

HFNC Excursion to Wildman Cave at Burrunj, 18 June 2023

Rod Bird

Participants: R Bird, D Luhrs, P Hocking, J Mitchell, M Hannan, P Lehmann D Ward & S Scott.

We travelled on the Glenelg Highway to Cherrypool/Djarabul for a short stop and scan for waterbirds on the long pool on the Glenelg/Bugarra River. This is always a good place to see Australian Darters and, true to form, we saw at least 6 birds perched on the tall trees on the opposite bank. We were lucky again with the weather, as the rain had gone and the conditions were moderate.



Djarabul waterhole on the Glenelg/Bugarra River



Yellow Gum/Yellow Box woodland

A stop was made for a cuppa in the Yellow Gum/Yellow Box woodland on the track to HGH Corner. The road runs from State Forest into the Black Range State Park.

There is no better representation in Victoria of the *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* (Yellow Gum) and *E. melliodora* (Yellow Box) woodland. Other tree/shrub species here include *Allocasuarina luehmanni* (Buloke, near the entrance), *E. camaldulensis* (River Red Gum, in creek lines), *Callitris rhomboidea* (Oyster Bay Pine, on the rises), *Banksia marginata* (Silver Banksia) and *Acacia verniciflua* (Varnish Wattle, very common throughout). Small shrubs with a few flowers included *Brachyloma ericoides* (Brush Heath), *Stenanthera conostephioides* (Emu Heath), *Styphelia humifusa* (Cranberry Heath), *Stenanthera pinifolium* (Pine Heath) and *Hibbertia fasciculata* (Bundled Guinea-flower).



Brush Heath



Bundled Guinea-flower



Emu/Flame Heath

Many of the young Oyster Bay Pines had a very bluish tint to the foliage, whereas the older trees are green. The Yellow Gum have a clean, often yellowish trunk, and large capsules, whilst the Yellow Box have a fine, light brownish bark and small capsules ('yellow' denotes the colour of fresh-cut wood).



Above – young Oyster Bay Pine

Far left – Yellow Gum

Middle – Yellow Box



Morning tea stop DL



Rooting Shank DL



Yellow Belly Buttons & sundew DL



Glistening Ink Cap DL



Unidentified fungi DL

Many colourful fungi were seen at this stop. These included Rooting Shank (*Oudmansietta gigaspora*), Yellow Belly Buttons (*Lichenomphalina chromacea*), Yellow Jelly Bells (*Heterotextus miltinis*), Brown Belly Button (*Lichenomphalina umbellifera*), Parasol (*Macrolepiota* sp.), *Coprinus* sp., *Mycena* sp. and *Boletus* sp. A few of these fungi are shown here.



