

## BOOK REVIEW

**Plants of the Kimberley Region of Western Australia** (revised edition) by R.J. Petheram, B. Kok, and E. Bartlett-Torr (photography), 2003. University of Western Australia Press, Crawley. ISBN 1 920694 04 8576 pp. Price hardcover A\$45.00.

The need for a portable simple reference to plants of the Kimberley, both native and naturalised, has led to this revised edition of *Plants of the Kimberley Region of Western Australia*.

The excellent introductory essays, ‘The Kimberley Scene’ and ‘Rangeland Management Principles’, are updated and more recent references included. Rangeland management information, descriptions of key pasture species and the notes on value (fodder, poisonous etc.) with the species descriptions make this book essential for pastoralists.

The inclusion of name changes resulting from generic shuffling, the splitting of species complexes or the discovery of novelties that has occurred at what appears an increasingly bewildering rate over the last 20 years makes this revised edition worthwhile. Unfortunately, updating of plant names is a little patchy.

The splitting of the genus *Eucalyptus* and the naming of the new genus *Corymbia* for the Bloodwood eucalypts is explained. However in this edition, three Kimberley species transferred to *Corymbia* remain under *Eucalyptus* – *Corymbia aspera*, *C. confertiflora* and *C. grandifolia*. The statement that “in the A.C.T., *Eucalyptus* is maintained” had me a little bemused. I think most Canberra botanists accept Bloodwoods as belonging to the genus *Corymbia*.

A simple explanation of segregate species, the splitting of new species from a complex previously known by a single name, could have been useful for many readers, perhaps puzzled by the note under *Acacia holosericea*. Brief descriptions of the new species to complement the photographs would have been appreciated.

Photographs of plant habits are fine. Close-ups of flowers and fruit generally assist with identification. The plate of *Trichodesma zeylanica* needs a flower enlargement.

Another problem with handbooks such as this when the user attempts a plant identification, is the incomplete treatment of genera. This can lead to misidentifications. For example, *Cycas* has five species occurring in the Kimberley. Only one, *C. lane-polei*, is described in the text. The user should have been alerted to the other species, perhaps with brief diagnoses. Or better, the inclusion as well of a reference to where to look for a complete account - *Flora of Australia* 48 (1998). *Crotalaria* fares better, with the reader’s attention drawn to two common species not dealt with in the text, but diagnoses are not provided. Happily, in *Calytrix*, diagnoses for the other two species are provided. There are other genera where the reader is not alerted to the other species that may be present in the region.

Fuller descriptions and keys to identification are to be found in *Flora of the Kimberley Region* (1992), but this weighty (definitely not for the backpack) work is out of date with regard to recent revisions of plant groups. It does make a fine companion to this field guide.

Altogether, a worthwhile revised edition. One easily fits into the backpack or glove compartment of visitors to the Kimberley or on the bookshelf of land managers.

## References

Wheeler, J.R. (Ed) 1992. 'Flora of the Kimberley Region'. Department of Conservation and Land Management, Como, Western Australia.

McCarthy, P.M. (Ed) 1998. 'Flora of Australia'. Vol. 48. Ferns, Gymnosperms and Allied Groups, ABRS/CSIRO, Australia

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