Top End Native Plant Society NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2026

A WET SEASON TOP END FLOWER

Grevillea dryandri

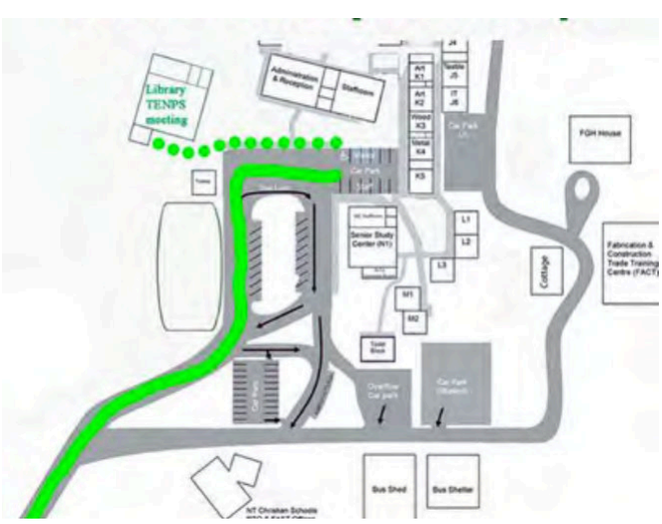
Monthly Meetings

Top End Native Plant Society (TENPS) general meetings are held at 7:00 pm on the third Thursday of the month at Marrara Christian College library on the corner of Amy Johnson Ave and McMillans Rd.

Bring your plants to swap, sell or have identified over a cuppa. Note this item, unlike previous meetings, will be after the monthly talk. Please be there at 7 pm sharp so not to miss the presentation.

The April talk will be announced.

NEXT Meeting: April 16th



TENPS (Top End Native Plant Society)
Committee Members

President: Plaxy Purich

(0435027116)

Vice President: Sean Stieber

Secretary: Johanna Stieber

Treasurer: Graham Zemunik

Publications: Roland Muench

General Committee Member: Claire Hewitt

Webmaster: Amanda Lockwood

Public Officer: Dave Liddle

Publicity: Vacant please inquire

In this Newsletter

Visit our Facebook for info on our next events and sales!

www.topendnativeplants.org.au

By Richard Boyne

The first TENPS field trip for 2026 was held at the Knuckey Lagoon Recreation Reserve on February the 21st. This a little to the north of the larger Knuckey Lagoons Conservation Reserve and is mostly mixed forest with a shrubby understorey, including some of the largest Banksias I've seen in the Darwin region. This reserve has six walking tracks with different themes. For example, the Native Bush Walk has markers that identify common native plants in the area, the Cycad walk

Clerodendron tatei - Photo Richard Boyne

takes you past *Cycas armstrongii*, and the Green Tree Frog walk goes to a swamp, which was very wet at this time of the year! The biggest highlight was an 'avenue' of *Grevillea dryandri subsp. dryandri* in full flower. It's likely that these were planted, as part of this reserve was a community

Tephrosia remotifolia - Photo Richard Boyne

garden. Other plants in flower were white *Clerodendrum tatei*, yellow *Hibbertia holtzei* and a pink pea that I've tentatively named *Tephrosia remotiflora*.

Crossandra sp - Photo Richard Boyne

On one side of the reserve were the backyards of residential blocks. One of them had a large patch of *Crossandra*, an exotic ornamental, that was spreading into the reserve. This is one of those taxa that's become naturalised, but not to the point where it's considered to be a weed. So far it's not listed as part of the NT's official flora. After the walk, we had morning tea provided by Amanda at the Berrimah Scout Hall. Our visit coincided with a workshop of the Top End Gem and Mineral Club, who were busy polishing stones. We were shown some beautiful pieces of petrified wood from their collection. There were also some great sculptures of native frogs reptiles carved from tree trunks. We took this as an opportunity to assess the hall's suitability for holding future meetings, so watch this space!