Yellow Jelly Bells DL



Mycena sp. DL



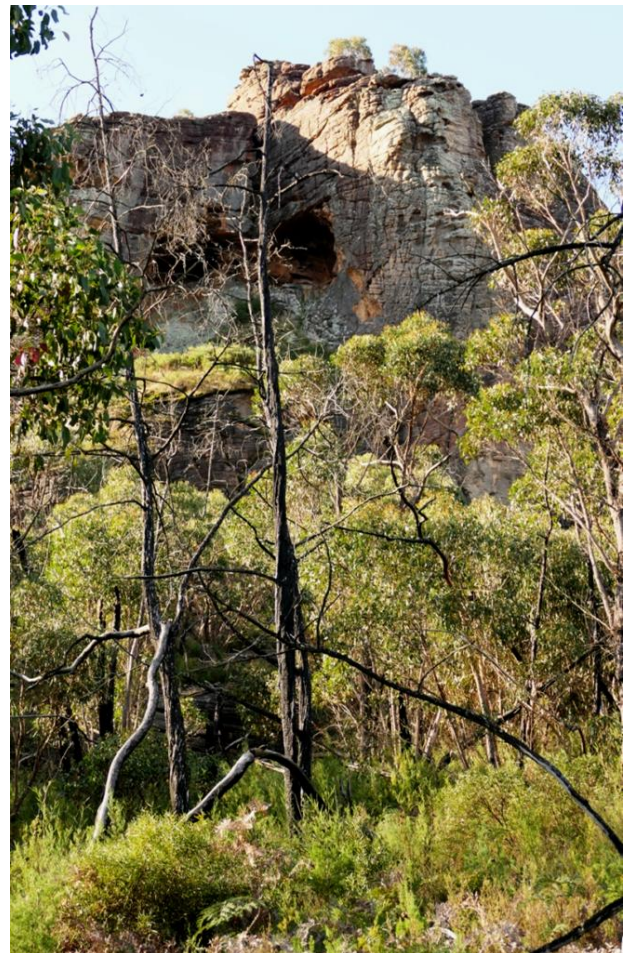
Coprinus sp. DL

HGH Corner is 7 km from Djarabul and our next turn (Muirfoot Tk) is 5.5 km to the south off the Rocklands Tk. We were concerned that the rain may have caused a closure of the Muirfoot Tk, or made it unsafe to drive on, but it was in reasonably good condition for 4WD vehicles with clearance to cope with the mounds across the track. That is, at least as far as our stop 4 km along the track – on a preliminary visit we found great washouts on the road beyond the Mt Byron walk track.

We parked off the track on a firebreak [gps 37-09-15.2/142-04-12.9] and walked the 0.4 km upslope on an eroded track to the Burrunj Range.



Walk from Muirfoot Tk to Wild Man Cave PL



HFNC had visited this site in April 1998 but I do not think the access was the same – my memory is that after the first 300 m we approached the range from around the eastern flank.

The later stage was quite steep, particularly the scramble over a large, sloping wet rock. We used a rope at that point to assist me and some others of the group.

A short, steep ascent up the rocky slope led to a rocky outcrop with the Wildman Cave near the eastern end, at the base of the cliff.



Path to the mid level and Wildman Cave PL



Up over the slippery rock PL

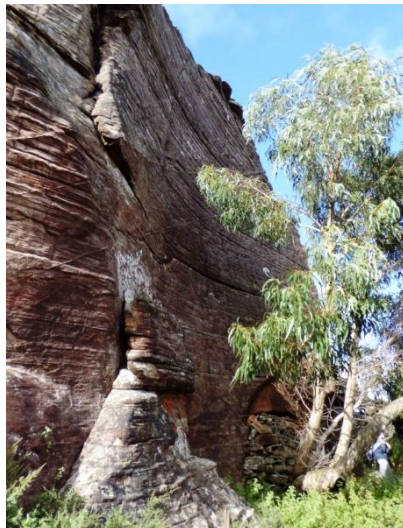


Cliff at Wildman Cave DL

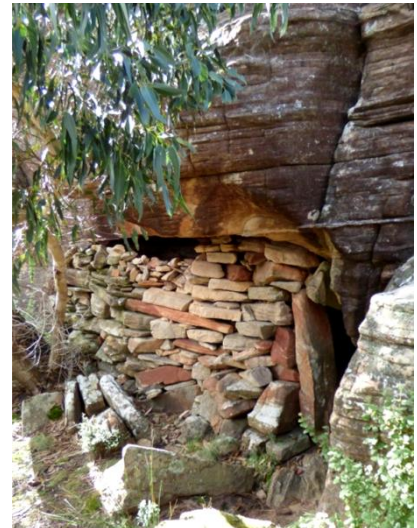
The Wild Man Cave entrance was much as we remembered, with stones blocking most of the entrance. A small cave, about 5 m x 5 m and 2 m height provides the accommodation. A fireplace is near the doorway and below a small cleft in the rock above – a convenient chimney to remove smoke.



