



Newsletter

Australasian Systematic Botany Society

No. 203 December 2025



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From the President

Jennifer Tate, Massey University

I am very excited to be writing my first ASBS President report as we head into the summer holidays. At the outset, I want to thank outgoing President Katharina Nargar for her leadership during the last three years and for her service on Council prior to taking up the President role. I'm humbled and honoured to have been nominated for the role of President and I look forward to working with everyone on Council.

For those who don't know me, perhaps a short introduction is in order. I am an Associate Professor of Plant Systematics and Evolution at Massey University in Palmerston North, New Zealand. My research interests are in the systematics of Malvaceae and polyploid evolution (explored in various groups). I previously served on Council as a Council member and then as Secretary for three years. I have been a member of the Research Committee for the last several years (though I will step away from that role while on Council). In 2014, we held the ASBS conference in Palmerston North,

which was a great time for those who were able to attend.

This newsletter issue is full to the brim with content from the recent ASBS conference, including the AGM minutes. Congratulations to the winners of the student talk awards, Rinchen Yangzom, Thomas Carter, Robb Eastman-Densem and Ryan O'Donnell

Although we do not have a face-to-face conference planned for 2026, we will have an opportunity to get together online to present research. Many professional societies are now discussing the 'need' to have annual face-to-face meetings in light of ongoing financial pressures and environmental concerns. We do need to continue to connect and share our research, especially for our students who are doing such cool things these days!

All the best for the holidays and New Year!

From the Editor

Helen Kennedy

I hope everyone who attended the recent ASBS conference—whether in person or online—found it as enjoyable and productive as I did. If you weren't able to make it this time, don't worry, issue 203 includes a series of conference reports to bring you up to speed. My sincere thanks to all the authors I "tapped on the shoulder"—you've all done a superb job.

One of the advantages of moving the newsletter entirely online a few issues ago has been the ability to include many more photographs, and this issue is particularly visually rich. I am grateful especially to Tareg Shalloom, Thomas Mesaglio and Tim Hammer for their wonderful images. The timing is perfect, too, as the conference was full to the brim with creative, AI-assisted memorabilia and motifs—such as the "Little Miss *Melichrus*" mug the organisers made for me, which I love!



Australasian Systematic Botany Conference 2025

Armidale, New South Wales Conference Report

Jeremy Wyman (University of Melbourne), Patrick Hannah (CSIRO publishing) and Emily Hoskin (University of Adelaide)

The official theme of the 2025 ASBS Conference—*Next Generation Botany*—was woven throughout the entire program. The use of AI, discussions on emerging technologies and the future stewardship of herbaria, as well as the prominence of student-led presentations collectively created a strong sense of momentum and forward thinking. We commend the conference organisers and delegates for embracing these ideas and for their enthusiastic support of early career researchers.

If there was an unofficial theme, it was surely Artificial Intelligence. The organisers—particularly Dr Andrew Thornhill—deployed ChatGPT with admirable creativity and humour. At every opportunity another bespoke, AI-generated logo or label appeared: the Wal Whalley Lager served at the welcome drinks, the *Mr Men*-themed mugs gifted to keynote speakers and other contributors (see; [From the Editor](#)), and even the botanical-themed quiz at the conference dinner. It seemed that no corner of the program escaped digital embellishment.

Conference highlights were plentiful: a surprise guest appearance by Costa Georgiadis elevated the welcome drinks (Figure 1); Maestro Ryan O'Donnell's show-stopping musical performance at the conference dinner; a perfect sunny day spent in the rainforest with colleagues and friends for the fieldtrip (see; [Field Trip Report](#)). Yet for many delegates, the standout was the official launch of the new ASBS Palaeobotany Chapter. Its debut brought a spark of excitement, inspiration and opportunity that seemed to brighten the entire conference.

Sunday 2 November; Workshop and Welcome Drinks

Before the conference formally commenced on Monday, a workshop—*Wiki for Botanists*—was held on Sunday, led by Siobhan Leachman and Heidi Meudt and held at the Armidale City Bowling Club. For participants, it proved both practical and empowering. Attendees were introduced to the fundamentals of contributing as Wikimedians: editing Wikipedia pages, uploading images to



Figure 1. Left; Prof. Emerit. Wal Whalley showing *Grasses of New South Wales* to Gardening Australia host Costa Georgiadis. Right; Wal enjoying his very own Kangaroo grass lager.

Wikimedia Commons, and engaging with Wikidata. The workshop catered equally well to first-time editors and to those with prior experience. For a more detailed account, see [Ben Anderson's workshop report](#).

Conference registration and the welcome mixer followed that evening at a beloved Armidale institution, The Welder's Dog Brewery. The relaxed atmosphere offered an ideal opportunity for delegates to reconnect, meet new colleagues, and ease into the week ahead. Spirits lifted further with the unveiling of a beer brewed especially for the conference and named in honour of Emeritus Professor Ralph Wal Whalley. A renowned Poaceae expert and co-author of *Grasses of New South Wales*, Wal's achievements were celebrated with a brew incorporating kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*). Those taken with the beer—and there were many—could even purchase growlers to take home.

Whether Costa Georgiadis secured one remains unconfirmed, but he was certainly impressed by the imposing volume that is *Grasses of N.S.W.* (Figure 1).

His unexpected appearance set the tone for what would become a week full of surprises devised by the ever-inventive conference organisers.

Monday 3 November; Welcome rockhounds!

The main proceedings of the conference were held in the JP Belshaw Lecture Theatre on the University of New England campus in Armidale. The official program was opened by The Vice-Chancellor of UNE, Professor Chris Moran with an acknowledgement of country and an impressively unscripted opening address. In it, he stressed the importance of botany to UNE since its inception and urged delegates to consider the growing threat that artificial intelligence—when wielded irresponsibly by powerful corporate interests—poses to higher education in Australia and around the world.

The first keynote speaker was Dr Hervé Sauquet, Head of Plant Discovery and Evolution Research and Principal Research Scientist at the National Herbarium of NSW, Botanic Gardens of Sydney. In his talk, titled *Angiosperm macroevolution: embracing the unknown (and the unknowable)* Dr Sauquet



Figure 2. Palaeobotanical and Palynological researchers at the ASBS Conference, from L–R: Dr Miriam Slodownik (Trinity College, Ireland); Dr Maria Paulsen, Monash University); Dr Raymond Carpenter (Queensland Museum); Dr Vera Korasidis (University of Melbourne); Dr Bianca Dickson (University of Melbourne); Dr Anne-Marie Tosolini (University of Melbourne); Professor David Cantrill (Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria); Thomas Carter, PhD student (University of New England); Professor Greg Jordan (University of Tasmania); Dr Andrew Thornhill (University of New England); Jeremy Wyman, PhD Student (The University of Melbourne); Dr Andrew Rozefelds (Queensland Museum).

introduced a new theme to the conference, one which resonated strongly with many in attendance—uncertainty. Failure and uncertainty are two fundamental aspects of an academic's life and career, regardless of career stage. As the conference continued and the two themes of *next generation* and *uncertainty* recurred together repeatedly, a common ground was established between ECRs and those further along their career path. No matter what stage of career, we have all had to pivot, reapply, and recover from rejection by institutions, grants, fellowships, conferences, journals, and many more. As an ECR, these blows can feel significant, even career-ending, but hearing stories shared from people who have persevered through the hard times and as a result had transformative experiences was inspiring. Rejection is not a full stop. It is a constructive edit, a chance to change directions—often for the better.



Figure 3. ASBS Palaeobotany and Palynology Chapter welcome cake

Session one focused on phylogenomics, with presentations from Australia and New Zealand spanning a wide diversity of plant families. Dr Dan Murphy opened the session with a journey back to the last ASBS conference held in Armidale, reflecting

on how far the field has progressed and which technological predictions made in 2009 have since come to fruition (go AVH!). The session ended with a beautiful talk from Dr Heidi Meudt, who generously shared how personal and academic life cannot be separated. Heidi highlighted how these seemingly different lives intersect and emphasised the importance of communities like the ASBS in supporting researchers, especially in times of profound struggle.

Two back-to-back palaeobotany sessions consumed much of the rest of the day. The palaeobotany keynote lectures were provided by Dr Andrew Rozefelds and Dr Vera Korasidis who both focused on advances in Australian palaeobotany and future directions for the field. Together they demonstrated that Australian palaeobotany, as a whole, cannot be restricted to a single time period, group of plants, or sedimentary system, which was reinforced by the diversity of talks in the sessions. There was one unifying theme among all these talks: unraveling the flora in the Modern requires an intimate understanding of the taphoflora and palaeoenvironment of the past 50 million years. Similarly, answering where palaeobotany, a fundamentally retrospective field, fits into the theme of “Next Generation of Botany” and the Future, more broadly, requires an understanding of where palaeobotany sits in the Present. As palaeobotanists, we are always the plant person in a group of geologists or the rockhound in a group of botanists. The truth is that, even in a crowd of palaeontologists, a palaeobotanist is the “odd person out.” Deciding where to present your work often involves deciding between a geology and a botany conference, and, even then, there are hardly ever palaeobotany sessions at those conferences where we do tend to aggregate. As universities around the world replace positions previously held by palaeobotanists or, otherwise, eliminate palaeontological faculty positions entirely, there is a growing sense that the future for palaeobotany and palynology is built on shifting sands. The new Palaeobotany and Palynology Chapter of ASBS is a foothold in these uncertain times (Figure 2).

Between palaeobotany sessions, a cake was cut and shared to mark the official opening of the Chapter. The cake was emblazoned with the text, “A New Palaeo Chapter Blooms” (Figure 3). Dr Anne-Marie Tosolini ceremonially sliced in and, in so doing, helped establish a future for palaeobotany in Australia. It is not lost on me that I (Jeremy Wyman) was the only student speaker in the palaeo session, and one of two student talks concerning fossil plants across the whole conference (shout-out to Tom Carter who won Best Student Speed Talk for his work on Miocene Myrtaceae). Much of the research currently being conducted on the evolutionary history of Australian plants is by researchers who are not currently in Australia, and many of the graduates who get their PhD in Australia are not staying here. ASBS has welcomed us further into their thriving community and reserved a seat at the botany table for their resident rockhounds. Establishing this Chapter is making a place both literally and metaphorically for Australian palaeobotanists current and future.

At the end of a day filled to the brim with fascinating talks, Dr Nunzio Knerr donned his [Pannotator](#) and led a procession to the pub. The Great Hops Brewery hosted both the SECR catch-up and the Palaeo Chapter welcome dinner (Figure 4). The repurposed airplane hangar, set in the middle of agricultural fields, made for an excellent venue for another enjoyable evening of networking.

Tuesday 4 November; What would Nancy think?

Tuesday’s sessions continued the theme of resilience, with morning keynote talks by Karen Wilson (2024 N.T. Burbidge Medal recipient) and Dr Francis Nge, both from the National Herbarium of NSW, Botanic Gardens of Sydney. Both speakers highlighted the transformative potential of systematics: the barriers it can dismantle and the careers it can shape. What made the talks particularly compelling was the contrast in perspectives across the career spectrum.

Karen’s reflections underscored how the foundations of systematics, laid decades ago, through curiosity and persistence, continue to shape the discipline ([see article](#)). Francis’s presentation showcased the cutting-edge, high-throughput analyses now capable of addressing increasingly specific questions,



Figure 4. The SECR catch-up and the Palaeo Chapter welcome dinner at The Great Hops Brewery, Armidale.

advances that would not exist without the groundwork established by earlier generations ([see article](#)). Together, their talks illustrated how systematics has evolved over the past 50 years, expanding with new technologies while remaining rooted in the pioneering spirit of its founders.

Following the morning presentations, a phylogenomics session, building on Francis’s earlier talk, showcased the intensive research currently being undertaken by society members in Australia and abroad.

Following the morning presentations, a phylogenomics session, building on Francis’ earlier talk, showcased the intensive research currently being undertaken by student members of the Society. The afternoon session continued to highlight some of the Society’s outstanding Early Career Researchers and students, a moment well worth reflection. The strength of any society is often measured by the calibre of its emerging scholars, the support extended to them, and the warmth with which they are welcomed by more established members of the

community. It was commendable to see the newer academics' work engaged with so constructively. Many familiar voices from across the Society offered thoughtful questions and feedback, ensuring that these presentations became more than just a showcase, rather, they were genuine opportunities for dialogue. For many of the student speakers, such sessions mark their first experience of academic discussion beyond their own lab groups. To be met with encouragement and constructive critique is

members as they continue to forge their own academic paths.

The closing session of the day delivered a suite of highly anticipated project and infrastructure updates from across Australia (including renewed investment in KeyBase—hurrah!), spanning everything from the 'wikifying' of systematic botany to new initiatives led by partners such as Taxonomy Australia. This session offered members a chance to appreciate the breadth of work being undertaken, not only the core

academic research, but also the vital contributions of herbaria and service providers who make such research possible. More than anything, the session was a reminder that researchers wear many hats in their professional lives, and nowhere is this more evident than within ASBS. The passion of its members extends beyond producing excellent science: they are committed to ensuring that their work is accessible to the public, relevant to policy, and available to collaborators across State lines. This collective drive reflects the true strength of ASBS. It is not simply a professional society, but a community united by a shared mission and sustained by passion, working to secure lasting impact for the field.

Day two of the conference culminated in the Conference Dinner at the New England Regional Art Museum (NERAM). Dining among such high-calibre artworks was a memorable experience—one that future conferences will struggle to match. After dinner, the evening's festivities began, hosted by the Society's

favourite comedic duo Andrew Thornhill and Brendan Lepschi. Although *The Presidents* couldn't reunite this year (see [Biosystematics 2023 Conference Report](#)), Ryan O'Donnell delivered an unforgettable performance of an original N.C.W. Beadle Herbarium themed Rock Opera written by Andrew Thornhill. Some of us are still catching ourselves idly singing "JJB...JJB...JJB...JJB" to the tune of *Let it Be* by The Beatles. The Rock Opera served as



Figure 5. One round of the ASBS conference dinner quiz involved identifying your colleagues based on AI generated impressions of them as Muppets. Here Bronwyn Collins is depicted as a muppet photographing a *Lechenaultia*.

invaluable for their growth as academics. Not only were student talks engaged with, but their talks were placed on equal footing with those from more established researchers. By sharing the Speed Talk session with post docs and lecturers, student speakers were welcomed into the community as equal contributors. The collective engagement of the Society and cohesive integration of Early Career Researchers into the community was excellent, and one hopes it will fuel the enthusiasm of our SECR

one of several rounds of botanically themed, AI augmented trivia. Arguably, the second most memorable round was that in which contestants needed to identify an unknown plant from an AI generated artistic impression. Though the round in which we had to recognise some of our colleagues based on an AI generated impression of them— in the style of a [Muppet](#)— was also enjoyable (Figure 5). After all the fiercely contested rounds played out, a team mostly composed of palaeobotanists was declared the winner.

Wednesday 5 November; A dynamic duo applauded

The final day of the conference began with the announcement of the 2025 Nancy T. Burbidge Medal recipients—two outstanding honourees: Dr Ian Telford and Prof. Emerit. Jeremy Bruhl (Figure 6). Their profound impact on Australian taxonomy, dedication to mentoring students, and significant contributions to the N.C.W. Beadle Herbarium were celebrated with this prestigious award. Ian and Jeremy delivered their Nancy T. Burbidge address together, delighting the audience as they recounted the journeys of their careers, culminating in their collaboration at the University of New England's N.C.W. Beadle Herbarium.

The final keynote speaker of the conference, Dr Helen Kennedy from the Australian National Herbarium and a UNE alumnus, described her vision for the future of herbaria and systematics in Australia, one which exemplifies stewardship and prioritises community. To build her talk, Helen had asked her fellow SECRs about their experiences in academia and what they would like to share, which was truly inspiring and once again demonstrated the camaraderie of this Society and field.

In session 7, audiences enjoyed talks on non-flowering plants and fungi, including algae, cycads, and three different families of fungi. This session further showcased the diversity of research within our society, broadening horizons as we learned about advances in the systematics of organismal groups many of us are less well-versed in.

Everyone sat up a little straighter in their chairs to learn about cutting edge scientific methods in Session 8. Russell Barrett

introduced a novel project to construct a N.S.W. Plant Tree of Life and Benjamin Anderson showed how he is using Angiosperms353 based target capture to address conservation questions. Shawn Laffan piqued some interest amongst those dealing with spatial patterns of biodiversity with his talk on [Biodiverse](#).

Session 9 got stuck into some *proper* alpha taxonomy, focusing on every taxonomist's favorite question — what are the species? Brendan Lepschi offered a

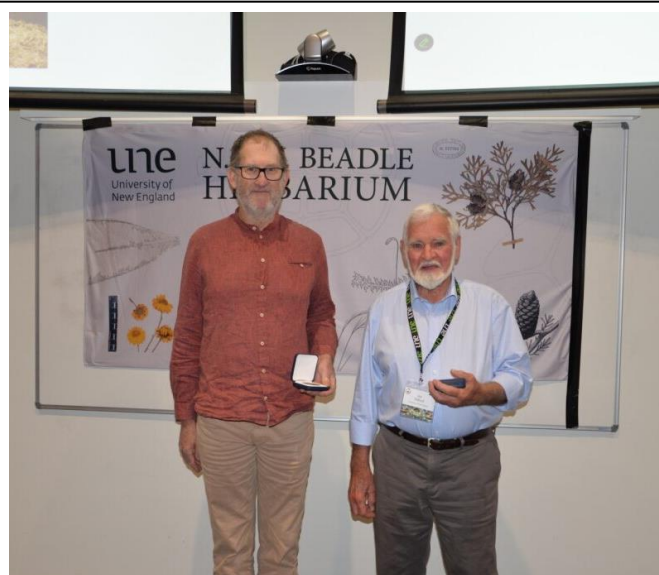


Figure 6. Prof. Emerit. Jeremy Bruhl and Dr Ian Telford are jointly awarded the 2025 Nancy T. Burbidge Medal.



Figure 7. Brendan Lepschi asking the hard-hitting questions.

candid reflection on our success in answering this question (see Figure 7). Longstanding ASBS member John Clarkson gave the last talk of the conference, joking that a “Next Generation Botany” conference finishing with a rather experienced and in fact retired botanist felt a little ironic. We might argue otherwise—his presentation felt like a passing of the torch. While the conference highlighted SECRs, new

Conclusion

The 2025 ASBS Conference in Armidale was a vibrant celebration of both the present and future of Australian botany. With its official theme of *Next Generation Botany*, the program skilfully highlighted emerging technologies, cutting-edge research, and the achievements of Early Career Researchers, while



Figure 8. Katharina Nargar (left) presents the student talks awards to (L–R): Rinchen Yangzom, Thomas Carter, Ryan O'Donnell, Robb Eastman-Densem.

methods, and frontiers in botany, it also reminded us of those who paved the way for these innovations.

The conference was officially concluded on a high note with several prizes awarded for best students' talks (Figure 8): the Bob Anderson award— Rinchen Yangzom; the best speed talk by a student— Thomas Carter; the Runner Up best student talk— Robb Eastman-Densem; the Pauline Ladiges Prize for the best student talk— Ryan O'Donnell. Congratulations!

