

Queensland's extreme endemics recce 2019

Avoiding the terrible bushfires...

Led by Phil Benstead

Participants: John Curd and Roy Woodward.

Summary

An enjoyable short recce with a hard-working team. The trip was put together at very short notice after the bulk of the intended itinerary in northern New South Wales was denied to us by the horrendous wildfires blighting the east coast. We elected to head to much safer parts of Queensland and concentrated on three endemic odonate areas for quality rather than quantity. This worked well although inevitably we missed a few endemics. We will be back though as Oz odong is rather addictive.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to John and Roy for putting up with me and making the trip possible.

Daily diary

20/11 Sippy Downs, Ewen Maddock Res., Mapleton Falls NP and Kenilworth

No sleep overnight thanks to jetlag and bedbugs in our seedy downtown hotel. We hit the road early and headed up the road an hour to do our big food shop in Sippy Downs and get some introductory libellulids under the belt in the nearby town wetland. This proved to be good with views of *Aethriamanta nymphaea* being the highlight but a strong supporting cast that included *Austrocnemis splendida* (difficult to photograph well as ever).

With the temperature hitting the mid 30's already we pushed on and had a quick go along the edge of the nearby Ewen Maddock Reservoir. This was a possible site for *Nannophya australis* and it did not take too long as we picked our way along the edge of the drying reservoir through some likely vegetation before Roy spotted a female fleetingly. This was swiftly followed by a male that behaved impeccably for photographs. We walked away happily but the day was heating up even more...

We took lunch in the car park at Mapleton Falls NP and then enjoyed a short session here that was packed with confusion. Roy found our first *Eusynthemis (aurolineata)* and there was an egg-laying female orange flatwing that upon examination turned out to be *chrysoides*. As we were here following up reports of *amabilis* we felt slightly cheated but it was a similarly fantastic species. Further up the trail we found plenty of males plus another *Eusynthemis nigra* and our first *Diphlebia (coerulescens)*. Jetlag and fatigue caught up with us here and we headed to Kenilworth to sort out a campsite.

Tents pitched we headed out for a dusk session at nearby Little Yabba Creek, we were really tired by this point and I doubt we did the crepuscular stuff much credit but we did catch a *Hemicordulia (australiae)* and had our first *Rhadinosticta simplex*.

21/11 Booloumba Creek (Conondale NP) and Seary's Creek (Great Sandy NP)

A more leisurely start this morning although we were all woken by the kookaburra pre-dawn chorus... Getting to the first creek crossing on Booloumba Creek by 0800 proved to be a good idea. The temperature was already over 25 degrees and things were on the wing. This allowed us to get to grips with some of the widespread and common forest species missing so far from our list of targets. The best thing here was probably the amazing *Choristhemis* but a strong supporting cast included *Hemigomphus heteroclytus*, *Austrogomphus amphiclitus*, *Nannophlebia risi* and great opportunities to photograph *Pseudagrion aureofrons*. Phil had an *Austrothemis cornutus* here too (retrospectively identified from photos).

We spent a pleasant morning searching various creek crossings along the track but things stopped flying when the heat built by 1100. After the first creek our hard work netted a few more things including more lovely orange *chrysoides* and a few flybys of an unphotographed synthemistid that may have been *Parasynthemis* (we all kept our fingers crossed for another sighting later in the tour but it was to be in vain).

After lunch in Kenilworth we drove over to Great Sandy NP. We stopped on the way to the campsite to recce Seary's Creek which was rather crowded and odo-activity had probably stopped. We did get a glimpse of a possible *Austroaeschna* and added *Nososticta solitaria* to the list in the incredible wallum stream habitat. We looked forward to the morning session of the next day.

22/11 Great Sandy NP (Seary's Creek, Poona Lake and Teewah Creek)

Arriving at Seary's Creek for 0800 was a good idea, stuff was flying. It did not take long for John to have the first contact with *Austroaeschna cooloola*, eventually we got decent flight views but never saw one perch. A female *Austrogomphus ochracea* was a surprise here. Roy waded 'nuts-deep' in the chilly stream and found us a superb male *Hemigomphus cooloola*. We had found the two wallum endemics!

With the heat building we ran over to Poona Lake and tackled the 2-km walk through tall forest to the stunning sand-fringed Poona Lake. We saw no odos in the rather dry forest but as soon as we emerged on the brilliant white, sandy lakeside we were amongst large numbers of the brownwater-specialist *Orthetrum boumiera*. It took us longer to track down the *Austrolestes minjerriba* as they were all out on large *Juncus* stems in the lake and we had to wade out to get photos.

After lunch back at the camp we headed out to look at Teewah Creek (just a single *icteromelas* – our only one of the day). Stopped at Seary's Creek on the way back and the guys checked it again for more views of the *Austroaeschna* and a speedy *Zyxomma*.

