

# CORREA

Friends of Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Garden Newsletter



Superb fairywren, *Malurus cyaneus*

Winter 2026

# Friends of Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Garden Newsletter

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## President's Report

### Derek Anderson

Welcome to the winter edition of the Correa newsletter. Since my autumn report, the committee has been busy preparing for the rest of our celebratory year. On Saturday 2nd May, a group of Friends gathered near the volunteers' lunchroom to learn the art of silk-screen printing under Shannon Leard's expert guidance. They printed T-shirts in a range of sizes, which will be available for sale at the Book 'n' Bake sale over the June long weekend. Tea towels and canvas bags featuring the 40th anniversary timeline graphic first displayed at our January launch will also be available.



*Derek Anderson*

On Friday 5th June, Friends will be sorting books into categories in the Banksia Room and organising newly printed merchandise for sale. The book sale will run from 10:00am to 3:00pm on both Saturday and Sunday. The bake sale with baked goods, jams and preserves will be sold on Saturday only to ensure they are fresh. Monday will be devoted to tidying the Banksia Room and cataloguing of unsold books. Sue Cogger has prepared a roster of Friends and volunteers for all four days, which is greatly appreciated, and I would like to sincerely thank everyone who has offered their time to support this fundraiser for the Friends.

As in the autumn edition, this issue continues the history of the Friends and the ERBG, covering the next decade, from 1996 to 2006. A great deal of research has gone into bringing this material together, and I am sure you would join me in thanking everyone who has contributed their knowledge and experiences—not only to this edition, but also to the Friends Association over its 40-year history. For Fran and me, 2006 was also the year we moved to the Eurobodalla region. One of the attractions of settling in Broulee was the opportunity to volunteer at ERBG, something Fran has done almost from the time we arrived.

The committee has decided to purchase a storage shed in partnership with ESC. Garden Manager Michael has identified a site near the tractor shed opposite the nursery, and a contractor has been engaged to lay the concrete slab and erect the shed.

Please note these upcoming dates for your diary. On Saturday 15th August, well-known botanist and Garden Curator Professor Tim Entwisle will present "The Sceptical Botanist". His book of the same title is available in the Garden Shop, and Friends receive a 10% discount. In October, we will also hold a bushdance on the lawn in front of the Pavilion. This will be Sunday the 4<sup>th</sup>.

Before I finish, I'd like to remind you that our AGM is scheduled for Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> October. As always, the committee welcomes new members with fresh ideas. If you feel you could contribute, we would love to have you join us. The committee meets once a month and works in a friendly, cooperative way.

Lastly, Kathleen Patrick has kindly offered to edit this edition, but the Committee is seeking members to help form an editorial team so that the Correa can continue to be produced without relying on one person. For more information, please contact Secretary Gail using the details shown at the beginning of this edition.

Till next time,

*Derek Anderson*

## Garden Manager's Report

**Michael Anlezark**

Up till now we have had a fairly dry and warm Autumn; however some much needed recent rain has put some moisture back into the ground and we are now certainly moving into colder conditions. Growth is slowing down but banksias, some grevilleas and acacias are flowering and providing pollen and nectar for a range of insects. Although things might be slowing down in the plant world our activities in the Garden as usual are still full steam ahead.

The long awaited wildlife recovery and rehabilitation facility proposed for the Garden is a major step closer with the pouring of the footings in early May. The next step is installation of the cages, food preparation and storage shed areas and some landscaping. We are hopeful that this will happen by late June with the potential to receive the first animals shortly after. This exciting partnership between the wildlife Rescue Service WIRES and our botanic garden will play a major role in the conservation of our precious fauna. Other Botanic Gardens are keenly watching this

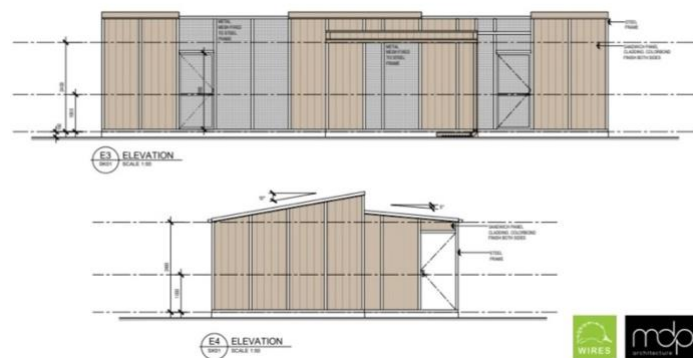


*Michael Anlezark*

project which has the potential to become a model for flora and fauna conservation partnerships throughout the state.

Our Horticulturist Daniel Bateman left us recently and we are now in the final stages of recruitment for his replacement. There has been strong interest in the position with some great candidates. We hope to announce the name of the successful person very soon.

This year we celebrated Botanic Garden Week from May 18-24 with the theme of – ‘Where



*WIREs wildlife recovery and rehabilitation facility plans*

your Health Grows’. This was a fitting theme in light of research showing that time in plant-rich environments reduces stress, lowers cortisol, improves mood and restores attention. As part of Botanic Garden week I was invited to join ABC Gardening Australia’s Costa Georgiadis in a webinar together with Waminda Parker of NatureFix and health professional Jacinta Perrin to discuss botanic gardens as health assets. See the link to see the webinar [here](#).

