, a delicate pink *Dichopodium* sp, a striking red *Grevillea dielsiana/wittweri* and what we thought at the time were good spreads of yellow *Cephalipterum drummondii*. A visitor centre gave us the necessary information we needed to find another of the iconic plants of (the northern edge of) the south-west Australia floristic zone, the Wreath Flower. And as we neared the location it was even signposted and quite impossible to miss! We arrived at a stunning scene of two or maybe three hundred large *Lechenaultia macrantha* in full bloom, flanking the road. Each circular plant was surrounded by dense rings of cream and pink blooms, some with much heavier rose suffusion. A remarkable sight. Among them was the odd pink spike of *Stylidium elongatum* and bush of purplish-flowered *Keraudrenia velutina*. The latter became more common as we drove on turning off on what I thought was the route to Coalseam. A colourful corner brought us to a halt where perfect hummocks of *Dampiera* sp were encased in blue-purple flowers. Bushes of *Pityrodia terminalis* were brimming with carmine tubular flowers and there was the delicate little semi-climbing shrublet *Stypandra glauca* with deep blue flowers too.

Unfortunately, the hoped for short cut to Coalseam never materialised and instead we had to drive an extra hour (stopping for the golden spikes of *Grevillea eriostachya*) and then have an argument with a petrol pump before reaching Coalseam. But it was worth it for here were huge displays of *Cephalipterum drummondii* in fact not just this. Mingled among them were at least eight more species of daisy including *Podolepis gardneri* and *Lawrencellia davenportii*. It was all very colourful with oceans of flowers enveloping fallen

Lechenaultia macrantha



trees and bringing the dry landscape to life. A short drive further on and a path to a look-out passed by the golden and orange *Waitzia acuminata*, pink *Schoenia cassiniana* and the attractive shrub *Eremophila clarkei* with its white or lilac penstemon-like flowers.

Alas we had to depart all too soon to get back before dark...a local parrot wished we'd stayed where we were!

Day 5 15 Sept – Hi Vallee Farm

An interesting day in many ways today. It began perfectly well with a short drive to Hi Vallee Farm where we were taken under the wing of Don Williams who had lived on the property for over fifty years and was now a fount of knowledge of the area and its' flora. Over the next few hours he gave us many insights into the complex kwongan flora and the reasons for its' ultra-high diversity. This is partly through the frequently changing soils and this was easy to demonstrate practically for as we moved around the area the plants changed constantly. There were many species of *Dryandra* (the farm is actually at the diversity centre for the genus with twenty-one species), also related *Banksia*, many *Hakea* and a number of *Eucalyptus*. Though many shrubs were not in flower it was still fascinating to get a new insight into it all. It is hard to prepare a list as there were so many things but a standout species would include yellow *Petrophile serruriae*, *Hakea enneaba* and the tall sometimes branched *Dryandra nobilis* with large golden-brown inflorescences. The tall trunks of *Kingia australis* grew with *Xanthorrhoea preissii*, at first glance similar but with markedly different flowers. The sweet-scented *Hakea neurophylla* was around us at lunchtime in a grove of *Eucalyptus accedens*.

We had to leave soon after lunch as we had one last chance to find the elusive Queen of Sheba *Thelymitra pulcherrima*. So, we drove straight onto the site for this and after a bit of persistence and the translating of GPS co-ordinates Joe ached a beauty in the heath with two perfect flowers. It was a stunning little orchid with beautiful purple spotted golden sepals and purple petals, glowing with backlight from the afternoon sun. A second plant was found with two spikes and then (and by now we had attracted others to the party) a diminutive and extraordinary King-in-his-Carriage *Drakaea glyptodon* was found. It is a type of hammer orchid and a genus that, like so much we were seeing, is unique to Australia. There were also a few stripey *Thelymitra campanulata*.

Here our luck ran out with a flat battery! Never leave your hazard lights on for long. This meant the end of playtime, though whilst we waited for assistance we saw a couple of Lemon-scented Sun Orchids *Thelymitra antennifera* to give us a sun orchid triple. A passing car drove past and then

Thelymitra pulcherrima



turned around and came back. It was the local plumber and he gave a quick jump start to get us going and on our way back. It had been an eventful and enjoyable three days in these special heaths.

