

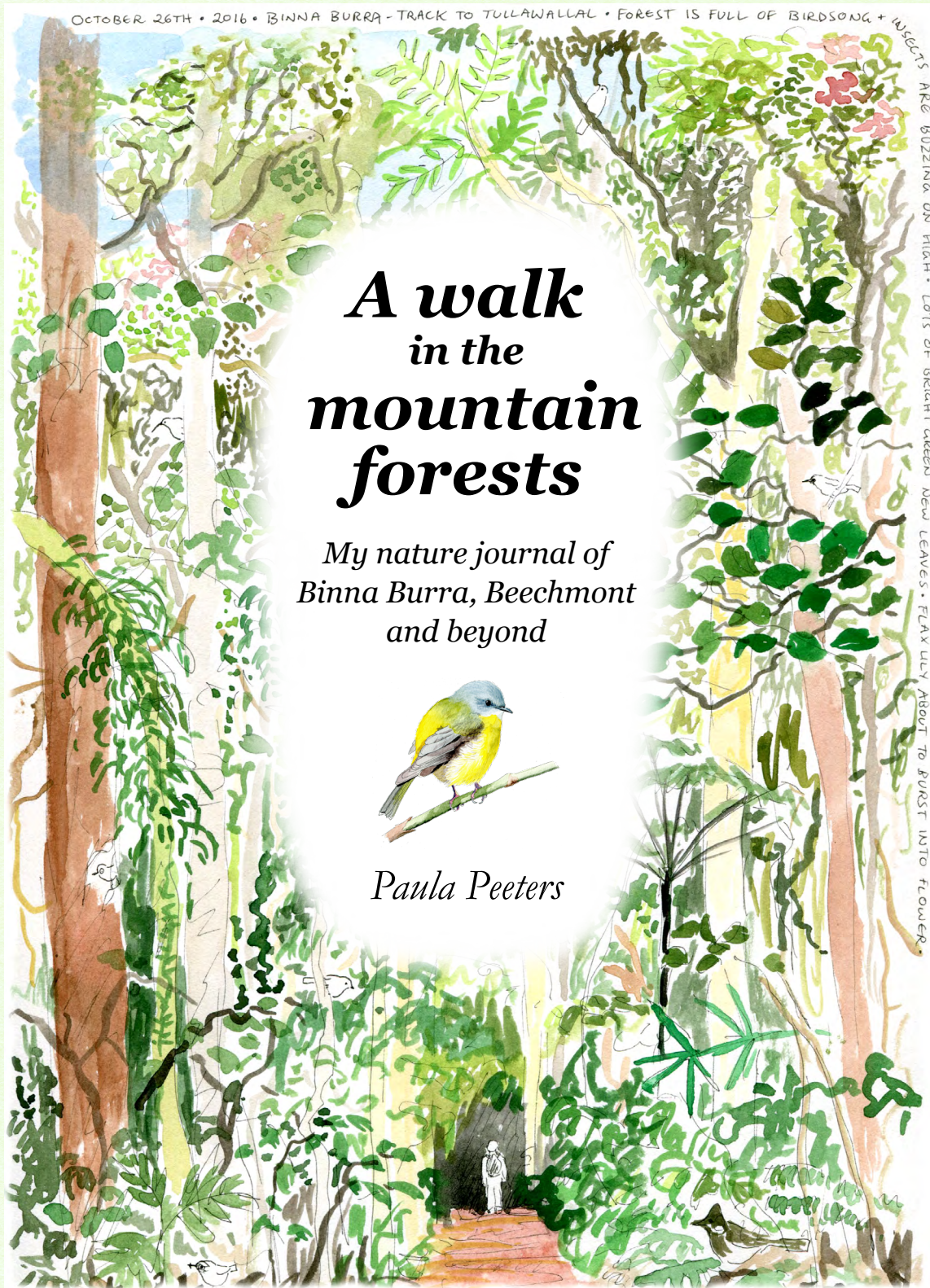
OCTOBER 26TH • 2016 • BINNA BURRA - TRACK TO TULLAWALLAL • FOREST IS FULL OF BIRDSONG + INSECTS ARE BUZZING ON FLAX • LOTS OF BRIGHT GREEN NEW LEAVES • FLAX ULY ABOUT TO BURST INTO FLOWER.