At the ASBS Annual General Meeting that afternoon, outgoing President Dr Katharina Nargar was warmly thanked for her dedicated service and impactful term, and Associate Professor Jen Tate was announced as the new President.

also acknowledging the foundational work of established scientists. From inspiring keynote addresses and a hands-on workshop to the launch of the new Palaeobotany Chapter and memorable social events, the conference offered opportunities for learning, collaboration, and community-building.

For all of us this was our first ASBS conference, and for some our first ever academic conference. We all had a fantastic experience, we felt welcome and saw firsthand why ASBS members feel at home amongst their peers. We look forward to many more years of engagement with the ASBS, growing our involvement in the community. A huge thank you to the conference organisers Andrew Thornhill, Kelly Shepherd and Rose Andrew as well as to the ASBS council. You really did bring to life a vibrant, inspiring and uniting conference.

Botanising the Wikiverse

Benjamin Anderson, Western Australian Herbarium

I was privileged to attend the recent ASBS conference in Armidale N.S.W., and as part of that I arrived a day early for the [Wiki for Botanists Workshop](#) put on by Heidi Meudt and Siobhan Leachman, aka [Stitchbird2](#) and [Ambrosia10](#). The focus of the workshop was introducing botanists to editing (botanical) information in the Wikiverse to improve our scientific outreach and communication to the public. Wikipedia is often the first point of reference when searching for your study organism, and as Heidi shared from personal experience, having up to date information and a presence on Wikipedia can better inform people and enable them to potentially contact an expert. The workshop led participants through practical examples editing three Wiki projects ([Wikipedia](#), [Wikimedia Commons](#), and [Wikidata](#)) to illustrate how the projects are connected and a workflow for mobilising and communicating botanical knowledge. Despite a bit of a rough start (Heidi and Siobhan were delayed by stormy weather and arrived mid-morning), the workshop went really well; the organisers were able to cover all the topics they had hoped to and the participants had a great time (see [photo](#)).

The overarching theme for the Wiki sites is that they provide openly available, notable, referenced information. Heidi and Siobhan repeatedly emphasised the importance of copyright issues for uploading content (in the public domain in the USA *and* in the country in which you work *and* in the country in which the work was created). For images, three [creative commons](#) licenses CC0, CC BY and CC BY-SA are appropriate for Wiki (note how I didn't credit Siobhan for the photo, since she prefers to release her photos under CC0). For notability, we were encouraged to consider whether the content we add to Wikipedia is based on enough independent knowledge (not created by the subject) already generated for that topic (not shared for the first time in the article). For example, it wouldn't make sense for me to upload my insights about *Triodia* if they haven't been published yet, or to create an article about my apartment. Finally, linked to notability, all the information we add needs to be connected to citable, reliable sources. As part of the

workshop, we learned how to link references for content added to each of the projects.

The first of the projects we were introduced to, Wikipedia, presents the well-known face of the Wikiverse and is the more easily accessible place to find information on a topic. The workshop participants were guided through setting up a personal page for their user account, learning about [WikiProjects](#) such as [WikiProject Plants](#) to identify articles in need of editing and content, and finally selecting an article to practice editing from a pre-chosen set. For my practice, I added a citation to the protologue publication for *[Austrostipa elegantissima](#)* on the [Biodiversity Heritage Library](#) (BHL) to support an existing statement of who first described the species and when. Looking at the [edit history](#) of the article now, it seems I did not do that flawlessly (another editor made a minor fix), but that underlines another message Heidi and Siobhan emphasised: be brave and go for it, as there is a community of editors who will correct mistakes and help you improve.

The second project we were exposed to was Wikimedia Commons, the underlying repository for all the accessible pictures and other media used in the Wikiverse. Participants were shown how to upload images to the project, as well as a handy tool called [iNat2Wiki](#) that makes it easy to add images from (appropriately CC licensed) [iNaturalist](#) observations. I decided to look for images from my PhD study genus (*Triodia*) already on Wikimedia Commons and was surprised to see a [figure](#) from one of my open access papers already uploaded! I thought it would be useful to add a representative photo of the species for the article on Wikipedia (*[Triodia scintillans](#)*), but after looking on iNaturalist, I realised there were no available photos(!). Heidi suggested using scanned specimens from e.g. [GBIF](#), which may serve as a placeholder until better images of the living plants are uploaded (still on the to-do list). For practice, I added an [image of the type specimen](#) of *Terminalia eddowesii* previously uploaded to Wikimedia Commons by Siobhan to the associated Wikipedia [article](#) infobox.

The final project we were introduced to was Wikidata, which is the more structured linking of bite-sized pieces of data behind the scenes, and which can be queried by data aggregators and algorithms. One of the features Heidi and Siobhan

emphasised was the database of scholarly articles regularly obtained from sources like [Crossref](#), which could be linked to individual researchers (via [ORCID](#)) to support studies on connectivity and collaboration across research networks. Try it yourself: if you have an ORCID then you probably already have information available on Wikidata (including links to other IDs; e.g. Google Scholar, IPNI, ResearchGate), and with the cool tool [Scholia](#), you can search for yourself and visualise your own research network and outputs. Of course, some of the work we do may not have DOIs or may not be linked to our ORCIDs, which is where Wikidata can be useful in allowing users to correct information and disambiguate themselves or co-authors in records of scholarly articles. Heidi added the caveat that it is important to avoid editing when you have a conflict of interest, so it is preferable for others to update information that relates directly to you. For the workshop, participants were given practice adding scholarly articles (pre-selected) to Wikidata to then use as references in Wikipedia articles. I added a [scholarly article](#)

(Gwenda Davis' revision of *Calotis*) to Wikidata including a link to the [BHL record](#), then I updated the Wikipedia [article for the genus](#) to add the citation supporting the list of species in the genus.

Overall the workshop provided us with a good introduction to Wiki tools and allowed time to practice editing and uploading botanical information. It included a lot of content to absorb, and for many of us I reckon we will need to refer back to the workshop information when next delving into the Wikiverse; thankfully that information is easily [accessible](#). The workshop also underlined to me the scope of how much botanical knowledge is not readily available and how large the task is communicating it in this medium (a bit daunting). Like iNaturalist, editing and adding to the Wikiverse could easily become a productive distraction for many of us, and it remains to be seen how much time I'll find for it. Regardless, I feel better equipped to begin correcting and adding to this online source of freely available knowledge.



Participants and presenters Siobhan Leachman and Heidi Meudt of the ASBS 2025 Conference Wiki for Botanists Workshop in Armidale, Australia. Top (left to right): Lyn Cook, Tim Hammer, Shelomi Doyle, Jessie Prebble, Thomas Carter, Andrew McDougall, Kerri Clarke, and Benjamin Anderson. Bottom (left to right): Siobhan Leachman, Heidi Meudt, Emily Hoskin, Yuqun Du, and Josephine Pryce.

ASBS Conference 2025 Field Trip Report; A Trip Down Waterfall Way

Millicent Oulo, Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney and Thomas Mesaglio, University of New South Wales

After another enjoyable and successful ASBS conference, a horde of almost sixty botanists, mycologists and the botanically-minded descended on three locations east of Armidale, hand lenses and cameras at the ready. We were lucky enough to be greeted with clear skies and warm weather all day long.

First stop was Wollomombi Falls (Figure 1), one of the tallest waterfalls in Australia; although the falls weren't at the height of their glory, it was nonetheless impressive to see water cascading into the gorge for such a long distance.



Figure 1. The spectacular Wollomombi Falls from Main Falls Lookout. Photo: Tim Hammer

Soon enough though, we couldn't resist the allure of so many plants nearby, and dispersed along the Chandler Walking Track to satisfy our botanical cravings. The small, greenish-yellow flowered shrub that dominated the understorey of the grassy eucalypt woodland here surprised a number of people when they learned it was a *Pimelea*, *P. neoanglica*; a far more understated species compared to the showier, white-flowering *Pimelea* species with larger heads that many are used to (Figure 2).



Figure 2. *Pimelea neoanglica*, Thymelaeaceae. Photo: Tim Hammer

A well-camouflaged ghost moth, *Aenetus ligniviren*, was also a big hit, and proof that their butterfly cousins steal the show far too often.



Figure 3. *Aenetus ligniviren*, a hepialid moth. Photo: Thomas Mesaglio

Our second stop was the big one for the day: three full hours in the subtropical rainforest of Dorrigo National Park, walking from the visitor centre down to Crystal Shower Falls. At risk of making enemies with an entire generation of rainforest botanists, rainforest is not my favourite vegetation community: it's gloomy, damp, half of the flowers and fruits are 40 metres up into the canopy, and I can only stare at so many giant, violently green leaves before they all start to blur into each other. And yet, I had a fantastic

time on this walk, thanks to not only to the really interesting species we came across, but also the wonderful company of so many passionate, knowledgeable naturalists.

After a quick briefing on the field guides and the interesting plants to watch out for, we began our walk. We first paused at the skywalk lookout near the park entrance, where the forest canopy stretched majestically before us, and in the distance, we could see the Pacific Ocean. It was a breathtaking start that set the tone for a great ramble.



Figure 4. *Dendrocnide excelsa*. Photo: Millicent Oulo

Depending on interests, it was clear early on that we all moved at different paces. Botanists would stop to take photographs and chat about plants as we walked, while the bryologists and mycologists, who often lagged, were drawn to the fascinating mosses, liverworts and fungi along the trail. This served as a lovely reminder that in the rainforest, even the tiniest organisms deserve a closer look.

The walk was jam-packed with highlights. Bryologists Niels Klazenga and Brent Mishler were in their element (at least the mosses love the damp), and in fact they may have found a new moss for Australia. *Pothos longipes* was everywhere, with many bearing

pocket-sized inflorescences, along with a profusion of epiphytic ferns adorning almost every tree trunk. No-one fell victim to a *Dendrocnide excelsa* (stinging tree), although if anyone had done so, it certainly would have made the trip even more memorable for them (Figure 4).



Figure 5. *Alocasia brisbanensis*. Photo: Timothy Hammer

In the moist soils of the shaded understory, *Alocasia brisbanensis* thrived in filtered sunlight, nearly in full shade. Karen Wilson told us that the plant sap is believed to neutralise the effects of *Dendrocnide excelsa*, and they often grow close to each other. However, she quickly warned us against testing whether this myth is true, as the intense, itchy, burning pain of the stinging tree can sometimes be fatal. I imagined how these two plants might be another excellent example of nature's own remedies.

Calamus muelleri, better known as "Wait-a-While" or "Lawyer Vine," was one of many interesting Australian endemics we happened upon (Figure 6). Its hooked stems seemed to be demanding attention. At this point, Rinchen Yangzom shared that another

Calamus species, *C. tenuis*, is commonly eaten in Bhutan—raw, roasted, or cooked with meat and fish.



Figure 6. *Calamus muelleri*. Photo: Timothy Hammer

One of the superstars of the walk was *Triunia youngiana*, a rainforest Proteaceae with beautiful white flowers, and certainly a species (and genus) that many of us had never seen before (Figure 7). I was so enamoured by this species I spent at least twenty minutes taking photos of a single plant (it was tempting to include all 100 photos in this report).



Figure 7. *Triunia youngiana*. Photo: Thomas Mesaglio

In hot pursuit for drawing interest was *Akania bidwillii*, the only species in its genus and indeed the only species in the family in Australia and with only a single other species in the family worldwide (Figure 8).



Figure 8. *Akania bidwillii*. Photo: Russell Barrett

It was also particularly exciting to see the aerial litter traps of *Marasmius crinis-equi*, especially since they were shown to us by Frances Guard, the very next day after her conference talk on the genus (Figure 9).

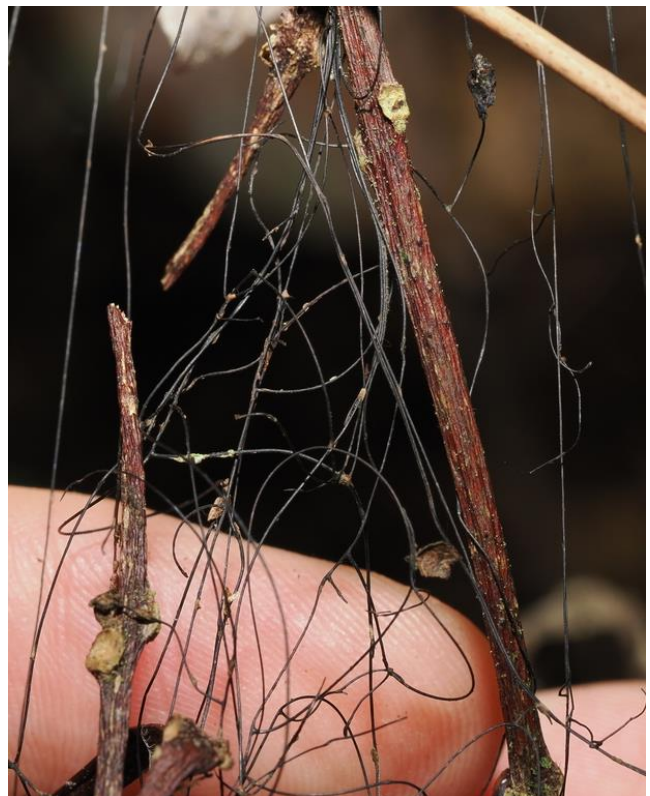


Figure 9. *Marasmius crinis-equi* aerial rhizomorph. Photo: Thomas Mesaglio

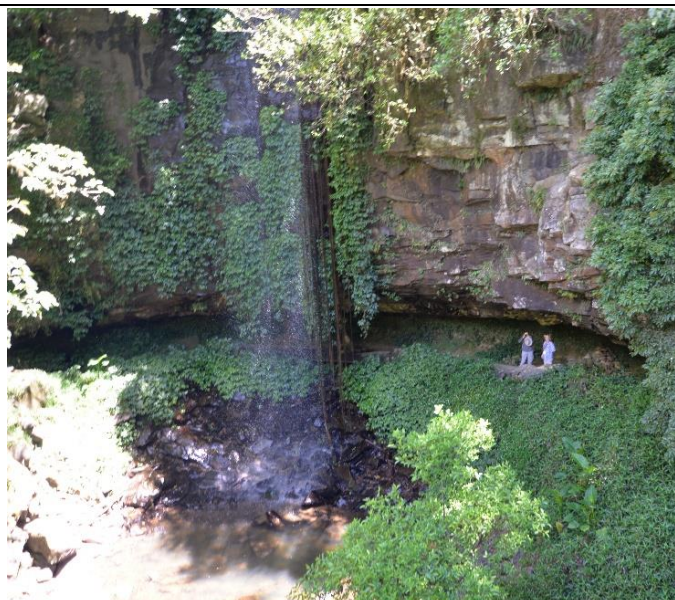


Figure 10. Crystal Shower Falls. Photo: Tareg Shalldoom

The zenith of the walk was the breathtaking Crystal Shower Falls, where it felt magical to walk behind the cascading waters (Figure 10). On the way back, we spotted a skink (*Bellatorias major*) soaking up the limited rays that reached the forest floor (Figure 11).



Figure 11. *Bellatorias major*. Photo by Millicent Oulo

The gift shop at the end of the walk was almost as popular as the plants; the ice cream freezer certainly would have needed restocking after 60 hungry botanists passed through.

Our third and final stop was Ebor Falls, completing the hat-trick of waterfalls for the day (Figure 12).



Figure 12. Jeremy Bruhl (L) and Nunzio Knerr at Ebor Falls. Photo: Tareg Shalldoom

The eucalypt woodland here was severely burned during the 2019/2020 Black Summer bushfires, so it was nice to see things rebounding. In addition to interesting plant species along the cliff-top, including *Discaria pubescens*, *Lomatia fraseri*, and *Olearia alpicola*, we were fascinated by some very impressive eucalypt galls formed by a scale insect, *Apiomorpha conica* (Figure 13). It turned out we were actually among gall royalty, as both Andrew Thornhill and Dan Murphy revealed that they have galling species named after them: the fly species *Fergusonina thornhillii* and the fungal species *Uromycladium murphyi*.



Figure 13. Female gall of *Apiomorpha conica*. Photo: Thomas Mesaglio

The field trip was a big hit, we are very grateful to the organisers for putting together a great day out. We can't wait for the next one.

ASBS 2025 post-conference survey

Kelly Shepherd, Western Australian Herbarium

Historically, conferences held in regional areas tend to attract fewer registrants, but they are often more intimate, offering increased opportunities to mingle and connect. Ultimately, the ASBS 2025 conference at UNE in Armidale was well attended, with 83 delegates participating in person (including a few single-day registrants) and an additional 24 joining online. This resulted in a packed program featuring 53 talks, three keynotes, and two Burbidge Medal presentations. A big thank you to all presenters and, most importantly, to Tareg Shaldoom, who remained unflappable while providing exceptional IT support to ensure all presentations were ready — even when handed slides at the very last minute.

Thanks to the flexibility of our upgraded ASBS website, we were able to create a dedicated 2025 [Conference](#) subpage without the need for an external standalone conference website, as was required in previous years. This allowed for online registration and abstract submission, as well as the seamless integration of a secure online ticketing payment system using the [Humanitix](#) platform. This platform was easy to use, and specific tickets could be created for different events. The ability to also adjust pricing and availability as needed ensured we could adapt to include unexpected events as circumstances changed, such as the late addition of a function to welcome the new ASBS Palaeobotany and Palynology Chapter at the Great Hops Brewery on Monday evening. Most ticket sales were processed through Humanitix, although a handful of people still opted to pay via an invoice. While this represents more work for the Treasurer to process, we believe it is important to provide payment flexibility for our members.

Overall, we received great feedback about the conference through word of mouth and email, but I felt it would also be helpful to conduct a post-conference survey to identify specific areas for improvement and assist with planning future events. An email was sent to all attendees with a link to a Google form survey and 37 people responded (30 members, 10 of which were students or ECRs; 7 non-members). Overall, 73% of respondents attended in person and 27% were online.

In summary, the delegates really enjoyed the conference both online and in person. There were positive comments about the variety of talks, the keynote speakers and the quality of the online streaming. Having talks of variable lengths was also generally well received. A good suggestion was to arrange the students' talks on the first day, so senior researchers could know more about their work early and help them to connect with others. The respondents felt the conference was good value for money, there were ample opportunities for networking, and they all valued the social program and field trip.