Day 6 16 Sept – Pinnacles and to York

Thick mists had settled overnight giving a very different feel to our surroundings. There was time for a quick look at an Arrowsmith Orchid *Caladenia cebra* before we left, saying farewell to our convivial hosts and their kangaroos. Our journey today took us south stopping in a couple of areas of heath to look for interesting plants including good flowering plants of *Banksia prionotes*, *Calytrix depressa* and the ever-abundant silvery wisps of *Conospermum unilaterale*. We retrieved Joe's jacket from the post box of yesterdays' hosts and we carried on, stopping not long after for a flowering *Eucalyptus macrocarpa*, a particularly impressive species when in bloom. Turning towards the coast a new area of heath had different *Dryandra*, Purple Enamel Orchid, *Patersonia occidentalis* and a tiny *Thysanotus* sp. then close to the coast the roadsides were lined with yellow from a flower-laden *Acacia*, itself festooned with tumbling masses of *Clematis pubescens*. The sky-blue of *Scaveola crassifolia* was seen before we arrived at the Pinnacles, a rather curious collection of limestone rocks poking up out of the sand.

Moving on the sight of the day was without doubt the superb 'forest' of Grass Trees *Xanthorrhoea preissii* that spread out across a shallow valley. There were thousands of them, most with old blackened flower spikes and some over four metres tall. These veterans were probably hundreds of years old. Most of the trunks were blackened from previous fires, and some were bent or twisted, even divided to form two, three or four headed specimens. It was quite a sight, underlain with drifts of a bright yellow *Senecio* sp.

From here we had to cover the remaining distance to Perth, where necessary shopping was done (including a crucial new lens for my camera and even more crucial wine boxes for 'happy hour') before the final leg to York.

Day 7 17 Sept – Central Orchids I

Just to the west of York an area of Wandoo woodland held many orchids and other plants.



Banksia prionotes

The peculiar upturned green flowers of Fringed Mantis Orchid *Caladenia falcata* started the day, growing near the abundant wands of *Stackhousia monogyne* and clumps of soft blue *Orthrosanthus laxus*. As we explored the area more fully we found Leek Orchids *Prasophyllum sargentii*, tiny green *Prasophyllum gracile* and Sugar Orchids *Ericksonella saccharata*. The climbing stems of *Drosera pallida* and a small fringe lily *Thysanotus* sp were everywhere. A few delightful Rabbit Orchids *Leptocera menziesii* and *Pterostylis revurva* were found and in greener patches we found a small *Stylidium* sp. Joe then found a superb three-flowered *Caladenia falcata* which, with a bit of work with the shadows was made photo-worthy.

Moving onto an area of photogenic Eucalyptus wandoo woodland there was not only some fine trees but also other plants such as a new *Stylidium* sp., *Isopogon formosus/crithmifolius* and a bluish *Conosperma* sp. We drove back to York to refuel and then on to a small nature reserve. Here we found many beautifully coloured *Caladenia flava*, amidst masses of scrambling *Drosera pallida*. There was also some fine Small-flowered Donkey Orchid *Diuris porrifolius* and the blue-flowered *Stypandra glauca*. Driving on we found bright red *Lechenaultia formosa*, but our attempts to find *Caladenia filifera* were thwarted as they had already finished this year. However, our next stop was successful when we found not only the Slender Hammer Orchid *Drakaea gracilis*, but also its cousin King-in-his-carriage *Drakaea glyptodon* growing next to one another. Not far down the road in an area with an abundant branched *Drosera* sp and pink flowered *D. menziesii* we found three of the peculiar Bird Orchid *Pterostylis barbata*. These were to be the last plant stop of the day. We had to travel south and the cross-country route seemed a good idea. The first half of the route was very pleasant, travelling through woodlands with a familiar understorey of *Dryandra*, *Xanthorrhoea* and the like. Every so often a Western Grey Kangaroo would bound across too. However, the whiff of smoke was in the air and this got stronger until we reached an area where a controlled burn was underway. Then things got interesting. We talked to one group of firefighters who told us the road ahead was closed! The next firefighter we met told us the same, except he would turn around and escort us through (avoiding a long detour). This we did following flashing lights through the thick smoke and hazy forest, passing bemused workers wondering what a car load of tourists was doing in the thick of the 'burn'.

Reaching the asphalt, the drive to the historic hotel was straightforward enough and on arrival they lit a fire in our own private lounge-cum-dining room for a snug evening.