We also celebrated Volunteer Week by hosting an event at the garden for all of the shires volunteers. On a beautiful sunny day volunteers from the Garden Landcare, Ydrive, the libraries and the Bas came together at the Garden for great food, great company and live music. After a welcome to country dance routine, volunteers were officially thanked by the Mayor Matt Hatcher and Director of Community Arts and Recreation Kathy Arthur.

There are some great fungi related activities planned throughout June as part of [fungifeastival](#), so check out what’s on.

We will soon be adding a new shed to our facilities thanks to Friends who are sharing the cost. The new 6m x 6m shed will provide much needed additional storage space for Friends and gardens. That construction is expected to commence in June.

Till next time,

*Michael Anlezark*

## Boring Insects - Friend or Foe?

Jane Elek

The presence of many insects is only apparent by the traces they leave behind from feeding, or when emerging from a host that has been attacked. Often the first time you are aware that boring insects are present is when you see a pile of sawdust (or frass) at the base of the trunk, weeping sap or resin or little holes appearing in the woodwork. It often takes a lot of further digging to find the insect responsible, if you find it at all. That makes it very difficult to detect and eradicate or even manage invasions such as that recently in Western Australia.

### Borer

Borers are widely seen as foes, responsible for killing trees. However, most Australian borers usually only attack water stressed or dying trees (Fig. 1). They also have an important role as recyclers of nutrients from the once-living wood back into the soil. The primary borer attack leads the way for fungi and other insects to continue the decomposition, allowing the other living plants to take up the nutrients. The primary borers are several families of beetles and moths, in which it is the larvae that do the boring. Termites of course also bore into live and dead wood but rarely kill trees. However, a beetle that has recently invaded WA is of major

concern because, not only because it can attack hundreds of species of trees including many Australian natives, but it seems to be able to attack healthy trees. This is the Polyphagous shot-hole borer. We need to know more about it and be able to recognise signs of its attack.

### Polyphagous shot hole borer

The Polyphagous shot-hole borer (PSHB) was first detected in WA in August 2021. The Department of Primary Industry has now conceded that eradication has failed, and biosecurity has set a Quarantine Area around metropolitan Perth to try to prevent its spread. However, this will probably only slow down its spread across the country, as happened when Myrtle Rust invaded the eastern states. We need to be prepared for its invasion here.

PSHB is a tiny beetle (Fig. 2), 1-2mm long, that originated in SE Asia. It tunnels into trunks and branches of over 500 documented species, hence the name polyphagus. The beetle is one of the Ambrosia beetle family, (*Coleoptera: Curculionidae: Scolytinae: Xyleborini*,



Figure 1. Exit holes of two native borer species



Figure 2. Polyphagous shot-hole borer (PSHB) 1-2mm

*Euwallacea fornicatus*). Like all Ambrosia beetles, they and their larvae actually feed on their specific symbiotic fungus (*Fusarium euwallaceae*) that they introduce into their host trees. This beetle species carries its fungal spores in a special structure in its mouth parts; it is actually the growing fungus that blocks the xylem and phloem vessels that usually kills the trees when there is a mass attack by beetles.

The Xyloborini tribe are very effective invaders because as soon as the female beetles emerge from the pupae in their galleries they mate with their male brothers before dispersing to find new hosts to attack and lay eggs. They also seem to be able to attack healthy trees. The PSHB has already invaded USA, Israel and South Africa. Invasion is concerning for industry because it attacks economic species such as tea (*Camelia*), citrus, avocado, mulberry and many other exotic trees such as elder, maple and robinia. In WA it has already attacked Moreton Bay fig and *Melaleuca* trees, so its potential impact on our native flora and ecosystems is also concerning. Australia already has several native species of Ambrosia pinhole borer species but these mostly only attack trees that are stressed by fire or drought, or freshly logged trees or green boards, leaving tell-tail round holes and staining from the fungus. The larvae that are tunnelling in the wood die when it dries out.

#### Signs of infestation (Fig 3.) to look for:

- Dieback of branches PLUS
- Tiny (<1mm) pinholes in trunks or branches
- Powdery or compacted noodles of sawdust coming out of holes
- Resin or sap coming out of holes
- Staining around holes from the fungus
- Sugary volcanos of sap (avocados), or sap dripping down the trunk (figs)

**Photograph and report any suspected cases to your local Department of Agriculture or Primary Industry.**

Beetles are easily spread because all life stages occur inside the tree, and can survive transportation in any pieces of wood greater than 2.5 cm diameter.

The only treatments currently are to remove and destroy all affected wood, mainly by cutting down and destroying (not mulching!) the attacked trees. Scientists are testing the efficacy of systemic insecticides, probably combined with a fungicide, injected into the tree. The best way to minimise the chance of attack is to keep trees healthy and not water stressed.



