

# EARTHLY TREASURES OF OUR SHIRE

Watercolours by Cheryl Hodges



The stories behind the paintings

## 1. Half Moon Reserve Collection

### Half Moon Reserve, Mongarlowe

Vera Sapov introduced herself to me at an exhibition in Braidwood and invited me to visit her property at Half Moon Reserve. The history of the area is fascinating and once again I was slightly embarrassed not to have heard of the place before. For many years it was a busy gold mining area, and there are still shafts, tunnels and other remnants of the era. There were also Eucalyptus oil distilleries and remains of the stills are also scattered about. During the depression the area was heavily settled with people fossicking, growing vegetables and raising stock. Over the years more and more land was purchased by Stewart Harris, an environmentalist. He was keen to preserve the area and so registered Half Moon as a Wildlife Refuge. He then subdivided part of his property into 100 acre lots, but the purchasers had to commit to caring for the land and sign a Wildlife Refuge agreement.

Many creative people have been drawn to Half Moon Reserve: artists, designers, a weaver, filmmakers and more, and most notably poet Judith Wright. She lived at her property "Edge" until several years before her death, and wrote many poems inspired by the landscape. I read some of these poems after visiting Vera's property, and the words were so evocative, they took me back there.

As Vera and I walked around her property, Vera knew most of the plants we came across, referring to her guidebook for others. The *Patersonia sericea* had been in full bloom the day before, but alas for me, we only found a couple flowering that day. The Sun Orchid was also hiding, though I did photograph some beautiful buds. However for a dry landscape I was pleasantly surprised by the number and variety of species we found. Insects were also in abundance. Vera is a creative, energetic soul and is also a teacher, so we had much to discuss. We ended the visit with tea and cake before I had to rush back to collect my daughter from school, wondering how those three lovely hours with Vera had gone so quickly.

So far I have only managed to paint one 'collection' of a few species, but feel I must return to paint some more in the future, in particular the endangered *Boronia rhomboidea* which is prolific on Vera's property. Half Moon Reserve is all private property, however it is a beautiful area and sometimes people have a picnic on the side of the road (just don't wander off-track, remember the mine shafts).

#### *Sun-orchid*

*Sun-orchid, Thelymitra,  
what a blue of blues you've chosen  
to remind this sullen season  
that still the sky is there.*

*Its tender cherishing colour  
is like the hills in summer  
when a eucalyptine vapour  
dreams up in windless air.*

*Another poet, staring,  
saw the sun in your centre, burning  
core of fire, and, dazzled,  
closed eyes upon that secret*

*Wrapped in your Mary-blue,  
veined with a flush like roses,  
you stand in contemplation  
of a spring as cold as winter,*

*but, blessed from your creation,  
the calm of your robe encloses  
a gold like revelation.*

*Judith Wright*

## 2. Kangaroo Grass *Themeda triandra* Turallo Nature Reserve

This nature reserve will probably be a revelation to many. It is a stone's throw from Bungendore and looks to be an open paddock. Not expecting to find very much I was surprised by the number of species listed on the information board near the gate. Wandering through the reserve I was astounded by the number of Australian Bindweed (*Convolvulus erubescens*), I have never seen so many in one area. Closer inspection revealed some striking Blue Devils, Spur Velleia, *Wahlenbergia*, Everlasting Daisies, and more flowers. This year I hope a spring visit will reveal some earlier flowering species.



I couldn't resist the beautiful rusty coloured Kangaroo Grass. Kangaroo Grass is widespread, and although not endangered itself, it is part of the endangered temperate grassland communities. It is popular as a landscaping plant with its interesting texture and beautiful autumn colouring. Aboriginal peoples would grind the seed to produce flour.

### 3. Bee Fly *Palirika decora* Jerrabomberra

If you think flies are boring you need to listen to 'Bry the Fly Guy'. Dr Bryan Lessard is an entomologist with CSIRO in Canberra and is a fabulous science communicator doing his best to raise the profile of flies. He's appeared on shows such as Gardening Australia, Totally Wild, Scope TV and The Project. He's done a TedX talk which is well worth listening to. He's named a fly after Beyoncé. Bryan gave an entertaining and educational presentation at one of my insect illustration classes.



I had no idea flies were so fascinating and I encourage you to do some research. One thing I did learn from Bryan is that if an insect is called a 'Something Fly' – two words, then it is a fly. If it has fly in its name but in one word, eg dragonfly, butterfly – then it is not a fly. So this Bee Fly is indeed a fly.

I was stunned when I saw this Bee Fly - at first I thought it was flower wasp. The wings, black and clear, were like none I'd ever seen before. I love the combination of the metallic green thorax and metallic blueish-purple abdomen. These are another reasonably common insect so keep your eyes open, you might see one. There are many types of Bee Fly, in the family Bombyliidae. They have a proboscis which, unlike a butterfly's, does not retract. They generally feed on nectar and pollen, some of them being important pollinators.