A walk in the mountain forests

*My nature journal of
Binna Burra, Beechmont
and beyond*



Paula Peeters







Spangled
Drongo



This book was created on the lands of the Yugambeh, Ngarrindjeri, Turrbal and Gumbaynggirr people. I acknowledge these Traditional Custodians of country, and their connections to land, sea and community. I pay my respects to their Elders past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.





for Raymond



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2017-2021



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Contents

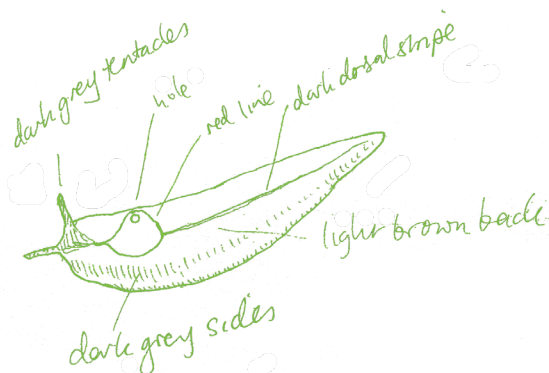
Introduction 15

2017 - 2018

Beechmont encounters	22, 30, 40, 48
On the way to the tree top walk, O'Reillys	28, 31
Rainforest Circuit, Binna Burra	32
Wet sclerophyll forest, Dave's Creek Track	34
Along Back Creek Reserve, Beechmont	36
Hoop Pine	38
Rose-crowned Fruit-dove	44
Topknot Pigeon	46
A walk to Dave's Creek	54

2019

Tall forests	56
Rainforest Circuit, Binna Burra	60, 66, 76, 92
Beechmont birds	62, 68, 70, 72
Beechmont butterflies	64
Along the Illinbah Circuit Track	69
Lower Bellbird Track	71, 75, 81
Ship's Stern Track	81
Return of the Bellbirds	85
Paradise Riflebird	91
Fire comes to Binna Burra	95
Signs of Spring return to Beechmont	105
Reasons to be cheerful	115
Queensland Lacebark Tree	126



