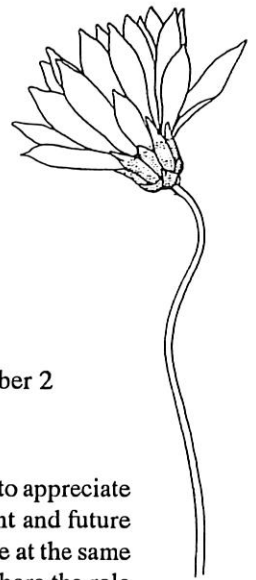


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FROM THE VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

In a recent issue of *Biolinks* the Federal Minister for the Environment Ros Kelly wrote "We are beginning to appreciate how little we know about our flora and fauna and how essential knowledge is to the well-being of present and future generations of Australians". If CALM is to meet the challenge of managing the conservation estate, while at the same time raising public awareness, it will need all the support and help the community can muster. This is where the role of volunteers is essential to the aims of CALM in cataloguing the conservation estate. During the last twelve months it has been my pleasure to have had close involvement with all of you in my role as volunteer coordinator. Your dedication, enthusiasm and commitment in your various tasks has been greatly appreciated. By volunteering your time and expertise you are all playing a significant part in conserving the State's wildlife for future generations.

I thank you for your support during the year and wish everyone and their families a very merry Christmas, a bright and prosperous New Year and look forward to working with you all in 1992.

Kevin Kenneally

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERS DAY

International Volunteers Day was celebrated in Forrest Place, Perth on Thursday 5th December. Ten Herbarium volunteers attended as part of the overall CALM contingent. Under the bright sunshine there was a festive atmosphere as the crowd of over 1000 volunteers were entertained by music from the Silver Threads Band before being addressed by the Hon. Eric Ripper, Minister for Community Services and Dr Carmen Lawrence the Premier. Dr Lawrence informed the crowd that one in three people in Australia are volunteers of one sort or another and then thanked everyone for their outstanding service.

A delegate from the International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE) presented the Premier with a copy of the Universal Declaration on Volunteering adopted at their 11th biennial conference in Paris in September 1990. A copy of the Declaration will be placed on display near the volunteers noticeboard. A light lunch was provided. The event, organised by the Volunteer Centre of W.A., was an outstanding success and an experience for those volunteers who attended.



Volunteers (L-R) Gwen and Jack Abbott, Harry Bennett and Daphne Edinger with a flowering *Kingia australis* in the Herbarium garden.



Volunteers and staff enjoy the "Sausage Sizzle" under the watchful eye of our chef Ante Usic

TALKS TO VOLUNTEERS

A recent innovation for volunteers at the Herbarium has been a series of in-service talks to explain procedures and to inform on what are the roles of each staff member. The two sessions to date (6th September and 8th November) have been most informative and fully appreciated by those who attended.

When introducing the first session Kevin Kenneally introduced Trevor Carboon, acting coordinator of CALM volunteers. Trevor stated that about 1000 volunteers are associated with CALM overall. High profile projects of late have included the *Watsonia* eradication program in John Forrest National Park and cleaning up the Sanko Harvest oil spill, east of Esperance.

Librarian Beng Siew Mahon explained protocol in the Herbarium library in her support role of assisting taxonomists, as a good reference library is a vital working tool in any herbarium. The library includes a rare book collection and 17th and 18th Century records on microfiche.

Paul Wilson has worked at the Herbarium since 1965 when he transferred from the State Herbarium of South Australia. He gave a brief account of his work on nomenclature and taxonomy, in particular in relation to *Chenopodiaceae*, *Asteraceae* and *Rutaceae*.

Sue Patrick, who is on the Rare and Endangered Flora and Conservation program, told of recent finds in the field while conducting a survey of rare flora in the Moora District. Other finds outside the Moora area were also briefly mentioned. Sue is also working on various projects in the Flora Information Program such as allergenic plant species, endemic species of the Darling Scarp and *Thomasia* taxonomy. Aspects of her forensic work on *Cannabis* and Opium poppies was also discussed.