*This painting is on vellum which has been used for centuries for high quality manuscripts and paintings. Vellum is made from calfskin, and the surface can expand and contract slightly with changes in temperature and humidity. This is a feature of the material and is not a flaw. Vellum has a translucence which can make botanical paintings glow. Painting on vellum is quite a challenge, and different to painting on traditional watercolour paper. As vellum cannot take too much water or it will buckle, a drybrush technique is required. The paint is layered, taking care not to remove previous layers.*

#### 4. Christmas beetle *Anoplognathus chloropyrus* Braidwood

There are around 35 species of Christmas beetles, so named because the adults usually emerge around Christmas time. The larvae feed on grass roots and the adults feed on eucalyptus leaves.

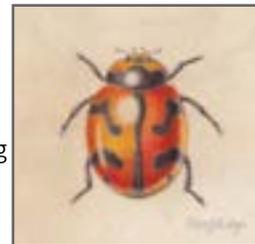


Since I've been teaching insect illustration I have been paying a lot more attention to the humble Christmas beetle. The colours and iridescence are just beautiful and vary among species. They are even more interesting when viewed through the microscope. Some identifying features are the pygidium (the lowest part of the abdomen), the clypeus (the foremost part of the head), the teeth on the fore tibiae (part of the leg). There is a free App created by Bushblitz and the Australian Museum "Xmas Beetle ID Guide" which is interesting and very useful for identifying beetles. It helped me identify this beetle, with its green pygidium.

As many Canberrans do, we stopped at Braidwood on our way to the coast and I found this little beetle (dead) on the ground. I have been learning how to 'set' insects and I decided to spread the wings of this one as I think it's interesting to see how the wings fold up underneath the elytra (wing cases).

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## 5. Transverse Ladybird *Coccinella transversalis* Jerrabomberra



This ladybird is a beetle found across Australia and is identifiable by its orange-red colouring, the black V shaped patterns and stripe down the middle and of its elytra (wing case). Depending on the species, ladybirds (or ladybugs or ladybeetles as they are also commonly known) can have spots, stripes or no markings at all. Most species of ladybird are beneficial for your garden as they eat aphids, leafhoppers, mites, moth eggs and scale insects. They are bred specifically for use on crops prone to aphid infestation such as roses, cereals, cotton, brassicas, melons, potatoes and capsicums. When prey numbers are low, they can remain in the crop, or in nearby vegetation by eating alternative prey species and pollen from flowers.

In spring, female ladybirds lay clusters of up to 50 eggs. These yellow or orange eggs can be found attached to the underside of leaves, often near aphids. Once the eggs hatch, the larvae begin feeding on the eggs of insects. The larvae shed their skin several times. When they reach full size, a pupa is formed and a week or so later the pupa becomes an adult.

To encourage ladybirds to your garden you can plant herbs like coriander, fennel and dill. Try not to use insecticides as they are harmful to ladybirds and they destroy the ladybirds' food sources.

I remember collecting ladybirds when I was young and when I held them they would leave a yellow substance on my hand. This is called "reflex blood" and is squirted out from their leg joints – it's smelly and toxic to predators (but not to humans).

I love photographing ladybirds in my garden, they seem to love my parsley plants. This ladybird died, and I was able to view it under the microscope, very useful when I'm enlarging such a small subject.

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## 6. Four Spotted Cup Moth *Doratifera quadriguttata* The Big Hole

I visited The Big Hole with my family a few years ago (so it is achievable with small children). The walk from Berlang Campground is 3.5km return and you have to wade through the Shoalhaven River. The Big Hole is a limestone roofless cave over 100m deep and 50m wide, which can be viewed from the relative safety of a platform. Although the cave is the destination, the journey should not be understated. The walk is through beautiful eucalypt forest and open heath landscape with wonderful views.



This little caterpillar feeding on a Eucalyptus leaf was discovered along the way. It grows to around 2cm, so this painting is much enlarged to show the detail. Red stinging hairs protrude from the four knobs at the front on the thorax when it is disturbed. I am always fascinated by insects on plants and I will take many photographs to help me identify it and possibly paint it in the future. This intricately detailed caterpillar will turn into the Four Spotted Cup Moth, which is brown and has two or four spots on each forewing.

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## 7. Blue Skimmer Dragonfly *Orthetrum caledonicum* Jerrabomberra

The Blue Skimmer is a common dragonfly in Australia. The male is powdery blue and the female is yellow or brownish.

Dragonflies are predators, both in their larval stage in water and as adults. They can pursue insects at high speeds with their two uncoupled pairs of wings.

