

U3A Port Fairy  
Science...naturally!  
**Russell Clark Reserve – Self-guided nature walk**

John Miller March 2020



This is one of a series of self-guided walks around Port Fairy to help relieve the tedium of COVID-19. The aim of the walks is to provide enjoyable outdoor activities that can be undertaken either by yourself or your family (with appropriate COVID-19 separation and other precautions). I hope you enjoy them.

The walk introduces you to a few of the natural features of the Russell Clark Reserve that you may have wondered about or maybe never noticed before. It is a bit like a treasure hunt – locations are not marked on the ground so you will need to keep your eyes peeled for the plants and other features illustrated.

To start the walk, enter the Reserve from the Campbell Street/James Street intersection and enjoy an easy loop walk on a paved path.

As you walk anticlockwise along the walking path you will see copses of tall shrubs. The shrub with purple pom-pom type flowers is Showy Honey-myrtle *Melaleuca nesophila* – a native of *Western Australia*.



*Showy Honey-myrtle*



*Bower Spinach*



*Seaberry Saltbush*

There are also some indigenous scrambling species including Bower Spinach *Tetragonia implexicoma* (sometimes referred to as Warrigul Greens or New Zealand Spinach and is edible) and Seaberry Saltbush *Rhagodia candolleana* recognised by its little red berries (also edible).

As you move along the path, have a look around the edges of the wetlands. The water in the wetlands is brackish and all sorts of salt tolerant species live in and around the water.

When the water is low in late summer and autumn a row of seashells is visible. There are several shell species present but the most common and biggest is the Ridged Venus *Catylaysia rhytiphora* a bivalve recognised by the concentric ridges on its shells.



*Ridged Venus*



*Slender Water-mat*



*Creeping Brookweed*

Slender Water-mat *Althenia preisii* forms dense mats under and floating on the surface of the water. When in flower, the stems project above the water.

The small creeping plant with small white to pink five petalled flowers on the banks of the wetland is Creeping Brookweed *Samolus repens*. It is very common on the seasonally wet saline meadows around the wetlands.

Moving towards South Beach you will encounter a small eucalypt between the path and the wetland. It is a planted Yellow Gum *Eucalyptus leucoxyton* which does not occur naturally in the Port Fairy area.



*Yellow Gum*



*Coast Beard-heath*



*Coast Wattle*

On the south side of the path leading back to James Street you will also encounter some other common shrubs including Coast Beard-heath *Leucopogon parviflorus* with its small white star-shaped flowers (look closely and you will see the short white "beard" on the ends of the petals) and Coast Wattle *Acacia longifolia* subsp. *sophorae* which has golden cylindrical flowers in winter and spring.

There are lots more to discover in the Reserve. If you find a plant, shell, bird, whatever, and want to know what it is, email me a picture and a short description and I will endeavour to work it out for you. Email me at: [jmiller3350@gmail.com](mailto:jmiller3350@gmail.com)

Please feel free to share this with anyone else who might enjoy the walk.