Figure 3. Damage from Polyphagous shot-hole borer (PSHB) A: PSHB holes and frass in elm tree, B: sugar sap volcano on fig tree, C: Exudate of resin from PSHB holes, D: Sap noodles from PSHB holes (all images from Agriculture Victoria)

## How To Become A Birdwatcher

### Mandy Anderson

“Here’s to the birdwatchers: optimistic, slightly eccentric, custodians of wonder and joy and passion and love” writes Natalie Kyriacou in her book *Nature’s last dance*. Birdwatching is “the gentle act of noticing, the willingness to see the world around you.”

Birdwatching takes you to beautiful environments. It gives the opportunity to observe and immerse yourself in all of the beauty that nature has to offer. Birdwatchers do not restrict their enthusiastic observation to just birds. It’s all about the whole picture – the birds, their behaviours, their environments, the plants that they depend on for shelter, protection, food, the insects, the scenery. As a hobby, birdwatching is comparatively inexpensive. The most important investment is a decent pair of binoculars. There is no point trying to watch birds with your old horse-racing clunkers, nor is a tiny pair that is difficult to adjust and focus going to cause anything but frustration. It is not necessary to spend thousands of dollars (but you could), be prepared to invest a few hundred for a satisfying experience. Once you have made this initial investment, there is very little ongoing cost, unless you decide that you want to add the Emperor Penguin to your Australian life-list. Or travel further afield to see the Resplendent Quetzal, which would involve a journey to Costa Rica. Birdwatchers are often parodied in their “uniforms” – the colourless hiking pants with multiple pockets, the floppy hat, the hiking boots and gaiters. These



*A critically endangered Hooded Plover on 1080 Beach, B. Harvey*



*Inside the nest of a Lewin's Honeyeater, M. Anderson*



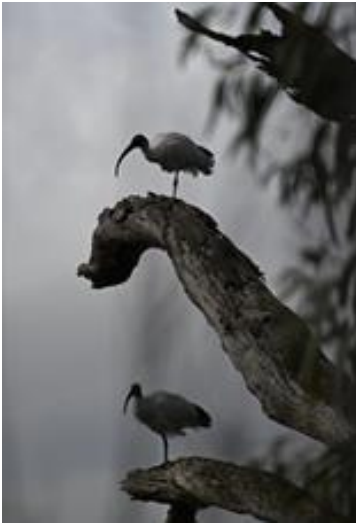
*A familiar garden visitor, Crimson Rosella, B. Harvey*



*An endangered male Gang-gang*



*A pair of White-bellied Sea-Eagles in full song at Kianga, A. Christiansen*



*Australian White Ibis, B. Harvey*

accoutrements are not essential – you just need the usual requirements when spending time outdoors in Australia: sunblock, a hat, water and a few pockets or bum-bag for carrying your mobile phone – because you will very soon need to purchase one of the essential apps which will help you recognise birds, their calls, their locations. A hard-copy is also useful. It's advisable to always carry a field-guide in the car because you can never know when you're going to come across a bird that needs identifying.

Birdwatching is a life-changing hobby. Seeing a rare bird can have a strange effect on an otherwise average, normal person. It can become addictive. Even obsessive. It is advisable to “find your flock” – join a group, or go along with some friends who are knowledgeable birdwatchers. You can learn so much from an experienced friend or an expert. Hiring a professional guide when visiting a new area can be rewarding and worth this extra



*Eastern Spinebill, B. Harvey*

occasional investment. A mentor will pass on lots of invaluable information. Self-confessed “Bird-nerd” Sean Dooley, was taken “under the wing” of an acquaintance, a man called Mike Carter, who was well-known in birding circles. Sean's parents apparently thought nothing of Sean wandering off into the bush each weekend with an older gentleman, each of them armed with binoculars.

During the covid pandemic, there was a surge in the number of people who became engaged in birdwatching, and in the majority of cases, the hobby has stuck. Restricted to a 5km radius from their homes, people began discovering some of the joys of the world around them. So much time was freed up. The mental and physical benefits of being outside and in nature are permanent. Birdwatching is a form of meditation. It's impossible to think of

anything else if you are totally concentrating on a bird and noting all of its features, seeking a positive identification.

During this year's annual bird count which is organised by Birdlife Australia, the number of individual bird sightings exceeded five million for the first time. Each year since the count began about five years ago, participation has soared, so that the numbers of individual birds counted, and the number of observers has climbed. This annual bird count is a great example of citizen science in action. We are adding to scientific data. Scientists acknowledge that more than half of all bird data has been contributed by amateurs such as birdwatchers.

As a novice birdwatcher, you can start anywhere, as Dr Ann Jones has shown in her TV series “Urban Birds”. At home or out in the bush, just one special sighting can get you hooked. For me, it was the Regent Bowerbird. I can vividly picture in my mind the time when, as a young child, I was living in Murwillumbah, and a small group of these spectacular birds briefly visited our garden.