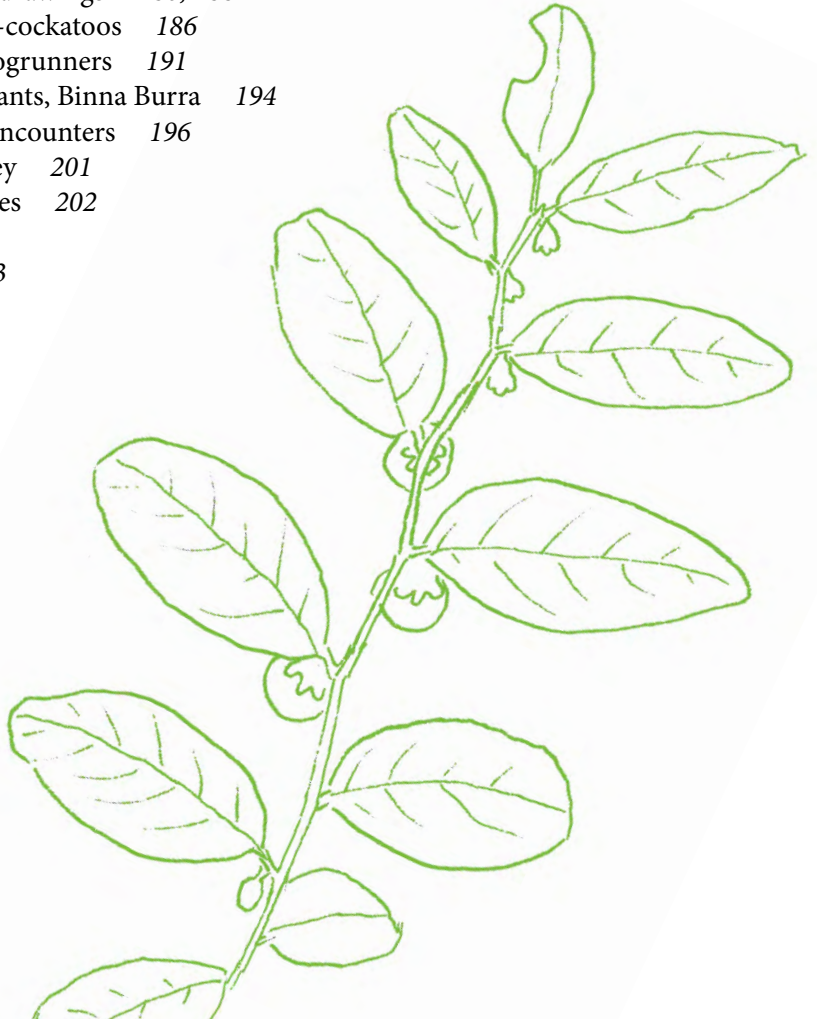
2020

- Beechmont encounters 131, 150, 154, 162, 176
A lyrebird's breakfast 145
A brief trip to Victor Harbor 147
Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoos 152
Happy Mother's Day Mrs Large-billed Scrubwren! 156
Eucalyptus 159
Return to Binna Burra 161
On this morning's walk 167

2021

- Daily nature drawings 180, 188
Glossy Black-cockatoos 186
Australian Logrunners 191
Rainforest plants, Binna Burra 194
Beechmont encounters 196
Illinbah Valley 201
Magpie studies 202

Thanks 203





White Beech, *Gmelina leichardtii*. This is the 'Beech' that 'Beechmont' is named after.

Introduction

In September 2017, I moved from Brisbane to the forested mountains near Binna Burra, in south-east Queensland. Lamington National Park surrounds the small cluster of houses where I live. This landscape is part of the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage Area which includes the major remaining areas of rainforest in south-east Queensland and northern New South Wales, and many other ecosystem types (e.g. waterways, eucalypt forests, and montane heaths).

This place is home to an astonishing number of plant and animal species. In Lamington National Park alone, 2062 native species have been recorded, including 1071 plants, 512 fungi and 476 animals, and this is an underestimate of the actual species richness. For example, we know that the true number of animal species is much higher because few invertebrates are included in this list.

What you will find in these pages is part of my attempt to get to know this landscape, and the plants, fungi and animals who live here.* I call it ‘nature journaling’.

* I have included a few pictures in the book that were drawn in other places I visited during 2017 – 2021. These were included because I thought they added some narrative interest to the book (e.g. the trip to South Australia right at the start of the COVID pandemic), or were also part of the ‘mountain forests’ of the World Heritage Area (e.g. ‘The Lyrebird’s Breakfast’ drawn in New England National Park, New South Wales).

King parrots
in the white beach



I find the practice of nature journaling both incredibly simple and deeply meaningful. It's the simple practice of drawing and writing in response to nature. However, aspects of nature journaling are akin to meditation, hence the potential for the practice to be profound.

It starts by going outdoors and being in nature. Many people already experience the profound when they spend quiet time in a natural place. But the practice of drawing and writing, while in nature, can enhance the senses, intensify the experience and clear the mind.

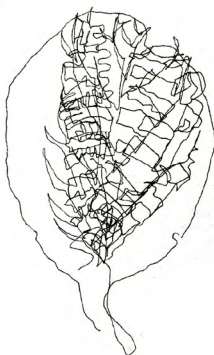
To draw something from life, I need to stand or sit in one place and look at it closely. Already this makes me slow down. My attention is focussed on the visual. If my mind gets absorbed by the subject of the drawing, many other thoughts disappear. In this way, the experience is akin to the preliminary stages of meditation – a clearing of the mind.

But curiously, I have found that while my eyes are focussed on drawing, my other senses become enhanced. Not only do I explore with fascination the subject of the drawing (e.g. the intricate branching patterns and colours of the tree in front of me), I also hear and recognise different bird calls and the rising pitch of insects humming. I smell the deep fresh scent of forest humus; I feel the cool breeze on my body. The simple act of drawing becomes an intense experience of nature.

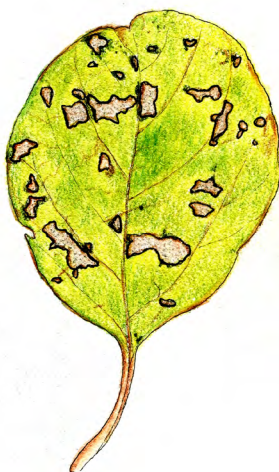
Amelina leichardtii
White Beech

23/9/2017

Contour drawing of underside of leaf
complex network of raised veins



Fallen
leaf



Writing while immersed in nature is a little different. The same focus on external stimuli can lead to sharpened senses and an intense experience. But then there is the interplay between external stimuli – what I see, hear, smell, touch – and what my mind makes of these inputs. My mind reacts to what I am perceiving with emotion, knowledge, analysis and memory. In this way, the act of writing in nature can unearth questions, feelings, facts and past events buried deep in the subconscious. It can be a wonderful adventure in exploration – both of the natural place I'm in, and of my own internal hidden pathways. It can be cathartic.