Mid-level cliff Nth end DL



Approach to Wildman Cave DL



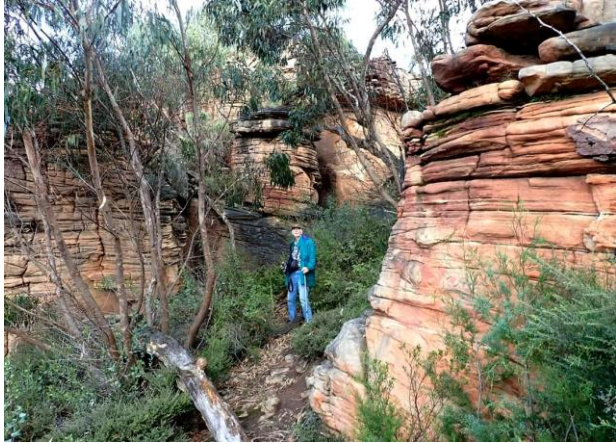
Wildman Cave DL

One can stand on the top of this small cliff and survey the Billawin Range to the east, Rocklands Reservoir to the south and Burrunj Range to the north. The Glenelg River begins in the heart of Gariwerd and flows out around the northern end of the Billawin Range.

We had a brief exploration of an ad hoc path along the mid-slope of the range but turned back after 150 m or so when the track deteriorated. There is (or was) a walk trail that runs north along the base of the range to the **Mudadgadjiin Picnic Area**.



The cave in 1998 (left – with Dave Munro, John & Glenys Cayley) and in 2023 (right)



Sandstone stacks near Wildman Cave PL



View to the lookout rocks PL



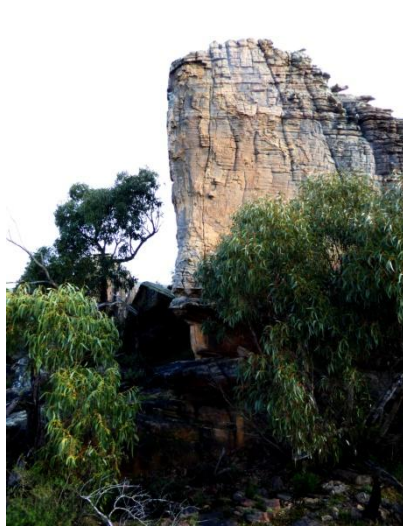
View to Billawin Range DL



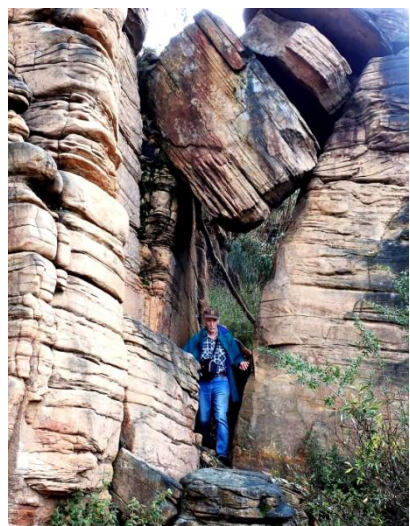
View north along Burrenj Range DL



Stack at Wildman Cave DL



Higher stack on the range DL



Fallen sandstone blocks PL



Doug, Pam, Peter & Diane on Burrunj lookout



Lunch with Jenni, Mervyn & Sara on Muirfoot Tk DL

Vegetation near the cliffs included *Correa aemula* (Hairy Correa) and *Goodenia ovata* (Hop Goodenia). The trees in this area include *Eucalyptus baxteri* (Brown Stringybark), Oyster Bay Pine and *E. goniocalyx* var. *goniocalyx* (Bundy, apparently a different subsp. to that in Gariwerd). Bundy has 5-7 buds/cluster, sessile cup-shaped capsules about 5-8 mm wide, with 2 ridges, and slightly flattened peduncles. The fine, greyish bark extends up the whole trunk

Peppermint eucalypts have been recorded in Burrunj but no trees seen here were *E. falciformis* (Western Peppermint), which has 11 or more buds per cluster and a triangular-shaped capsule.