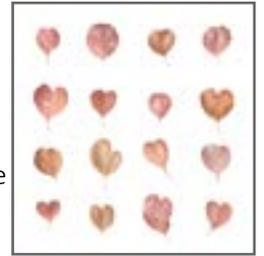


Fossils of dragonfly ancestors have been found from 325 million years ago, with wing spans of up to 70cm.

Loss of wetland habitat threatens dragonfly populations around the world. Dragonflies are indicator species of the health of their environment. As they spend most of their lives underwater, their presence indicates water quality due to dragonflies requiring clean water to thrive.

**8. Redbox leaves *Eucalyptus polyanthemos*  
Jerrabomberra**

My daughter Hannah attends Jerrabomberra Public School. A couple of years ago a few of the kids and Mums would go to the park after school - the kids would play and the Mums would catch up. Knowing that I'm an artist interested in all things natural, the kids would often bring me leaves and dead insects. They kept bringing these beautiful love heart shaped leaves to me. I had an idea to paint them so I encouraged them to find more and now I have a beautiful collection. My daughter and her friends and cousins are now old enough to catch the bus so we don't have these afternoon get-togethers anymore.



This painting is part of my collection of leaves, and it brings back memories of children running, playing, laughing, and best of all being curious and interested in nature.

## 9. Fungi of Jerrabomberra

***Cortinarius* sp, *Geastrum* sp, *Clitocybe* sp, *Cyathus stercoreus*,  
*Leratiomyces ceres*, *Peziza* sp, *Pistacia chinensis* (leaves)**



Some of these fungi are not Australian (and in some cases their origin is unknown) and have landed in my yard thanks to the mulch I've brought in. At one stage I had all of these different fungi around my garden – I was in heaven! Fungi are an incredibly important part of the ecosystem. They decompose dead plant material and return nutrients to the soil. You should definitely not eat them and if you touch them always wash your hands immediately, they could very likely be poisonous.

### ***Cortinarius* sp.**

This is a genus of mushrooms containing over 2000 different species and found worldwide. A common feature among all species in the genus *Cortinarius* is that young specimens have a cortina – a cobweb like protective covering, between the cap and the stem, hence the name, meaning curtained.

### ***Geastrum* sp. Earth Star fungi**

Earth stars have a central 'puffball' (or inner peridium) which is a spore sack, sitting on a platform of four to ten pointed 'arms' giving the fungi its star shaped appearance. This fungus reacts to humidity in the air, with the points folding up around the puffball if the air is dry, and opening out if the air is moist or when it rains. For this reason it is also known as a Barometric Earthstar.

### ***Clitocybe* sp.**

*Clitocybe* is a genus of mushrooms characterised by white, off-white, buff, cream, pink, or light-yellow spores, gills running down the stem, and pale white to brown or lilac coloration. There are estimated to be around 300 species in the widespread genus with a few members being edible while many others are poisonous. They are difficult to tell apart, so apart from the easily identified members they are generally not collected for consumption. I loved the gentle colour variation on this fungus, it was such a pleasure to paint.

### ***Cyathus stercoreus*, Birds Nest Fungi**

These fungi are very small and I only noticed them because of the abundance of them growing in the mulch under my roses. They usually grow in manure enriched soil. As the fungus grows, the top peels open to reveal the 'peridioles' which contain the spores. When a raindrop lands in the 'nest' the 'eggs' are ejected. These can then be eaten by herbivores, and when passed through the animal, the spores can germinate in the dung.

### ***Leratiomyces ceres*, Redlead Roundhead**

The red colouring does spell danger for me, and indeed it is poisonous. As it matures, the colour darkens to a brownish orange and the gills turn from cream to a dull brownish grey.

### ***Peziza* sp.**

This is a large genus of cup fungi which can grow singly or in clusters on either soil or well-rotted wood. The cup shape allows rain to scatter the spores.

**10. Earthstars *Geastrum* sp  
Jerrabomberra**

I am always delighted to find fungi in my garden, but I didn't expect to see these beautiful Earthstars. They have a central 'puffball' (or inner peridium) which is a spore sack, which sits on a platform of four to ten 'arms' giving the fungi its star shaped appearance.



This fungus reacts to humidity in the air, with the points folding up around the puffball if the air is dry, and opening out if the air is moist or when it rains. For this reason it is also known as a Barometer Earthstar.

## 11. Small Purple-pea *Swainsona recta* Wandiyali-Environa Wildlife Sanctuary

I visited the Wandiyali-Environa Wildlife Sanctuary and although I was not able to visit the area of the *Swainsona recta* I was given excellent reference photographs. I have painted the species with the Box Gum Grassy Woodlands habitat in the background to provide context.



Small Purple-pea (*Swainsona recta*) is an endangered plant of Grassy Woodlands, and is one of 30 plant species targeted for recovery under Commonwealth Threatened Species Recovery Plans. Small Purple-pea was once relatively widespread in south-eastern Australia, however populations, both in number and size, are believed to have greatly reduced, with populations only persisting in patches of remnant habitat which have had, by chance, a favourable management and land use history.