*A rare but very special A young Noisy Pitta, A. Christiansen*

For those who live in the Eurobodalla area, what better place to start than at the Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Garden, armed with their bird identification brochure. It has been uplifting to monitor the surprisingly rapid recovery of bird numbers since the devastating bushfires of 2019/2020. On my first return visit after that summer, I heard a single call - a courageous little pardalote. But I did not actually see a single bird. Now, a mere five years later, it is not difficult to compile a list of more than 20 different species.

Patience is a true asset for anyone beginning the birdwatching path. Don't try to acquire too much knowledge at once – it will gradually seep in. This is especially important when trying to familiarise yourself with bird-calls. Some species make numerous different calls, which can be really frustrating at first, but just aim to enjoy each experience. The male and female of a species can look so different from each other, yet another challenge to the learning process. It won't be easy, but it will be rewarding. It can be hard to go bird-watching with a bushwalking group. They likely won't stop for you to identify a bird. It's a totally different activity, and from my experience, the two are mutually exclusive.



*Superb Fairy Wrens cleaning up the insects on the windscreen, M. Anderson*

the 10,000 bird species in the world, so a life-list of 600 is a realistic goal – over a number of years. The above-mentioned Sean Dooley decided to spend a small inheritance, doing a “big twitch”. His goal was to see 700 Australian species in a single year. Most people would not see that number in a lifetime. But Sean was successful and he published an account of his year in his entertaining book *The Big Twitch*.

Our world has become noisy, fast-paced, stress-inducing, and we are constantly bombarded with invasive social media. Bird-watching offers something completely different and totally satisfying. It's quite OK to be eccentric and addicted. There's a whole flock of us out there.



*Male Regent bower bird (QLD)*



*Eastern Osprey, Mystery Bay, A. Christiansen*

## News From Jenny Liney Scholarship Recipients

### Sally Edsall

Each year Friends award a tertiary scholarship to one or more students from Eurobodalla to continue their education in the natural sciences at university or TAFE. In 2026, Friends have awarded scholarships to two outstanding students.

**Isa Butchers** went to Batemans Bay High and graduated Year 12 in 2024. He started at Wollongong University this year studying a Bachelor of Medicinal Chemistry. He is particularly interested in how chemistry and biotechnology are applied in medicine and used to solve environmental problems and is concerned by the biodiversity threatened by unsustainable land use and climate change, which also threatens biological and chemical solutions to problems affecting both humans and other animals.

Isa recently wrote:

*“My experience at university so far has been very positive. I’ve enjoyed both the challenge of the coursework and the opportunity to explore subjects in greater depth.*

*One highlight has been chemistry labs, where we do experiments ourselves rather than observing demonstrations, as was more common in high school. It’s been enjoyable using more advanced techniques and equipment to further build my skills.*

*Outside of classes, I’ve enjoyed settling into campus life. The campus is a pleasant environment, with ponds, open fields, trees, and local wildlife such as possums and a variety of birds, along with cafes and plenty of opportunities to socialise.*

*I’ve made friends through my studies, and I’m considering joining an archery club I recently discovered. Alongside university, I work 15 hours per week in a pharmacy, which I’ve been able to balance with my studies.*

*Overall, I’m grateful for the opportunities and independence the university has provided so far, as well as the scholarship support, which has helped me focus more fully on my studies.”*

**Isabella Lopresti** went to St Peters Anglican College where she was Vice-Captain and demonstrated outstanding leadership abilities, graduating in 2024. In 2025 she completed first year of a Bachelor of Environmental Engineering (Honours) at the University of NSW.

Isabella is driven by a passion to make a positive change in the way we treat our environment. Her studies bring together environmental science, engineering problems, and real-world problem solving. On campus at university, she is part of The Producers, a student-run urban gardening program. They recently held a stall for students to participate in botanical printing using various leaves and flowers from the garden.

Isabella writes:

*“So far, second year has been full of amazing experiences, meeting new people and learning more about my course and its implications in the real world.*



Isa Butchers

*Starting off strong, I ran Orientation-Week for my college (Goldstein College) with a team of my close friends. We welcomed 60 new residents and took them on a full discovery of college life. We ended the week with a formal dinner, joined by two other colleges, where everyone danced, ate and sang their hearts out.*

*Moving into the term, I studied two courses - Fluid Mechanics and Water Resources*

*Engineering. I thoroughly*

*enjoyed Water Resources Engineering. Its focus is introducing engineering hydrology and its application in water resources management and flood estimation. This subject showed real world scenarios of flood events in local areas and how we can track, predict and better build our infrastructure for future floods.*

*I am looking forward to studying more courses similar to this, where we are learning about what our future careers may be as well as the future of our environment due to climate change."*



*Isabella (second from left) at The Producers Stress Less Week stall*

## **We planted two woody meadows a decade ago to see what would thrive. Now the concept is popular across Australia.**

*Melbourne University research: Woody Meadows published in [The Conversation](#) November 14, 2025 6.08am AEDT.*

It sounds like a gardener's holy grail: beautiful and practical plantings that can turn cities into green spaces with benefits for people and biodiversity.

Our Australia-first collaborative research has made this dream a reality. Woody meadows have transformed urban spaces in Australian cities by adding green beauty and colour in public spaces at a much lower cost than other approaches.

