

MEPA Membership renewal form on back

Native - Hairy Rosewood

To say that this tree *Dysoxylum rufum* is bird attracting would be an understatement. When it is in full fruit we have observed Paradise rifle birds, Satin bower birds, Regent bower birds and Lewin's honey eaters all eating the fruit. Not to mention brown Gerygones, Scrub wren, Thorn-bills, White breasted tree creepers and Golden whistlers after the various insects that live on the leaves and bark.



Paradise riflebird (*Ptiloris paradiseus*)

As for the tree's common names, the list is as long as your arm, the most commonly used are: Hairy rosewood, Rusty mahogany, Bastard pencil cedar.

Leaves pinnate, the leaflets ovate-lanceolate, unequal sided at the base, the under surface clothed with rust coloured hairs. The fruit is more or less rounded, about 25 mm (1 inch) and covered in tiny irritant hairs, hence the names. It is fast growing and an excellent regeneration tree. Very, very old specimens can attain a height of 30 m though I think we would have to live for 300 years to see that.

Garry Rogers

Come along to the
MEPA AGM
on Sunday 9 November,
11 am, at Mt Nebo Hall

Book Review: Tim Low's *Where Song Began*, Penguin 2014.

Australian ecologist and author Tim Low has written yet another wonderful exploration of Australia's remarkable natural heritage. *Where Song Began* centres on the revelation that Australia is the origin of all the world's song birds (which comprise nearly all the world's birds). In the scientific world, northern-hemisphere bias has long held sway. Our unique mammals like echidnas and platypus (egg-laying monotremes), kangaroos and wombats (raising pouch-young), were described as "primitive relicts" of bygone days before the "modern" placental mammals like dogs, horses and monkeys took over the world; they only remained here because we were cut off from the advance of these "modern" creatures. With birds the idea was even more extreme – we didn't have *any* birds of our own to speak of. The world's birds were, until the 1980s, assumed to have originated from the North, the origin of all that matters. And the wonderful world of song, ushered in by songbirds when the dinosaurs roamed, had similar roots. Australia was an avian *terra nullius* colonised by Northern birds. But over the last couple of decades DNA studies, in particular, have suggested that this continent (and its Gondwanan precursor) was a centre of song long before larks and warblers ever raised a note in the North. In fact they only got to the North through wave after wave of bird migrations out of Australia.

50 million years ago birds were evolving here in the South that would evolve and spread into the glorious variety of songbirds the world over. The evidence seems fairly conclusive. But the idea was met with considerable resistance and even hostility by heavy-hitting ornithologists in the North, only really being fully accepted in 2004. Science has its paradigms, among them northern origins for birds, and attempts to overturn them often face what in hindsight seems like blind prejudice (just think of continental drift, plate

tectonics, and its struggle to be taken seriously last century). Low discusses the evidence and history of this recent change in thinking but the book is far more than a study in scientific theory change.

Low also discusses Australian birds' remarkable gregariousness (think of noisy and highly social honeyeaters), their loud harsh calls (cockatoos, galahs, parrots, bowerbirds), their intelligence, as well as their beautiful songs (lyrebirds, scrub birds, thrushes, magpies, butcherbirds, gerygones). And his knowledge of flora is a key to his story. In a country with ancient poor soils, plants have found it difficult to convert sunlight into plant growth. The missing nutrients limit the ability to build plant fibre. Instead, there is a strong tendency to convert it onto nectar. Australian forests and heathlands flow with nectar like nowhere else in the world. Eucalypts, paperbarks, grevilleas and banksias provide birds

with food sources so rich that defending them brings rich rewards. And this, along with other rich nectar sources like insects that produce honey-dew (e.g. lerps on eucalypts), has driven bird evolution. Noisy, aggressive, intelligent behaviour is distinctive of Australia's bird fauna. There is so much in this book to interest bird (and forest) lovers, and the detail and explanations of bird origins, evolution and behaviour make the bird world look so much more fascinating. I will never look at a mob of honeyeaters in quite the same way. The back-story to the remarkable birds we live amongst, every bit as distinctive as our mammals, has to be read to be believed.

For an interview with Tim Low on the book see:
<http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2014/06/24/4031932.htm?site=conversations>

Dominic Hyde

MEPA is your local non-profit environment group. With your help and support, we undertake volunteer on-ground activities to protect our local environment.
HELP US HELP YOU HELP OUR LOCAL AREA

We offer the following services.

“Do Your Block” (free on-site advice to residents including weed identification, native plant identification, and advice on weed control and bush-friendly planting)

“Ask MEPA” (an email service where we do our best to answer relevant questions you may have – email: askmepa@yahoo.com.au)

Our focus continues to be the protection of our outstanding native flora and fauna. (We are now in the ninth year of our weed management project in the power and road corridors from The Gap, past Mt Glorious, to Wivenhoe Outlook - with funding partners MBRC, BCC, SEQC, DMR, Powerlink, and QPWS.)

For all this we need your support. Membership numbers count.

The membership form below has details on how to join and pay.

MEPA
PO Box 29, Mt Nebo, Qld 4520

Thank you
Dominic Hyde, MEPA, Ph: 32890093

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Mt Nebo & Mt Glorious Environment Protection Assoc.

MEMBERSHIP 2014 – 2015
\$5.00 per person or \$10.00 per family

Name..... Telephone.....
Address..... Email.....
.....
Receipt required: Yes No

To join:

1. Post this form & payment to PO Box 29; or
2. Post this form to PO Box 29 & pay by electronic transfer:

BSB No.: 064145 Account Number: 00903153 Account Name: MEPA

Please also make sure you enter *your* name so that it will appear on the account statement.