The Wandiyali *Swainsona* Project, in partnership with the National Seed Bank, is part funded by the Threatened Species Recovery Fund, and includes translocation of 300 seedlings grown by the Australian National Botanic Gardens. The seed has a mixed provenance to maximise genetic diversity, with one ultimate goal being the establishment of new self-sustaining populations which will be able to act as seed banks into the future.

Wandiyali Restoration Trust is a special purpose not-for-profit trust, entered on the Australian Federal Register of Environmental Organisations. The Trust is a registered charity, and donations made to its public fund can be tax deductible. The principal purpose of the Trust is the long term protection of the natural environment. The Trust coordinates a dynamic local and landscape scale restorative management program, with the aim to restore the diversity and flexibility of these landscapes, using a range of land management programs to increase the resilience, extent and connectedness of ecosystems and linkages in the region. There is a focus on partnership with other landholders, community groups, educational organisations, businesses and government agencies in a strategic and coordinated approach.

Private Land Conservation, via NGOs such as Australian Wildlife Conservancy, Bush Heritage and Australian Nature Conservancy, fund and manage large scale conservation and restoration projects over millions of hectares of Australia. Smaller scale wildlife reserves on private land are a growing phenomenon, providing valuable habitat and wildlife corridors close to cities, within farming districts or even part of working farms eg. Tiverton in Victoria. While this presents numerous challenges, there is a vibrant and developing community that shares extensive experiences and innovative solutions eg. Australian Land Conservation Alliance (ALCA).

The 400ha of privately owned Wandiyali-Environa Wildlife Sanctuary was primarily established to give protection in perpetuity to Endangered Ecological Community (EEC) Box Gum Grassy Woodland and nearly 4km of the serpentine gorges of Jerrabomberra Creek, one of the major tributaries of Canberra's Lake Burley Griffin via Jerrabomberra Wetlands.

There is no public access to the Sanctuary, however the Trust runs workshops, walks and field days. For more information please visit the Wandiyali Restoration Trust facebook page or email [wandiyali.restoration@gmail.com](mailto:wandiyali.restoration@gmail.com).

**12. Correa OMG**

**13. Correa 'unnamed'**

**Bywong Nursery, Peter and Jennifer Ollerenshaw**

See text for No 18. Leptospermum Cultivars

#### 14. Hakea, lichen and skeletonised Eucalyptus leaves Tallaganda State Forest

Tallaganda State Forest is popular with bushwalkers, mountain bikers and four-wheel-drivers alike. We drove to Lowden Park and spent some time looking at the historic relics and waterwheel - it was a logging camp in the 1830s. We started the walk up to Hopkins Pond, and true to form I was photographing just about every plant along the way, ignoring the calls of "hurry up, Mum" from my children. I was aiming the camera high for shots of *Smilax australis* with its broad leaves and purple berries, crouching for the *Dianella tasmanica*, and eventually on my knees to capture the *Viola hederacea* at ground level. This was all about to change. My son Jack said "Mum what's that on my leg?". A little squeal from me "It's a leech!" as I swatted it off. Closer inspection found many of them along the path, reaching up for the next victim (I took a video from a safe distance). Jack, unconcerned about the leech himself, grinned at his Dad, whispering "this walk's going to be a bit quicker now". I dislike leeches, very much. The rest of the walk consisted of me trying to keep my feet off the ground as much as possible, stopping very quickly for only the best of photographic opportunities.



Having driven so far I was determined to get some good material so we did persevere but Jack was right, the pace certainly quickened. We then did the Fern Gully walk which was gorgeous with a little stream running through. I loved the mosses, liverworts and lichens at Tallaganda, even at the carpark – they are like a miniature landscape, and something I'd like to spend more time learning about. I have read a newsletter from the Australian Plants Society which lists more species flowering in February (we were there in November) so I'm going to work out the best way to leech-proof myself and return. In hindsight I don't think there really were that many leeches. Even if they're on you, they don't hurt, it's just the 'fear factor'. So please visit, there really is a lot to see and experience.

This landscape was rich in botanical painting choices, and I have many photographs to paint future specimens. For this painting I chose the rugged looking Hakea pod, revealing its beautiful interior, the seeds being dispersed while the lichen clings to the seedpod. The intricate skeletonised Eucalyptus leaves are apparently an indicator of a Cryptocephaline beetle. The adult beetles feed on living Eucalyptus leaves in the canopy like other Eucalypt leaf beetles however the larvae, unlike other Eucalypt leaf beetles, live on the ground and feed on fallen Eucalyptus leaves.