A few pictures in the book were drawn from photos. Can you tell which ones? They often have a stillness and a gravity that is absent from those drawn from life. The pictures drawn while immersed in nature often have a special life of their own. Is it spontaneity, some kind of verve? Certainly, they are imperfect. Often I try to capture a moment, and maybe this suggests the impermanence of life. Perhaps this type of nature journaling embodies the Japanese concept of *wabi sabi* as it combines imperfection, impermanence and quiet time spent in nature.

Then there are the cartoons drawn from memory, including the series I created after the 2019 wildfires. These are loose impressions of things felt and perceived. Since they are somewhat distilled by time, they tend to be simpler than a sketch drawn directly from the subject, but also more emotive and intense. Perhaps this is part of the general appeal of the cartoon style.

In a way, all drawings are drawn from memory. The visual stimuli need to pass through the eyes, travel through the brain and be expressed by the hand. This takes time. It's good to practice drawing from memory, as you *do* get better at noticing and remembering features. And you probably become less critical about what the resulting drawings look like!

Despite the misgivings of many people, I assure you that anyone can draw, and anyone can write. This means that the practice of nature journaling is available to all. Unfortunately, preconceived ideas about one's ability to draw (or not draw) can get in the way. Harsh judgements about whether a drawing is 'good' or 'bad' can mar the experience. Lofty goals and complicated endpoints (e.g. 'how I want this page to look') can make nature journaling an exercise in striving for perfection. This can make it hard to be present in the moment.

I am far more interested in the *process* of nature journaling, and how it makes you feel, than what ends up on the page. Letting go of self-judgement, and goals and expectations of what your pages will look like, will free you to experience the best part of nature journaling: the immersion in nature, with your senses enhanced, and a quiet, calm state of mind.

The range of materials available for nature journaling is vast, and learning to be 'expert' in using them might take a lifetime in itself. Enjoy the variety, and explore far and wide, but don't get bogged down by this. In these pages I've dabbled with many different types of graphite pencils, ink pens, coloured inks, watercolour pencils, watercolour paints, acrylic pens, white-paper journals and toned-paper journals. I am expert in none of these mediums. Actually, I enjoy the sense of play and discovery that comes with considering myself a beginner, always. I encourage you to do the same. Experiment, doodle, have a play, and learn from the results.

For a detailed introduction to nature journaling, including exercises to get you started, check out my previous books *Make a Date with Nature: An Introduction to Nature Journaling* and *Take this Book for a Walk: A step-by-step guide to nature journaling*. *Make a Date with Nature* is available as a free ebook from my website www.paperbarkwriter.com



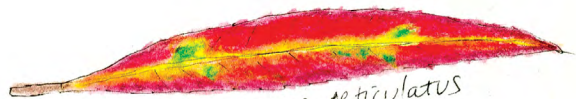


Scarlet Honeyeater
on bottlebrush,
September 2017



Looking south to Mt Tamborine
October 2017

2017 - 2018



Elaeocarpus reticulatus
Blueberry Ash

Sunday 29th October 2017

Fam. Lauraceae

Cryptocarya
triplineris var.
pubens

Hairy three-veined $\times 3/4$
cryptocarya

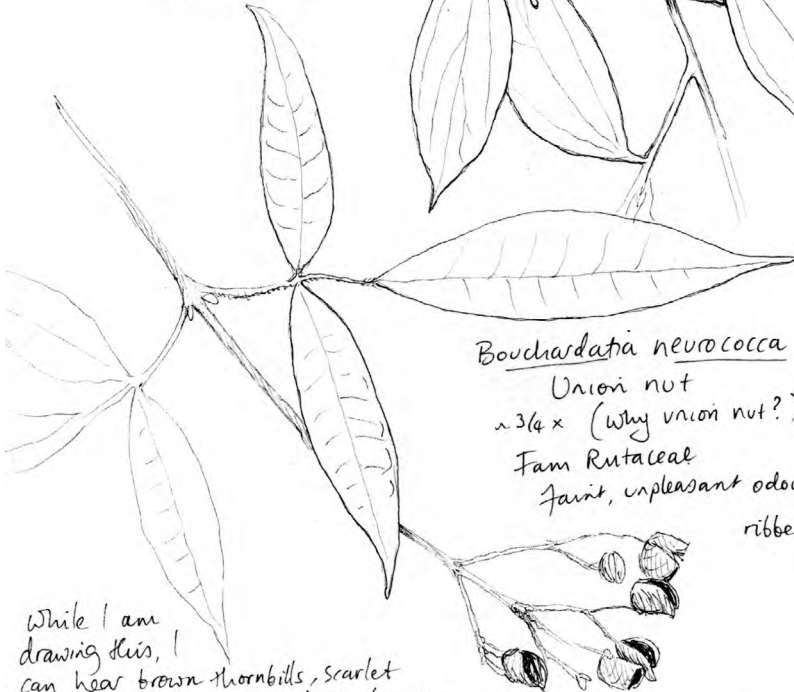
It's supposed to have oil dots,
but I can't see them.