Day 8 18 Sept – Central Orchids II

On the news that morning was the main highway was closed because of smoke!

Setting off at 8.15 am we drove to our first location, an area of roadside woods with abundant climbing *Drosera pallida*, as well as a few similar pale pink *D. thysanosepala* and masses of a pretty

Caladenia falcata



mauve-blue *Dampiera* sp. Hidden among the woods were also a good number of orchids with both *Diuris porrifolius* and the smaller *Diuris* sp. Perhaps the most interesting though were two new species of *Caladenia* with *longiclavata* and *barbarosa* the latter (the Dragon Orchid) possessed an extraordinary insect-mimic lip. *Caladenia falcata* and *C. flava* were also common along with a few good *Pterostylis recurva*. Moving on we stopped a few times along the roadside first for the odd *Caladenia denticulata* and *Thelymitra antennifera*, the flowers of *Eucalyptus caesius* on long weeping stems and then for some flowering bushes of *Alogyne huegelii*. Our last stop of the morning was in an orchid reserve where there were many fine *Caladenia longicauda* and three species of *Diuris*; *corymbosa*, *porrifolia* and again the mystery dwarf third species. Lunch was here and then we moved off north-east to a cemetery. There were some superb multi-flowered clumps of *Caladenia longicauda* where we arrived and in the surrounding heath were many more *Thelymitra antennifera* and a few *Caladenia denticulata/dimidia* (these two species or forms of one species are very similar and exhibit a lot of variation). There was one more stop for the day, in an area of heath with a few lovely *Caladenia chapmannii*.

From here we drove on towards the rugged spine of the Stirling Range, which today was crystal clear on a truly cloudless day. On arrival, we enquired about the small book on the flowers of the park and were told they were now only available from one roadhouse. We whizzed of to secure some just in case they sold out (as it turns out there were plenty) and enjoyed an ice cream at the same time.

Day 9 19 Sept – Stirling Range I

Walking to breakfast, the weeping branches of *Eucalyptus caesia* were a buzz with Purple-crowned Lorikeets and various honeyeaters feasting on the nectar. Afterwards a wander into the edge of the park produced the brownish flowering cones of *Banksia gardneri*, brightly coloured *Gompholobium polymorphum*, purple *Hovea pungens* and then quite a few Zebra Orchid *Caladenia cairnsiana* and *C. denticulata*. These were clearly hybridised in places with the progeny (Prisoner Orchid *C. x ericksoniae*) growing near the parents for ready reference. *Caladenia longicauda*, *C. flava* and *Thelymitra antennifera* were also common. A selection of now familiar heath genera was also to be found including *Isopogon formosa*, *Dryandra armata* and *Hakea prostrata*.

The was a bit of a break in the afternoon before we set off again. The weather had



Caladenia barbarosa

changed dramatically with strong winds blowing and clouds building. The planned hike towards Bluff Knoll was put on hold and instead we drove out along the road through the park stopping for some fine plants along the way with the lovely *Isopogon latifolius*, growing in front of the the woollier-flowered *I. baxteri* and near to some fine flowering bushes of *Dryandra formosa* with their showy golden flowerheads. Further along and we found a good flowering bush of *Banksia coccinea* decorated with bright red barrels of flower. There were even better ones further into the shrubbery along with a fine flower-laden shrub of *Gompholobium scabrum*. The roadside was lined with an intense red *Melaleuca*, and there were some fine silvery *Kingia australis* with a mixture of flowering shrubs beneath such as white *Sphenotoma dracophylloides* and *Mirbelia spinosa*. A brooding grey sky was building behind the *Kingia* and rain seemed imminent so we backtracked to the main road. There was still time to go along a bit further and look at some lovely yellow-flowered *Eucalyptus preissiana* in flower with plentiful *Banksia gardneri* beneath. Driving back the weather cleared and there was time to show Mary the hybrid orchids from this morning.

Day 10 20 Sept – Stirling Range II

Our second day in the park began with a walk up towards Bluff Knoll. The route was flower-lined with abundant bushes of *Eucalyptus staeri*, flower-laden white *Hakea ambigua*, orange spikes of *Sphaerolobium medium*, *Xanthosia rotundifolia* and prostrate *Banksia petiolaris* with rusty flower spikes and saw-edged leaves. In the leaf litter of the woods were many delicate green Snail Orchids *Pterostylis nana* and along the trail there was also the golden flowered *Dryandra formosa* and pink *Stylidium scandens*. But the prize of the morning if not the day was for the delightful pink bells of *Darwinia lejostyla*, which grew in abundance in one section of the walk alongside the bottlebrushes of *Beaufortia decussata*. There was a superb view across the landscape framed by silver-topped *Kingia australis*. We walked a bit higher for more expansive views before returning to the car.