**15. Button Wrinklewort *Rutidosia leptorrhynchoidea***  
**Queanbeyan Nature Reserve**



Many years ago I was involved in a nature art group and we were taken for a tour through the Queanbeyan Nature Reserve by Rainer Rehwinkel and Lorraine Oliver from the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH). Rainer, now retired, is an ecologist, active naturalist, birder and conservationist, who has contributed to several field guides to which I refer on a regular basis.

Rainer could identify almost every plant we came across in the reserve (flowering or not). He was happy to answer my questions when I emailed him several photos I took in later weeks, identifying other plants I was unsure of. I am quite open about the fact that as a botanical artist I am more ‘artist’ than ‘botanist’, so I am often asking for help with identification. In fact he has helped me once again with identifying plants I’ve painted for this exhibition. After our walk Rainer said that he had also been noting the different bird calls that he’d heard as we walked around, and there were over 20!

I’ve visited the Queanbeyan Nature Reserve many times since our first tour, and I always find something different. It is an unassuming little area of land near the racecourse, managed by Environment NSW. I believe some interpretive signage is to be erected in the near future to encourage more visitors and make their visit more rewarding.

The Button Wrinklewort is an endangered species, known from less than 30 sites in the NSW Southern Tablelands and Victoria. It occurs in the Box-Gum Grassy Woodlands of Queanbeyan Nature Reserve. I have been lucky to photograph some beautiful little native bees on the flowers. I have painted the enlarged flower head and individual flowers as I think the detail is intricate and beautiful. So visit the Queanbeyan Nature Reserve, especially in spring, remembering to “take only photographs, leave only footprints”.

As I’ve been asked before “What’s that endangered species with the awful name?” I asked Rainer if he knew where the term “wrinklewort” comes from. True to form he has investigated and advises that it comes from the Greek origin of “Rutidosia” – “rytidos” meaning wrinkle, which refers to the wrinkled bracts that support the heads of flowers. And of course “button” is for the button shaped flowers.

## 16. Scarlett Golden Pippin Apple Sully's Cider at The Old Cheese Factory, Reidsdale

When researching places to visit for this exhibition, several people suggested Sully's Cider. The Watkins-Sully family purchased and renovated the Old Cheese Factory in Reidsdale in 2007 to create a cidery. They produce a range of ciders, crafted using traditional techniques and selecting genuine cider apples.



One fine autumn day I took my family for a drive through the beautiful countryside to Reidsdale. It was a busy Sunday for them but the Watkins-Sully family made time to chat with us about the apples and the process of fermenting cider. After tasting some excellent apple cider and juice we enjoyed a ploughman's lunch on the verandah overlooking the lush landscape, thanks to the 'Monga Mist' which rolls in from the mountains in the afternoons.

I found my Scarlett Golden Pippin apple, and crawled under the netting to photograph, sketch and take colour swatches. It was a memorable day and I highly recommend a visit. A lot more information on the cidery, the old cheese factory and the history of Reidsdale can be found at: [www.braidwoodmade.com.au](http://www.braidwoodmade.com.au).

Gary Watkins-Sully has given me information on the heritage of the apple so these are his words, in full, because I know of some people this will appeal to:

*In 2007 local historian Ros Maddrell introduced me to an old apple tree that resides beside the old Wilson estate gardeners cottage. It is a very old tree, barely clinging to life, that was most probably planted by Dr Thomas 'Braidwood' Wilson in the 1840s. With help from David Pickering, cider enthusiast and then employee of the Department of Agriculture in Orange, we managed to extract a few healthy buds from the tree and transplant them onto new rootstock. It was about 4 years until the new trees produced fruit and we could attempt to identify it. Some historical research led us to Scotland as the most likely origin. Wilson himself came from West Lothian in Scotland as did his close friend and mentor Sir Henry Duncan. Duncan's family had large orchards in the area, notably Gourdie Hill. We checked the varieties grown in Matthew's orchard and found a close link in the Scarlet Golden Pippin, a sport from the much heralded (at the time) Golden Pippin. We then checked it against the Herefordshire Pomona, a 19th century fruit catalogue. Below is an extract.*

### *2. SCARLET GOLDEN PIPPIN.*

*This very beautiful variety originated as a bud spurt on the old Golden Pippin, about fifty years since (c. 1820), at Gourdie Hill, in Perthshire. The variety is named, but not described, in the Catalogue of the London Horticultural Society for 1831. It is also mentioned in the edition of 1842, though without any description.*

*Description—Fruit: small, roundish oblong in shape, very regular and free from angles, but rather flattened at the eye and base. Skin: very rich in colour, of a golden yellow on the shaded side, but covered almost entirely with a scarlet blush, and becoming of a deep red opposite the sun; the whole surface being strewn with small russet dots. Eye: large and open with broad calyx segments, placed in a shallow basin, generally even but sometimes grooved. Stalk: half to three-quarters of an inch long, inserted in a narrow but rather deep cavity. Flesh: yellow, crisp, and firm, with a sweet and pleasant flavour, very similar to the Golden Pippin itself, from which indeed, except for its brilliant colour, it differs but little.*