Ours is a collaborative research project that engages with urban land managers, designers and horticultural crews to research and trial woody meadows under real-world conditions. Their popularity reflects the huge demand to green our urban places in a cost-effective way.

After ten years of success, failure and constant experimentation, we can now share our insights into how woody meadows can be both beautiful and hardy.



## Mangroves of the South Coast

**Jenny Edwards**

There is one local tree species that is dominant in its ecosystem but that will probably never be grown in our botanic garden. It is tough but fussy. The soil it prefers must be fine grained and flooded twice daily with water that is unpolluted but enriched with nutrients. Despite its importance for many years, it was cleared mercilessly and even today is not widely appreciated and is sometimes removed illegally to “improve” water views.

You have guessed by now that the species is the Grey Mangrove (*Avicennia marina* var

*australasica*). Although there are many mangrove species, most prefer the tropics. The Grey Mangrove is the only one in the world that can survive in cool temperate estuaries such as those in Victoria. It is the dominant mangrove found in our local bays and rivers.



*Grey mangrove at high tide (Jane Elek)*



*Grey mangrove seedling*

The main characteristic of this species is its root system. The soil is so fine and waterlogged that there are no air spaces, so the tree's roots extend a long way from the trunk and have many vertical projections – peg roots or pneumatophores. These have water resistant bark with special raised grey patches that allow intake of air into the spongy tissue inside the pegs and roots. Vascular tissue can then take the oxygen to other parts of the plant.

Salt in large doses is normally toxic, so the Grey Mangrove has adaptations that allow it to thrive without competition in almost pure tidal salt water. The roots have a system that filters out some of the salt before the water is absorbed. Most of the plant can tolerate high salt content and can excrete some from glands in its leaves. The Grey Mangrove also stores excess salt in its old leaves which, when dropped, provide a food source for decomposers and hence numerous creatures from worms, molluscs and crabs to fish and birds.

We have another much less common mangrove in our estuaries which prefers less salty water –

the River Mangrove (*Aegiceras corniculatum*). The Grey Mangrove's leaves grow opposite on the stem and the undersides are pale and covered with a dense mat of fine hairs. These help reduce evaporation and so conserve the fresh water for which the tree has worked so hard.

River Mangrove is normally multi-stemmed and shrub sized. Its leaves are glossy green, slightly darker above than below and are arranged alternately. Both species have clusters of small flowers. The Grey Mangrove's are yellow and usually appear in spring. The River Mangrove's flowers are white and are more common in the cooler months from April to September. Both have seed that germinates in the fruit while still on the plant (viviparous)

and the propagule mainly falls in summer. The Grey Mangrove's propagules, washed up in their millions on our beaches and riversides, have two fleshy seed leaves and the tip of the root is often visible ready to sink into any suitable surface.



*River mangrove flower*



*River mangrove fruit*



*Fish among peg and roots (Jane Elek)*

*Note: Photos sourced from the Internet unless otherwise designated*

# Celebrating 40 years of Friends of Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Garden

1986 – 2026

As a special addition to the Correa for our 40<sup>th</sup> year, we will be looking back over the decades across this year's editions. We will look back at a range of historical snippets and stories relating to each decade of the 40 years.

In this issue we will look back at the second decade of the Garden from 1996 to 2005 including:



- An overview of the decade by Gail Stevens
- Recollections from Ryan Harris, apprentice horticulturalist at ERBG
- Year 4 schools education program
- The Herbarium's Second Decade - From Uncertainty to Stability
- Interview with the Visitors Centre architect, Stuart Whitelaw
- Volunteers photo essay of the frenzy of activity across the decade



The construction of the Visitor Centre from ground preparation, slab pour, blockwork and framing to complete

## A Decade of Consolidation: 1996 – 2005

**Gail Stevens**

After the 1994 bushfires which swept through Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Garden (ERBG) burning plants, destroying buildings, bridges and other infrastructure, there was a few years hiatus while Eurobodalla Shire Council considered whether or not to continue to support a regional botanic garden. During this period of uncertainty, Friends and volunteers worked on clearing the site of fire debris.

When Council determined to continue ERBG it obtained a concept plan prepared by Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and engaged a Canberra based environmental consultancy to complete landscape plans. Under the leadership of Council's Garden Management Committee and John Knight Garden Supervisor, work began on reconstruction and development of the Garden.

The following year saw remarkable activity by John Knight, Garden staff and Friends with Commonwealth funded programs such as Green Corps. Friends raised funds through the sale of propagated plants and provided volunteer labour on a wide range of projects.



Green Corps volunteers and TAFE students at work in the Garden

In the period 1996 – 2005, Friends worked with the Garden Management Committee and Garden staff to build a replacement residence for the Garden Supervisor; rebuild propagation facilities, and later a plant sales area; repair and extend walking tracks throughout the 42ha Garden; establish an arboretum featuring only trees found within the Garden's collecting region; to a range of other projects. All of this while promoting revegetation of the site, weeding and caring for the grassed areas.