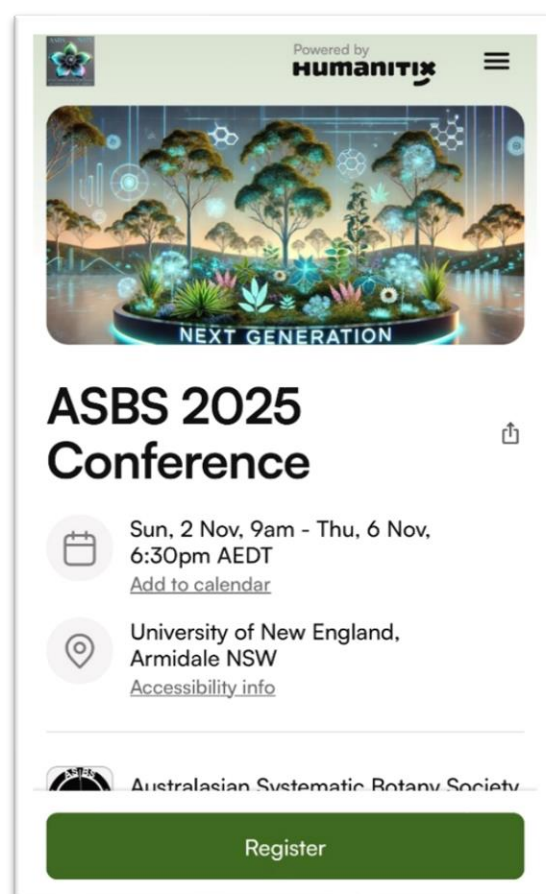
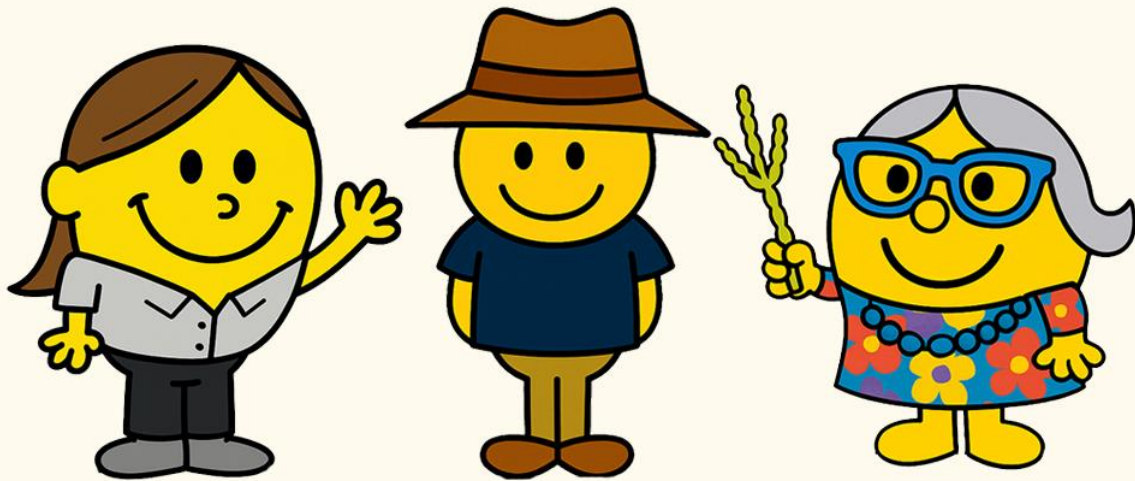


Figure 1. Humanitix online ticketing system.

Things that could be improved were the quality of the sound, as some found it difficult to hear all speakers and suggested we explore the option of providing live closed captioning for people with hearing difficulties. Some commented the catering space was a bit

2025 ASBS CONFERENCE ORGANISERS



Conference organisers (left to right) Rose Andrew, Andrew Thornhill and Kelly Shepherd depicted as AI generated Mr. Men and Little Miss characters.

cramped and overwhelming due to the noise. Catering is always challenging to manage due to layout constraints of the venue. Things to consider in the future include trying to separate the drinks area from the food and to either have more than one food station or to be able to access the food tables from both sides to minimise long lines. Having access to an outdoor area is also helpful so people can eat outside. One survey respondent also commented that all social events were located at a pub or related to alcohol. While two social events were held at local breweries (these were venues that could handle large numbers of people), the conference dinner was located at the New England Regional Art Museum (NERAM) (although alcohol was available) and of course the field trip was alcohol-free. However, it is worthwhile reflecting that there is an assumption that alcoholic drinks should be available at most social functions, and future organisers may want to consider offering more alcohol-free events.

Having a packed program also limited the time for discussions and questions. Other ideas were to hold the AGM at an earlier time when attendees weren't so fatigued, and to schedule the field trip earlier, so people get to know each other. Conversely, we also had feedback that it was good to have the trip following the conference to cap off a great week

when people had already got to know each other a little bit before spending the day together.

The ASBS conference continues to be seen as a critically important for our community. However, it takes a lot of time and resources to host such an event, and the work usually falls to very few people within an institution making the workload significant. This can be mitigated somewhat if jobs can be delegated externally, as was the case with this conference. While I wasn't there in person, I was able to support both Andrew Thornhill and Rose Andrew remotely and could help with the 'online' work. I would encourage people who may not be able to host a conference but would like to be involved to reach out to future organisers and offer your assistance. By creating the website conference subpage with an integrated ticketing system there is now a framework available that will also hopefully relieve some of this burden. I really enjoyed helping to organise this conference. It was a pleasure working with Andrew, Rose, and their fabulous students, and receiving positive feedback such as: "One of the most enjoyable ASBS conferences I've ever attended. The organisers did a superb job. Thank you!" makes all the hard work worthwhile. Looking forward to seeing you all at our next gathering.

What would Nancy think?



Karen L. Wilson
Nancy Burbidge Address
4 November 2025



I'd like to acknowledge our presence today on Anaiwan country, which is not far from the Kamilaroi country where I spent my childhood.

I have had a long association with the Australasian Systematic Botany Society (ASBS), including being its second Secretary. In fact, I was in office when, in 1978, Council decided to set up the Nancy Burbidge Address. Now I feel honoured to be the recipient of the Nancy Burbidge Medal for 2024.

Dr Nancy Burbidge's illustrious career ended nearly 50 years ago. Coincidentally, that was about when my career began, so this is a good opportunity to reflect on changes to systematic botany over that period. There are some aspects of the current systematic botany scene that Nancy's history suggests she might have found disappointing if she were alive today, but she would have welcomed the revolution wrought by advances in molecular and information and communications technologies. Nancy was a leading figure in Australian botany, both in her own areas of research and as an advocate for change. She was among those whose advocacy led to the creation of bodies that we take for granted now, notably the Australian (now Australasian) Systematic Botany Society, the Australian Biological Resources Study (ABRS), and the Committee (now Council) of Heads of Australian (now Australasian) Herbaria (CHAH). Her efforts also resulted in the *Flora of Australia* and the Australian Plant Name Index (APNI). Kevin Thiele covered aspects of this in his 2021 Burbidge Address and he also considered what is needed now to extend

our documentation of Australia's biodiversity into the future (reproduced in [ASBS newsletter issue 188](#)). I will expand on other aspects of her career, and botany then and now.

I only met Nancy once or twice, having started work in 1973 at the National Herbarium of New South Wales at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney. To the young me, she was a formidable presence: an exemplar of what a woman could achieve in botany (of course, I was fortunate to have other models at NSW in the persons of Joyce Vickery, Barbara Briggs and others).

Nancy Burbidge AM, DSc, was born in 1912, part of the first generation of women for whom a university education was not such a pioneering oddity and who went on to have careers in universities and scientific organisations. Others in that cohort in Australia with careers in botany and mycology included (in order of birth):

- Dr Winifred Curtis AM, DSc (systematics; born 1905)
- Dr Joyce Vickery OBE, DSc (systematics; b. 1908)
- Dr Lilian Fraser DSc (plant pathology; b. 1908)
- Dame Margaret Blackwood DBE, PhD, LLD (genetics; b. 1909)
- Dr Sophie Ducker AM, DSc (née von Klemperer; phycology; b. 1909)
- Miss Constance Eardley MSc (systematics, lecturer; b. 1910)

- Prof. Gwenda Davis DSc (née Rodway; embryology, systematics; b. 1911)
- Mrs Maisie Carr MSc (née Fawcett; ecology, systematics; b. 1912)
- Mrs Alma Lee MSc (née Melvaine; systematics; b. 1912)
- Dr Ilma Stone PhD, DSc (née Balfe) (bryology; b. 1913)
- Dr Betty Phillips PhD (ecology; b. 1917)

Across the ditch in New Zealand, female botanists in that ground-breaking generation included:

- Dr Lucy Moore MBE, DSc (ecology, systematics; b. 1906)
- Dr Lucy Cranwell Smith, DSc (née Cranwell; palynology; b. 1907)
- Dame Ella Campbell DNZM, DSc (systematics; b. 1910)
- Miss Ruth Mason MSc (ecology, systematics; b. 1913)

These short lists reflect the difficulty women experienced in applying for professional botanical positions— then and now! Most of those women were unmarried— or widowed young in the case of Gwenda Davis. It was very difficult for a woman to maintain a career if she was married and had children, which is still true to some extent. Indeed, for a long time, government departments (and CSIRO) required women to resign, either when they married or when they later had children. I remember being shocked as a young botanist when Alma Lee told me that she and Joy Thompson had to resign from the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney staff in the early 1950s when they started their families. Alma and Joy only came back to botany as part-time botanists once their children had grown up. And Nancy herself apparently could not get a position at the Western Australian Herbarium because the head wouldn't employ women (Burbidge 2017: 9).

Mind you, there were still traces of discrimination early in my lifetime: equal pay for women in the NSW Public Service had only happened a few years before I started work at NSW in 1973 — partly due to the vigorous campaigning by the redoubtable Joyce Vickery. And my superannuation entitlements (and those for single men) were limited compared to

those for my married male colleagues — happily, that changed within a few years of my appointment.

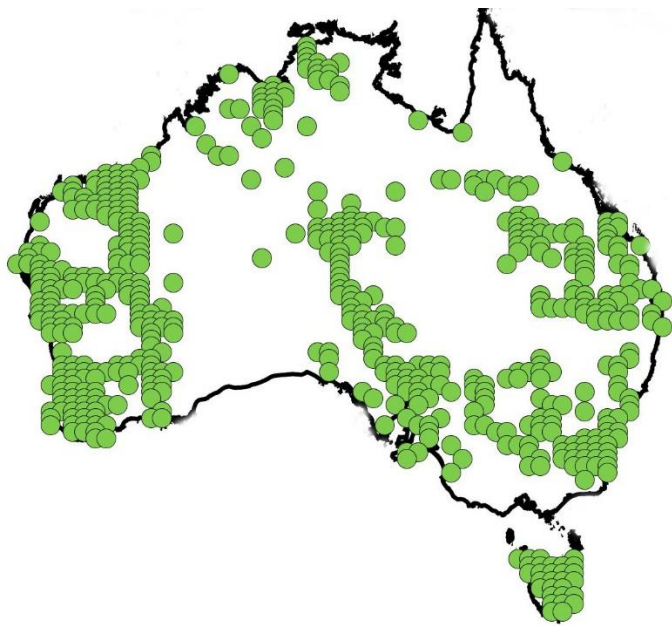
Nancy's generation came into botany at the time when the 'New Systematics' (term coined by Julian Huxley, 1940) was giving a more prominent face to systematics. The term reflected the broadening of scope of taxonomy/systematics to use data not just from morphology but also from cytology, anatomy, ecology, population studies, etc., and to use statistical analysis. Back then, Huxley and others were also advocating for more staff, labs, field stations, funding — sound familiar?

In the 1950s, the German zoologist Willi Hennig wrote persuasively about making systematic studies more “scientific”, i.e., using repeatable methods and producing falsifiable results as promoted by the science philosopher Karl Popper. However, Hennig's first book *Grundzüge einer Theorie der Phylogenetischen Systematik* (1950) had little influence on the work of Nancy and her contemporaries because it only became widely known in the rather monolingual Anglophone world after the book was translated into English in 1966 as *Phylogenetic systematics*. This led to cladistic methods of analysis to investigate the relationships of organisms: analysis that was made possible by the wider availability of, and increasing power of, computers. (Anyone seeking more background could consult *inter alia*: Dupuis 1984, Briggs 1991, Wheeler et al. 2013, Hamilton 2014.)

Biological thought from the 1960s onwards has also been strongly influenced by acceptance of the geological hypothesis of continental drift (a.k.a. plate tectonics), promulgated early in the 20th century by the German geologist Alfred Wegener (1920) — but that also came too late to influence Nancy's career, particularly her seminal 1960 paper on the phytogeography of Australia (Ebach 2012, Ladiges 1998). Note that Allen Keast (1971) was one of the first authors to discuss Australasian biogeography in light of plate tectonics.

To return to Nancy: her career embraced many aspects of botany. Her research involved the taxonomy, morphology, anatomy and ecology of *Triodia*, *Sesbania* and other genera. She also documented botanical history and botanical resources (including books on older botanical

literature available in Australian libraries (now nearly redundant thanks to the online Biodiversity Heritage Library), a dictionary of Australian plant genera, and the list of Australian plant names that evolved to be the present-day Australian Plant Names Index. She also wrote several field guides and the *Flora of the ACT* (with Max Gray). Her fieldwork was remarkably extensive for those times, particularly in the period just after World War 2 for her ecological/agronomic work in WA. And to top it off, she was a competent botanical artist, doing the illustrations for most of her papers and books.



A map of Nancy Burbidge's extensive collection localities (source; AVH).

Outside her own botanical work, she was the first curator in charge of the Herbarium Australiense (now the Australian National Herbarium) and that included overseeing the building of the first herbarium for that collection. She took a leading role in the establishment of the Australian Biological Resources Study and the *Flora of Australia* project, and she fostered communication within the botanical community in various ways: through CHAH, ASBS, newsletters, ANZAAS conferences. In her private life, she was an active conservationist, including as a founding member of the ACT National Parks Association.

Most significantly for Australian biology, Nancy and various colleagues were strong advocates for improving our knowledge of Australia's biodiversity. Natural history organisations go through cycles of highs and lows, dictated largely by funding and the

attitude of the government and bureaucrats of the day. The advocacy of Nancy and others bore fruit in the 1970s and 1980s with considerable investment by Australian governments (Commonwealth and State), resulting in what I consider a halcyon age for systematic biology in this country: new facilities, more scientific positions, and better funding for systematic research and publications (including the CSIRO and herbarium house journals and regional Floras). Sadly, this favourable attitude by governments has declined from the 1990s onwards (concurrently with global economic problems, of course) to our present more limited situation, as discussed by Kevin Thiele in 2021.

What would Nancy be disappointed about if she were alive today?

(i) **We are still far from naming and investigating all of our organisms.** Taxonomy has been whimsically described as man's oldest profession (Cole 1941, Hedgpeth 1961), dating back to Adam's first task in the Garden of Eden: to name "all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky" (Book of Genesis, chapter 2, verse 19). (Note this referred only to animals – plants were and still are for some people no more than green wallpaper, while cute and fluffy mammals and birds similarly push aside the other 99% of animals, the invertebrates (Smith 1999)). Adam obviously failed because we're still working on it today. And this despite the importance of systematics to most aspects of our existence, thanks to the need to have unique scientific names attached to taxa. It is the keystone of biology: no scientific name = no handle to hang other information on.

(ii) **Reduced funding** for ABRS and the ARC (and therefore cuts to grants and ABRS projects) and for herbaria and other natural history museums. This reduction is leading to a death by a thousand cuts – 'efficiency dividends' are among the weasel words that I loathe. As Paul Adam (2013) wrote: "While inefficient and wasteful practices should be identified and eliminated, I have difficulty seeing how, on demand, scientists can become more productive (other than by removing the impediments imposed by managers) – instead of having one idea a day are we supposed to have two?"

However, like it or not, we are in a changing social climate where accountability, cost-effectiveness and utility are all-important. This is not surprising given

the poorer economic conditions of recent decades and governments with little understanding or appreciation of the long-term importance of science and the natural environment to society locally and globally. Longer term consequences include loss of expertise and corporate knowledge. To quote Paul Adam (2013) again: "Scientific research cannot be turned on and off like a tap; loss of skilled staff and corporate knowledge following cuts has repercussions for years and cannot be instantly reversed even if funding is restored." Paul was referring to the loss of research capability in the NSW Department of Agriculture, but the same is true for botanical organisations.

(iii) Reduction in botanist numbers. We've seen a big reduction in the number of universities employing systematists of any kind and concomitantly fewer systematics courses and university herbaria. Availability of fewer permanent full-time positions in herbaria and universities has encouraged an overemphasis on short-term projects that yield quick results in a few years. This is at the expense of long-term, in-depth studies where expertise in particular taxa, especially the big groups like grasses, eucalypts and wattles can develop. Over-specialisation is leading to some researchers concentrating on molecular studies alone, with reduced understanding of a whole organism and its relationship to its environment. Nancy would also be disappointed that there are still few women in senior positions.

(iv) The cost of modern equipment and techniques at a time when funding is harder to find.

Electronic data storage, maintenance and updating (the latter often forgotten!) of hardware and software are continuing and growing expenses. There are also the maintenance costs of housing specimen collections — cf. the propensity of universities to save money and space by giving away their herbaria.

(v) Increasingly restrictive and time-consuming procedures for collecting specimens and, in some regions, obstruction because of local suspicion that the purpose of collection is not for scientific research.

What would Nancy approve of in systematic botany today?

(i) This has been a very exciting half century for systematics research with **development of new**

sources of data and new tools to analyse them — what one might call the 'even newer systematics' (*pace* Huxley) or 'Integrative Systematics' (Dayrat 2005) or 'Iterative Systematics' (Yeates 2011) or 'Plant Biodiversity Science' (Sauquet & Graham 2016): there's nothing like a new name to attract more funding! Whatever we call it, leads to reconsideration of old questions in botany and formulation of new questions/hypotheses.

Nancy would approve of the extensive uptake of molecular analysis to better understand the systematics, biogeography and phylogeny of plant groups intractable with previous methods of analysis. High throughput/next-generation sequencing is taking molecular analysis to an exciting new level, as we are hearing at this conference. But she would emphasise (as did Wheeler 2004) that molecular data should be used in conjunction with other sources of data: morphology, anatomy, cytology, ecology, physiology, reproductive biology, etc. This congruence of data of different types is leading to much better understanding of taxa and their relationships. An early example of this is that molecular data highlighted previously unrecognised morphological homologies between the floral structures in Elaeocarpaceae and Tremandraceae (Matthews and Endress 2002).

(ii) She would also approve of the **increasing collaborations across disciplines**, which pools resources and expertise and can obviate problems of collecting specimens in other jurisdictions. A personal example is of collaboration with chemists on the study of propolis (resin) collected by honey bees from various *Lepidosperma* spp. (Duke et al. 2017). Similarly, there is increasing recognition of the value of herbarium specimens in a wide range of studies, e.g. morphological or reproductive changes over time.

(iii) **Technological advances.** Advances in electronic hardware and software over this period have been crucial in analysing the much bigger datasets associated with the molecular revolution. Other developments like scanning and transmission electron microscopy, flow cytometry, digital microscopes and cameras, and GPS and drones for fieldwork have also become everyday tools for botanical research. The only negative aspect is that modern equipment and techniques are more

expensive at a time when funding is getting harder to find.

(iv) Nancy would be happily surprised by the **online resources for systematics research** globally and locally: [Biodiversity Heritage Library](#), [Taxonomic Literature edition 2](#), the [International Plant Name Index](#), the [Australian Plant Census](#), the [Atlas of Living Australia](#) (which hosts the Australasian Virtual Herbarium) and virtual herbaria for many other regions or for specific herbaria, [GenBank](#) and other data repositories.