this venation
often means
Lauraceae

Upper leaf surface
glossy
Lower leaf surface
hairy

No domatia



Bouchardatia neurococca

Union nut

$\sim 3/4 \times$ (why union nut?)

Fam Rutaceae

faint, unpleasant odour when leaves crushed

ribbed capsules

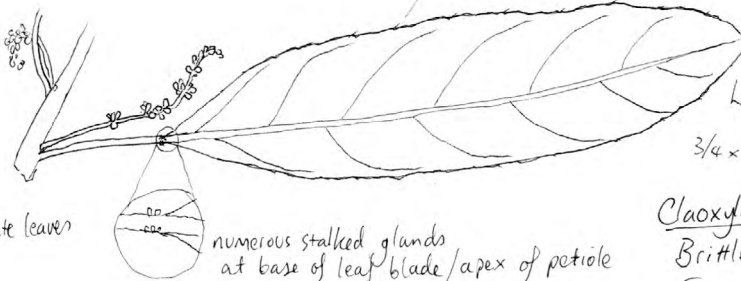
While I am
drawing this, I
can hear brown thornbills, scarlet
honeyeaters, king parrots, cockaturras,
whipbirds, chooks scratching, Amelina leaves
falling, a march fly buzzing, hewin's honeyeaters,
silvereyes, trilli, a radio, a brush cuckoo, a
grey shrike thrush, another cuckoo, a black-faced
monarch, a sulphur crested cockatoo,
a white-throated tree creeper, and a rosella.
And that's just in a few minutes.



March
fly

green/bronze eyes
thorax dark grey
abdomen has
black bands
wing veins are smoky/shaded
in mid part of wing