*The great beauty of this variety renders it one of the most attractive fruits of the table, quite apart from its own merits as a dessert Apple. It is in season from November to March.*

*The tree makes an excellent espalier or dwarf standard. It bears abundantly, and forms a beautiful object in the garden.*

*So our hypothesis is that Wilson's apple is a Scarlet Pippin, sourced from his friend's orchard in Scotland.*

*Further research revealed a link to this apple and modern thinking!*

*It turns out that Matthew was the first "originator", by which I mean the first person to propose a correctly reasoned version of natural selection as a mechanism for the evolutionary origin of species. His ideas on the origin of species appeared in an Appendix to his 1831 book *On Naval Timber and Arboriculture*. This was acknowledged by Charles Darwin in his second edition of *'On the Origin of Species'*. We also discovered that Charles Darwin, Patrick Matthew and Dr Thomas Wilson all took the same biology course some years apart.*

**17. Mountain Pepper *Tasmania lanceolata***  
**Australian Mountain Pepper, Budawang Ranges**

The Mountain Pepper farm of Tim Wimborne and Meraiah Foley is nestled in the beautiful Budawang Ranges, near Mongarlowe. When I arrived I was surrounded by bush and not sure which direction Tim would come from. He emerged in gumboots and with a laundry basket under his arm. This is the vessel for collecting the mountain pepper berries. Tim enthusiastically laid out his map on the tailgate of the ute and explained that mountain pepper likes basalt soil, indicating the narrow strip running through the range including their property. These plants are naturally occurring in this area, and they are a different phenotype to the Tasmanian species.



Tim and Meraiah harvest the berries and market them to restaurants and retail outlets. Demand has been growing so they decided to propagate their own plants to supplement the existing numbers and these have been planted this year, along with their companion plants the *Acacia melanoxylon*.

Tim kindly took me for a walk (warning me to wear gumboots to avoid the leeches) through the forest and we found many plants with berries ready for picking (and painting). The mountain pepper has been used by Aboriginal peoples as food and medicine. It has antibacterial properties and high levels of antioxidants.

## 18. Leptospermum Cultivars

**Correa OMG**

**Correa 'unnamed'**

**Bywong Nursery, Peter and Jennifer Ollerenshaw**

Peter and Jennifer Ollerenshaw started Bywong Nursery in 1984 growing a mixture of Australian and exotic plants. Prior to that Peter had worked at the Australian National Botanic Gardens for many years. In 1989 they decided to try developing their own new plants, creating cultivars of mainly Grevillea, Leptospermum and Correa.



*The process of creating the cultivars is painstaking and takes several years. First you must collect good parent plants. Ultimately they are looking at characteristics such as number, size and colour of flowers, compact growth, leaf size and texture.*

*Correas are pollinated by bees and birds, so the plants must be kept in an isolated area away from these pollinators. When the plants are first moved in to the breeding house, any open flowers are removed. The stamens ripen as soon as the flower opens, but the stigma is not receptive for another few days. So to avoid self-pollination the stamens are removed before the stigma is ready (becomes sticky). Once the stigma has been pollinated (by hand) the fruit should start to develop. When fruit is mature it explodes to expel the seed, so foil has to be placed over the fruit to catch the seed.*

*Seeds then need to be cleaned and each batch labelled. Correa seeds need smoke to germinate, so after sowing, Peter puts all the seed trays in a tent with a drum of smouldering leaves. It can still take six to eight weeks for seeds to germinate. Once the seedlings have come up they will need repotting several times until they flower which may take two to three years. Then it's crunch time - which plants are worth continuing with and which ones will end up in the scrap heap? Once a decision has been made, the successful plants are re-propagated with the aim of producing 50 specimens of each. These are grown on for a further year of assessment. Then the successful plants are named and made ready for commercial distribution.*

*These cultivars can only be propagated by cuttings as the seed would not be true to type. These plants are protected by Plant Breeders' Rights, so other growers can't propagate these without permission. Peter and Jennifer have produced an impressive selection of plants over the years including the popular Grevillea 'LadyO' named after Peter's mother, and Correa 'Canberra Bells' bred for Canberra's 100th birthday in 2013. You can identify them easily at nurseries when you spot their uniquely shaped labels.*

I spent a couple of days at the nursery with Jennifer and Peter, photographing and sketching the beautiful cultivars created there. My first visit was to see the Leptospermums and I was given a tour of the shade house by Jennifer. I was overwhelmed by the beauty and variety of these flowers, I really had not paid Leptospermums enough attention. The second time I chose to paint Correas. As usual I have not had time to paint as many as I would like. It was on this visit that Peter explained the process of creating the cultivars and I got to sit with these beautiful Correas, so many differing colours, shapes, sizes, even orientation – one was looking up at the world rather than drooping as many Correas do (this is the 'unnamed' Correa I've painted). I loved a particular light green and pale pink Correa. Peter said he wasn't sure it would make it to the market as it may not be 'pretty enough'. I felt sad that all that work and such a beautiful result may end up in the compost. I wanted to bring it home with me.