23/11 drive to Rockhampton

A leisurely drive up to Rockhampton with a series of failed attempts to find some habitat on spec. A mostly dry creek (near Calliope) produced red-bellied snake and a single *Ceriagrion*. We did have sites near Rockhampton but on arrival there we drove around a bit and found that all the creeks here were dry...

24/11 on to Finch Hatton

We stopped very little en route but enjoyed a short diversion to the St. Lawrence wetland which was great for birds and produced our first *Brachydiplax denticauda*. Arriving in the gorge after lunch we checked the creek before the campsite and in the environs of the campsite before recceing up the road to the top.

25/11 Finch Hatton Gorge (Eungella)

We walked up to the top of the trail this morning, picking up our only *Telephlebia cyclops* in trackside rattan. After this the best site was easily the Callistemon Crossing and the associated seeps and side streams. We worked this area hard in often overcast conditions and came away with a nice set of odes with a nice male *Episynlestes intermedius* taking pride of place but also a good number of our first *Eusynthemis nigra*.

26/11 Dalrymple Road and Broken River (Eungella NP)

Today we took the road uphill into the heart of Eungella NP. We had hoped to drive along the Dalrymple Road but at our first site we discovered the road to be gated. This area was superb luckily and we did not want for excitement. We asked permission to go through the gate a short way on foot and work a small open stream and associated wetland. The paddock margins were home to flying *Austroaeschna* and one swing of the net confirmed that they were the endemic *eungella*. Also here plenty of *Eusynthemis nigra*.

Broken River next, chasing reports of *Labidiosticta*, no sign of that but plenty of odes and a series of excellent encounters with platypus.

27/11 the rivers en route to Marian and the drive to Emerald

We spent the morning checking the streams and rivers between Finch Hatton and Marian. This produced nothing of note! The drive through to Emerald was through very dry country and not much was seen en route, although we recorded our first *Ischnura aurora*. But a short late afternoon session at Emerald Botanical Gardens produced a few photographic opportunities and a determination to return in the morning as it showed promise.

28/11 Emerald to Carnarvon

Emerald Botanical Garden was good during a short morning session. The stillwater elements were rather quiet early on but we did better along the river later on. Here we quickly found our first *Hemicordulia intermedia*. A small riverside shrub had at least three *Rhadinosticta simplex* including a female (my first). Lastly just before we left we connected with one very flighty *Austrogomphus australis*. That left some food shopping and banking before the drive through the huge opencast coalmining region to the south...

We did some profitable stops once we got close to park and recent rain was evident here for the first time. The best stop on the road in was just before Takarakka and delivered both *Austrolestes leda* and *aridus*! Roy photographed our only *Hemicordulia tau* here too. As we bumped up the access track the home stream at the campsite produced our first *Diphlebia nymphoides*. A great end to a good day. A quick night drive with Roy later netted a common brushtail possum and a rufous bettong.

29/11 Moss Garden trail (Carnarvon Gorge NP)

Today we walked in to the gorge and took a fantastic side trail to the Moss Garden. At the start of the trail Roy connected with our first *Episynlestes albicauda* (a teneral that quickly fluttered up and out of range. Luckily we were to see many more as we climbed higher up the sidestream. This small sidestream was a really magical place. We were visited briefly by the rarely-seen endemic *Telephlebia undia*. An *Austrocordulia refracta* sallied out and hung again for us in a nearby cycad. We were plagued with *Austroaeschnas* but the only photographs we managed showed *Austroaeschna pinheyi* (better than nothing but we were hoping for the Carnarvon endemic *muelleri*). We walked out for lunch and the temperature must have been in the low 40s... We spent the rest of the afternoon recovering.

30/11 Mickey Creek, Rock Pool and Takarakka

Today we tried the accessible rivers and creeks outside the Gorge proper. Mickey Creek had been blasted clean by the recent storm but it delivered fast-flying *Austroaeschna* which eluded the cameras sadly but looked good for *pinheyi*. We also had a smaller *Austroaeschna* that could well have been *muelleri*. Phil got a shock back at base when a poorly photographed presumed egg-laying gomphid turned out to be our only *Eusynthemis denisae* of the trip... Whoopsie.

Next stop was Rock Pool which was worth it for photographs of widespread stuff but started to burn off as we worked it. The intense heat at this location really shortened our time in the field each day. That left a little time to search out stuff at Takarakka and go through our photographs in the heat of the day. This was interrupted by the arrival of an adult and immature boobook in the trees above the field kitchen.

1/12 Moss Garden and drive to Chinchilla

This morning Roy and I trekked into an overcast gorge for another crack at finding the endemic *Austroaeschna*. Birding was good but dragons took a long time to get going. It was not to be and in the end we settled for confirming *Austroaeschna pinheyi* before we headed back to drive to Chinchilla to overnight en route to Brisbane.