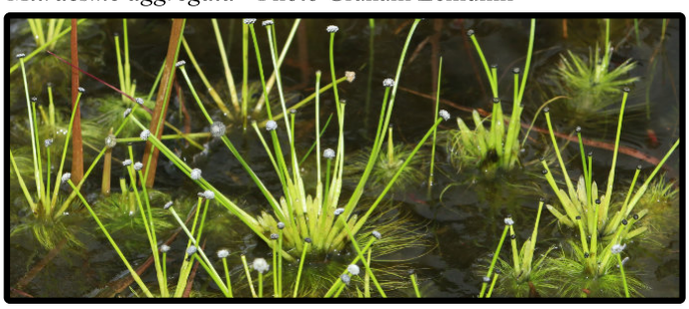
Addendum by Roland Muench

Graham Zemunik and myself separated from the group and ventured along the Frog Walk to examine the swampy area and came across quite a number of interesting plants including tiny carnivorous plants. These included several *Utricularia* species such as

Hibbertia holtzei - Photo Richard Boyne

Grevillea dryandri - Photo Richard Boyne

Mitracsme aggregata - Photo Graham Zemunik



Eriocaulon setaceum - Photo Graham Zemunik

Utricularia minutissima - Photo Graham Zemunik

Utricularia minutissima, *U. capilliflora*, *U. nivea* and *U. leptoplectra*. There were also some *Drosera spp*. which are difficult to ID without seeing them flower. Other herbal species included *Eriocaulon setaceum*, *Fimbristylis densa*, *Mitrasacsme aggregata*, *Salomonia ciliata* and *Afrohybanthus*

Tephrosia juncea - Photo Graham Zemunik

Utricularia capilliflora - Photo Graham Zemunik

Utricularia leptoplectra - Photo Roland Muench

enneaspermus. Most of these and many other observations since then have been uploaded to the iNaturalist platform which includes the location of the observation and additional information.

Samual Amini, our TENPS scholarship recipient gifted us a follow-up talk on the 19th of February to shed further light on his work on Sawfish Conservation in the Northern Territory. While this topic appears to be somewhat outside of our main interest being the botany of native plants, we understand that everything in Nature is connected through the food web of life as well as the climate and therefore is relevant. His presentation gave us a fascinating insight into both, the practical aspects of conservation efforts for critically endangerd species as well as informing us on the scientific methods used in his work. Samuel kindly provided the following summary.

O' brother where art thou: Stranded Critically Endangered Largetooth Sawfish (*Prisits pristis*) provide insights into habitat, ecology and kinship

By Samuel R. Amini (Honours student)

Research Institute for the Environment and Livelihoods, Charles Darwin University, Darwin, NT 0810

Email: samuelamini20@gmail.com

Supervisors: Dr Peter Kyne (CDU) and Dr Pierre Feutry (CSIRO)

Research Summary:

The sawfishes (family Pristidae) are among the most imperilled species globally. In northern Australia, wet-season flooding facilitates the dispersal of Largetooth Sawfish (*Pristis pristis*) pups onto floodplain habitats. Many individuals retreat to floodplain waterholes over the dry season, making them vulnerable to mortality in the event of a late monsoonal onset. The discovery of stranded sawfish led to the 'Sawfish Patrol and Rescues', a 13-year collaboration between the Malak Malak Rangers and CDU researchers, where sawfish trapped in rapidly drying waterholes are caught, processed, and returned to the main channel of the Daly River.

My honours investigated the ecological and genomic patterns in Largetooth Sawfish through the 'Sawfish Rescues' and targeted sampling the Daly River (Northern Territory). I first examined the relationship

Above – All smiles whilst relocating a sawfish pup from a drying pool (Thor Jensen)

between wet season variables and the occurrence and abundance of stranded juvenile *P. pristis*. I then used a multi-marker approach to estimate the kinship of 113 individuals across five cohorts. I show that *P. pristis* are most likely to occur on the floodplain following high-discharge wet seasons, whilst abundance increases with the duration of floodplain inundation. There was a high incidence of kin within and between cohorts, with most cross-cohort siblings being maternally related. This provides the first direct evidence of female philopatry in the species and suggests that few adults have contributed to each cohort.

These findings highlight the vulnerability of *P. pristis* to catchment-scale hydrological alterations and sustained declines in adult abundance in northern Australia.

Fun fact: There are maternal half-siblings born 12 years apart in our data!