Driving on through the park I wanted to try and find more species of *Darwinia*, but none of the ‘passes’ were high enough. Instead we saw a superb spiny Echidna beside the road and then a wonderful stand of *Banksia coccinea* with many plants in full flower. These grew with the peculiar *Petrophile longifolia* and the pink pea shrub *Gompholobium scabrum*. We had lunch and then began a walk on a very stony track which did not seem promising so we turned back. Then we tried a bush-whacking track further on and although we saw new plants such as *Andersonia echinocephala* and a fine spike of *Banksia grandis* the trail petered out. Driving on we stopped for an area of wandoo woodland coloured orange by *Gastrolobium bilobum* and found fine clumps of *Banksia gardneri*, and a pretty pink *Tetratheca*. The handsome pea *Chorizema glycinifolium* was a bit further on too. There was time for one last walk through an area with abundant *Calothamnus gibbosus* and shrubby *Petrophile rigida*, whilst he kwongan



further on had *Andersonia grandiflora* and pink *A. simplex*. Rain threatened and so we walked back driving onto our cabins and preparing for the evenings barbeque.

As it turned out our DIY BBQ was a success, no doubt helped by red wine and some good ice cream to finish.

Day 11 21 Sept – Fitzgerald River

Rivalling the Stirling Range in terms of diversity (but not scenery) is Fitzgerald River. We left straight after breakfast and drove to a bush camp fast-gaining a reputation as an orchid hotspot. There was a stop on the way for drifts of *Patersonia occidentalis*, winged-stemmed *Acacia glaucoptera*, trailing red *Grevillea nudiflora* and white *Isotoma hypercrateriformis*. Arriving at the camp we had a drink and got read then set off in, it has to said, rather blustery conditions. Terry our guide, was very much an orchid man and showed us nineteen species during the tour. However, we began with the first of several interesting banksias with the huge furry heads of *Banksia baueri*. Close to this in the bushland were *B. coccinea* and the shorter domes of *B. baxteri*. The diminutive Little Blue China Orchid was tucked among the shrubs and there was the local and very handsome form of Cowslip Orchid *Caladenia flava* ssp. *sylvestris* and a solitary but lovely *Caladenia heberleana*. Neat domes of *Lechenaultia tubiflora* were beset with many little red-tipped creamy tube-flowers and there were also abundant rusty-centred white daisy-like *Actinodium* sp., which are actually in the myrtaceae. The heath was swathed in pink-flowered *Kunzea* (this may actually have been a *Melaleuca*) and many different pea species including pretty pink *Gompholobium venustum* and so on. There were a few very fresh and photogenic King Spider Orchids *Caladenia pectinata*, a single Pale China Orchid *Cyanicula gertrudiae* and the prize of a Warty Hammer Orchid. This slender little gem was a challenge to photograph in the wind. We moved onto another prize, the Custard Orchid *Thelymitra villosa*, with large pale yellow flowers speckled with brown. More good flowers followed with many Bee Orchids *Diuris decremента* and then to round things off a couple of remarkable and tiny Flying Duck Orchids *Paracaleana nigrita*. The wind was really gusting by now and we were glad to have lunch in the large dining room as the roof loudly rattled above us.

Leaving the camp the plan had been to explore the western fringes of Fitzgerald River National Park, but very heavy rain delayed all of this for an hour. It did clear, and improve a lot giving us the chance to sample the great diversity on offer. There were neat buns of a *Stylidium* swathed in creamy flowers, a soft blue *Conospermum floribundum*(?), and the



Pimelea physodes

white flowers of a *Chamaelaucium megalopetalum* that turned pink with age. Not far away was a fine plant of *Pimelea physodes* with elegant hanging pink bells and opposite that a superb flowering shrub of *Banksia attenuata* decorated with some perfect yellow cones, with the curious ground hugging *Petrophile longifolia* beneath. New flowers came thick and fast and there was another stop for a fine multi-coloured *Hakea victoria*. There were many more of these in even larger and more spectacular forms further along and we completed a whirlwind, but successful floral sweep with a flower spike of a *Banksia* sp. and bright yellow corymbs of *Verticordia chrysanthella*.