An architecturally designed plan for a visitor centre was completed. With Council and Friends' funding support and substantial volunteer labour, the building was constructed. September 2001 marked the official opening by Premier Bob Carr of the Visitor Centre building, consisting of a café, shop area and office, with over 500 attendees from our community.



The opening of the Visitor Centre



Opening of the limited mobility track

A limited mobility track was constructed nearly one kilometre long running past the Visitors Centre, through the Picnic Ground, round the Northern Lake, past the Dune and Xeriscape Gardens and back to the Car Park was completed. All this and no slope more than 3%.

Friends Guiding Team was established with top level advice from two expert guides from the Australian National Botanic Garden. The 10 guides' first tour involved taking a group of sixty people from the Australian Garden History Society on a guided tour of the Gardens.

In 2004, with a focus on education, a large Sand Dune Garden was constructed to demonstrate how to stabilise our sea fronts. Similarly, a Xeriscape Garden was designed to demonstrate how best prepare and plant home gardens with the minimum use of water. To enhance the experience of visiting the Garden, a bird-hide at the northern lake adjacent to the limited mobility track was built.

The Garden's Arboretum, a source of income for the Garden through sponsored trees, was expanded. To enhance the Arboretum experience a gazebo was erected with detailed information was about the Arboretum and the trees which grow there.

In 2005 the theme was consolidation. After nearly 10 years of hard work building on the concept plan, the Garden Supervisor was focused on finishing all outstanding projects and continuing to maintain a high standard of care in the various gardens, lawns, paths, tracks and facilities. It was also a time Council sought a new 5 year Garden management plan. So that was the focus for 2005.



Judy Thomson plants her tree in the Arboretum

Towards the end of the year, banners were erected near the Garden entry on the highway and were very effective promoting the Garden and attracting more visitors. That was the upside. In October however, 216mm of rain fell over 24 hours, washing away the Hill track bridge – it was replaced early the following year.

2006 commenced with an ambitious program of works including improvements to the BBQ area, fencing parts of the arboretum to protect the plantings, construction of geology, fern, sandstone and rainforest gardens; planting the Visitor Centre lake; additions to the arboretum and enlarging the plant nursery. Funding from IMB also enabled the creation of a walk specifically designed for children 3 – 10 years old.

And so, Friends' second decade supporting Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Garden came to a close.

## Recollections: Ryan Harris, Garden Apprentice

I began work at the Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Garden (ERBG) in February 2005 aged 16, as an apprentice horticulturist. At the time, I could not have known how formative that experience would be, or how deeply the Garden and the people who cared for it would help shape my life.

From the outset it was clear that the Friends of ERBG were simply part of the fabric of the Garden. I was surrounded not only by professional staff but by Friends and volunteers whose deep knowledge and passion for the Garden, and whose quiet dedication, were immediately evident. The work was physical, purposeful, and sometimes demanding, and there was a clear expectation that you would turn up, put in the effort, and take pride in what you did. The Friends of ERBG embodied that same principle in everything they did.

I learned as much by listening as by doing. Friends had stories about particular plants, difficult seasons, setbacks and small victories that taught me to see ERBG as layered, resilient and deeply connected to people. What stood out most was the strong sense of community. People who were drawn to the Friends of ERBG brought with them a wide range of skills, interests, and backgrounds. Some individuals acted as informal mentors. The Wednesday propagation group along with the quieter hours spent in the herbarium, were equally influential. Through propagation, general nursery and construction work, arboretum development, time in the herbarium collating voucher specimens, and even learning aspects of database design and management, visitor centre meet and greet, I gained an appreciation for the skill and care that sat behind the public face of the Garden.

Beyond the environmental outcomes, there was real social value in this work. The Friends created a space for connection, shared purpose, and mutual support where people could contribute meaningfully, learn from one another, and feel part of something larger than themselves. They were united by the idea that indigenous flora is worth protecting; that knowledge should be shared and celebrated; and that caring for the environment is an active, ongoing collective responsibility.

Some of my strongest memories from my apprenticeship come from plant collection trips to places such as Badja, Monga, the Little Forest Plateau, and a range of coastal locations. Experiencing first-hand the diversity of landscapes and plant communities sparked a curiosity to explore further. Once I turned 17 and gained my licence, I began spending most weekends venturing further afield, seeking out new places and building on what those early trips had first inspired. Remote areas of Deua National Park, Brimberamala National Park and Tianjara section of Morton National Park became favourites: places where the scale, isolation, and botanical richness encouraged longer days in the field and deeper observation.



Ryan Harris & Jean Konkes at Big Badja Trig, 2005

The first formal collection trip that stands out took place in 2005 along the Badja Fire Trail, where we visited Big Badja Trig (Hill), around 1,363 metres, the highest peak in the ERBG collection region. As we climbed, the vegetation shifted into subalpine communities, and the changing landscape became part of the experience we were all sharing. I still remember collecting *Nematolepis elliptica* and returning home that evening with around 60 voucher specimens, so many that I stayed up late pressing and preparing them.