Above – Preparing sawfish for processing prior to release (Thor Jensen)

'The magical world of Bryophytes with Andrew Franks'

For the March meeting Richard showed a video via YouTube titled The Magical World of Bryophytes with Andrew Franks. In Richard's words, bryophyte is an umbrella term for mosses, liverworts and hornworts, small plants that lack vascular tissue and reproduce by spores. This video gave an overview of the three major bryophyte groups and tips for what identifying features you can look for in the field. The wet season is great time to look for bryophytes while they're actively growing and reproducing. Good places to find them are tree trunks, rocks, termite mounds and bare ground (where they play an important role in stabilising the soil). Andrew Franks is a bryophyte specialist who used to work at the Queensland Herbarium and is very passionate about increasing awareness and appreciation for the less conspicuous plants. Ancient and believed to originate some 450 mi years ago, these organisms preceeded flowering plants, gymnosperms and ferns. Bryophytes are still here and indeed have critical ecological roles in many habitats all over the world including carbon storage. They are also quite beautiful but are rarely observed because of their size.

Many thanks go to Richard Boyne for organising this screening on short notice.

One of my mosses over one year old - Photo Roland Muench

Botanical misinformation online
by Richard Boyne

Most of us use web browsers to look for information on plants, even when already know of specialist websites. I do this when I want to see what else has been written about a taxon, or find more images to help with identification. When doing this it's wise to be mindful of all the misinformation that's out there, and all the articles that are just there for advertising space.

A good example I found is the website Botanical Realm. Unfortunately this site is often one of the top hits when I search for a plant name on a web browser. Botanical Realm at least gives you a warning before you read on:

"*While Botanical Realm strives to provide accurate, up-to-date, and relevant information, we do not and cannot guarantee the completeness or accuracy of any information presented on this platform. Our team continually reviews and updates content with the assistance of botanical experts within the community to ensure the highest standards of accuracy.*"

https://www.botanicalrealm.com/plant-identification/synostemon-lissocarpus

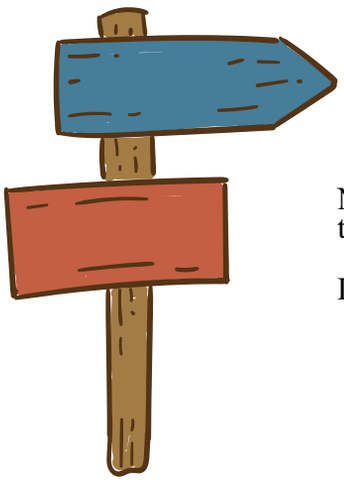
The example that I have is for the native plant *Synostemon lissocarpus* in Phyllanthaceae. The title describes it as 'The Resilient Shrub with Ecological Charm'. This kind of flowery language is prevalent throughout the article and the information it contains completely useless for anyone who wants to identify it in the field or learn about its ecology or taxonomy. It falsely puts it in the family Fabaceae and claims that it can fix nitrogen! But the top of the page did put it in the right order (Malpighiales). Under Natural Range and Distribution it's 'Indigenous to parts of Australia and neighbouring regions', which is too vague. This species is an Australian endemic, so if the text is implying that's indigenous to neighbouring regions outside of Australia, then that's another error.

The text had a very AI look to it, which is becoming increasingly prevalent. I ran a bit of it through Originality.ai and the result was 100% confidence that it was AI-generated. I can't vouch for how good that AI detector is because that's not my department! I welcome people who know what to look for to correct me on this.

Compare that to the profile on the species from the official NT Flora site and the Atlas of Living Australia, which are less wordy but a lot more useful. I find that Wikipedia can be an excellent source for broader taxonomic groups and species that are very well-known or which have extensive literature, but not for relatively obscure species (there's no page for *Synostemon lissocarpus* yet).

http://eflora.nt.gov.au/factsheet?id=2064

Synostemon lissocarpus | Atlas of Living Australia



March and April 2026 Field Trips

Note that for March there is no fieldtrip other than the scheduled plant sale at the Humpty Doo Village Green, see the flyer below