(v) We also benefit from **better geological knowledge** than when Nancy wrote her seminal paper on the phytogeography of Australia (Burbidge 1960). The acceptance of the concept of plate tectonics has already been mentioned. But we are also benefitting from the increasing number of plant fossils being found (cf. presentations at this conference), providing approximate dates for the evolution of groups.

(vi) Nancy might have been surprised by how **the pace of work** has been revolutionised by technological changes. Before the advent of electronic communication, one had to learn patience: one wrote a letter and then waited perhaps weeks or months for a reply or for the loan of specimens from overseas. Funding for visiting herbaria and doing fieldwork was often limited. In a few extreme cases, certain States banned official fieldwork outside that State or banned the use of official vehicles interstate. Under such constraints, projects were necessarily slow to be completed or limited in their geographical scope. This slow pace also allowed a tendency to perfectionism to creep in: the feeling that one should dot all the i's and cross all the t's (to place all those odd outlier specimens, etc.), further delaying the publication of a study.

Now, the pace is much faster, particularly given the need to find funding for further research. This is good in getting results out there quickly but does have its drawbacks in terms of unsatisfyingly limited or incomplete short-term studies, not to mention the frustration of having to shift attention from one taxon to another every few years depending on available funding.

A positive aspect of electronic communication is our ability to communicate quickly with colleagues in

other places. This was heralded by the fax machine (who remembers what a fantastic innovation that was in the 1990s!?), followed by email, video-conferencing, etc. We now have speedy communication with collaborators and dissemination of data and publications via the internet and portable media. Nancy would approve of the electronic field guides, keys and apps for identifying native and weedy species in a region. I imagine that she would be surprised that we can now publish new names electronically since the *International Code of Nomenclature* was changed in 2011. Online publication increasingly allows open access to scientific journals, but we should remember that nothing is free: someone has to pay publishing costs, whether it is the user, producer or publisher.

(vii) **Students and citizen science.** It is heartening that there is a continuing stream of enthusiastic students of plants, despite few positions being available. Similarly, there are increasing contributions by citizen scientists to extend knowledge of organisms and their interactions beyond what professional researchers can do; [iNaturalist](#) is a global example of this, [FungiMap](#) and [FrogID](#) are Australian examples. Field naturalists should be encouraged to undertake longitudinal studies of species and their life histories in the naturalist's home region – something that is difficult for a professional botanist to find time for. Such observations and photos are useful adjuncts to collection of preserved voucher specimens (Eckert et al. 2024; Ondo et al. 2024) even though they have limitations such as uneven coverage (but that is also a problem with herbarium specimens).

(viii) **Communication of scientific results and their significance** to society at large is better than 50 years ago but could still improve, especially for 'non-charismatic' species (Smith 1999; Saunders 2020). Increasingly, systematists and their organisations are aware of the need to promote their science to the general community and its importance to conservation and land management, particularly to those holding the strings of the funding purse. There are still people in influential positions who think that all is cut and dried, —"The Flora of X is published so why do we need more research on this?"— The trade-off in improving such communication is often that one or more research positions in an organisation are replaced by a communications or

fund-raising position — but the latter is necessary given ever-reducing government funding.

family thanks to global collaboration (Larridon et al. 2021), with current collaborations exploring the finer



The 'sedge crew' at the ASBS conference 2025. From left: Jeremy Bruhl, Shelley Rowntree, Millicent Oulo, Karen Wilson, Russell Barrett, Francis Nge. Photo: Tareg Shalldoom

Examples of recent work: Cyperaceae

I'd like to briefly mention one of my own interests: the sedges (family Cyperaceae). By the early 1990s, I felt that we had reached the limit of understanding for the systematics of sedges using traditional means such as morphology, micromorphology, chromosomes, secondary chemistry, ecology. This feeling of stalemate turned my attention more to (then) pioneering information technology projects that aimed to harness the (then) new internet to make biodiversity information available globally and freely. I spent much of my time over more than a decade contributing in various ways to nascent international projects aiming to make biodiversity data available online including the International Organisation for Plant Information, Species 2000 and The [Catalogue of Life](#), the Taxonomic Databases Working Group (TDWG; now [Biodiversity Information Standards](#)), the [Global Taxonomy Initiative](#) of the [UN Convention on Biological Diversity](#), and the [Global Biodiversity Information Facility](#). By the time I stepped back from involvement in these projects, molecular techniques were maturing and had become a standard feature of systematics research.

In the case of the sedges, we are now in the happy position of having a stable tribal framework for the

details of the biggest genera: *Carex s.l.* and *Cyperus s.l.* It is particularly satisfying to me that we have a much improved understanding of the global biogeography and phylogeny of the most diverse tribe in Australia, the Schoeneae (Viljoen et al. 2013, Elliott et al. 2021). Locally, Jeremy Bruhl, Russell Barrett and I have various joint projects in train, including further work on that particularly difficult genus *Lepidosperma*, which you will hear about later in the conference from our newest team member Millicent Oulo.

What about the future?

Systematic botany is still as important as ever (Thomson et al. 2018). Kevin Thiele ended his Burbidge Address in 2021 on a positive note, describing current efforts through the Taxonomy Australia initiative and the Australasian Decadal Plan to continue improving our knowledge of Australasian biota (of all kinds, not just plants). Nancy would approve of this initiative, having been a great advocate in her day for biodiversity and its conservation. This is the next stage in an ongoing synthesis, each generation building on the work of preceding generations (Constance 1964). We have yet to see where molecular systematics will lead us. Or what role artificial intelligence (an oxymoron?)

can usefully play in our field (Davinack 2023). But we can be sure of a few surprises along the way, which keeps our work interesting.

I am happy to have played a very small part in this process of understanding the world's biodiversity, and I look forward to continuing to do so for the foreseeable future. However, in the face of climate change and population growth, I can only hope that future studies are not based largely on organisms that are already extinct or breathing their last.

Finally, my advice to students: don't go into systematics unless you are very enthusiastic. Employment opportunities are relatively few, and you certainly won't get wealthy as a botanist. And be aware that every position has its boring aspects, e.g. bureaucratic paperwork. But overall you will get great satisfaction from researching a subject that fascinates you. And, one day, you may be the happy recipient of the Nancy Burbidge Medal: recognition from your peers of a career spent doing what you love.

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Progress on flora-wide trends in macroevolution: Australia and beyond

Francis Nge, National Herbarium of NSW, Botanic Gardens of Sydney

I was kindly invited to present a keynote seminar at the recent ASBS conference in Armidale. It was my first keynote and I am honoured to be given this opportunity, especially as an early career researcher. I will summarise key points of my keynote below for those that were unable to attend the conference.

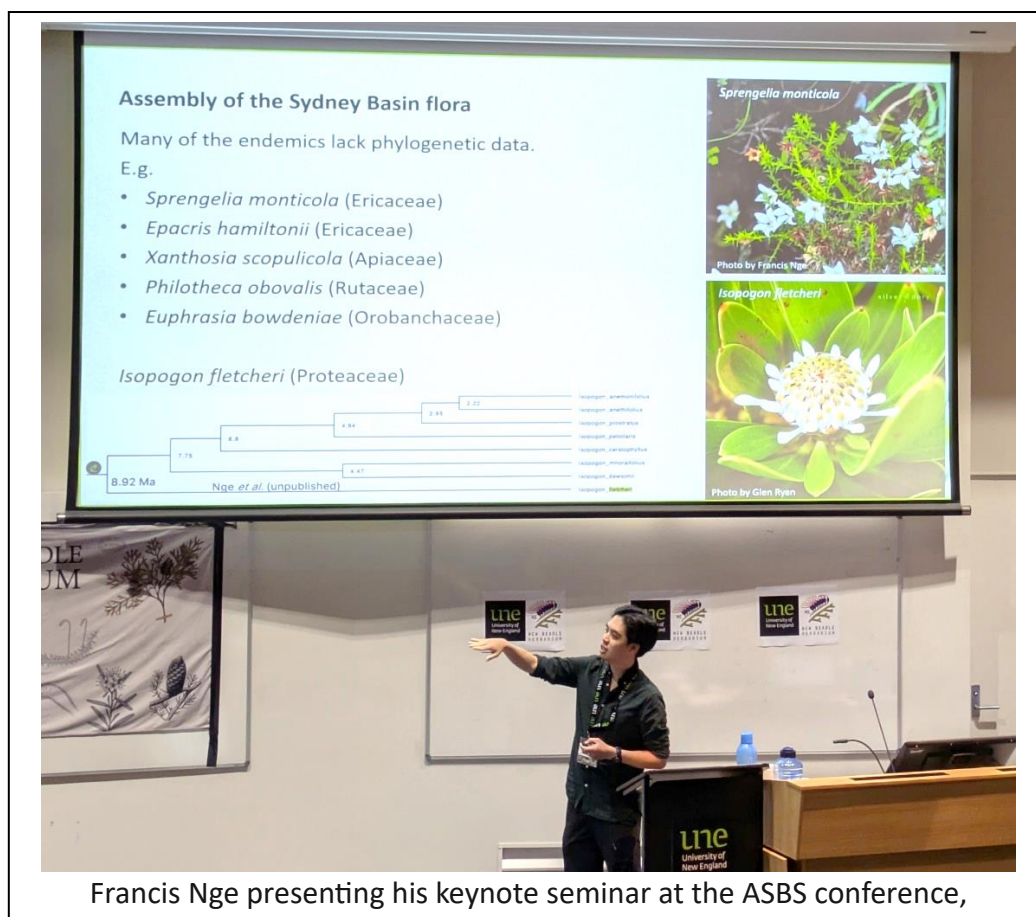
Substantial progress has been made on our understanding of macroevolutionary dynamics across our flora, largely spear-headed by increasingly comprehensive molecular and taxonomic datasets generated by our scientific community (Simpson *et al.* 2024). In addition, progress on analytical pipelines and models has also been made, allowing us to investigate and address evolutionary questions more thoroughly (Joyce *et al.* 2025).

In the keynote address, I touched briefly on broadscale biodiversity patterns and trends.

1) **The peripheral vicariance hypothesis** (Nge *et al.* 2022) in explaining disjunct distributions of many Australian plant groups across the continent, largely in response to aridification (Ladiges *et al.* 2012; McLay *et al.* 2016; Nge *et al.* 2023; Nge *et al.* 2025a; Nge *et al.* 2025b).

2) **The West Wind Drift** phenomenon in explaining an asymmetric dispersal pattern from west to east — Australia to New Zealand and also towards the wider Pacific (Sanmartín *et al.* 2007; Nge *et al.* 2021; Keppel *et al.* 2023).

3) **Floristic exchange between Sunda and Sahul**, and asymmetric movements from Asia (Sunda) into Australia (Sahul) for lowland rainforest lineages (Crayn *et al.* 2015; Joyce *et al.* 2021; Johnson *et al.* 2025). But biogeographic history of Australian/Gondwanan lineages in Asia are understudied.



Francis Nge presenting his keynote seminar at the ASBS conference,

- 4) **Evolutionary assembly of regional floras**, such as the southeast Asian and Sydney Basin floras (unpublished).
- 5) **Diversification patterns of southwest and eastern Australian floras** (Nge and Skeels 2025), and how a common evolutionary driver (time) for hyperdiversity is also detected across other global biodiversity hotspots (Nge *et al.* 2025c).

In general, it is easier to prune out extra samples from a phylogeny (e.g. to convert a multi-accessioned phylogeny looking at taxonomy to a single representative per species macroevolutionary tree) than to add another sample into the phylogeny. Gathering new data may require additional permits, field work, lab work, and time spent re-analysing phylogenies to fit in additional samples. Hence why sampling as comprehensively as possible would be

Table 1. Comparison of sampling strategy of systematic, biogeographic, and macroevolutionary studies

APPROACH	Systematic studies	Biogeography	Macroevolution
Aims:	Resolving phylogenetic relationships	Understanding distributional patterns	Understanding diversification dynamics
Sampling strategy	Targeted to selected clades. E.g. to test for monophyly.	Broader sampling, geographic representation	Comprehensive taxon sampling (50-80%+) but often limited in number of loci
Dated phylogeny	Not required	Yes	Yes
+/- Pros & cons	Less resources req. but multiple studies to gap-fill	Medium resources	More resources but more consistent framework

I also touched on *taxonomic sampling* for these biogeographic and macroevolutionary studies and how they aren’t mutually exclusive with systematic studies (Table 1). I encouraged the audience (and encourage readers) to be more mindful of taxonomic sampling as it can be overlooked in the phylogenomic era where focus has been on the inclusion of ever more genetic markers.

I advocate for a multi-purpose comprehensive sampling approach which allows us to address multiple questions in systematics, biogeography, and macroevolution.

Traditionally, a more targeted, piecemeal approach has worked well, where attention is focused on a specific clade for a given study, and then another clade in another subsequent study, and building on from multiple studies we then gradually expand on the taxonomic sampling of a phylogenetic group. While this has worked well in the Sanger sequencing era, I caution that this approach may no longer be suitable for the fast-changing phylogenomic era that we’re in now. By the time we move on to another study in expanding the taxonomic sampling of a group, the bioinformatic pipelines and genetic loci used might have already changed drastically, in just a few years.

more efficient. However, I acknowledge that this approach might not always be tractable, e.g. from funding constraints or for mega-large groups (say eucalypts), although these issues can be partly addressed through collaboration with partners across Australia and abroad. I hope these points are useful to readers. It seems pertinent to discuss these in greater detail as a community, and the ways in which we can move forward.

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Australasian Systematic Botany Society Inc.

MINUTES

47th Annual General Meeting

Meeting opened 5 November 2025, 4:00 pm EDT

Welcome and apologies

Thanks to conference organisers, speakers, helpers, wikimedia Heidi and Siobhan. Attendees please sign the list, online post in chat.

Apologies: Christine Cargill, Philip Garnock-Jones, Rainer Vogt, David Mabberly, Judy West, Tim Entwisle, Ilse Breitwieser.

Attendees (in-person): Tim Collins, Patrick Fahey, Mike Bayly, Kelly Shepherd, Katharina Nargar, Tareg Shalldoom, Jessie Prebble, Heidi Meudt, John Clarkson, Russell Barrett, Peter Jobson, Niels Klazenga, John Nevin, Shirley McLaran, Lyn Cook, Karen Wilson, Peter Weston, Joanne Birch, Helen Kennedy, Ryan O'Donnell, Robb Eastman-Densem, Harvey Orel, Benjamin Anderson, Leah Seabourne, Alexander Schmidt-Lebuhn, Herve Sauquet, Anne-Marie Tosolini, Jeremy Bruhl, David Cantrill, Dan Murphy, Rose Andrew, Tyler Cameron, Francis Nge, Andrew McDougall, Austin Brown, Tim Hammer, Emily Hoskin, Brendan Lepschi, Andrew Thornhill, Shelomi Doyle, Yuqin Du, John Hosking.

Attendees (online; who identified themselves in the chat): Juliet Wege, Shelley James, Lalita Simpson, Stephanie Chen, Jen Tate, Vanessa Ryan, Peter Wilson.

Minutes of previous AGM (see [ASBS Newsletter 201: 36–57](#)): Proposed: Karen Wilson and seconded Peter Jobson.

Reports

President: Katharina Nargar

Final [report from Katharina Nargar](#), she is stepping down after 6 years as President.

- Burbidge medallists congratulated
- Welcome Paleobotany chapter
- New ASBS and Australian Systematic Botany (ASB) partnership, which formalises longstanding collaboration. ASB sponsorship of ASBS conferences, including for student awards. Discount for Open Access for non-institutional members. Promotion of ASBS on ASB online platforms and vice versa, including promotion of student awardees. Opportunity for ASB Conference Special Issue including invitation of Early Career Researcher guest-editors.
- Taxonomy Australia update. Continuing high-level science advocacy. Incorporation of TA. Establish Decadal Plan subcommittee. Develop sustainable funding model for the Australian Journal of Taxonomy (AJT). Hold annual TA forum/workshop on key issues.

Vice-President and Treasurer: Mike Bayly

[\(See page 33 \).](#)

- Membership. Operating results. The Society is in a sound financial position. Recommend that there be no increase in membership fees for 2026.

Continue to monitor Colonial's approach to responsible investment, and investigate other investment options.

Herve: Can we expand the research grants and what would the strategy be? **MB:** last time we established

a subcommittee to look for the best ways, new grants, considering all options.

Student/ECR Subcommittee: Patrick Fahey

[\(See page 47\)](#) Turnover on the subcommittee. Background of the subcommittee. SECR profile website identification. 2025 report. Looking forward. Continuing members: Patrick Fahey (BRI), Paulo Souza Baleeiro (PERTH), Timothy Hammer (The University of Adelaide)

New member: Emily Hoskin (The University of Adelaide) - this adds a Student rep to an otherwise ECR subcommittee

We have Australia well covered (from a longitudinal perspective at least), but still lack membership from the wider Australasian region.

- Attended council meeting representing SECRs.
- Hosted an open, online SECR meeting in September
- Contributed to four initiatives for the conference; conference buddies, SECR bingo and SECR botanical treasure hunt, social mixer.
- Happy to hear feedback.
- Improve understanding of society SECR membership
- More regular open meetings

Exploring the idea of an online student seminar series to allow students unable to attend a conference an avenue to present their work.

Will need to recruit for next year as Patrick and Paulo reach the end of their three-year terms.

ASBS Newsletter: Helen Kennedy

[\(See page 48\).](#)

Research Committee: Mike Bayly on behalf of Peter Heenan

[\(See page 49\).](#) PH unable to attend so MB presenting. New research committee members were announced and welcomed. HJ. Eichler grants. Gareth Nelson Award. March 2025 Round - Four applications.

The successful applicants were:

Luke Vaughan, MSc, University of Melbourne, was awarded AU\$5,000 to study the 'Systematics of the genus *Peziza sensu lato* (Pezizaceae, Ascomycota) in Australia'.

Andrew McDougall, PhD, University of Adelaide, was awarded AU\$4,872 to undertake 'A population level investigation into the genetic distinctiveness within the *Caladenia reticulata* Fitzg. species complex in South Australia.' September 2025 Round - Six applications. The successful applicants were:

- Paul Bell-Butler, PhD, Victoria University of Wellington: \$4,970 for 'Taxonomy and biogeography of the liverwort family Lophocoleaceae'.
- Stella Fish, MPhil, Queensland University of Technology: \$5,000 for 'Bryophyte taxonomy: its role in Antarctic conservation'.

Gareth Nelson Award, inaugural recipient

- Robb Eastman-Densem, PhD, University of Melbourne: \$4,034.57 for 'Generating a new genomic resource for *Eucalyptus* subseries *Subexsertae* (tropical red gums) to improve phylogeographic and systematic investigation'.

Marlies Eichler Fellowship. No 2025 applicants - plans to improve visibility and targeting. 2024 Fellow: Caroline Puente-Lelievre (University of Auckland). Amount Awarded: \$20,000 (\$10,000 + \$10,000). Expanding the Epacrid Tree of Life.