very tiny stiff hairs along margin



Alternate leaves

numerous stalked glands
at base of leaf blade/apex of petiole

Leaves soft and
hairless

$3/4 \times$

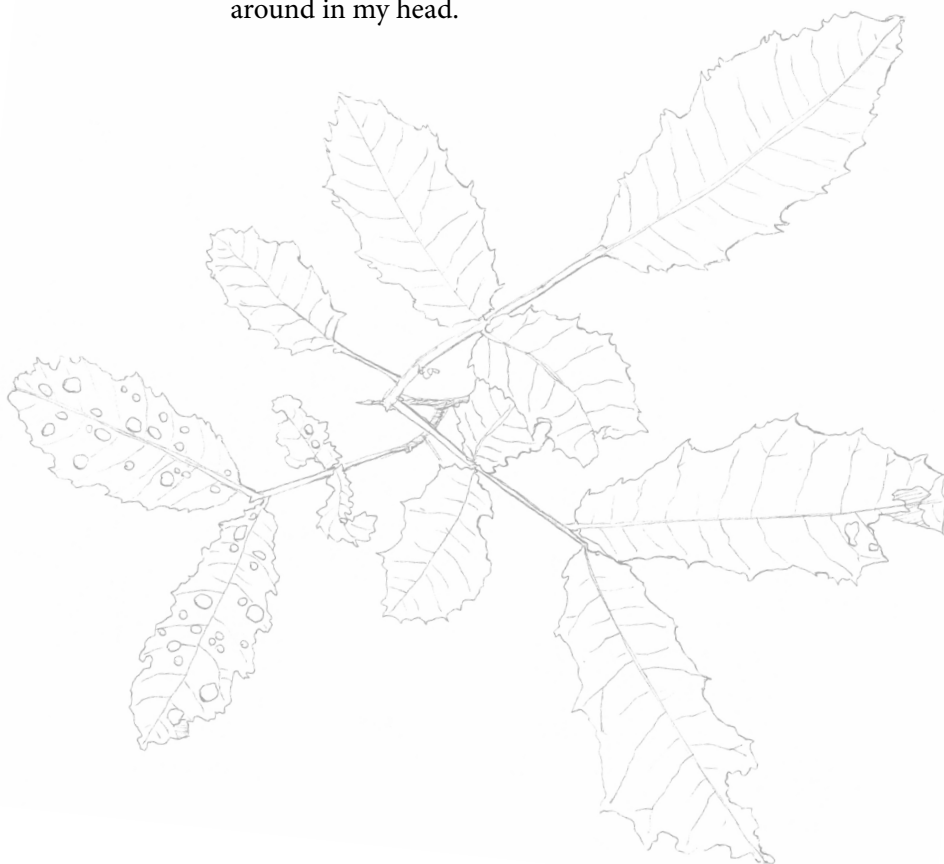
Claoxylon australe

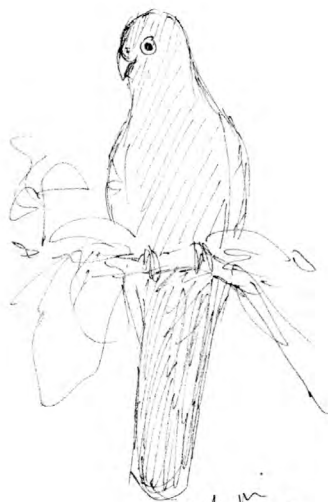
Brittlewood

Fam. Euphorbiaceae

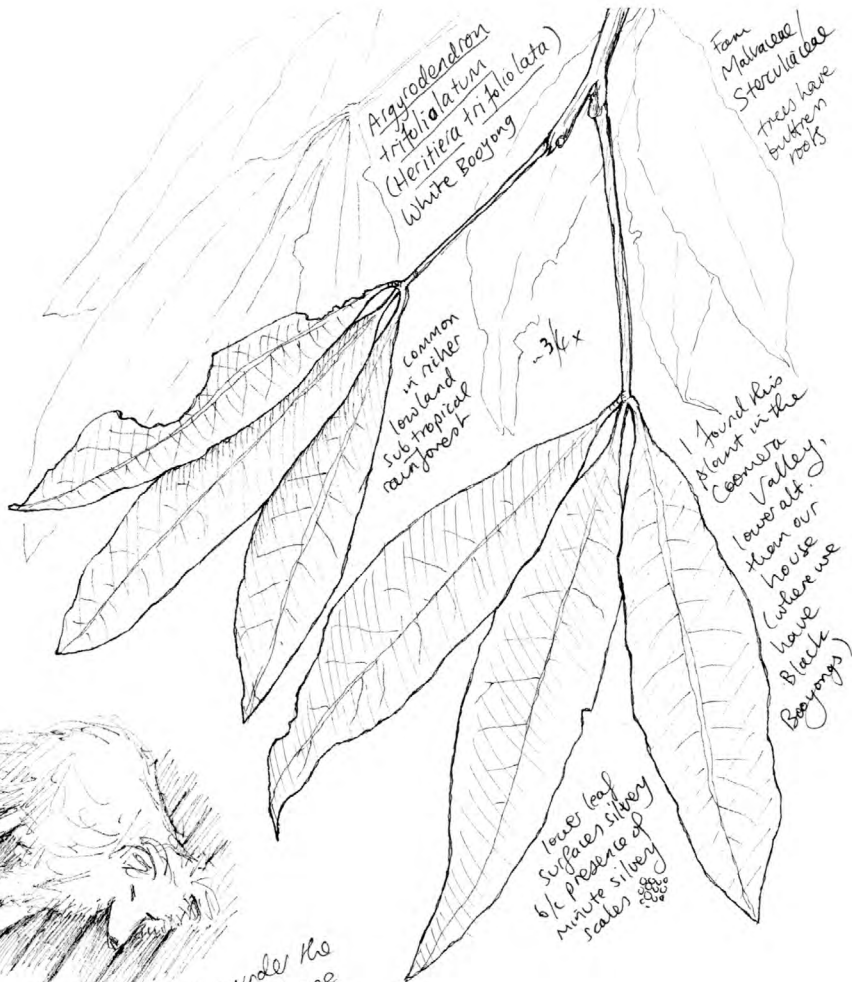
I feel like I am tentatively, joyously, unbelievably, expanding
into this new existence...