Details of the April fieldtrip to be announced

March 2026 Plant Sale

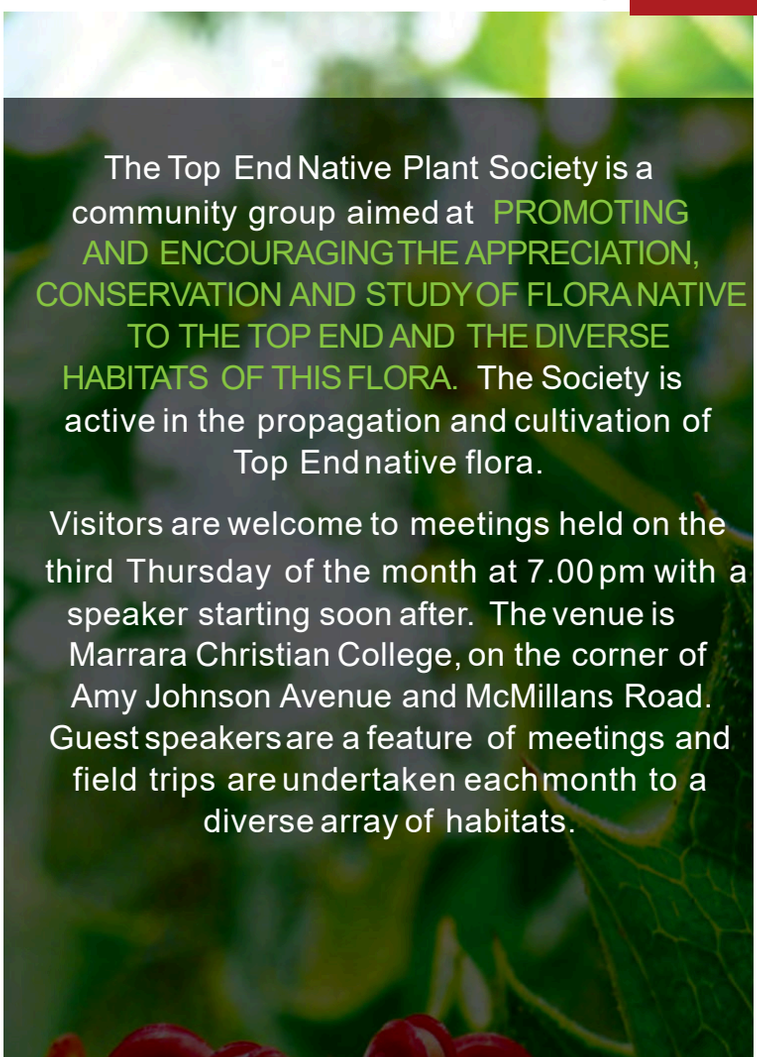
Top End Native Plant Society

BECOME A MEMBER!

Member discounts for plant sales.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

(Due annually on 1st July each year)



The Top End Native Plant Society is a community group aimed at PROMOTING AND ENCOURAGING THE APPRECIATION, CONSERVATION AND STUDY OF FLORA NATIVE TO THE TOP END AND THE DIVERSE HABITATS OF THIS FLORA. The Society is active in the propagation and cultivation of Top End native flora.

Visitors are welcome to meetings held on the third Thursday of the month at 7.00 pm with a speaker starting soon after. The venue is Marrara Christian College, on the corner of Amy Johnson Avenue and McMillans Road. Guest speakers are a feature of meetings and field trips are undertaken each month to a diverse array of habitats.

New Membership ☐ Renewal ☐

Membership fees are:

Individual Waged:	$35.00
Family Waged:	$45.00
Individual Unwaged:	$15.00
Family Unwaged:	$20.00

Name/s: _____

Postal address: _____

To pay online:

Bank Bendigo Bank

Account Name: Top End Native Plant Society

BSB: 633 000

Account: 207 974 247

Note: Please include your name in the transfer reference and email the information in this form to topendnativeplantsociety@hotmail.com
Or pay in person at meetings or events where cash or card will be accepted.

Follow 'Top End Native Plant Society' on Facebook for information on current activities and events.

Contact us by

topendnativeplantsociety@hotmail.com

www.topendnativeplants.org.au

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