Bundy buds and capsules



Rock Wattle

Along the track to the range were flowering Silver Banksia, *Banksia ornata* (Desert Banksia), *Epacris impressa* (Common Heath, in pink and white flowers), *Hibbertia fasciculata* (Bundled Guinea-flower), *Leucopogon* species (Beard-heaths), *Correa reflexa* (Common Correa), *Acacia rupicola* (Rock Wattle) and *A. verticilata* (Prickly Moses).



Common Heath DL



Desert Banksia DL



Pink Beard-heath DL

There were shrubs of *Micromyrtus ciliata* (Heath Myrtle), *Calytrix tetragona* (Fringed Heath-myrtle) and *Pultenaea scabra* (Rough Bush-pea), *Bursaria spinosa* (Sweet Bursaria) and *Conospermum mitchellii* (Victorian Smokebush) but too soon for flowers. An inspection 2 weeks earlier of the track beyond Mt Byron trail revealed several *Pultenaea patellifolia* (Mt Byron Bush-pea) in bud – that species has tiny (2 mm) phyllodes and most beautiful flowers. October might be the time to visit

Orchids were not plentiful – leaves of what may have been *Leporella fimbriata* (Fringed Hare-orchid) were present as were leaves of *Acianthus pusillus* (Small Mosquito-orchid, reddish under-leaf).

Lunch was had when we all met back at the vehicles. Jenni and Mervyn had foregone the climb up to the Wildman Cave and had looked around the base of the range.

At around 2.30 pm rain looked imminent and we packed up to depart. Some took the Rockland Tk through to Balmoral and then Hamilton, while the rest returned to Hamilton via Djarabul. A couple of light rain showers were received as we neared Hamilton. Once again this year we had enjoyed an outing despite the prognosis of bad weather.

Birds

Birds were not very conspicuous on this trip. We saw Australasian Darter, Australian Magpie, Crimson Rosella, Laughing Kookaburra, Little Pied Cormorant, Little Raven, Long-billed Corella, Nankeen Night-heron and Sulphur-crested Cockatoo at Djarabul.

In Burrunj we saw Crescent Honeyeater, Crimson Rosella, Emu, Grey Currawong, New Holland Honeyeater, Pied Currawong, Red Wattlebird, Red-rumped Parrot, Scarlet Robin and White-eared Honeyeater.

Flora list (f denotes flowering):

Acacia rupicola (Rock Wattle) f
Acacia verniciflua (Varnish Wattle)
Acacia verticilata (Prickly Moses) f
Acianthus pusillus (Small Mosquito Orchid)
Allocasuarina luehmanni (Buloke)
Banksia marginata (Silver Banksia) f
Banksia ornata (Desert Banksia) f
Brachyloma ericoides (Brush Heath) f
Bursaria spinosa (Sweet Bursaria)
Callitris rhomboidea (Oyster Bay Pine)
Calytrix tetragona (Fringed Heath-myrtle)
Conospermum mitchellii (Victorian Smoke-bush)
Correa aemula (Hairy Correa)
Correa reflexa (Common Correa) f
Epacris impressa (Common Heath) f
Eucalyptus baxteri (Brown Stringybark)
Eucalyptus camaldulensis (River Red-gum)
Eucalyptus goniocalyx var. *goniocalyx* (Bundy)
Leptospermum myrsinoides (Heath Tea Tree)
Eucalyptus leucoxylon (Yellow Gum) f
Eucalyptus melliodora (Yellow Box) f
Goodenia ovata (Hop Goodenia)
Hibbertia fasciculata (Bundled Guinea-flower) f
Isopogon ceratophyllus (Horny Conebush)
Leucopogon ericoides (Pink Beard-heath) f
Micromyrtus ciliata (Heath Myrtle)
Pultenaea scabra (Rough Bush-pea)
Stenanthera conostephioides (Emu Heath) f
Stenanthera pinifolium (Pine Heath) f
Styphelia humifusa (Cranberry Heath) f
Xanthorrhoea minor (Small grass-tree)