... The experience of *being* in nature, having nature all around,
is rich and calming. I am happy, blissful, excited, stimulated,
intrigued, invigorated. Ideas and sensations and images swarm
around in my head.





The living parrot in the White Beech tree behind me is looking for food.



Argyrodendron trifoliolatum
(*Heritiera trifoliolata*)
White Booyong

Fam. Malvaceae
Sterculiaceae
trees have buttress roots

common in richer lowland subtropical rainforest

-3/4 x

I found this plant in the Coeneta Valley, lower alt. than our house (where we have Black Booyongs)

lower leaf surfaces silvery
6/8 presence of minute silvery scales



Tape is sleeping under the table as I draw these plants

I love the shape of the teeth on the margins of these leaves

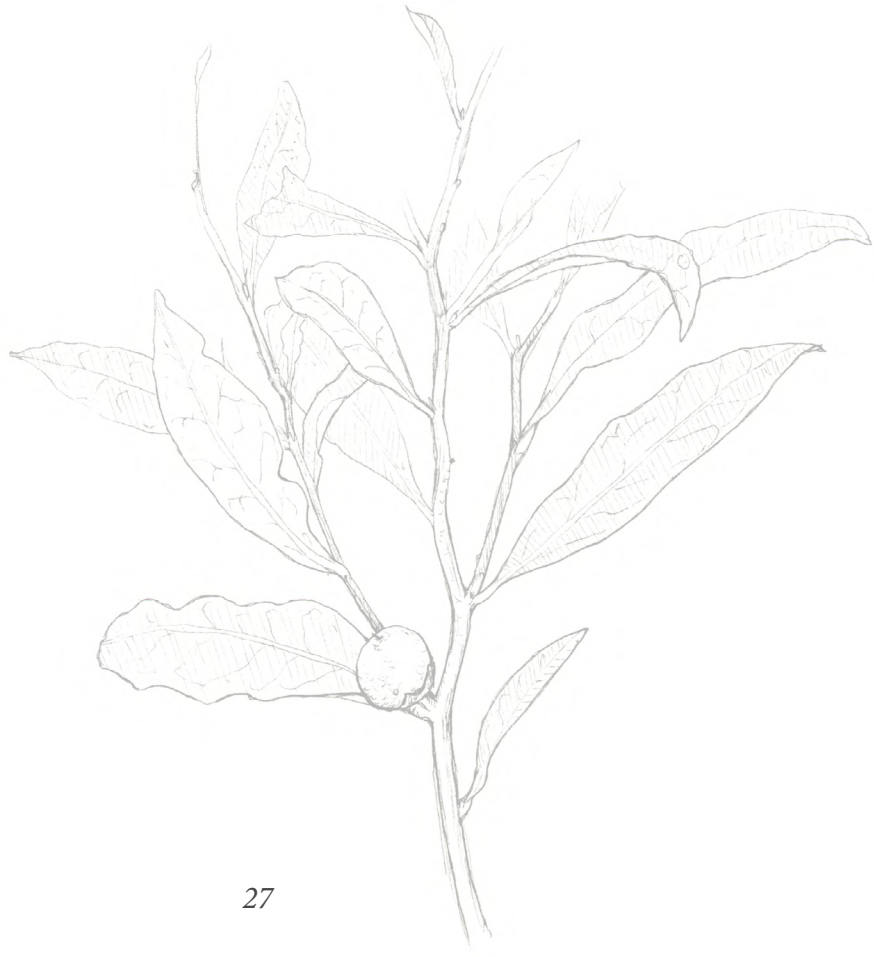
leaf tracing of *Daphnandra* sp. 'McPherson Range'

Common Socketwood (why 'socket' wood?)
Socket Samopas

Fam. Atherospermataceae

leaves opposite
dark green upper surface
faintly aromatic

The deliberate act of drawing and writing, while immersed in nature, seems to enhance feelings of calm and peace, while also stimulating curiosity and the imagination.