My strongest early memory of ERBG is not visual, but sensory. I believe it was my very first day. Walking down towards Deep Creek on a warm February day, I remember the sudden relief from the heat as the air cooled beneath the trees. The scent of river peppermint (*Eucalyptus elata*) hung in the air, clean, sharp, and unmistakable, carried with you as you moved through the landscape. That crisp eucalyptus scent, combined with the shade and the presence of the creek, felt reassuring, grounding, and deeply tied to that place.

As Friends of ERBG marks 40 years, I still carry fragments of stories particularly of the uncertainty following the 1994 bushfires. Without the determination, advocacy, and belief of the Friends, it is likely that ERBG would simply not exist today. That sense of fragility and renewal was felt again when the Garden was impacted by the New Year's bushfires of 2019/20. Yet, as before, the landscape responded. I can still recognise that same eucalyptus scent and feel that same sense of connection when I walk the Garden today. The smell has returned exactly as it was, a familiar presence that speaks to continuity, resilience, and the enduring character of the place.

Reaching this 40-year milestone is also a reminder of where my own professional journey began and of the people who helped shape it. The Friends of ERBG demonstrate that caring for place is a long-term commitment, and their legacy will continue to be felt for generations to come.

*Ryan is currently Principal Environment Planner, Cardinia Shire, Victoria.*

## Year 4 Schools Education Program

**Sally Edsall**

The Year 4 Program has been running at the Garden since 1997 where Year 4 classes from every primary school in the Eurobodalla Shire come to visit the Garden. The program gives the students a hands-on experience with plants and allows them to explore some of the paths within the Garden. The program was originally developed by Bernadette Davis (Council's Education Officer) and John Knight (the Garden Manager) and is still going strong to this day - there is always room for new volunteers to assist.

Ryan Harris, who visited in year 4 and eventually worked as an apprentice at the Garden recalls:

*"I remember it was a wet day. After getting off the buses, we were marshalled together and led towards an outdoor classroom area, located behind what is now the playground.*

*Two memories remain distinct. One is walking along parts of which was then known as Track 3 a trail which led into more remote parts of the Gardens, I have recollections of the large fungi present. The other is visiting a shade house, the green cloth overhead still vivid in my memory. We may have potted up *Lomandra* or something similar that day.*

*Looking back now, I sometimes allow myself to reflect on an idea that was occasionally suggested by others, perhaps a little romantically that my connection to ERBG began on that wet school excursion. At the time it was simply a day out of the classroom, but with the benefit of hindsight, it feels like an early encounter with a place that would quietly thread its way through my life."*



*Students visiting the Garden for the Year 4 Program, outdoor classrooms, seedlings and plant identification*

## The Herbarium - From Uncertainty to Stability

Tricia Kaye

The Herbarium's second decade was marked by both growth and uncertainty. Following the death of founding Curator Murray Wallace in January 1994, Jenny Liney was appointed Curator, having begun as a volunteer with the Herbarium in 1989. After the Wallace family home was sold, the collection was relocated to the Shire Council Chambers.



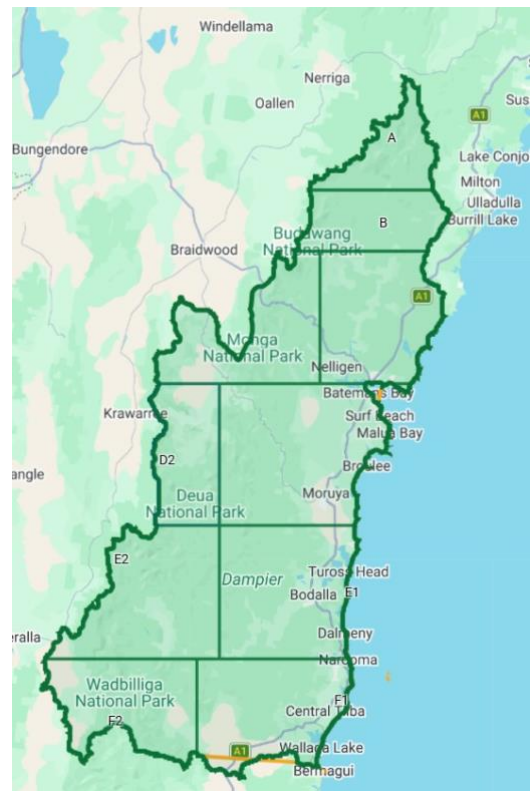
*Jenny Liney and volunteer in Herbarium at Council Chambers in Moruya in November 1995*

In the years following the 1994 fire, support for the Herbarium within Council varied, and there were periods when its future was uncertain, with some questioning whether the collection should continue. During this time, the Herbarium was moved several times - first to a garage at Surf Beach, and later to a storage facility in Batemans Bay. The Herbarium's future was ultimately secured when it was given a permanent home in the Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Garden Visitor Centre upon its opening in 2001, providing a stable base for the collection and its ongoing development.

Meanwhile, Jenny Liney and fellow volunteer David Wallace introduced a more systematic approach to collecting by dividing the broader collection region into ten districts. Their aim was to document every species within each district, rather than simply recording each species somewhere within the region. This strategy provided a more comprehensive understanding of species distribution and variation across the Eurobodalla region.