It was a privilege spending time with and learning from Peter and Jennifer. They have done so much for Australian native plants and encouraging people to grow them in their gardens. What a legacy from a nursery in the Queanbeyan Palerang Shire!

**19. Common Fringe Lily *Thysanotus tuberosus***  
**Carwoola**

I came across Hannah Cooper's Instagram account after her property and garden, but not her house, were ravaged by a bushfire in March 2017. She was documenting (on IG and her blog "Tree Diaries") the trials and tribulations of rebuilding the garden, trying to focus on the positives but being very honest about her feelings. Part of her healing was to identify many of the Eucalyptus species on her property. This investigation led her to dying wool using the Eucalyptus leaves and she created a gorgeous woollen blanket "Hidden colours of Widgetopia".



One day she posted a photograph of the Common Fringe Lily. Although 'common' I had never come across one, so I asked if I could visit and photograph them. As expected Hannah was most welcoming, and she and her two children Eleanor and Max and the dog Squatly took me to the little gully near the house. This area had been burnt but now had an abundance of the beautiful Fringe Lilies. The children were very excited to meet a 'real artist' and interested to see how I sketched the flowers and took colour notes with my paints. I love how enthusiastic children are, and I know that Hannah will nurture that curiosity in them. Hannah and her family have since moved from their property at Carwoola to the Southern Highlands, but I still follow her posts with interest, as she is an intelligent, creative and inspiring soul.

## 20. Weevil on Golden Wattle - *Acacia pycnantha* Jerrabomberra

Insects make up 53% of all animals. 38% of insects are beetles. Half of the beetles are weevils. There are over 6,000 known species of weevil. The Botany Bay Weevil, a striking large black and iridescent blue weevil was the first insect to be identified from material collected in 1770 by Joseph Banks from Botany Bay.

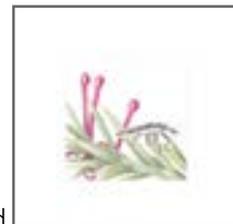


Many weevil species are serious pests that threaten trees, vegetables and grain crops. Other species are useful biological control agents of weeds, such as thistles and noxious Acacias.

Most weevils are tiny and are recognizable by their long snouts (rostrums) which are used to chew plants for food and to make egg chambers.

This little weevil is in reality about 2mm long. I had picked some wattle to paint, and saw a couple of little beetles on the flowers. When I viewed them under the microscope I found the weevil crawling in amongst the stamens. I am always amazed by what I discover through the microscope, and I can take some reasonable photographs for later reference using my smartphone. It really is a great tool for botanical and insect illustration. I've been researching weevils and wattle, and I suspect this may be a *Melanterius* sp. but I have not had that confirmed.

**21. Belide Weevil *Rhinotia adelaidae* on *Grevillea lanigera*  
Cuumbeun Nature Reserve**



Cuumbeun Nature Reserve is in Carwoola, just a couple of minutes' drive from Queanbeyan. I was on an organised walk at Stony Creek Reserve with Megan Dixon from Canberra Native Nursery. Megan actually helped me with many recommendations of places to visit in my quest for wildflowers. She has a great knowledge of the local area and is a volunteer with Landcare. She said

I'd driven past the entry to Cuumbeun, just up the road – I was oblivious, had never heard of the place.

Cuumbeun is dominated by a dry sclerophyll forest of Eucalyptus – Scribbly Gum, Long-leaved Bundy, Red Stringybark, Brittle Gum and Redbox. Surveys have found evidence of past Aboriginal use including artefacts. Being so close to the city there had been a lot of illegal dumping and firewood collection but this has been reduced due to fencing the area off as part of efforts to rehabilitate the reserve.

I took the family to Cuumbeun on a fine October day. It warmed up pretty quickly so the kids were not happy, and the walk seemed to take longer than I had anticipated. Always take lots of water just in case plans do not go as expected! Luckily there were lots of natural treasures to entertain us along the way. Perhaps because I had been teaching insect illustration, I seemed to notice a lot of insects on this walk. I take many photos and if I have time I do some sketches, hoping that when I get home I can find and identify these little critters from my reference books or the internet. This little weevil I painted is apparently common around here but I had never seen it before. We found some great beetles and moths camouflaged against the stringybark. We came across many wildflowers including everlasting daisies, grevilleas, and a few orchids. It's worth visiting at different times, I believe Hyacinth Orchids flower there in January. I have photos of many plants and insects from Cuumbeun but couldn't resist painting the little weevil. Cuumbeun is another on my long list of places to revisit and paint more species.