2/12 Northbrook Creek (D'Aguilar NP), Mount Glorious

Leaving Chinchilla early enabled an mid-morning session at the Red and White Cedar picnic grounds along a very dry part of Northbrook Creek. Roy worked hard here and found us a nice deep, shaded pool here that produced *Austrogomphus cornutus*. Later we walked down into a flowing part of the creek higher up and enjoyed our only *Austrogomphus ochracea* of the trip. Climbing out we lunched and headed for Mount Glorious. The Greenes Falls trail was a great idea. As we walked down we disturbed a roosting *Austrophlebia costalis*, which eventually settled for a long photo session. A monster! The stream feeding the falls was dry sadly but on our return we found another (or the same) *Austrophlebia*. We headed downhill to Brisbane to find a campsite.

3/12 Northbrook Creek (D'Aguilar NP), Brisbane BG and Yugarapul Park

Up and out early again to see if we could do better for the *Austroaeschna* missed at Northbrook yesterday. No sign, perhaps it was not flying? Afterwards we drifted downhill to look for *Diplacodes melanopsis* in the Botanical Gardens but drew a blank here too, although we had opportunities to photograph commonplace species. After lunch in the restaurant we headed south to Yugarapul. This sedge swamp was a rather challenging habitat to access and we failed to find the *Petalura* (of course). But we did see plenty of *Griseargiolestes albescens* for

our troubles and also our first *Hemicordulia continentalis* of the trip. We vowed to return in the morning...

4/12 Yugarapul Park, Karawatha Forest and Ithaca Creek

A return to Yugarapul Park this morning was unsuccessful in producing a *Petalura* but we did manage a few new things for the site including *Austrogomphus amphiclitus* and our only *Tramea stenoloba*. With no sign of petaltails we headed to check out Karawatha. The lagoon in the southern portion was full of odonates but nothing novel and then we went round to check the information centre. Here they reported that the northern section was very dry. Frog Hollow was not froggy. Luckily we had spotted a creek under the road on the way round so we drove back to check it and were rewarded with our only *Diplacodes melanopsis* of the trip and more *Diplacodes bipunctata* than we had seen for many days.

We checked Slaughter Falls next but it was completely dry and so headed on spec to Ithaca Creek. Here Roy dug out a single female *Rhadinosticta simplex*. That just left checking into our airport hotel and getting Roy to the airport after an excellent Indian meal. John would fly home the next day and Phil was off to PNG.

Dragonflies recorded in Australia between 20th November and 4th December

* <i>Austrolestes aridus</i>	A few near Takarakka (Carnarvon Gorge NP).
<i>Austrolestes leda</i>	Small numbers near Takarakka (Carnarvon Gorge NP).
* <i>Austrolestes minjerriba</i>	Small numbers at Poona Lake (Great Sandy National Park).
* <i>Episynlestes albicauda</i>	Small numbers in Carnarvon Gorge NP.
* <i>Episynlestes intermedius</i>	Single male in Finch Hatton Gorge (Eungella).
* <i>Austroargiolestes chrysooides</i>	Mapleton Falls National Park, Booloumba Creek (Conondale NP) and Northbrook Creek (D'Aguilar NP).
* <i>Austroargiolestes icteromelas</i>	widespread.
* <i>Griseargiolestes albescens</i>	Yugarapul Park (Brisbane).
* <i>Diphlebia coeruleascens</i>	Mapleton Falls NP, Finch Hatton Gorge and Northbrook Creek (D'Aguilar NP).
* <i>Diphlebia nymphoides</i>	Takarakka and nearby Carnarvon Gorge NP.
<i>Rhadinosticta simplex</i>	Little Yabba Creek (Kenilworth), Emerald Botanical Gardens and Yugarapul Park (Brisbane).
<i>Nososticta solida</i>	widespread and often abundant.
<i>Nososticta solitaria</i>	Seary's Creek (Great Sandy NP), Finch Hatton Gorge and Eungella NP.
<i>Agriocnemis pygmaea</i>	Ewen Maddock Reservoir and Dalrymple Rd (Eungella).
<i>Austroagrion watsoni</i>	widespread.
<i>Austrocnemis splendida</i>	Sippy Downs.
<i>Ceriagrion aeruginosum</i>	Sippy Downs and Ewen Maddock Reservoir.
<i>Ischnura aurora</i>	Frequently encountered in SIQ only.
<i>Ischnura heterosticta</i>	widespread.
<i>Pseudagrion aureofrons</i>	widespread.
<i>Pseudagrion ignifer</i>	Seary's Creek (Great Sandy NP), river near Marian and Broken River (Eungella NP).
<i>Pseudagrion microcephalum</i>	widespread.
<i>Xanthagrion erythroneurum</i>	Emerald Botanical Gardens.
<i>Adversaeschna brevistyla</i>	Yugarapul Park (Brisbane).
<i>Anax papuensis</i>	widespread.
<i>Anax guttatus/gibbulosus</i>	An unidentified egg-laying female at the Saint Lawrence wetland was our only record.
* <i>Austroaeschna cooloola</i>	A few on Seary's Creek (Great Sandy NP).
* <i>Austroaeschna eungella</i>	Frequently encountered at the end of Dalrymple Road (Eungella).
* <i>Austroaeschna pinheyi</i>	Carnarvon Gorge NP.
* <i>Austrophlebia costalis</i>	One or two males along the Greenes Falls trail (Mount Glorious).
* <i>Austrophlebia subcostalis</i>	A sight record of this monster from Dalrymple Creek (Eungella).
* <i>Telephlebia cyclops</i>	One roosting in Finch Hatton Gorge (Eungella).
* <i>Telephlebia undia</i>	One at Carnarvon Gorge NP.
<i>Ictinogomphus australis</i>	widespread.