Webmaster: Kelly Shepherd

[\(See page 50\).](#) Stats and updates. Unexpected spike in July. Silvercode sorted it without any extra charges. Conference page. [Feedback to be sought on user experiences](#). Recommend we use Humanitix for future conferences.

Stats and updates:

- online funds processed \$27,358.33
- memberships \$9,030.00 (250 membership orders)
- donations \$18,180.00 (43 donation orders)
- two newsletter issues uploaded (201, 202)
- updated membership page with new fields
- updated conference pages

Facebook: Mike Bayly

[\(See pg. \)](#). Update 12.5 years on.

Emily: Is there a reason ASBS doesn't have a LinkedIn? **MB:** No particular reason. **Andrew Thornhill:** UNE advertised on LinkedIn but couldn't tag the society.

General Business

Update on ASBS logo from **Lalita Simpson**: Work is ongoing. Concepts will be shared soon with opportunity to provide feedback. Final design will be sent to a graphic designer.

Next ASBS conference. No host yet for 2026, but MEL and MELU to do it in 2027.

New ASBS Council. **KN**: thanked present and past members she has worked with. Please consider nominating.

New members announced:

Jen Tate – President

Peter Heenan – Vice-President

Mike Bayly – Treasurer

Tim Collins – Secretary

Lalita Simpson – Councillor

Kerry Ford – Councillor

Close of meeting 5:42 pm

Juliet Wege online to everyone: Thanks for your efforts Katharina, and to all council members. A great job by the conference organisers as well - online attendance was pretty seamless!

President's Report

Katharina Nargar

Council activities 2024-2025

For the past term, I would like to highlight the following four areas of Council activities:

ASBS conference in Armidale

This year's ASBS conference in Armidale (2-6 November 2025), themed 'Next Generation Botany', was a huge success and ASBS Council is very grateful to the conference organising team, Andrew Thornhill, Rose Andrew and Kelly Shepherd, for their hard work. Further, many thanks to the keynote speakers, Hervé Sauquet, Francis Nge, and Helen Kennedy, who brought the conference theme to life through sharing their perspectives and insights from their own career journeys. I'd also like to express my gratitude to Heidi Meudt and Siobahn Leachman for running the hands-on pre-conference Wikimedia workshop, which proved super productive. A big thank you also to Andrew Thornhill and Brendan Lepschi for a fun conference dinner, including the hilarious ASBS bingo and an unforgettable rock opera on the untold story of the Beadle Herbarium, starring the amazing Ryan O'Donnell on the vocals and keyboard. Many thanks also to Tareg Shalldoom and its volunteer group, for technical support of the conference sessions, and to our SERC subcommittee, Patrick Fahey, Paulo Baeleiro, and Tim Hammer, for organising SERC engaging networking activities during the conference. I'd also like to give a massive shout out to Kelly Shepherd for conceptualising and building our new shiny conference website with Silvercode, and to the Treasurer, Mike Bayly for generously providing advice and support to the conference organisers throughout the year. Last but not least, I'd like to extend Council's thanks to our generous conference sponsors: CSIRO Publishing, the University of New England, and Wikimedia.

Nancy T. Burbidge Medal Recipients 2024 and 2025

At this year's conference, Council conferred the Society's highest award, the Nancy T. Burbidge Medal, to three members who have made outstanding contributions to Australasian systematic botany. The medal recipient for 2024 was Karen L. Wilson AM who presented her Nancy T. Burbidge Memorial Lecture reflecting on the advances made in our discipline since Nancy T. Burbidge. For 2025, Council awarded Nancy T. Burbidge medals to Ian R. H. Telford and to Jeremy J. Bruhl, who delivered a joint Nancy T. Burbidge Memorial Lecture reflecting on their individual career paths in botanical science as well as their fruitful collaboration. Congratulations, Karen, Ian and Jeremy. The Society highly appreciates the immense contributions you have made to our discipline and the new generation of plant systematists you trained and continue to inspire.

New ASBS Paleobotany Palynology Chapter

Council is delighted about the establishment of a new ASBS Chapter for Paleobotany and Palynology and warmly welcomes the new Paleo members to the Society. Many thanks to Mike Bayly and Anne-Marie

Tosolini for socialising this idea with Council and bringing it to fruition. We are looking forward to seeing the new Chapter flourish and enriching our Society.

New ASBS-ASB Partnership Agreement

ASBS and the Australian Systematic Botany journal (ASB, CSIRO Publishing) have established a new partnership agreement, building on the sustained support that the publisher has provided to our Society through conference sponsorship and the ASB journal and the service that many ASBS members have provided to the journal through editorial responsibilities and journal articles over the years. Among the mutual benefits of the partnership agreement are continued ASB sponsorship of ASBS conferences including the student prizes, as well as promotion of student awardees on the ASB website, the opportunity of conference-themed special issues, with the opportunity for ECRs to guest edit these alongside experienced editors. In turn, the partnership will provide a range of benefits to ASB representatives, e.g. through free conference admission, the possibility of a promotional desk/booth at our conferences, and the ability to contribute promotional content to the ASBS newsletter such as on ASB articles of interest to our membership. Many thanks to Patrick Hannah, journal manager for ASB at CSIRO Publishing for establishing this new partnership agreement with ASBS.

Taxonomy Australia update

Over this term, ASBS Council has continued contributing to Taxonomy Australia (TA) through representation on the TA's Steering Committee, which is now being led by Tom May as chair. TA is working on becoming incorporated and acquiring a non-for-profit status, which will enable TA to receive and administer funding and tax-deductible donations. This will support TA's core activities such as science advocacy, public engagement, and the TA's online journal (The Australian Journal of Taxonomy). Another important topic for TA is the planning of a potential future Decadal Plan, as the current Decadal Plan for Biosystematics in Australia and New Zealand 2018–2027 is entering its last two years. This will require a review of the progress and achievements made since the launch of the Decadal Plan to benefit from the learnings that this will bring. This topic is of considerable interest to our Society, as the idea of the Decadal Plan was born within the Society and ASBS has invested considerable effort into its development through establishment and co-ordination of Decadal Plan working group. Council will remain actively involved in discussion with TA and keep our membership updated on developments.

Farewell and announcement of new Council

After reaching the maximum term on Council, I am stepping down from my role as ASBS President at this AGM. Many thanks to all Council members for their manifold contributions to Council activities this year: to Vice President Peter Heenan for taking such diligent care of our grant programs and looking after our grant recipients, to Treasurer Mike Bayly for ensuring that the Society has remained in an such a sound financial position and contributing a wealth of ASBS-related corporate knowledge, to our Secretary Tim Collins for keeping Council so well on track and our membership informed, and to Lalita Simpson and Kerry Ford for being such wonderful Councillors, providing additional perspectives to our Council discussions. I thoroughly enjoyed my time on Council with you and thank you all and everybody I've worked with on Council over the years, including John Clarkson, Heidi Meudt, Kelly Sheperd and Hervé Sauquet, the newsletter editors Helen Kennedy and previously Lizzy Joyce, and all SERC subcommittee members over time. I greatly appreciate your enormously generous contributions to the Society, your humour and friendship. Many thanks to all of you.

Finally, it is my great pleasure to announce the new ASBS Council for 2025–2026: Jennifer Tate is incoming ASBS President, Peter Heenan continues as Vice President, Mike Bayly as Treasurer, Tim Collins as Secretary, and Lalita Simpson and Kerry Ford as Councillors. Congratulations to all, and welcome back to Council, Jen. Council is thrilled to have you join in the role of President.

Treasurer’s Report 2024/25

Mike Bayly

1. Introduction

I am pleased to present the financial statement of the Australasian Systematic Botany Society Inc. (ASBS) for the year ended 30 June 2025 (Appendix 1). The finances of the Society are run on a financial year basis with data reported on a full cash basis.

Melinda McAllister of BHT Partners Eltham audited the accounts. Her report to members is attached as Appendix 2.

2. Membership

Table 1 summarises the number of members in September 2025. Membership numbers remain stable with new members roughly balancing resignations and deaths.

Table 1. Membership of ASBS as of 22nd September 2025 (non-financial members in brackets).

Fee	Full	Concessional	Gratis	Total
Ordinary	190 (28)	n/a	0	190 (28)
Student	n/a	70 (17)	0	70 (17)
Developing Country		1 (0)	0	1 (0)
Retiree	n/a	67 (4)	0	67 (4)
Unemployed	n/a	2 (0)	0	2 (0)
Institutional	4 (0)	n/a	14	18 (0)
Life	n/a	n/a	6	6
Total	194 (28)	140 (21)	20	354 (49)

The following new members have been admitted to the Society since the last AGM:

Paul Bell-Butler	Wellington	Student
Saphira Bloom-Quinn	University of Sydney	Student
Angelina Bouet	NRA Environmental Consultants	Ordinary
Tyler Cameron	University of New England	Student
Raymond Carpenter	Queensland	Retired
Thomas Carter	University of New England	Student
Bianca Dickson	The University of Melbourne	Ordinary
Katherine Downes	Western Australian Herbarium	Ordinary
Aqib Farid	Macquarie University	Student

Michael Gemmell	Auckland	Ordinary
Jodie Gillam	Queensland	Ordinary
Rhyan Gorman	University of New England	Student
Nunzio Knerr	CSIRO	Ordinary
Vera Korasidis	The University of Melbourne	Ordinary
Diman Krwanji	Edith Cowan University	Student
Penniel Lamei	PNG Forest Research	Developing Country
William Leggate	Griffith University	Ordinary
Rae Lerew	University of Otago	Student
James Marthick	Canberra	Ordinary
Chris Mays	Natural History Museum Vienna	Ordinary
Lea McLaren	University of New England	Student
Sapphire McMullan-Fisher	University of New England	Ordinary
Kelvin Meng	The Australian National University	Student
Thomas Munro	Natural Resource Assessments	Ordinary
Lauren Murfit	University of Western Australia/Kings Park	Student
Angela Nikulinsky	Western Australia	Student
Maria Paulsen	Monash University	Student
Peter Pemberton	University of New England	Student
Josephine Price	James Cook University	Ordinary
Rahul Sreekumar	Queensland	Ordinary
Anne-Marie Tosolini	The University of Melbourne	Ordinary
Sophie van Vliet	Natural Resource Assessments	Ordinary
Luke Vaughan	The University of Melbourne	Student
Jeremy Wyman	The University of Melbourne	Student

3. Management of Funds

3.1. General Fund

The General Fund finished the financial year with a deficit of \$3,221.53. This is the third year in a row that we've had a net deficit, which is highly unusual. The deficit this year was due to a short-term loan of \$10,000 from the General Fund to the Research Fund, which will be repaid in the 2025/26 financial year. That transfer

between funds allowed us to meet grant obligations and avoid withdrawing from our large managed fund at a time when markets had taken a sizeable dip in the wake of new tariff announcements by the USA (so we didn't turn a paper loss into a realised financial loss). With subsequent rebound of markets, that short-term juggling of cash leaves our society finances in a stronger position overall.

The major ongoing source of income for the General Fund, totalling \$8,901 in this financial year, is annual membership fees. Most members are prompt in paying their annual membership, but 49 memberships remained unpaid on June 30, down from 65 unpaid memberships at the end of the previous financial year. This was the second year that we used membership payments through our website, and the process worked smoothly this year for most members, but it still presented challenges for others. I will continue to contact members about unpaid fees and to provide support with navigating web payments. Any members with questions about their membership payments can contact me at treasurer.asbs@gmail.com.

Assets in the General Fund are held as cash at call or in reasonably short (6–9 months) term deposits. With growth in interest rates during the financial year, earnings on those cash reserves were another substantial source of income, totalling \$7,756, and thus approaching the volume of income from membership fees.

Despite the reported deficit in the General Fund, explained above, The Society remains in a very strong financial position. Our core operating expenses, related to the Newsletter (which transitioned online this year), website, meetings and council business, are adequately covered by membership payments and investment income in the General Fund, and we have solid General Fund assets of \$143,743.32. As such, Council has agreed to leave membership fees unchanged for 2026.

3.2. Research Fund

The Research Fund derives its income primarily from donations, investment income, and profits from conferences. As a not-for-profit organisation with tax exempt status, the Society is also able to claim a refund of franking credits paid on its Colonial First State investment. The Society continues to offer up to \$40,000 each financial year to support research projects in plant systematics. Projects supported include the Hansjörg Eichler Research Grants (up to \$20,000) and the Marlies Eichler Postdoctoral Fellowships (up to \$20,000). Grants paid in the 2024/25 financial year totalled \$27,162.

3.2.1 Research Fund donations

This financial year, 36 members made donations or bequests to the Hansjörg Eichler Research Fund totalling \$63,130. All donors, including the following members who agreed to having their names recorded publicly, are thanked for their generous support. Of particular note, was a large donation of \$50,000 by an anonymous donor; those funds, together with a previous \$50,000 donation, by the same donor, in the 2023/2024 financial year, have been used to establish a new grant, the “Gareth Nelson Award”, within the Research Fund. That award was discussed in the previous Treasurer's report, and the first grant round was offered in September 2025.

Robyn Barker	Alison Hewitt	Rosemary Purdie
Michael Bayly	Gareth Holmes	Kelly Shepherd
Barbara Briggs	John Hosking	Nikola Streiber
Jeremy Bruhl	Betsy Jackes	Helen Thompson
Christine Cargill	Laurie Jessup	Stephen van Leeuwen
John Clarkson	Bronwen Keighery	Helen Vonow
Christine Dalliston	Phil Ladd	Juliet Wege

Murray Fagg	Peter Michael	Judy West
Robert Gibson	Andrew Mitchell	Molly Whalen
Laurie Haegi	Jo Palmer	Annabel Wheeler
Frank Hemmings	Ruth Palsson	Karen Wilson

3.2.2 Financial performance and management of the Research Fund

The Research Fund ended the financial year with an operating surplus of \$73,641.17. That figure includes both the large \$50,000 donation to the Gareth Nelson Award and a loan (that needs to be repaid) of \$10,000 from the General Fund, but it does not include the unrealised growth of investments in our Managed fund (discussed below).

Most assets in the Research Fund are held in a managed fund, in which we first invested in 2017. Up until the 2023/24 financial year, all income from distributions and rebates was reinvested in the managed fund and we had not otherwise added to or withdrawn from the managed fund, as we generally had sufficient cash assets in the Research Fund to make annual research grant payments. In 2023/24, cash holdings were depleted to the extent that we needed to make our first withdrawal, \$10,000, from the managed fund to cover research grant payments. A subsequent withdrawal of \$10,000 was made in 2024/25 and it is likely that we will need to make further withdrawals in the coming years. Such withdrawals, to manage annual cash flow, were anticipated when we first invested in the fund, and we will just need to be judicious in terms of the state of the market and unit prices in the managed fund, about when we make withdrawals.

Returns from the managed fund, on average since 2017, comfortably exceed our annual grant commitment of \$40,000. Over the 2024/25 financial year, for instance, the net (unrealised) growth in the value of the managed fund investment was \$88,195 (and \$69,464 in the previous financial year). Of course, the value of the managed fund investment fluctuates with unit price, but it is pleasing that returns continue to meet our needs. As total assets in the Research Fund continue to grow, as a result of both investment returns and ongoing donations from members, it might soon be time to further assess our investment profile and whether we could sustain an increase (in addition to the new Gareth Nelson Award) in the size or scope of our annual grant offerings.

Financial Report for the year ended 30 June 2025
Australasian Systematic Botany Society Incorporated
ABN 22092454279

Council’s Report

Your Council members submit the financial statement of the Australasian Systematic Botany Society Incorporated for the year ended 30 June 2025.

Council Members

The names of the Council members who held office throughout the reporting period and at the date of this report are:

President	Katharina Nargar	Elected November 2022
Vice President	Peter Heenan	Elected November 2024
Vice President	John Clarkson	Stood down November 2024
Secretary	Tim Collins	Elected November 2023
Treasurer	Mike Bayly	Elected November 2023
Councillor	Kerry Ford	Elected November 2023
Councillor	Lalita Simpson	Elected November 2022

Principal Activities

The principal activities of the society during the reporting period were to promote systematic botany in Australasia.

Significant Changes

No significant change in the nature of these activities occurred during the reporting period.

Operating Results

The operating results are as set out here under:

	Year ending June 2025	Year ending June 2024
General Fund	(\$3,221.53)	(\$10,302.99)
Research Fund	\$73,641.17	\$85,474.31
Total	\$70,419.64	\$75,171.32

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the Members of the Council on:


Katharina Nargar (President)

5th November 2025


Mike Bayly (Treasurer)

5th November 2025

Income and Expenditure Statement
Australasian Systematic Botany Society Incorporated
For the year ended 30 June 2025

	2025	2024
General Fund Income		
Cheque Account		
Conference Registrations	467.88	4,985.00
Conference Sponsorship	—	5,000.00
Copyright Agency	149.69	-
Donations to Eichler Fund	63,130.30	65,964.95
Subscriptions	8,901.44	9,573.85
Return of loan to Conference Account	—	3,000.00
Transfer from High Interest Savings Account (Rabobank)	10,000.00	16,337.84
Sundry income	—	1.74
	82,649.31	104,863.38
Conference Cheque Account		
Transfer from General Fund	10.00	
Sponsorship	—	13,900.00
Registrations	2,902.70	93,180.00
	2,912.70	107,080.00
PayPal Account		
Net conference income not transferred to other accounts	—	2,444.82
	—	2,444.82
Rabobank Accounts		
Interest High Interest Savings Account	37.68	90.42
Interest Term Deposit 1	—	3,047.86
Interest Term Deposit 2	4,682.77	1,626.73
Interest Term deposit 3	3,035.71	—
Transfer from Conference Cheque Account	—	10,000.00
Transfer from General Fund Cheque Account	—	2,500.00
	7,756.16	17,265.01
Total General Fund Income	93,318.17	231,653.21
General Fund Expenses		
Cheque Account		
Council expenses	—	2,364.73
Auditor's remuneration	2178.00	1,463.00
Bank charges, credit card fees	147.95	342.95
Student travel assistance	215.65	11,717.15
Miscellaneous expenses	—	368.72
Newsletter costs	3,310.98	2,803.10
Scoping of logo design	1,478.74	-
Web page	2,530.48	9,020.44
Donation to Taxonomy Australia	—	5,000.00
Transfer to High Interest Savings Account (Rabobank)	—	2,500.00
Transfer to Conference Account	477.88	9,985.00
Loan to Research Fund	10,000.00	5,000.00
Transfers to Research Fund	63,259.01	65,969.85
	83,598.69	116,534.94