All was going well on the way onto Albany when a puncture rather delayed us, though a passing local was a huge help in getting us on our way again. In the end, we didn't arrive too late and settled in to our new hotel, albeit rather urban after what we were used to.

Day 12 22 Sept – Mount Barker & Valley of the Giants

Some time was lost whilst I sorted out replacing the shredded tyre from yesterday, but soon enough we were on our way to Mount Barker. The weather today oscillated from showers to sun, with frequent changes. Fortunately, we managed to dodge the worst of it and enjoy most of our botany in the dry. At an area of heath and woodland the entrance was framed by great tumbling, scrambling masses of scarlet *Kennedia coccinea* and further in, it held many orchids starting with *Caladenia arrecta* and *C. ferruginea* growing together, with a Silky China Orchid *Cyanicula sericea* not far away. Unfortunately, a flower of *Thelymitra spiralis* refused to open on such a grey morning. Dotted across the area were the delightful pendant heads of *Pimelea suaveolens*(?) and its cousin pink *Pimelea rosea* as well as various new peas and lovely shrublets of *Calectasia grandiflora* smothered in purple stars. Searching further afield we found more *Caladenia ferruginea*, *C. discoidea*, *Pterostylis recurva* and then as we were leaving two spikes of the charming mauve and peach Pansy Orchid *Diuris longifolia*.

Now it was the turn of much larger plants and we drove for an hour into the towering karri forests, with superb and huge smooth barked trees of *Eucalyptus diversicolor* and equally large *E. jacksonii* the red tingle tree. A substantial elevated walkway had been constructed through one area of mainly red tingle and we enjoyed a bird's-eye view of the canopy and thick trunks, before the route descended to ground level for a close view of the massive boles of these giants. From here we passed through more tracts of big, big trees and onto the coast where we met with Karen, a local lady who was going to show us some special plants. It has to be said our timing could have been better as it was high tide (and getting higher) and this little treasure required a wade through the shallows to reach. Sadly, I was the only one who made it to see the remarkable colony of *Cephalotus follicularis*. They grew on low cliffs, plastered on mossy soil and clinging on right next to the sea within the spray zone of the waves. I was fairly wet when I got back, but it was worth it.



Next, we were shown a recent burn which had a smattering of yet another spider orchid *Caladenia brownii* the Karri Spider Orchid, though they did look very like another species we'd seen, namely *C. arenicola*. There was also Karri Cowslip Orchid *Caladenia flava* ssp. *sylvestris* a lovely form with a red stripe on the sepals. The peculiar drumsticks of *Dasyopogon bromeliifolium* poked out of clumps of regenerating leaves too. A solitary Dainty Leek Orchid *Prasophyllum plumiforme* was found before we went in search of even more delicate species. Sandy banks had a fair sprinkling of Flying Duck Orchids *Paracaleana nigrita*, (this time not flapping in a gale as they were yesterday) and some fantastic Narrow-lipped Hammer Orchids *Drakaea thynniphila* to round things off.

Day 13 23 Sept – Frenchman's Bay to Lake Grace

Gusty winds and the odd shower were still with us first thing this morning when we drove south towards Frenchman's Bay, where the indented coast of Torndirrup national park reaches out Princess Royal Harbour. Breaks of sunshine allowed us to photograph a new *Dryandra formosa* and a *Prostanthera* sp. on the way to seeing a very special little plant. There was also attractive 'holly-leaved' *Hovea chorizemifolia* and plenty of an orange *Adenophora* sp., but most eye-catching was the impressive display of *Callistemon glaucus*, with rank upon rank of bright red bottlebrushes marching off into the distance. It was around the base of these that we found the delightful pitchers of *Cephalotus folicularis* an exquisite little gem. There were little clusters of pitchers dotted about some with beautifully marbled 'lids' too. We drove on intent on finding more special plants today and didn't get that far as a large plant of *Banksia praemorsa* brought us to a halt. It had a good number of fresh and developing flowers the big cones bristling with thousands of flowers and varying from yellowish to pinkish in colour. *Banksia coccinea* and *Dryandra formosa* also grew nearby. Then there was a stop was a scarlet flowered *Eucalyptus* sp. (a more spectacular species was to follow) before we tried to find *Darwinia meeboldii*. We had a quick look at a local reserve where there were some fine *Caladenia longicauda* in flower but little else. Time was pressing and the site for the *Darwinia* deemed too far to reach, so we continued onto our next location. Arriving at an orchid-filled wood (lots of *Caladenia falcata*) it took a few minutes to locate the colony of *Eucalyptus tetraptera*. And what a plant, thick leathery leaves swathed strong branches with peeling bark and in the leaf axils were the amazing red flowers,



Cephalotus folicularis

the calyx greatly enlarged and winged.