Albert's
lyrebird
keeps its head
absolutely still,
while standing
on one leg +
scratching on
the ground with
the other

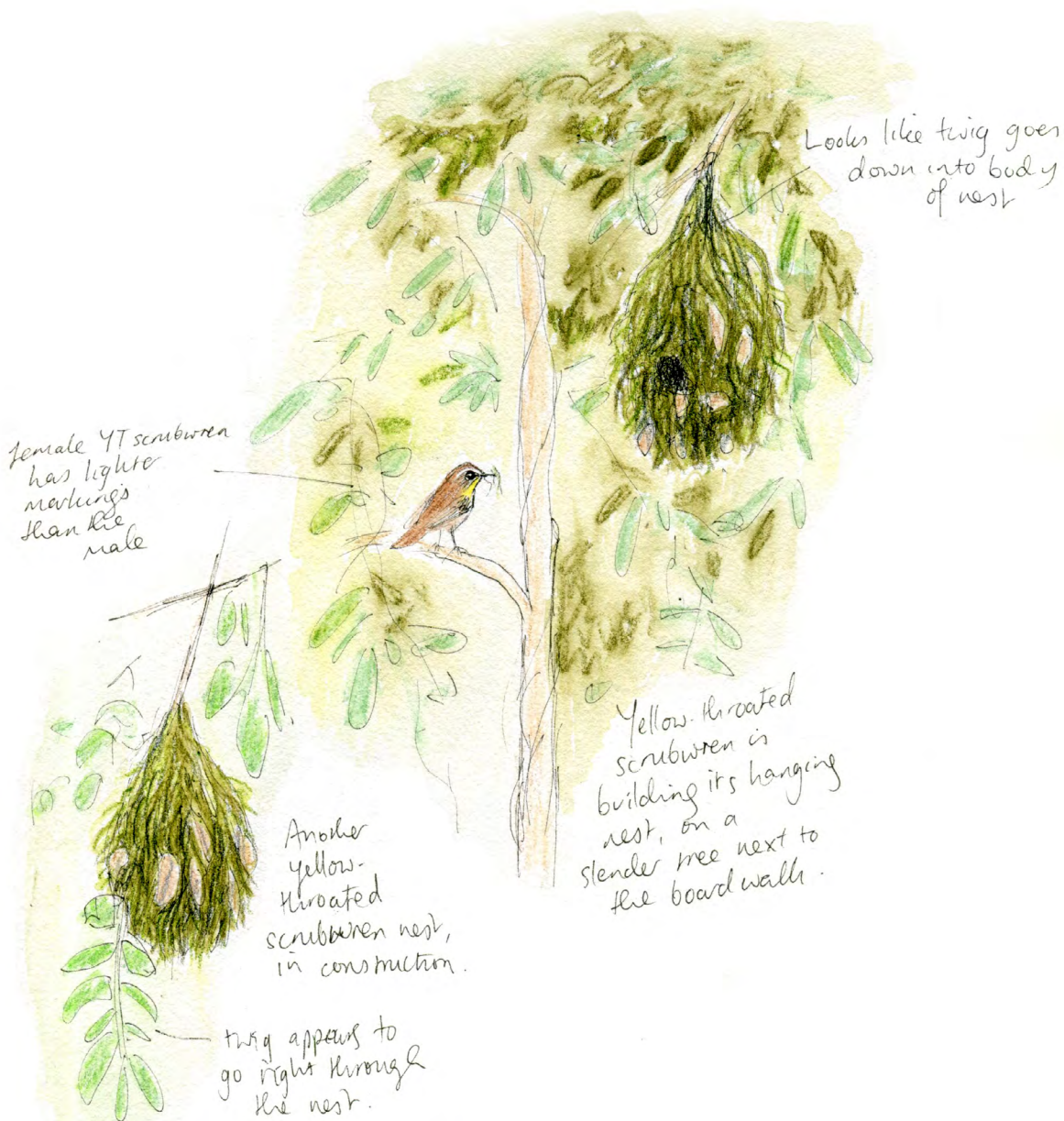
Later, the same bird
perched on a low
branch, singing

Accompanied by a rufous
fantail and some
spire bush flowers.
(*Triunia youngiana*)

This is a sample of
'A walk in the mountain forests'
by Paula Peeters

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female YT scrubwren
has lighter
markings
than the
male

Looks like twig goes
down into body
of nest

Another
yellow-
throated
scrubwren nest,
in construction.

twig appears to
go right through
the nest.

Yellow-throated
scrubwren is
building its hanging
nest, on a
slender tree next to
the boardwalk.

On the way to the Tree-top Walk,
O'Reilly's 16/11/2017