Conference Account		
Main conference expenses (incl. dinner and mixer)	—	71,139.29
Conference workshops	—	935.16
SECR event	—	1,462.58
Conference field trip	—	2,206.39
Donation to Taxonomy Australia	—	5,000.00
Share of profits to Australasian Mycological Society	—	2,200.00
Share of profits to Soc. of Aus. Systematic Biologists	—	8,140.00
Return of cash advance loan from General Fund	—	3,000.00
Transfer of profits to General Fund account (Rabobank)	—	10,000.00
Transfer of profits to Research Fund account	506.19	5,000.00
	506.19	109,083.42
PayPal Account		
Transfer to Conference cheque account	2434.82	—
	2434.82	—
Rabobank Accounts		
Transfer to General Fund Cheque Account	10,000	16,337.84
	10,000	16,337.84
Total General Fund Expenses	96,539.70	241,956.20
General Fund Surplus/(Deficit)	(3,221.53)	(10,302.99)
Research Fund Income		
Cheque account		
Donations to Research Fund	13,259.01	69,448.85
Profit from Biosystematics 2023	506.19	5,000
Franking Credits	—	1,897.00
Loan from General Fund	10,000.00	5,000
Transfer from Managed Fund	10,000.00	10,000.00
	33,765.20	91,345.85
Term deposit (Gareth Nelson Award)		
Interest	2,325.00	—
Donations	50,000.00	—
	52,325.00	—
Managed Fund		
Investment Income – Colonial Wholesale Investment		
Distributions	37,898.91	54,275.04
Management Cost Rebates	1,359.61	1,184.16
	39,258.52	55,459.20
Total Research Fund Income	125,348.72	146,805.05

Research Fund Expenses		
Cheque account		
Marlies Eichler Fellowships	19,722.00	20,000.00
Hj. Eichler Research Grants	7,440.00	18,058.00
	27,162.00	38,058.00
Managed Fund		
Management Fees	14,545.55	13,272.74
Transfer to Research Fund cheque account	10,000.00	10,000.00
	24,545.55	23,272.74
Total Research Fund Expenses	51,707.55	61,330.74
Research Fund Surplus/Deficit	73,641.17	85,474.31
Current Year Surplus	70,419.64	75,171.32

Balance Sheet
Australasian Systematic Botany Society Incorporated
As at 30 June 2025

	2025	2024
Assets		
General Fund		
Cash and Cash Equivalents		
General Fund: Cheque Account	10,926.76	11,876.14
General Fund: Rabobank HISA	4,456.09	14,812.70
Conference cheque account	3,467.88	1,061.37
PayPal account	10.00	2,444.82
Total Cash and Cash Equivalents	18,860.73	30,195.03
Investments		
Rabobank Term Deposit 1	52,000.00	—
Rabobank Term Deposit 2	72,882.59	56,199.82
Rabobank Term Deposit 3	—	60,570.00
Total Investments	124,882.59	116,769.82
Total General Fund	143,743.32	146,964.85
Research Fund		
Cash and Cash Equivalents		
Research Fund: Cheque Account	24,781.61	18,178.41
Research Fund: Term deposit	102,325.00	50,000.00
Total Cash and Cash Equivalents	127,106.61	68,178.41
Investments		
Colonial Wholesale Investment	1,385,922.49	1,297,726.65
Total Investments	1,385,922.49	1,297,726.65
Total Research Fund	1,513,029.10	1,365,905.06
Total Assets	1,656,772.42	1,512,869.91
Member's Funds		
Accumulated Surplus	1,512,869.91	1,400,421.09
Current Year Earnings	70,419.64	75,171.32
Unrealised Capital Gain/Loss	73,482.87	37,277.50
Total Member's Funds	1,656,772.42	1,512,869.91

Notes to the Financial Statements
Australasian Systematic Botany Society Incorporated
For the year ended 30 June 2025

1. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

The financial report is a special purpose financial report prepared in order to satisfy the financial reporting requirements of the members. The Council has determined that the Society is not a reporting entity.

The financial report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Australian Accounting Standard AASB 1031: Materiality. No other applicable Accounting Standards, Australian Accounting Interpretations or other authoritative pronouncements of the Australian Accounting Standards Board have been applied.

The financial report has been prepared on a cash basis.

The following specific accounting policies, which are consistent with the previous period unless otherwise stated, have been adopted in the preparation of this financial report.

(a) Membership

Membership fees are recorded on a cash basis.

(b) Income Tax

Under present legislation the Society is exempt from income tax and accordingly no provision has been made in the accounts.

(c) Comparative Figures

Where required by Accounting Standards comparative figures have been adjusted to conform with the changes in presentation for the current year.

(d) Members Funds

In accordance with the rules of the Society, accumulated funds are not available for distribution to its members.

Research Committee

The Australasian Systematic Botany Society is an approved research institute and is registered as a charity by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.

The approved membership of the Research Committee comprises:

Peter Heenan	Appointed May 2022, <i>Ex officio</i> Chair from Nov 2024
John Clarkson	<i>Ex officio</i> Chair until Nov 2024
Benjamin Anderson	Appointed May 2022
Janet Gagul	Appointed May 2022
Murray Henwood	Appointed March 2016
Sarah Mathews	Appointed March 2015
Jennifer Tate	Appointed May 2022

**Statement by the Members of the Council
Australasian Systematic Botany Society Incorporated
For the year ended 30 June 2025**

The Council has determined that the Society is not a reporting entity and that this special purpose financial report should be prepared in accordance with the accounting policies outlined in Note 1 to the financial statements.

In the opinion of the Council:

1. The financial report as set out on pages 1 to 7 presents a true and fair view of the Society's financial position as at 30 June 2025 and its performance for the year ended on that date.
2. At the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Society will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

This statement is made in accordance with the resolution of the Council and is signed for and on behalf of the Council by:

President



Katharina Nargar – President

Treasurer



Mike Bayly – Treasurer

Dated this 5th day of November 2025



**INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT
TO THE MEMBERS OF
AUSTRALASIAN SYSTEMATIC BOTANY SOCIETY INCORPORATED**

We have audited the accompanying financial report, being a special purpose financial report, of Australasian Systematic Botany Society Incorporated, which comprises the Balance Sheet as at 30th June 2025, the statement of Income and Expenditure for the year then ended, Notes and the Members Statement.

Officers' Responsibility for the Financial Report

The officers of Australasian Systematic Botany Society Incorporated are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report and have determined that the basis of preparation described in Note 1, is appropriate to meet the requirements of the Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission and is appropriate to meet the needs of the members. The officers' responsibility also includes such internal control as the officers determine is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on our audit. We have conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Those standards required that we comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial report is free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial report. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgement, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the officers, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

BHT PARTNERS (AUDIT) PTY LTD ACN 113 241 919 ABN 28 113 241 919

Level 1, 963 Main Road, Eltham. PO Box 588 Eltham 3095
Tel: 03 9431 1827 Email: enquiries@bhtaudit.com.au Web: www.bhtaudit.com.au
Directors: M.L. McALLISTER FCPA • A.P. GIROLAMI CPA • B.J. MARSHALL CPA

Independence

In conducting our audit, we have complied with the independence requirements of the Australian professional accounting bodies.

Matters relating to the electronic presentation of the audited financial report

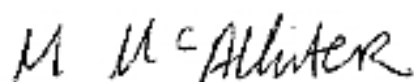
The auditor's report relates to the financial report of *Australasian Systematic Botany Society Incorporated* for the year ended 30th June 2025 included on *Australasian Systematic Botany Society Incorporated* website. The association's officers are responsible for the integrity of *Australasian Systematic Botany Society Incorporated* website. We have not been engaged to report on the integrity of *Australasian Systematic Botany Society Incorporated* website. The auditor's report refers only to the statements named above. It does not provide an opinion on any other information which may have been hyperlinked to / from these statements. If users of this report are concerned with the inherent risks arising from electronic data communications they are advised to refer to the hard copy of the audited financial report to confirm the information included in the audited financial report presented on this website.

Opinion

In our opinion, the financial report presents fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of *Australasian Systematic Botany Society Incorporated* as of 30th June 2025 and of its financial performance for the year then ended in accordance with the financial reporting requirements of ACNC.

Basis of Accounting

Without modifying our opinion, we draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared to assist *Australasian Systematic Botany Society Incorporated* to meet the requirements of ACNC. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose.



.....
Melinda McAllister
Registered Company Auditor

BHT Partners (Audit) Pty Ltd
Level 1, 963 Main Road
ELTHAM VIC 3095

Date: 28/10/2025

Student and Early-Career Researcher Subcommittee Report

Prepared by Patrick Fahey on behalf of SECR representatives Paulo Baleeiro Souza, Timothy Hammer and Emily Hoskin (incoming).

In 2025, in line with the call for ASBS council nominations, a call was put out for nominations of representatives to the SECR subcommittee. This pairing of the SECR nomination callout with the council nomination timing is set to be standard practice going forward.

With three continuing reps and one open position, voting would have been needed if multiple nominations were received, however only one person put themselves forward. We welcome and introduce our new representative, Emily Hoskin (University of Adelaide, Adelaide).

Emily is a first year PhD student, whose project will include a full revision of the Australian species of *Frankenia*, the only genus in the family Frankeniaceae. Emily brings a student's perspective to a subcommittee otherwise composed of ECRs. She joined us in the weeks prior to the 2025 ASBS conference, helping with the preparation of SECR focussed initiatives for the conference, and we are very glad to have her on the team.

Both Patrick and Paulo's three-year terms on the subcommittee will be up at the end of 2026, and we therefore continue to encourage students and ECRs to consider whether they may be interested in taking part in the subcommittee, particularly those based outside Australia, given our current geographic bias. Please reach out to the subcommittee or any current members if you have questions about what being a member entails and how we work.

The year, 2025 also saw the first open SECR meeting in a few years hosted in September. A few interested individuals joined us to discuss matters relevant to SECR members of the society. We aim to host further open meetings in 2026, with hopefully increasing attendance.

This November's conference in Armidale provided many opportunities to SECRs in the society, from the organisers' decision to provide early career researchers Francis Nge and Helen Kennedy the opportunity to deliver keynote addresses to the SECR mixer that proved unneeded as the younger and older members of the society seamlessly mingled at Great Hops Brewery. Despite Andrew Thornhill kindly organising prizes for the planned scavenger hunt and conference bingo, we appear to have set the difficulty too high, as there were no claims to have won these games. Overall, it is wonderful to be part of a society so welcoming and supportive to students and newcomers that such initiatives aren't necessary to break the ice.

Furthermore, with no conference venue lined up for next year, we are exploring alternate options to provide students with the opportunity to present their work to the society. This is important to us, as a year without a conference can be a major loss of networking and connection opportunities for students, particularly those undertaking Honours and Masters level research projects.

With the increased functionality of the website's membership system, we continue to encourage students and ECRs to check they have specified their career stage and elected to join the SECR register on their profile on the Society's website. As always, feedback and collaboration are very welcome.

Newsletter report

Helen Kennedy. ASBS Newsletter Editor

Publication

Two issues of the newsletter have been published this year: Issue 201 in January and Issue 202 in June. A third issue (203) is scheduled for release in late November or early December.

Issue 203 was originally planned for late October, but with Council's endorsement I decided to postpone publication until after the conference so we could include all conference-related content in a timely manner.

Changes

Two significant changes occurred this year.

Transition to Online-Only Publication

Following a strong case presented at the last AGM (summarised in Issue 201), we moved to online-only publication. Printing and mailing around 75 copies was no longer cost-effective, making Issue 201 the final printed edition. Issue 202 retained a similar layout for members who would like to print it at home, and I welcome suggestions for future design improvements.

Reduction from Four Issues to Three

This year we shifted from four newsletters annually to three. I outlined the rationale for this in the "From the Editor" column of [Issue 202](#). So far this seems to be working well, but we can revert to four issues per year if there is demand for more frequent communication or if more volunteers are willing to assist with editing.

Content

Below is a brief summary of content covered in the issues published since the last AGM (excluding the upcoming November/December issue):

- Reports from the 46th Annual General Meeting
- Reports from HJ. Eichler grant recipients and Marlies Eichler Fellows
- Reports from the SECR subcommittee
- Obituaries – 3
- Book reviews – 7
- *News from the herbaria*: DNA & NT, PERTH
- *In the News*
- Other articles – 7

Several grant reports are still outstanding; I am following these up, and some will appear in coming issues. We also hope to feature more regular "News from the herbaria" updates.

Contributions

John Clarkson continues to do excellent work as book review editor — please contact him with ideas for reviews. We are also seeking a news section editor, even on a short-term basis. Anyone interested in helping with a potential newsletter redesign is very welcome.

Thank you to all contributors and readers. Your involvement underpins this newsletter, and I especially encourage students to submit articles as a way to build professional networks and contribute to community.

Finally, thank you to everyone who helps proofread each issue, especially Council, Kelly Shepherd, and Anna Monro.

Research Committee report

Peter Heenan, Vice President and Chair, ex officio, of the ASBS Research Committee

During 2025 the Research Committee was refreshed with the addition of three new members: Rachael Fowler (Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria), Todd McLay (CSIRO), and Kerry Ford (Bioeconomy Science Institute, New Zealand). Applications for grants are assessed by the Research Committee which comprises:

- Peter Heenan, Bioeconomy Science Institute – Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research
- Ben Anderson, Western Australian Herbarium
- Jen Tate, Massey University
- Sarah Matthews, Louisiana State University
- Rachael Fowler, Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria
- Todd McLay, CSIRO
- Kerry Ford, Bioeconomy Science Institute – Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research

A significant and exciting new award, to be known as the ‘Gareth Nelson Award’, was offered for the first time in the September 2025 call for grant applications. This award honours ASBS member Prof. Gareth Nelson, who will be well-known to members through his significant contribution to the theory and practice of phylogenetic systematics and historical biogeography. The award will support students and early career postdoctoral botanists, who are current members of the Society, to conduct projects contributing to systematic botany and biogeography (including land plants, algae, and fungi) in Australasia. This award will be offered once a year in the September round.

The Hansjörg Eichler Scientific Research Grants are offered for research projects focused on the systematics of land plants, algae or fungi. This can include studies of taxonomy, phylogeny and biogeography.

All ASBS members can apply for a Hansjörg Eichler Grant or the Gareth Nelson Award. However, students, recent graduates, newly established botanists and non-salaried researchers are given preference. The grants can be used to fund consumables, travel and other costs associated with fieldwork, contracted services such as DNA sequencing, etc. Large capital items, the publication of journals and books, and the attendance at research conferences cannot be funded by this grant. The maximum grant awarded is AU\$5,000.

In 2025, there were two rounds of Hansjörg Eichler Grants, one offered in March and one in September, and the Gareth Nelson Award was offered for the first time in September. Since the Gareth Nelson Award is new, the ASBS Executive decided that for the time being it was best to not call for separate applications for either the Gareth Nelson Award or the two Hansjörg Eichler Grants. A single application covers both grants, and the Research Committee will award these as appropriate.

Hansjorg Eichler Grants and Gareth Nelson Award

Four applications for Hansjorg Eichler Grants were received in the March round.

The successful applicants were:

- Luke Vaughan, MSc, University of Melbourne, was awarded AU\$5,000 to study the ‘Systematics of the genus *Peziza sensu lato* (Pezizaceae, Ascomycota) in Australia’.
- Andrew McDougall, PhD, University of Adelaide, was awarded AU\$4,872 to undertake ‘A population level investigation into the genetic distinctiveness within the *Caladenia reticulata* Fitzg. species complex in South Australia.’

Six applications for the Hansjorg Eichler Grants and Gareth Nelson Award were received in the September round.

The successful applicants were:

Hansjorg Eichler Grants

- Paul Bell-Butler, PhD, Victoria University of Wellington, was awarded AU\$4,970 to study the 'Taxonomy and biogeography of the liverwort family Lophocoleaceae'.
- Stella Fish, MPhil, Queensland University of Technology, was awarded AU\$5,000 for her research on 'Bryophyte taxonomy: its role in Antarctic conservation'.

Gareth Nelson Award, inaugural recipient

- Robb Eastman-Densem, PhD, University of Melbourne, was awarded AU\$4,034.57 for his research on 'Generating a new genomic resource for *Eucalyptus* subseries *Subexsertae* (tropical red gums) to improve phylogeographic and systematic investigation'.

Marlies Eichler Postdoctoral Fellowships

Marlies Eichler Postdoctoral Fellowships are designed to support research in systematic botany and the career development of recent PhD graduates by providing top-up funds to researchers already successful in attracting other postdoctoral support. The Fellowship offers a maximum of AU\$20,000 over the two years with up to AU\$10,000 paid each year. Funds can be spent on salary for the applicant or project costs (including consumables, essential minor equipment).

The 2024 Fellowship was awarded to Dr Caroline Puente-Lelievre from the School of Biological Sciences, University of Auckland. Caroline's research is aimed at filling the gaps in the phylogeny of the Epacridoideae.

ASBS website report

Kelly Shepherd & Anna Monro, ASBS Webmasters

The website continues to be hosted by Silvercode, with WooCommerce plugins allowing for the processing of 250 membership orders (\$9,030) and 43 donations (\$18,180) this year.

The most significant changes to the website over this period included the implementation of a conference subpage (see the 'ASBS 2025 post-conference survey' article for further information) and adding information on the new Gareth Nelson Award. Other general updates included refining the membership login page with new fields, the addition of new awardees, updating Council office bearers and the Early Career Researcher subcommittee, adding two newsletters (201, 202), and other minor editorial changes.

It is somewhat disappointing that only four blog posts were created this year, usually after prompting from us. This indicates that members may not yet view blogs as a significant means for sharing research and news despite the fact the website received 6,753 active visitors and 13,200 views between early November 2024 and late October 2025. Most of this traffic was directed towards the Home page, as well as the Newsletter, Conference, Membership and Grants pages. Surprisingly, there were hundreds of views of the '404 Error: Page not found' page but it is unclear what error was causing visitors to be sent there. Additionally, there was a spike of extremely unusual activity from 2–3 July 2025 with tens of thousands of views of Newsletter issue 125, costing Silvercode hundreds of dollars in hosting fees (they absorbed this). They could not find the root cause, but suspected this traffic was from AI sources harvesting information and so Silvercode adjusted the Newsletter URL to stop the hits and AI bots were blocked from accessing the site.

With the creation of a Conference subpage future organisers can now update content for each conference as needed. While the website can handle straightforward payments such as membership dues and donations, it would have been very expensive for Silvercode to design and implement a bespoke ticketing system to

process a range of tickets required for a conference (e.g. early bird and regular student, member and non-member registration as well as all the various social activities), which also needed to be flexible so changes can be implemented quickly. The current solution was to utilise the Humanitix ticketing system, which seamlessly integrated with our website, was relatively simple to set up, and provided a secure payment system, while still offering flexibility. The fees for this system were 2.5% + \$0.50 per paid ticket, with profits going to charity. Conference attendees found this system easy to use and it is recommended that we continue to use Humanitix or something similar for future conferences.

ASBS Facebook group report

Mike Bayly, ASBS Treasurer

The ASBS Facebook group, now about 12.5 years old, has grown from 2,128 members in November 2024 to 2,297 members in October 2025. The group is “public”, which means anyone can see the group, its members and posts, but only people in the group can post to the page.

There were 99 posts to the group since the last AGM, soliciting 1978 “reactions” and 144 comments from group members. We thank all regular contributors for keeping the group lively. Some particularly active members this year were Juliet Wege, Tim Hammer, Alex Chapman and Tim Collins.

