

NEWSLETTER

April 2024



EHB NO LONGER HAS A POSTAL ADDRESS

Use the email, please.

Meet: Octagonal Hall, 52, McGlew Rd., Glen Forrest.
4th Friday of the month. [Doors open 7.00pm for 7.30pm](#)

Committee 2024

President: Pam Riordan
Vice President: Maxine Tyler
Treasurer: Peter Day
Secretary: Janet Atkins
Committee Members:
June Barkman
Sarah Dudley
Penny Hussey
Mal Myers
Robyn Rudeforth

Email:

**For all contacts, please use the
WSWA's generic email:**
eastern.hills.branch@wildflowersocietywa.org.au

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/easternhillswildflowersoc/>

**MANY IOUS ARE STILL
UNREDEEMED!**

COMING EVENTS: APRIL

**Thursday 4th April
Committee Meeting**
3.00pm Octagonal Hall

Seed Cleaning
Wednesday 3rd and 17th April
9.00am Octagonal Hall

Propagation Group
Monday 15th April

12 noon Octagonal Hall
Bring lunch.

**Evening Meeting
Friday 26th April
Bronwyn Keighery
"The Whicher Range"**
7.30 pm Octagonal Hall

In the Wildflower Society, Bronwyn is probably better known than her husband Greg. For years she has served on the Committee, been a principal organiser of the Plant Survey programme as well as Editor of the WSWA's Newsletter. A highly knowledgeable botanical authority and a good speaker as well!

She is going to talk to us about the Whicher Range, the low plateau that rises behind the marine scarp that lies to the south of Capel and Busselton. This is a fascinating area that is stuffed full of unusual plants – and most people don't give it a second glance, their eyes being fixed on the coast.

Come and see what you are missing, and plan your next trip south!

With any luck there will be a few things flowering this month – don't forget to bring them to the nature table!

COMING EVENTS: MAY

**Thursday 2nd May
Committee Meeting**
3.00pm Octagonal Hall

Seed Cleaning
Wednesday 1st, 15th and 29th May
9.00am Octagonal Hall

Propagation Group

Monday 20th May

12 noon Octagonal Hall

Bring lunch.

PLANT SALE

Saturday 11th May

(set-up Friday 10th May)

See further details later in this Newsletter.

Evening Meeting

Friday 24th May

Alex George

“Changes that have occurred in the Perth Flora during the last 50 years”

Alex George has been observing and documenting plants – probably since he first started toddling around! He has put together a fascinating record of the changes he has seen, as the suburbs creep outwards, weeds gain a stranglehold and the water availability changes- to say nothing of climate change

Should we weep for what we have lost, or celebrate what we have saved?

Perhaps you could think of examples of change near you (good and bad) and write/illustrate a short note about it? We could put together a whole Newsletter about ‘change in our time’. The Friends groups that you belong to will, I am sure have many success stories to tell!

REPORTS

Evening Meeting Friday 22nd March

Prof Steve Hopper

“The genus *Haemodorum*”

Steve started with the worldwide distribution of the family Haemodoraceae, essentially in the Southern Hemisphere but as well as Australia, including southern Africa, north and south America and

Malaysia. The Australian species, however, are quite distinct from their international cousins. In Australia, there are around 110 species, which occur in WA’s South-west, in northern tropical savannahs, in south-eastern NSW and even one in Tasmania.

The first specimen was collected in 1770 in the Top End and named in 1798 as *Haemodorum coccineum* in reference to its overall red colour. This, and many of the other northern species, have bright red flowers, with the petals wide open.



Pic from Internet

Steve linked this to pollination allowing a large range of insects to access the pollen. On the other hand, our SW species have black flowers, forming a closed tube. They are exclusively pollinated by bees of the genus *Leioproctus* and he showed a sequence of photos showing a bee pushing its way inside the flower to get at the nectar. [See pic at end of Newsletter.]

This genus is the only true bulb in the SW flora and its onion-like leaf bases contain a scarlet juice which can be used as a dye or, round Esperance way, it was used to colour fibres for basket making. The bulb is popularly said to have been eaten, but Steve noted that it tastes like very hot chilli, and would have been a flavouring only. Feral pigs like it, though, and they are contributing to the pants’ decline in the forested SW.

Steve likes to look at the bigger picture – how and where did these species evolve? He began by reminding us of the fascinating Miocene (around 15 million years ago) fossils found a Riversleigh in Qld. [If you don’t know about this site, borrow

the book from our library. It's fascinating reading.] It was assumed that the vegetation was rainforest. But new research into plant fossils has shown that, in fact, it was tropical savannah!

As the continent dried out, *Haemodorum* had been assumed to have spread down from the rainforest to drier parts. But Steve's research, using DNA techniques, is suggesting the it started here in the SW and spread north.

The presentation finished with a description of how important the genus was to Noongyar people and how it is being used currently, in fabric dying, for example.

A stunning presentation, sweeping across a wide range of scientific experimentation. Why were some people not able to attend? Too early in the month? You didn't like the idea of a talk via Zoom? Whatever the reason, you missed something quite exceptional.

Penny Hussey

PLANT SALE

This year's Plant Sale will take place on Saturday 11th May 9.00am – 2.00pm with set up all day Friday 10th May. Helpers will be needed for both days. Since this notice was placed in the March newsletter only a few offers of help have been forthcoming – nowhere near enough as yet.

This is the main fundraiser for the Branch with 40% of the takings used to fund our operations for the year. A lot of help is needed over both days. For those who have not participated in the past what we broadly need (there will be jobs for everyone) is below.

Friday 10th May

- 8.00am – 10.00am – Set up trestles etc a bit of muscle needed
- 10.00am- 2.00pm – Shift plants from vehicles to benches, some labelling and pricing
- 2.00pm -? Final table sort

Saturday 11th May

- 8.00am – 9.00am Put out plant labels, tidy and sort
- 9.00am Gates Open. We need people to help purchasers choose plants, cashiers etc.
- 12.00pm onwards start cleaning up with sale still operating
- Most importantly we need a small catering corps to water and feed the troops – most important job.

We would also appreciate some morning tea donations – these will be only for helpers. Since the coming of COVID we no longer provide morning teas for purchasers.

The last request is for boxes (for customers' plants). These can be left on the south veranda in the week prior to the sale. Thankyou

If you would like to be involved, please contact Janet on the branch email or atkinsrj@iinet.net.au . As you can see, plant knowledge is not an essential requirement!

LIBRARY

The library used to have most copies of the WA Herbarium's Journal "Nuytsia". However, the recent audit has revealed that many are missing. Does anyone know what has happened to them, please?

Mal Myres

BUS DRIVERS AHOY!

It is proposed to hire a bus for the Kellerberrin excursion in Sept/Oct.

Does anyone have contacts with bus hiring place AND/OR know of someone who holds a licence to drive one? Please let the Secretary know.

The views and opinions expressed in the articles in this Newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Wildflower Society of Western Australia



*Leioproctus
aureofimbriatus*
bee pollination of
*Haemodorum
planifolium*

Photos S.D. Hopper

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