During this period, around 20 volunteers contributed to the Herbarium's work. More than 3,000 specimens representing approximately 1,200 species were collected, with Jenny responsible for over half of all collections. Around 500 additional species were added to the collection, bringing the total number of species represented to approximately 1,500—around 75 per cent of the species held in the Herbarium today.

This was also a period of significant growth for the Garden's living collection, and both John Knight and Ryan Harris made valuable contributions to the Herbarium. Towards the end of the decade, Jenny Liney and David Wallace were commissioned by Council staff to undertake flora surveys of Council reserves across the Shire, and also the Tollgate Islands Nature Reserve. This was an exciting opportunity to apply and expand the extensive botanical knowledge they had developed through their work with the Herbarium, while contributing valuable information for the management and conservation of local biodiversity.



*The Collecting Region sub-divided into 10 districts*

## Stuart Whitelaw in Conversation, May 2026

### Heather Haughton

**Heather:** Stuart, you were the architect for the original ERBG Visitor Centre built between the late 1990s and 2001, replacing the rustic gazebo in the car park. I believe you had \$90,000 to work with. How did that strike you?

**Stuart:** A ridiculous budget! But we decided to give it a red-hot go, and get it built no matter what. The community completely got behind it and contributed hours of free labour.

**Heather:** Voluntary labour from Friends of ERBG notwithstanding, you still had to have professional leadership?

**Stuart:** Yes, Warwick Donnelly, the structural engineer and I worked together closely on the design. We contributed our time mostly pro bono, and the builder, John Blunden, put in many uncosted hours. Our assistant was Keith Coghlan. I also had a builder's licence. Warwick's specialty was large scale timber buildings.

**Heather:** Which leads us to design and materials. What were the choices?

**Stuart:** A post and beam style of glulam timber construction to cut costs, on Besser blocks below. There's a photo in In Among the Gum Trees of the pallets of blocks.

**Heather:** And an apocryphal story to go with them!



The donated blocks ready for laying

**Stuart:** My company, Whitelaw and Chrystal, architects, was just finishing a big job for Boral, (where I knew their CEO) when their site was flooded. Their drilling had breached a volcanic dyke which released an unstoppable torrent of water. I suggested building a dam to conserve and use the free flood water for making the concrete bricks. That saved them a lot of money. Now, some bricks were deemed an unsuitable strength for two-storey buildings but OK for single storey. So, end result, ERBG had to pay transport only for the bricks.

**Heather:** Your brief included the requirement for the building to serve as a fire refuge, is that right?

**Stuart:** Yes, hence the water tower. Stored water was to operate under gravity to feed a sprinkler system. The tower had a dual function as part of temperature control, so it was clad with corrugated iron with its north facing side in a dark finish to create a chimney effect, while louvres lower down in the room below were to control the circulation of indrawn air. Roller shutters on the windows were installed externally as a bush fire protection measure. They are still there, hidden in a cavity.

**Heather:** Were you working under time pressure?

**Stuart:** Not unduly. The work happened when labour was available. Warwick and I were on site regularly, while Council had their own project manager, whom we found remarkably flexible.

**Heather:** And you attended the opening in 2001, and years after, in 2016, generously committed time to the planning process for the renovation and redevelopment of the Visitor Centre.

**Stuart:** The formal opening recognised a significant achievement and was far from a sombre occasion! Involvement with the Garden sparked my interest in working in community projects. So here I am in Moruya working with SAGE (Sustainable Agriculture and Gardening Eurobodalla), a project which has gained national attention with trainees enrolling from as far away as WA.



Stuart Whitelaw

# Photo Essay Development & Construction Post Bushfire

Sally Edsall

There was a frenzy of activity at the Garden from 1996 to 2005, with earthworks, carpentry, landscaping, planting and other site work mostly being undertaken by volunteer labour.

1996, Council meets with Friends and community about Garden's future



1997, 'The Woodies' carpentry volunteers building frames



1998, Selective burns for bushfire control by Rural Fire Service volunteers



1996, Work group at Pat's Creek for erosion control

1998, Finishing touches for signage in the Arboretum



1999, Roofing of the Visitor Centre



2000, Building gardens



2000, Applying test cement colour using brooms



2000, TAFE horticulture students



2001, Track development



2001, Building the Pavillion



2001, Toilet block construction



2002, Canberra Australia Native Plant Society planting in the Garden



2003, Plant propagation and identification at the Herbarium



2005, Building the Arboretum gazebo



2003, Working on the BBQ shed floor



2004, Working on the Xeriscape Garden





## Dates for Your Diary

- 6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> June – Book ‘n’ Bake Sale
- 15<sup>th</sup> August – The Sceptical Botanist, Tim Entwisle, leading botanist and author
- 4<sup>th</sup> October – Friends Family Bushdance
- 7<sup>th</sup> November – Pollinator Week Talk, Speakers: Dr Keith Bayliss, Brett O'Keefe & Phil Warburton

**More information will be sent out to members as it comes to hand.**

**For all ticketing find us on [EventBrite](#)**



## Friends Committee 2025–26

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