

The Fort Bushland

November 2006 Notes - by John Lahey

The silver ash or bumpy ash (*Flindersia schottiana*) at the top of Eddystone Road is now in full bloom and looks magnificent. Surprisingly, although this species is very common in this bushland, very few are in flower. Its close relative the crow's ash (*Flindersia australis*) has just finished flowering although it flowered quite poorly this year. Three other species of *Flindersia* can be found at this site. A tall elegant specimen of yellowwood (*Flindersia xanthoxyla*) can be found at the top of the gully towards the eastern side of the bushland. It has much finer foliage than the other *Flindersias*. Several medium sized Bennett's ash trees (*Flindersia bennettiana*) with their very large leaves can be found towards the middle of the site. The leopard ash (*Flindersia collina*) has been recorded on this site but I haven't found it yet.



Flindersia schottiana

Look out for the Caper White Butterfly (*Belenois java*) over the next few months as it has been laying eggs on the native bush caper berry (*Capparis arborea*). The caterpillars of this butterfly feed exclusively on the native caper bushes. The native bush caper berry is very common right across the site and many plants are now covered in buds.



Caper White Butterfly



Caper White Butterfly eggs

These plants should produce some spectacular white flowers through December and January. Unfortunately individual flowers are short lived, lasting only one day. Beware of the vicious spines on the trunks and branches of these bushes and small trees.



Capparis arborea

The fruit on the Burnie vine (*Trophis scandens*), which flowered in September, are growing rapidly. These very common vines are dioecious (separate male and female plants). The photos to the right show the very small female flowers (about 4 mm in diameter) and the developing fruit. The aborigines used the tough fibres from these vines for making string and rope.



Trophis scandens

The native cascarilla (*Croton verreauxii*) has flowered for the first time in many years after the plant was cleared of its suffocating mat of Cat's Claw creeper. This plant is now gradually recovering and sending out new growths.



Croton verreauxii

Its close relative the silver croton (*Croton insularis*) is a small tree and quite common throughout the area. It is fairly easy to recognize because it always seems to have a few orange leaves.



Croton insularis



I found this native bee's nest (*Austroplebeia australis*) when I cut away the thick Cat's Claw vines covering an old gnarled yellow pear-fruit tree (*Mischocarpus pyriformis*). These native bees are stingless, unlike the European honey bees which have nested elsewhere in an old dead tree on the site. The nest has been built in a wound on the trunk which appears to have been made by an axe many decades ago. Who chopped into this tree and why they did it is a complete mystery to me. I believe this majestic old tree is the parent of the myriad small yellow pear-fruit trees growing in the vicinity.

This pile of old rubbish was removed from the north-east corner of the bushland and is awaiting collection by the council.