There was time to check out one more location so we drove on to a site for Lazy Spider Orchid but this year was too early and there were none on show. From here we drove directly onto Lake Grace and our hotel arriving in good time. And glad for it, an hour later another couple arrived having driven in the dark (not recommended in Australia) and been hit by a kangaroo, with dents to prove it!

Day 14 24 Sept – Tarin Rock & Hyden

After a gigantic breakfast at the local roadhouse we drove out towards the diverse heaths of Tarin Rock. Immediately out of town the first shallow salt lake appeared, completely tranquil on a calm morning and the roads were lined with a large silver-trunked eucalypt. The first botanical highlight was *Grevillea excelsior*, lit up with many superb orange spikes of flowers. Reaching the first areas of kwongan heath there were several shrubs of *Cyanostegia angustifolia*(?) with their two tone purple flowers and prominent yellow stamens by the roadside. Further into the heath and we found many interesting plants with tumbling masses of *Chorizema glycinifolium* smothering low shrubs, cerise *Chloanthes coccinea* the peculiar wands of *Grevillea erynoides*, wonderful little boomerang triggerflowers *Stylidium breviscapum*, the woolly inflorescence of *Physodes lachnoglossa* and the spiny mounds of *Dryandra ferruginea* with handsome golden flowers. The next area was stonier and had quite different plants with some fine bushes of *Grevillea insignis* with many waxy soft pink flowers that aged a richer cherry-pink, tall white flowered *Goodenia scapigera*, another trigger flower *Stylidium caricifolium* and some wiry leaved plants of *Isopogon teretifolium* the flowers emerging from tight cones to produce a wonderful woolly pinkish head. An third area of heath was less flowery but still had some decent *Lechenaultia biloba*.

Moving northwards towards Hyden we stopped at a roadside stretch bisected by the railway tracks with more good *Grevillea excelsior* and a selection of familiar heath genera including many upright shrubs of *Pityrodia terminalis* (white form). Our next stop was an large granite sheet and was very productive with many Clown Orchids *Caladenia roei*, the soon to be open granite sun orchid *Thelymitra petrophila*, many yellow granite donkey orchids and a solitary but lovely and rare *Caladenia graniticola*.

After a light lunch (breakfast had been truly enormous), we carried on towards Hyden stopping in different areas of heath where we found *Banksia sphaerocephala* in flower and

Grevillea excelsior



then on the other side of the town a grove of pretty *Grevillea paradoxa* with attractive flower spikes that aged from shell to cherry-pink. Our decision to go for an early bath was a good one as torrential rain came down at around 5pm!

Day 15 25 Sept – Norseman Road

Florally rich heaths line the road to the east of Hyden and we spent the day in these areas, although things weren't entirely straight forward. Everything began well with some fine clumps of sky-blue *Dampiera wellsiana*, growing on the roadside with the long-leaved *Acacia lasiocalyx* and *Calothamnus quadrifidus* nearby. There were regularly roadside stops for an array of lovely shrubs beginning with white *Hakea multilineata*(?). The delightful flat whorls of *Conospermum brownii* were near some tall *Thelymitra macrophylla* but the poor weather today meant we had little chance of any of the sun orchids opening today. Next up were a couple of superb *Xanthorrhoea nana* with perfect stout flower spikes as well as a few fruits on *Banksia sphaerocarpa*. The odd *Verticordia picta* was found but further down the track we explored a rich area of shorter heath with a more of these among a mosaic of yellow *Verticordia chrysanthella* and purple *Calthrix sp.* In places the two verticordias grew together with bright orange dwarf trailing pomegranate *Balaustion pulcherrimum* beneath, a vivid scene.