With changes to Facebook rules in 2022, membership to the group is unvetted, but we changed the group settings in 2023, so that the ability to post content requires manual approval. We also added some membership questions to help the approval process and to help separate the spammers from those who are genuinely interested in botany. This has led to a reduction in the number of spam posts getting through, but it does mean that some genuine members might wait a while to have posting rights approved. Despite the tightening, some spam will still get through, and we ask members to report problematic content to us so that we can remove it promptly.

Although I have the impression that Facebook use is declining, in general, and especially among “younger” people, the Facebook group is still a good way for the dispersed members of our society to keep in touch and discuss our common interests. If you are on Facebook and haven't yet joined our group, you should!

Does *Erythroxylum* (Erythroxylaceae) Still Occur in New South Wales?

John Clarkson

Amongst plants collected by J.L. Boorman at Acacia Creek in northern New South Wales in February 1905 is a specimen identified as *Erythroxylon* [sic] *australe*. Two sheets are held by the New South Wales National Herbarium (NSW636013 and NSW636017). This was the first (Fig. 1), and still, the only record of *Erythroxylum* for New South Wales. Does the plant still occur in New South Wales or has it gone extinct? Following the ASBS conference in Armidale, I attempted to see if it could be relocated.

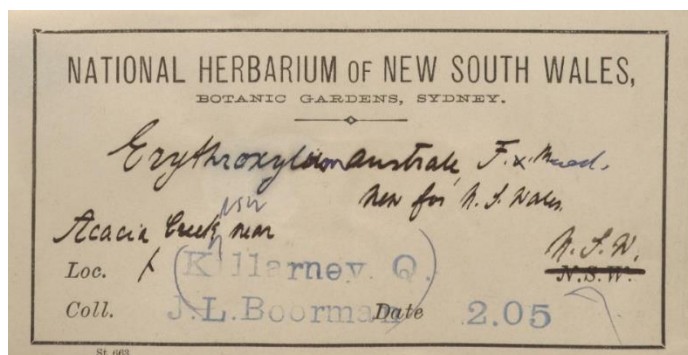


Figure 1. The herbarium label from NSW636017 noting the first record for NSW.

Acacia Creek is a small rural settlement in the far north of New South Wales near the Queensland border. The area was settled in the late 19th century by residents engaged in felling and transporting timber to sawmills in the nearby Queensland town of Killarney. Today, it has a small population of approximately 42 residents, mostly farmers. Acacia Creek can refer to a stream of that name, an upper tributary of the Clarence River, which runs adjacent to the Mount Lindesay Road, or an area of approximately 620 hectares just south of the Queensland-New South Wales border a few kilometres from Killarney in Queensland (Fig. 2).



Figure 2. Acacia Creek can refer to the creek or a locality in New South Wales just south of the New South Wales – Queensland border near Killarney.

A search of AVH records suggests the area has been poorly collected. Between 1904 and 1915, William Dunn (1860–1921), after whom *Eucalyptus dunnii* is named, was based in the Acacia Creek area as a forest guard. He collected 240 specimens which are housed, with a few exceptions, at NSW. There is no *Erythroxylum* amongst Dunn's material although



Figure 3. Left; Terminal shoots of *E. australe* (JRC 11817), right; the undescribed species *Erythroxylum* sp. (Splityard Creek L. Pedley 5360) (JRC 11813) showing the differences in leaf venation.

many of the plants he collected suggest he visited what are probably suitable sites. In February 1905, John Boorman (1864–1938), a collector for the Sydney Botanic Gardens, visited the area and collected about 40 specimens. Between them, these two collectors account for 67% of the specimens from the area listed in AVH. It was Boorman who collected *Erythroxylum*. His notes which accompany NSW636017 — “a rare plant on the sides of one particular dry hill, near the border” — suggest the plant was not common. There is a 30-year gap in collecting during the war years and it was not until May 1947 when Ernest Constable (1903–1986), another intrepid plant collector for the Sydney Botanic Gardens, visited the area and collected a range of species mostly from rainforest on red volcanic soil. He too failed to collect the *Erythroxylum*. Other collectors since have often targeted ‘rainforest’ or ‘dry rainforest’, often mentioning emergent *Araucaria cunninghamii*, but none, not even experienced operators such as John Williams (1932–2005) or Bob Coveny (1943–), who collected in the area in 1965 and 1986 respectively, recorded *Erythroxylum*.

Boorman’s collection was identified as *Erythroxylon* [sic] *australe* F. Muell. At some later date, someone has corrected the spelling of the genus to *Erythroxylum* (Figure 1). Recent morphological and herbarium studies have shown that plants occurring south of about the Tropic of Capricorn in Queensland are clearly distinct from *Erythroxylum australe* and will be described as a new species in a forthcoming revision of the genus in Australia. The leaves of the

southern entity, currently referred to as *Erythroxylum* sp. (Splityard Creek L. Pedley 5360), are much larger than those of *E. australe* and have 9–12 prominent lateral veins that diverge from the midrib at an angle greater than 45° as opposed to the 3–4 primary lateral veins diverging at an angle less than 30° in *E. australe* (Figure 3).

Confirming the presence of *Erythroxylum* for New South Wales could have implications for the state’s Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985. Because *Erythroxylum* is the source of the illicit drug cocaine, Drug Misuse legislation in all states and territories proscribe the growing and possession of cocaine or plants from which it can be extracted. All, except New South Wales, are quite specific and list *Erythroxylum. coca* and *E. novagranatense* or their nomenclatural synonyms. New South Wales, however, obviously unaware that the genus occurs naturally in their jurisdiction, adopts a shotgun approach listing “Any growing plant of the genus *Erythroxylon*” [sic]. Confirmation of the continued presence of the genus in that state would suggest the legislation might need amendment.

So, did I find the plant on my way home? The answer, unfortunately, is no. I spent several hours searching closed communities along Acacia Creek. Most were heavily invaded by woody weeds, particularly Chinese privet (*Ligustrum sinense* Lour.). I suspect the places to look are the dry rainforest patches north of the Mount Lindesay Road, some of which can be seen from the road. I’d encourage anyone working in the area to keep an eye out for it.

“Jess Young” and “J. E. Young”: 19th and 20th century expedition collectors

Alan Rix, Biodiversity and Geosciences, Queensland Museum

Jess Young and J. E. Young were both botanical collectors, the former in the 19th century and the latter in the 20th. Jess Young is listed in the Australian National Herbarium’s catalogue of *Australian Plant Collectors and Illustrators*, but J. E. Young is not. Both have contributed a large number of specimens which now reside in Australian herbaria. It appears that there has been some confusion between the two in the literature.

Jess Young

Jess (or Jesse) Young (1852–1909) was, in his own words, an “observer and naturalist” and “astronomer” in the party on the explorer Ernest Giles’s fourth expedition, that crossed the western part of the Australian continent from South Australia to Perth in 1875, arriving there in November of that year. Some 250 specimens collected by Jess Young on that expedition are held at the National Herbarium of Victoria.

Jess Young arrived in South Australia in 1874 and does not appear to have had a background in natural history. Said by Giles to be a friend of the expedition’s sponsor, Thomas Elder, Young had previously been a member of the Bengal Marine (Giles mentions that Young had been a sailor). He was a part of Lord Mayo’s escort to the Andaman Islands in 1872 when Mayo was assassinated.

The Giles expedition collected widely, despite the privations of the journey. Of their camp at Queen Victoria Spring, Giles wrote in his account of his explorations:

Mr. Young and I collected a great many specimens of plants, flowers, insects, and reptiles. Among the flowers was the marvellous red, white, blue, and yellow wax-like flower of a hideous little gnarled and stunted mallee-tree [possibly Eucalyptus youngiana F.Muell]; it is impossible to keep these flowers unless they could be hermetically preserved in glass; all I collected and most carefully put away in separate tin

boxes fell to pieces, and lost their colours. The collection of specimens of all kinds got mislaid in Adelaide. Some grass-trees grew in the vicinity of this spring to a height of over twenty feet. (Giles, 1889)

Giles assessed his colleagues somewhat unkindly thus:

The officers, Mr. Tietkens and Mr. Young, except for occasional outbursts of temper, and all the other members of the expedition, acted in every way so as to give me satisfaction; and when I say that the personnel of the expedition behaved as well as the camels, I cannot formulate greater praise.

Notably, Giles did not request Mr. Young to accompany him on his overland return journey to South Australia. Young then travelled in December 1875 via Adelaide to Melbourne, where he handed over the botanical collections to Ferdinand von Mueller (700–800 specimens collected, by his own account, as reported in the *Australasian Sketcher*, 22 January 1876). He passed the mineral and fossil collections to the Department of Mines, gave press accounts of the expedition, and in January 1876 proceeded by Pacific steamer to San Francisco and thence to London (*Adelaide Evening Journal* 1876; *Brisbane Telegraph* 1876). He published an account of his Australian travels in 1878 (Young, 1878).

Jess Young studied briefly at Christ College, Cambridge University from 1877 and went to the United States in 1879 to work in business. He returned to Western Australia in 1892 and took various public service roles in the Gascoyne region and Kanowna, before his death in Perth in 1909. He appears not to have undertaken further botanical collecting.

James Edgar Young

James Edgar Young (1871–1956) was a Queensland field naturalist, well known in the state in his day, who assisted the explorer, aviator and photographer Hubert Wilkins on his Australian collecting expedition

for the British Museum in 1923, and then became an honorary collector for the Queensland Museum. Young ranged widely throughout Queensland for some 20 years and took part in official expeditions to the Low Isles on the Great Barrier Reef and to the Carnarvon Ranges.

As enthusiastic as he was as a collector of fauna and fossils for the Queensland Museum, Edgar Young was also a keen botanist and plant collector, and the Australasian Virtual Herbarium lists 105 specimens recorded and donated by Young, or by Young and C. T. White (<https://avh.ala.org.au/>). These are held in the National Herbarium of Victoria, the National Herbarium of NSW, the Australian National Herbarium and the Queensland Herbarium (most in the last of these), and were collected over the period stretching from 1914 to 1938, and from all over Queensland.

The Wilkins expedition went as far as Cape Grenville and nearby Temple Bay in northern Cape York. Of this location, Wilkins recorded:

The vegetation was of special interest, for this area had not been previously visited by a botanist, and one of the interesting discoveries we made was a most conspicuous flowering tree which was quite new to science. It was perhaps the most conspicuous tree in bloom during our visit and, because of this, we could hardly believe it was new. In the rich soil near the beach it grew to a height of forty feet or more, but it was dwarfed on the rocky hills. This tree belonged to the genus Xanthostemon, which includes the well-known penda trees, so common in Queensland. It has been named Xanthostemon youngii after Mr Young, who first observed it. The brilliant red, drooping flowers with golden-yellow pendant pistils proved the brightest colouring that we noticed on the Peninsula (Wilkins 1928, p. 47).

Young's botanical collecting for the Wilkins expedition in the Torrens Creek area (near Hughenden) resulted in the description of a new species of *Grevillea*, *G. sessilis* C. T. White & W. D. Francis in 1926, and an additional locality for *Acacia uncifera* Benth., which was described in 1848. Young had also previously discovered *Cryptandra armata* from Barakula, north of Chinchilla, possibly around

1920, which was later described by C. T. White and W. D. Francis in 1922.

Confusion

There appears to be some confusion in the botanical literature between "Jess Young" and "J. E. Young". The *Flora of Australia* entry for *Grevillea sessilis* (Vol.17A, 2000), which Edgar Young collected in 1923, gives the collector as "J. E. Young", but the date was incorrectly recorded as "probably 1870s". The *Wikipedia* entry for the same plant is also in error, as it names the collector as "Jess Young", who never collected in Queensland ([Grevillea sessilis, 2025](#)).

Records at the National Herbarium of Victoria (e.g. MEL 0276144A) indicate for Jess Young that "[Collector was active from 1875–1880], dates which are also referred to in *Australian Plant Collectors and Illustrators 1700s – 2000* (Council of Heads of Australasian Herbaria, 2024). This would appear to be incorrect. Jess Young did collect prolifically on Giles's 1875 expedition, but not thereafter as he had returned to England.

Some of Jess Young's biographical sources assert that he received the Gold Medal of the Royal Geographical Society (RGS), meeting Queen Victoria and other royalty. However, he is not listed among the recipients of the RGS medals and awards, and it was in fact Ernest Giles who received the RGS Patron's Medal in 1880.

Jess Young and James Edgar Young have been confused with each other on numerous occasions throughout botanical literature. With superficially similar names and some biographical similarities it's not hard to imagine why this is the case. Renewed care when reviewing specimens and information associated with these botanical collectors is advisable.

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In the news

Please send to the Newsletter Editor anything that you think is of interest for the ASBS community.

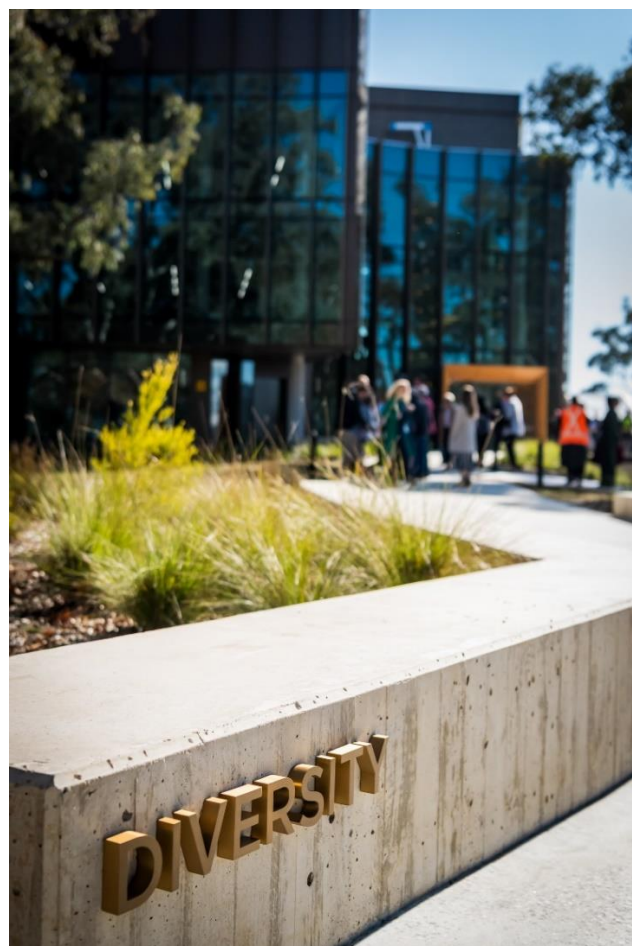
2026–2027 National Taxonomy Research Grant Program round will be opening soon.

- Applications open 3 February 2026
- Applications close 17 March 2026

More info: [ABRS National Taxonomy Research Grant Program - DCCEEW](#)

Major investment in biodiversity infrastructure

In August, CSIRO officially launched "Diversity" the new home for the Australian National Insect and Wildlife collections. The Australian National Herbarium also benefitted from the investment with access to new molecular labs, a dedicated storage facility for ethanol preserved collections and a shiny new tearoom.



Article: [New \\$90 million research facility opens at CSIRO to house specimens collected over 150 years](#)

State of the World's Plants and Fungi Symposium

Join international experts to explore the digitisation of herbarium and fungarium collections, including its applications and implications.

When

29 June to 1 July 2026, daily timings vary

Where

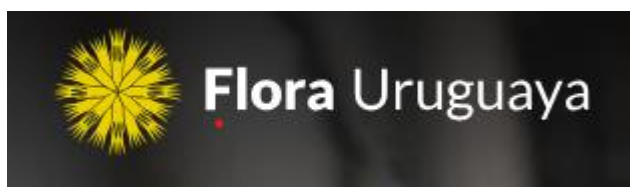
Kew Gardens and online (hybrid event)

[More information](#)

Flora of Uruguay is launched

A significant new botanical resource has been launched with the release of the online *Flora of Uruguay* (<https://florauruguay.org>), providing open access to comprehensive information on the country's plant diversity.

Article: [Uruguay's Online Flora: A new resource connecting science, society, and conservation](#)



Wondering what to read?

With thousands of papers published every day, it can be challenging to work out which ones really matter. This article offers some practical tips to help you decide what to read—and what you can safely skip.

Read the article: [How to find the papers you need to read — and avoid the ones you don't](#)

RBG Victoria researchers are writing women collectors back into history

Article: [Additions and corrections to a biographical register of Ferdinand Mueller's female plant collectors, and observations on the limitations of specimen databases.](#)



Canberra Nature MapR is retired

NatureMapr will cease national operation on 30 June 2026 (except in the ACT). This guide helps users export their records and media, ensuring continued access and contribution to biodiversity databases.



<https://naturemapr.org/content/platform-transition-guide>

Declining pollination services for orchids

Herbarium-based research suggests that pollination services for orchids have declined by about 60 per cent since the 1970s.



iNaturalist: [Reiner Richter, Early caladenia, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)

Article: [Australian orchids suffer rapid pollination decline since the 1970s, study suggests](#)

Tell Us What You Really Think

Book review by Robyn Barker, State Herbarium of South Australia

The Sceptical Botanist: Separating Fact from Fiction

Tim Entwistle

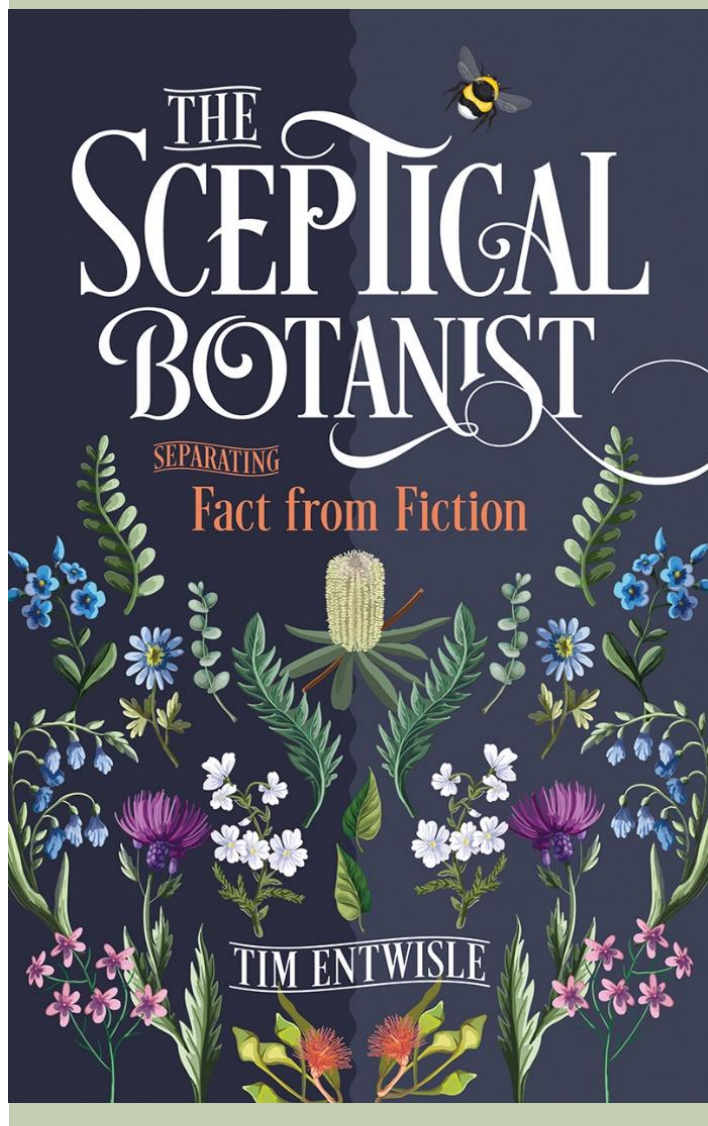
ISBN: 9781486318216 (paperback) 210 x 135 mm

CSIRO Publishing, Melbourne, 2025, pp. 272

RRP AU\$39.99

An expanded list of subheadings or essay titles:

<https://talkingplants.blogspot.com/2025/04/the-sceptical-botanist.html>



Who is Tim Entwistle?