Chang Sha Fang, recently appointed manager of the Herbarium, said he faced the challenge of organising the curation of the collection and at this early stage he was still feeling his way.

Following these talks the 20 volunteers in attendance enjoyed a sausage sizzle and refreshments with the staff to commemorate the anniversary of the herbarium volunteers' program.

At the November talk Kevin Kenneally discussed safety issues in the herbarium before introducing Judy Wheeler. Judy explained her role as the Herbarium's flora writer since 1981. The next major publication, now in the final stages of editing, will be the two volume Flora of the Kimberley Region, describing more than 1900 species. Judy is also currently working on the flora of Walpole/Nornalup National Park and a pilot project on the genus *Agonis* (*Myrtaceae*). The most pressing problem is deciding on what format would be most acceptable to readers for technical publications.

Gill Perry then took us through the maze of binominal nomenclature; and the rigorous procedures involved in the acceptance of botanical names by the International Committee. Gill also traced the somewhat turbulent history of nomenclature since the first code was presented by Swiss botanist de Candolle at a meeting in Paris in 1866. The first international botanical code was established in 1930, but since then splinter groups have ensured that controversy still rages.

We were also fortunate to hear of the progress being made on the series Flora of Australia by none other than Alex George. He is the Executive Editor on this project and estimates that it might be completed around the year 2010. Alex, a former botanist at the WA Herbarium, was visiting from the Australian Bureau of Biological Resources (ABRS) in Canberra. He said the next Flora volume (No. 35) would be on Goodeniaceae and should be available sometime late in 1992. Recent delays to the series have been due to completing and publishing the Australian Plant Names Index consisting of 62 000 names in four volumes, recently on sale for \$195 with 100 copies selling in the first month.

We also recognised the next speaker's name - Ian Brooker, visiting from the CSIRO in Canberra - being familiar with his field guides to the Australian Eucalypts. Ian first came to Perth from Adelaide in 1969/70, where he "began from the ground up" to familiarise himself with the 250 or so species of Eucalypts then known in the South-west. Since then he has found many new species and subsequently worked out ways to recognise and record them (a bane to most botanists). Ian estimated that Volume 3 of his Eucalypt guide should be ready for publishing sometime in 1984/85, and will cover the whole of northern Australia north of the 22nd parallel. During his four week visit Ian redetermined about 20 000 Eucalypt specimens for the Environmental Resources Information Network [ERIN] which is based in Canberra under Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service [ANPWS]. He was assisted in his task by several volunteers.

Our final talk for the day was from Brian Best, our first volunteer speaker, whose resumé is covered in another story. Following afternoon tea the 14 volunteers in attendance were informed of new shirts now available for CALM volunteers, directions for "Volunteers Day" with Premier Carmen Lawrence on Thursday 5th December 1991, and the Herbarium staff and volunteer Christmas party to be held at 12 noon on Wednesday 18th December.

PROGRESS INDEED!

Since we began in August 1990 we volunteers advanced from strength to strength in our list of achievements in the Herbarium - being ably directed and assisted by the professional staff, of course!

The gigantic task of updating the CAP Index (of vascular plants) is at the final spelling check stage, prior to completion of data processing the census. This has mostly been Barbara Backhouse's pet project but in the early stages she was aided by many volunteers, including Neil Coy who typed the initial additions onto a database.

Meanwhile, Bob Backhouse has placed 500 new specimens in the Reference Herbarium and expects this to be fully representative in "the not too distant future". Over recent times Bob has been ably assisted by Ena Andrews and Sybil Speak.

Brian Best continues to work methodically through the moss collection and has discovered a number of new records (see separate story). Skantha, our Sri Lankan volunteer, has been busy assisting Chang Sha with the preserved plant collection in the basement. A studious Jan Gordon has been quietly working in the library where she has assisted in transcribing the historically important Alan Cunningham journals.

Harry Bennett and his team have been stencilling folders and meeting the challenge of incorporating specimens in the collection (see separate story). Harry's team currently includes Jack and Gwen Abbott, Nora Best and Kath Trendall.