**25. Monga Waratah *Telopea mongaensis***  
**Monga National Park**



Just near Penance Grove is the Mongarlowe River picnic area. There is a winding trail down to the river where from October to December the Monga Waratah is in bloom. The day I visited, the cicadas were so loud, I felt I had to take a video to record the noise. I walked all the way to the river before seeing a waratah, but on my way back I realised I'd walked past many, but they were taller than me. On another visit in autumn I saw Mountain Pepper berries just starting to ripen. This is a beautiful walk, short and achievable for most.

The Monga Waratah, also known as the Braidwood Waratah, differs from other waratahs as it has long skinny leaves and no top cone, just the base flowers. It is also not quite as compact, though the flower head can have a cluster of up to 65 individual flowers.

## 26. Penance Grove Monga National Park

This gem is not far off the beaten track but I think a lot of people are not aware of it. Forest Drive is a right turn just before you start to climb the Clyde Mountain (on the Braidwood side). Almost immediately you will be in Monga National Park, but drive a few more kilometres and you will be in a Eucalypt forest ('wet sclerophyll forest').



Penance Grove is a small gully, where ancient Plumwoods provide a canopy for tree ferns and other rainforest plants. Dappled light filters through here and there, trying to warm the cool, moist air. The sound of water trickling, and bird calls, the most distinctive being the 'whip' of the whipbird. Rich bright greens abound - lush mosses, lichens and ferns. A certain aroma specific to rainforests permeates the air, heavy and sweet, the rotting of leaves and bark, creating compost. The smell is even sweeter when the Plumwoods are dropping their flowers. The largest moss in the world grows here, the *Dawsonia superba*, like little forests. These plants were once widespread on the ancient continent of Gondwana.

I was saddened to learn the reason for the name Penance Grove. Years ago someone cut down many of the tree ferns to sell to people for their gardens. Hopefully we can learn from this mistake and appreciate and conserve the beauty of this place. Informative signage enriches this experience and the boardwalk makes it accessible for everyone. Just a few metres before Penance Grove is a picnic area and the Waratah Walk to the river, where Monga Waratah is flowering from October to December.

## 27. European Honey Bee *Apis mellifera* From "Honey and Glow" Googong

I was gifted some dead bees. I needed some for my insect illustration class and asked beekeeper Erin if she might have any and next day there was a bag of dead bees in my mailbox. That's what I love about this community!



I met Erin and Marty several years ago when they were just starting their business "Honey and Glow". I think it was just honey then. Their passion has driven them to work hard to build this business into the success it is today. They now they have candles, body balm, lip balm, soaps and of course their original raw honey. Everything about this business is professional and polished and they have stockists all around the country. They are now living "the good life" with their young family in the Shire.

Bees are amazing and so very important for our existence. Bees pollinate plants and this is important for food production but also our gardens, landscapes, trees.

We have a lot to learn from bees and they are the most studied animal after humans. The bee I have painted is a worker bee (female) and there are also drones (males) and the Queen bee.

After the queen has laid the eggs in the hive, and the eggs have hatched, workers feed the larvae. Different types of food will determine which females become workers and which will be queens.

Adult workers live for 2-4 weeks, or up to 11 months if they survive through winter. Males survive 4-8 weeks and do not live through the winter. Queens can live for 2-5 years.

The bees in the colony have fascinating methods of communicating including using pheromones and also dance language. There are many different pheromones for varying purposes, such as 'alarm' pheromones to indicate a threat. They can warm their bodies and their hive by using their flight muscles.

Bees have two types of dances – the round dance and the waggle dance. These are to indicate to worker bees at the hive that the dancing bee has found a good source of nectar, at varying distances from the hive.

I encourage everyone to learn more about these fascinating creatures, you'll be amazed!

**28. Bristle Fly *Rutilia* sp.  
Jerrabomberra**

Bristle flies (Tachinids) are parasitoids of late instar larvae of scarabidae. The female lays eggs in or on the scarab beetle larvae, or on the host plant. Many Tachinid larvae almost totally consume the host insect, then bore out of the host to pupate. Parasitic flies help to control populations of other insects such as moths, butterflies, beetles and grasshoppers.



My daughter Hannah found this beautiful specimen on our rock wall. Since I have begun painting insects and paying more attention myself, in turn my children have been noticing more insects and often call me to look at them. There are many challenges when painting insects. I loved the colours and iridescence of this fly, and Tachinids are some of the most beautiful flies. If I have a specimen I am able to see most of the detail I need using my microscope. If I am working from photographs, I may need to refer to reference books, the internet or the friendly team at the Australian National Insect Collection to confirm anatomic details.