For many members of ASBS, Tim is in no need of introduction. Those who are older will have come across him in his earlier botanical life while those who are younger may have come across him in his directorial or communication roles. For the record, This first involvement with ASBS was presumably at the History of Systematic Botany Conference in Melbourne in 1988 where he gave a history of the lean legacy of the specialist niche he adopted as his own — freshwater algae. In the 1990s while gainfully employed at MEL in the writing of two different Floras, he was elected as a Councillor (1992–1995), Vice-president (1995–1996) and then President (1996–1999), of the ASBS Council.

For the rest of his life story the best source is Tim's own memoir, *Evergreen, The Botanical Life of a Plant Punk* (Entwistle, 2022). Phil Novis, Tim's freshwater algae equivalent at DSIR, Christchurch, New Zealand reviewed the memoir for the [ASBS Newsletter issue 192](#). For your further information, Tim is not the only plant taxonomist describing himself as a plant punk — try [Robert Scotland](#) and [Joey Santore](#). A meeting between these three would be very interesting.

The Book

A collection of 50 essays, usually deceptively simple in their writing and often displaying some clever word play. Half have been written recently, the rest are based on previously published works in newspapers, garden magazines or his [blog](#), with an update in the form of a postscript where necessary. The essays are grouped under five chapter headings, with their sub-heading titles serving as “way-finders” in the text, a practice used in *Evergreen* as well. Below are the groupings and an attempt to indicate some of the topics considered within each chapter.

Chapters

1. **What makes plants tick** — Amongst other topics, we are informed by considerations of Fibonacci numbers, flowering times, floral clocks, mugifumi, thigmomorphogenesis, r- and k-selected species, “scorching water droplets” and synchronised flowering

species. Are plants intelligent? Does adding seaweed to the soil help to produce healthier plants?

2. **Plants from elsewhere** — if we know that a plant doesn't occur in a country, then it must be exotic. Should it be allowed in a country where it hasn't previously existed? What are the requirements for plants (or animals) to be considered native? All familiar problems for those involved in the world of native species and their protection, or the world of invasive species where definitions change depending on the country, or even state of Australia, in which you live. There are some great examples chosen here to express the complexity encountered by those with the responsibility of deciding within which box a species belongs.

3. **Garden plants and landscapes** — Defining (something of a hobby of Tim's) what characterises a botanic garden and then which gardens are eligible for the crown of first botanic garden. What to do when historical gardens are reaching their inevitable fate — keep the spirit of the original designer (how), restoration (not always possible), partial replacement (but with what — consideration of desirable and undesirable plants). And if you need advice in these circumstances, consult the [Burra Charter](#), a best practice standard for managing cultural heritage places in Australia, and apparently, according to Google AI, "Australia's major contribution to 20th Century conservation history". And having read this, what should we plant in our gardens, bearing in mind what has been learnt from Chapter 2.

The lifespans of plants need to be taken into account when planning a garden. Most seed plants follow the normal pathway of germination, growth, flowering and fruiting on repeat for a prescribed number of years before passing their zenith and causing, in the case of the fig trees in Sydney's Domain in 2004, what Tim describes as "a test of his resolve and resilience".¹ But there are also those rarer examples of plants which do away with sex. Some of these are estimated to be thousands of years old and there are some interesting examples in the Australian flora.

4. **Gardening with convictions** — Welcome to the pros and cons of organic vs non-organic food production, of GM crops, of glyphosate use, whether seaweed should be used as a fertiliser² in your garden, the complexities of companion planting and planting by the moon. The essay on dead bodies reminded me to visit the butcher before planting a replacement passion fruit vine, but it also made me think of some of the more enlightened views that now exist under the subject of natural funerals — a subject not covered here but in need of further investigation in terms of land use. It also leads nicely into consideration of the rhizosphere, mycorrhizae and associated underground diversity, also covered in this section.

5. **Observing and cataloguing nature** — To communicate with others about organisms of any kind they need names. Whether these names are scientific or common they can still cause problems. The unfortunate *Racosperma/Acacia* debate of the early 2000s which nobody "won" is recounted — and ironically, looking at the arguments used at that time, why are these same objections not being raised for some of the major changes that have happened since? Whether the number of new species described by a taxonomist is a measure of their ability (a no brainer — definitely not), whether *Epacris impressa* is impressive enough to be Victoria's floral emblem — of course it is, but I was surprised to see that the original ASBS logo (*Xanthorrhoea*) was not included in Tim's list of alternative suggestions; it seems to tick all the boxes. The essay on Decolonising Nomenclature considers the ongoing global debate within scientific circles on whether organisms (along with places, and even ecological terminology etc.) given names now considered politically incorrect, should have these names changed. The examples used by Tim are Joseph Banks and William Hibbert, one apparently acceptable, the other not³.

This section includes an uncomfortable essay on extinction and the amount of money being spent trying to stop species already well on their way to that fate at the expense of others which are more viable.

¹ This clearly formative event in Tim's career is covered in an essay but there is more detail in his earlier memoir.

² Does the presence of a toxic algal bloom affect the answer to this question?

³ My own opinion is that demands for social justice are long overdue, but our small self-governing taxonomic community is now overloaded with changes from molecular studies alone, to

make a mockery of any concept of stability in botanical names. Further global committees would presumably be needed to make decisions about what names are acceptable in the future. What might be better is a brief, possibly standard, addition to the derivation of a contested epithet in the eponymy, rather than sweeping this information under the carpet.

Tim is well known for his interest in the seasons, proposing five rather than four for all of Australia south of Brisbane in his 2014 book *Sprinter and Sprummer: Australia's Changing Seasons*; he extended his observations to the London seasons whilst living there. In 2023 he reiterated his views in a summary essay calling for the scrapping of the four seasons in Australia.

As you can see there is plenty to contemplate in this modest book. For those looking for subjects for debate at meetings or conferences, look no further. Many of these essays are the basis for an argument or debate.

A couple of nit-picking criticisms and comments. While the titles of the essays are all listed in the Contents pages at the start of the book and help somewhat in navigation, the need for an index to plant names, at least, is exposed when trying to revisit a topic. For example, try finding the mention of *Bambusa arnhemica* (p. 41) or *Uromyrtus australis* (p. 108), even if you can remember under what topic it was mentioned.

I also don't like endnotes at the end of a book; by the time I have found them I have forgotten what chapter I was looking at and the search often interrupts the flow of thought. So, endnotes at the end of the chapter or as footnotes are preferred by this reader.

Surprisingly the only coloured illustrations for both books are the covers. Since the subjects of the essays usually involve plants and botanic gardens there was much potential for the use of colour, as can be seen with the colour photographs accompanying the original blog posts and magazine articles. Here though you can smile along instead with the minimal black and white line drawings of Tim's son Jerome — clearly a barrister of wit.

Finally, I wasn't quite sure what to expect before I received this book. Like Phil Novis, I was persuaded by John Clarkson, book review editor, that it was an easy-read and I would be able to provide a review in a few days. Having enjoyed many of Tim's various writings previously, when I did receive the book and flipped through it, I still thought the same. But another (and another) week has passed and still I am not sure that I have done it justice. One thing is clear, however. Our lives will be poorer if Tim decides not to continue to entertain and educate us in the way in which we have become accustomed. Definitely recommended.

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A Capital New Book

Book review by Alex George

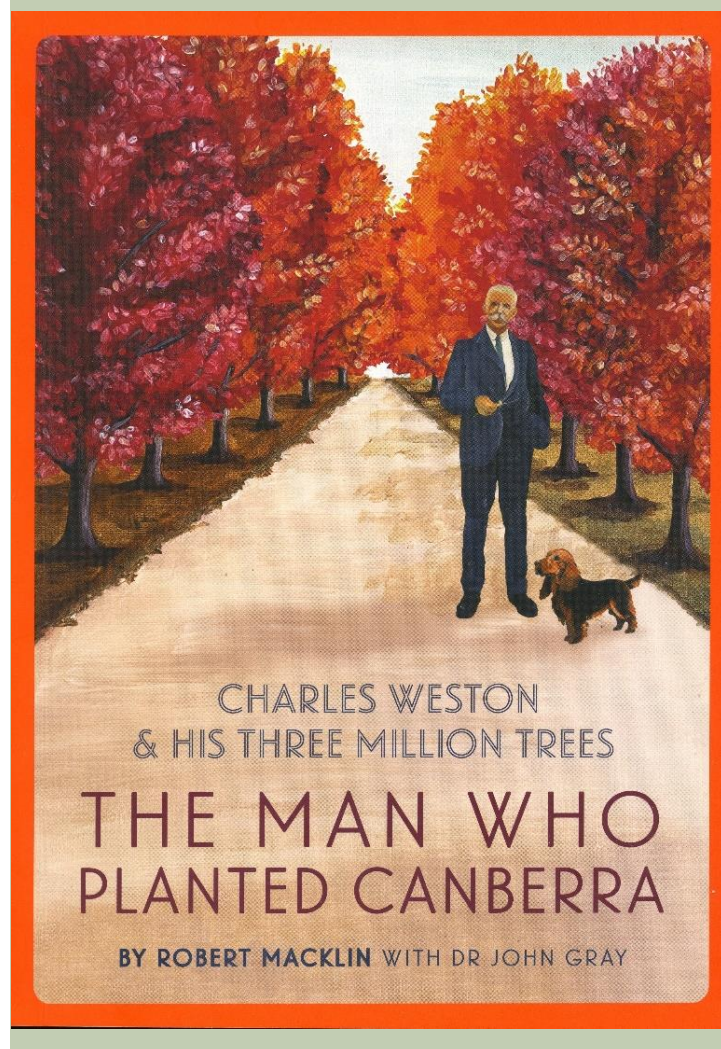
The Man who Planted Canberra: Charles Weston & His Three Million Trees

Robert Macklin with John Gray

ISBN 9781922507778 (paperback) 240 × 170 mm, pp 240

National Library of Australia Publishing, Canberra (2025)

\$39.99 from the National Library; packing and postage extra



While not relevant to systematics, this book is important for anyone interested in the landscaping of our national capital and the history of how it began. For the first time we have a biographical account of the man responsible for turning an open plain on the Southern Tablelands of New South Wales into a strikingly landscaped city. An account of Weston's

childhood and employment in Britain, and his years in Sydney, explains the drive, expertise and management skills that he brought to Canberra. In April 1911, he visited the newly chosen Federal Capital Territory for the first time. Climbing Mt Ainslie, he saw below him 'the valley of his dreams'. We are taken through the stages of planning and planting Canberra, including the provisional Parliament House and the Parliamentary Triangle, Government House, the Civic Centre, and the anticipated shoreline of the lake that would not appear until long after his death. Planning the Yarralumla Nursery and choosing trees and shrubs from around the world for trial planting was a major undertaking. He also supervised planting out. In some places the shale ground proved an obstacle, solved by the use of gelignite. Through it all he had to cope with the ups and down of dealing with government bureaucracy.

Weston had a fractured relationship with Walter Burley Griffin, who, with his wife Marion, had won the competition for the design of Canberra and who often had different ideas on how it should be landscaped. Griffin left Canberra in 1921 and had no further active role in the development, but he was invited to the official opening of the Parliament House in 1927.

One of 'our' number who played an important role was Joseph Maiden as Director of the Sydney Botanic Gardens. Weston developed a good rapport with Maiden and sometimes called upon him for support, which was given readily. In 1921, Maiden described a collection by Weston as *Acacia westonii* but later it was synonymised under *A. pycnantha* (the Australian national floral emblem). Lindsay Pryor makes a late entrance as one involved in carrying on Weston's work.

Scientific names in use at the time are given, with the currently accepted name when that has changed.

With photography well entrenched by the early 20th century, we are fortunate to have photographs of the players in the story, mainly politicians and bureaucrats, some of whom gave Weston a hard time. Besides Weston and Griffin, we meet a number of other people who are commemorated in place names in the capital: James Ainslie, Edmund Barton, Stanley Bruce, Alfred Deakin, Andrew Fisher, Clarence Gorman, Billy Hughes, Joseph Lyons, 'King' O'Malley, Charles Scrivener and John Sulman, amongst others.

The book is illustrated with many photographs (people and places), paintings and maps, though most of the colour plates are too dark — the only two bright

reproductions are an undated map of the city on the inside front cover and a 2024 view across the Yarralumla Nursery on the inside of the back cover. In some captions (especially aerial photos) it would have been useful to indicate the cardinal direction, to help those unfamiliar with Canberra. A current map of the city and inner suburbs would also help orientate the reader. The book is printed on quite thick paper and is section-sewn but also glued and does not open flat.

Filling a gap in the history of Canberra and its landscaping, the book deserves to sell well.

Photography and Science at Their Best

Book review by Robb Eastman-Densem

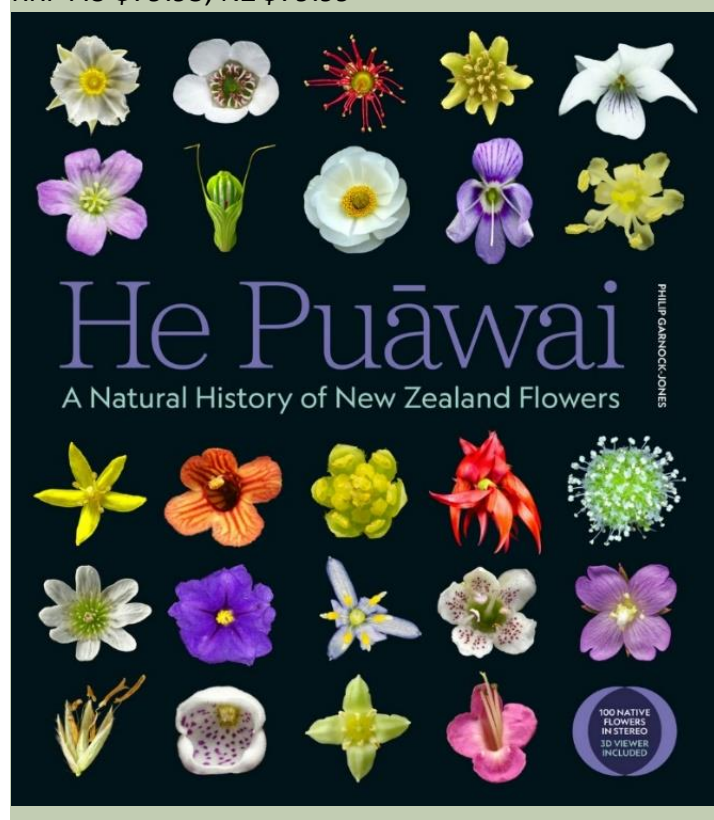
He Puāwai: A Natural History of New Zealand Flowers

Philip Garnock-Jones

ISBN: 9781776711680 (jacketed hardback) 270 x 240 mm

Auckland University Press, 9 October 2025, pp. 448

RRP AU \$79.95, NZ \$79.99



American modernist painter Georgia O'Keeffe once commented that no one sees a flower, comparing it to keeping a friend. Friendship, after all, like careful observation and understanding, takes time. This quote really stuck out to me while reading *He Puāwai: A Natural History of New Zealand Flowers*, which masterfully showcases author Philip Garnock-Jones's accumulated knowledge of and appreciation for the New Zealand flora. If anyone truly sees a flower, it is him.

He Puāwai is a story about New Zealand's flowers. Specifically focusing on their pollination biology, the book covers 100 of the 2000 or so species of flowering plants in New Zealand, choosing to represent a range of floral forms, life histories and taxonomic groups. From the iconic pōhutukawa, to the delicate wind-pollinated flowers of sedges, and the unusual, water-adapted, flower-clusters of eelgrass, readers will find the selection well-balanced and satisfying. For each flower, at least two (if not more) sets of stereo images facilitate viewing in both two and three dimensions, allowing the reader to experience something akin to what a pollinator might see. Accompanying these stunning images are several panels of text, providing information that is specifically relevant to each flower such as its biology, evolutionary history, or previous botanical studies. It was especially nice to see the work from PhD or Masters theses included among the references in these sections, which helped add to the richness of the story told in each.

At the start of the book, several pages are devoted to introducing key concepts such as what a flower is, pollination, and some key terminology. This provides a solid grounding for the following pages which detail the flowers individually. Interspersed throughout are small sections geared towards providing further explanation, or introducing new scientific topics such as gender dimorphism, flower structure, development and pollination syndromes. In all of these sections, Garnock-Jones does an excellent job of introducing the terminology and concepts in a way that is gradual and easily digested. This really enforces the value of *He Puāwai* as an accessible account of New Zealand flower biology, which is mentioned as being one of the main goals of this book. The preference for the use of names from Te Reo Māori and English over scientific

ones also goes a long way to add to the accessibility of *He Puāwai*, and I enjoyed the opportunity to learn the Māori names for some species which I hadn't encountered before.

While 3D imagery can sometimes feel gimmicky today — seemingly relegated to the 2010s with the hype surrounding James Cameron's *Avatar* — the use of stereo images in *He Puāwai* feels very natural and showcases the various floral forms beautifully. Although it was initially a bit cumbersome to use the 3D glasses each time I wanted to view the photos in stereo, they are so stunning in two dimensions that I found the full effect was not needed to enjoy them. After a bit of practice in viewing stereo with just my eyes, I was able to largely see the 3D effect without the glasses, making this a non-issue. For those who'd like more robust glasses than the cardboard ones that come with the book, a source for purchasing sturdier ones is suggested.

While on the topic of the 3D glasses, it may also be worth noting that buyers outside of New Zealand might need to be prepared to have delays at the border. The glasses are stored in a pocket in the noticeably thicker back cover, making it appear suspicious on inspection by Australian postal authorities. This is perhaps the reason the package was inspected while enroute to Australia for this review. Although no delays or disruptions were seen in this instance, it may be something worth considering if you need a quick delivery, perhaps in time for Christmas.

Striking an excellent balance between being both educational and visually appealing, I'm sure *He Puāwai* will enchant anyone with an interest in flowers, science or New Zealand natural history. This book is a delight to read, and it definitely made me aware of what it takes to truly see a flower.

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The ASBS Newsletter keeps members informed of society events and news, and provides a platform for debate and discussion. The newsletter is published three times a year on the ASBS website. ASBS members are encouraged to submit original articles, notes and letters.

Have an article or an idea for the Newsletter?

Send it to Helen Kennedy at
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