Other work continues on databasing the algae and fungi collections, with more than 6000 fungi entries to go. This has been a combined effort with Technical Officers Cheryl Parker and Vicki Hamley and volunteers Neil Coy and Johana Ferns, and retired botanist and former university lecturer in mycology, Roger Hilton.

Last, but most important, is the sterling job being done by all those who work in the mounting room, where about 11 500 specimens have been mounted to date, thus keeping other volunteers in the chain feverishly occupied in handling the volume. There's still another 30 000 or so specimens to go, however...more hands would be most welcome, right through the chain!

BRIAN'S BEST FIND

Brian Best, as some of us know, is the person behind the glasses that sees everyone come in and out of the herbarium as he works with studious care behind the bench just inside the main entrance. For those who do not know, Brian is sorting through collections of bryophytes - a task which has given him tremendous satisfaction since his retirement in 1981.

His interest goes back to his apprentice pharmacy days in 1931 when his course included hands-on botany to see if drugs and spices were adulterated. In 1951 he was transferred in the Colonial Service to Northern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) where he became intrigued by the flora and subsequently became a plant collector.

Upon his retirement in 1981 Brian went to work at the Salisbury Herbarium and his last odd job there was to sort out the bryophytes. As there was no real classification key available and all specimens were collected with dirt he improvised a method of washing them with detergent through a tea strainer - thus solving the dual problems of crumbling and disintegration.

In Salisbury (now Harare) he added 20 liverworts and 26 mosses to their collection. Since commencing a similar task at Perth Herbarium about 12 months ago he has found seven new liverworts - all included (but previously overlooked) within larger moss collection specimens.

A few weeks ago he was inspecting a moss collected by Kevin Kenneally in a Pitcher Plant swamp, near Mt Barker, in January 1978. Suddenly, he came across this weird thing under the microscope that looked like something out of Star Trek.

A search of the then available literature proved that Brian's find was a rare *Chaetophyllopsis whiteleggei*, a species restricted to Australasia, but found mainly in New Zealand, with Black Rock in Victoria being the only record for Australia. A more thorough search of Australian bryophyte literature has subsequently shown it had been collected from all states except WA.

Although this is Brian Best's find to date we expect there'll be more excitement to come as this quiet but amusing fellow continues to explore his portion of the moss world through a microscope two days a week.



Harry Bennett



Brian Best

HARRY BENNETT - PROBLEM SOLVER

Harry, one of our original volunteers, is a man who finds much stimulation from solving problems: you will all have noticed a box or two floating around the Herbarium labelled "Problems for Harry".

Each Friday it is Harry's task to sort out any incorporation problems from the previous week, to train new volunteers on the art of incorporation, and to stencil labels on folders.

When quizzed on the complexities of his herbarium tasks, Harry said there have been plenty of past mistakes that need rectifying and although it may seem simple the real challenge is working out the system. "There is much to learn ... he said ... in order not to wreck the system."

When asked if this task will ever be finished Harry replied "Never ... New specimens will always need processing ... The volunteers themselves create a problem by mounting all those thousands of specimens that are still in storage, thus creating problems further down the track."

Harry Bennett has been accustomed to solving problems almost all his life. Before his retirement in 1984, after eight years as Principal at Cyril Jackson Senior High School; he was also principal of Katanning High (1971-2) and Melville High (1973-4). During the interim years (1974-79) he was president of the State School Teacher's Union. He has also attended education conferences overseas and was the Commonwealth Government delegate to UNESCO at a conference in Paris.

Since "retiring", Harry has been a volunteer medical driver for the City of Stirling, a volunteer guide on the Endeavour replica project in Fremantle, a competent social golfer and skipper of a 3rd Division bowls team for Innaloo.

Being something of an authority on volunteer work Harry states emphatically that he has found that volunteers are usually very worthwhile people. Realising the uniqueness of WA's flora, through his past enjoyment of the bush, Harry feels he can make a worthwhile contribution to posterity at the Herbarium.

Within the Herbarium Harry is locally famous for his work ethic and, to quote "...there's no point in participating unless you give it a good shot." It is a revelation to be volunteering with people of Harry's calibre and, to end with an irresistible cliché, we at the Herbarium find there are no "problems with Harry".