<i>Austrogomphus amphiclitus</i>	Booloumba Creek (Conondale NP), Carnarvon Gorge NP and Yugarapul Park (Brisbane).
* <i>Austrogomphus australis</i>	Just one at Emerald Botanical Gardens.
* <i>Austrogomphus cornutus</i>	Singles at Booloumba Creek (Conondale NP) and Red Cedar (Northbrook Creek, D'Aguilar NP).
* <i>Austrogomphus ochraceus</i>	A female at Seary's Creek (Great Sandy NP) confused us somewhat. Also one at Northbrook Creek, D'Aguilar NP.
* <i>Hemigomphus cooloola</i>	One male at Seary's Creek, Great Sandy NP.
* <i>Hemigomphus comitatus</i>	A teneral female in Finch Hatton Gorge.
* <i>Hemigomphus heteroclytus</i>	Pleasingly widespread.
* <i>Choristhemis flavoterminata</i>	Amazingly widespread, a great odonate.
* <i>Eusynthemis denisae</i>	Carnarvon Gorge NP.
* <i>Eusynthemis nigra</i>	Mapleton Falls NP, Finch Hatton Gorge (Eungella) and Northbrook Creek (D'Aguilar NP).
* <i>Austrocordulia refracta</i>	One hung up at Carnarvon Gorge NP.
<i>Hemicordulia australiae</i>	widespread.
* <i>Hemicordulia continentalis</i>	Yugarapul Park (Brisbane).
<i>Hemicordulia intermedia</i>	Emerald Botanical Gardens.
<i>Hemicordulia tau</i>	One just before Carnarvon NP.
<i>Aethriamanta circumsignata</i>	Sippy Downs.
* <i>Aethriamanta nymphaea</i>	A few at Sippy Downs.
<i>Brachydiplax denticauda</i>	Saint Lawrence Wetland and Emerald Botanical Gardens.
<i>Crocothemis nigrifrons</i>	widespread.
<i>Diplacodes bipunctata</i>	Sippy Downs, Ewen Maddock Reservoir and Karawatha Forest (Brisbane).
<i>Diplacodes haematodes</i>	widespread.
* <i>Diplacodes melanopsis</i>	A creek crossing the road near Karawatha Forest.
<i>Diplacodes trivialis</i>	scattered records in lowlands.
<i>Hydrobasileus brevistylus</i>	Sippy Downs.
<i>Nannodiplax rubra</i>	Sippy Downs and Karawatha Forest (Brisbane).
<i>Nannophlebia eludens</i>	Seary's Creek (Great Sandy NP) and Finch Hatton Gorge (Eungella).
<i>Nannophlebia risi</i>	Booloumba Creek (Conondale NP) and Seary's Creek (Great Sandy NP).
* <i>Nannophya australis</i>	Two at Ewen Maddock Reservoir.
* <i>Orthetrum boumiera</i>	Lake Poona (Great Sandy NP).
<i>Orthetrum caledonicum</i>	widespread.
<i>Orthetrum sabina</i>	Sippy Downs.
<i>Orthetrum villosovittatum</i>	widespread.
<i>Rhodothemis lieftincki</i>	Sippy Downs and Karawatha Forest (Brisbane).
<i>Rhyothemis graphiptera</i>	widespread.
<i>Rhyothemis phyllis</i>	widespread.
<i>Tramea loewii</i>	Sippy Downs and Carnarvon NP.
<i>Tramea stenoloba</i>	One male photographed in Yugarapul Park (Brisbane).
<i>Zyxomma elgneri</i>	Seary's Creek (Big Sandy NP), Emerald Botanical Gardens, Brisbane Botanical Gardens and Ithaca Creek (Brisbane).