We then decided to take a circuit route back to Hyden but this took us onto a very muddy track which was tricky to drive and impossible to get out and botanise. We did manage to find a side track for lunch, also finding Frog Greenhood *Pterostylis sargentii* among the eucalypts. A better section of road allowed us to explore another area of heath with lots of the attractive orange-red pea *Urodon dasyphyllus*, with *Conostylis petrophilioides* and various attractive acacias. Mary also found a shirt orchid *Thelymitra campanulata*, but again this had decided against opening today. Reaching blessed tarmac, I cleaned the lights and windscreen and then we carried on stopping several times for interesting flora from sheets of carmine *Diphyma crassifolium* smothering the saline flats to various proteaceae including a pink form of *Hakea multilineata*, the handsome plum-pink *Grevillea paradoxa* and a huge *Grevillea sp.* with great arching branches lined with pink flower spikes. *Persoonia saundersiana* grew nearby the latter. Then the piece de resistance a truly amazing shrub of *Isopogon divergens* absolutely covered in perfect pink 'cones' of flower, a stunning plant and a good way to finish off the day.



Dampiera wellsiana

Day 16 26 Sept – Hyden & Harrismith

Sadly, the murky weather continued today and was thoroughly frustrating almost all day, with frequent squalls and all too short sunny/dry interludes. We began at Wave Rock, a graceful if not overly large formation in the granite domes near Hyden. A few clown orchids grew in the woods nearby. There was a bit of sorting out to do in town with cars, food and book buying before we finally left. We returned to our site for Granite Sun Orchid, but no amount of coaxing could get them open today.

Moving on we continued to the heathlands around Harrismith stopping on the way for a tall flowering spike of *Xanthorrhoea preisii*, fine flowery bushes of *Cyanostegia lanceolata* and a few neat ball-like inflorescences of *Banksia sphaerocephala*. Arriving at what seemed a deserted town we lucked out on a dry spot for lunch in the local sports centre. Afterwards, there as a decent break in the weather long enough for us to find more *Urodon dasyphyllum*, *Petrophile seminuda* and pretty pink *Verticordia insignis* which grew alongside two yellow species. A band of kangaroos bounced through the bush at one point.

The constant flux between showers and dry continued with the chance to stop for an *Olearia sp.* before we reached a small nature reserve and enjoyed another extended dry break. The abundant wands of *Stackhousia monogyna* filled the woods with a delicate grace and there was a lovely peachy *Stylidium sp.*, bushes of *Dodonaea ptarmicaefolia* with winged seeds and a smattering of now familiar orchids such as *Caladenia falcata* and *C. flava* to round off the day.

Day 17 27 Sept – Wongan Hills

The clear skies at sun up were encouraging after the poor weather yesterday and it was certainly warmer. Undulating countryside led north to Wongan Hills where we spent the morning. There were some lovely flowery *Eucalpytus torquata* along the road, buzzing with bees and honeyeaters. A black-styled *Grevillea hookeriana* and new species of pink *Verticordia* were also around, but the main target took a bit of searching for. Eventually we did find a few spikes of *Thelymitra campanulata*, but despite the relative warmth the lack of constant direct sun meant they were not open! Then one was found with an almost open flower so a makeshift greenhouse was constructed to warm it up a bit more and we left it for a while. The rest of the area proved unproductive and it

Wave Rock



all seemed quite dry despite the rain everywhere else. Fortunately, when we returned the enclosed orchid had performed well and three beautiful white-striped blue flowers were now open.

Heading south to Perth the roadside was coloured with drifts of electric blue *Lechenaultia biloba* and bushes of orange *Gastrolobium sp.* as we transitioned back to extensive wandoo woodlands. Our final botanical stop of the tour was for an area of woods with spectacular swathes of *Anigozanthus manglesii*, enhanced with the non-native *Gladiolus caryophyllacea*. But what we were really after was the giant of WA orchids, *Thelymitra macrophylla*. The cooling weather meant most had closed but luckily one superb one was still open and we could enjoy its sweet scent and pastel blue colour. Right next to this site was a native plant nursery which was interesting to look around and drool over what we couldn't buy and grow in our gardens back home. A decent bottle of wine and a curry rounded off the tour.

Day 17 28 Sept – Flights home

There were various departure times, Jan and I leaving at 11am, Mary and Joe much later, but we all got away okay. Hopefully would all meet up again soon in South Africa...



Thelymitra campanulata



Eucalyptus wandoo

For information on our tours
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