

HFNC Excursion to Cape Nelson Coastal Park on 19 July 2014

Rod Bird

Present: John & Glenys, Dave & Lyn, Rod & Diane, Ken & Janeen, Hilary Turner & Jane Hayes from HFNC and Ivor & Ruth Graney, Helen, Ken, Ted, & Bob from the Portland Field Naturalists Club, who conducted our tour.

We met at the Portland harbour side at 10.30 am, where Ken told us about the recent extension to the boat launching facilities for pleasure boats. Compared with early days the modern boats are capable of reaching areas near the continental shelf (some 60 km from shore) in a couple of hours, making it possible to reach the major tuna schools. In recent years Portland has become a major fishing destination and consequently there had been major problems of traffic congestion near the harbour because of limited launch facilities there. The Shire recently rectified that problem, relieving congestion on the adjacent roads.

Ken also reminisced that, as a lad, he and his mates would cycle over to Point Danger and catch a half a sugar bag full of crayfish in the water below the cliffs. He said that he took his boys there not many years ago and, with some difficulty, climbed down the cliff and waded out to the rocks. He could not find any crayfish in the places that he once found it so easy to see and catch them by the whiskers. How times have changed! It reminds me of how in WA my brothers and I caught Marron, Cobbler, Minnows and Perch in the Arthur River when we were boys. Twenty years later the river was saline from clearing the catchment – the fish and Marron were no more.

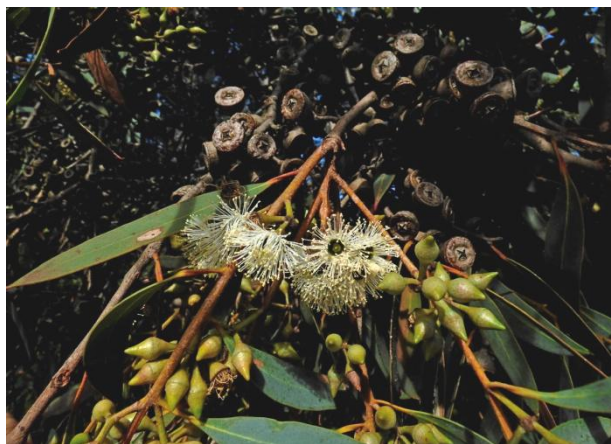
We drove in convoy out towards Cape Nelson. We went first to the parking area at Flat Rock. That takes us on part of the Great SW Walk to the **Eastern Ramparts**. From there we saw the curve of cliffs and beach to from Cape Nelson to Cape Bridgewater and the Cape Nelson cliff of Eastern Rampart. The bedding layers of limestone and sandstone can be seen in the cliffs.



We did not see many orchids – *Pterostylis striatum* (see above) was an exception – but there were many buds and a visit a month or two later would be required to see the flowers.

We had a car shuffle that enabled us to just walk one way, to the west end. Lunch was at a picnic ground further along the road.

We saw flowering Soap Mallee (*Eucalyptus diversifolia*) here. This area is the most easterly extension of this species, which extends in patches along the limestone coast of SE South Australia.



We drove to the start of the **Sea-cliff Nature Walk**, also part of the GSWW.



Seacliff Nature Walk was a round walk, first through dense shrubbery and low Brown Stringybark (*E. baxteri*), Drooping Sheoak (*Allocasuarina verticillata*) and Coastal Wattle (*A. sophorae*) to the cliff tops and then along that trail before winding back to the car park. The undergrowth was dense here, with Gahnia and many species all competing for space.

We had a view to the east of Lawrence Rocks and the volcanic Lady Julia Percy Island.



Bob and Ken told us that part of the walk had gone through land that had once been cleared. The coastal vegetation had largely re-established many years later but there were weeds present. We set off for home at 3.30 pm, having had a relaxing day's outing in fairly mild conditions.