

Book reviews

The best of *Eucalyptus* identification guides

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Native Eucalypts of South Australia.
By Dean Nicolle
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www.dn.com.au/Eucalypts_of_South_Australia.html

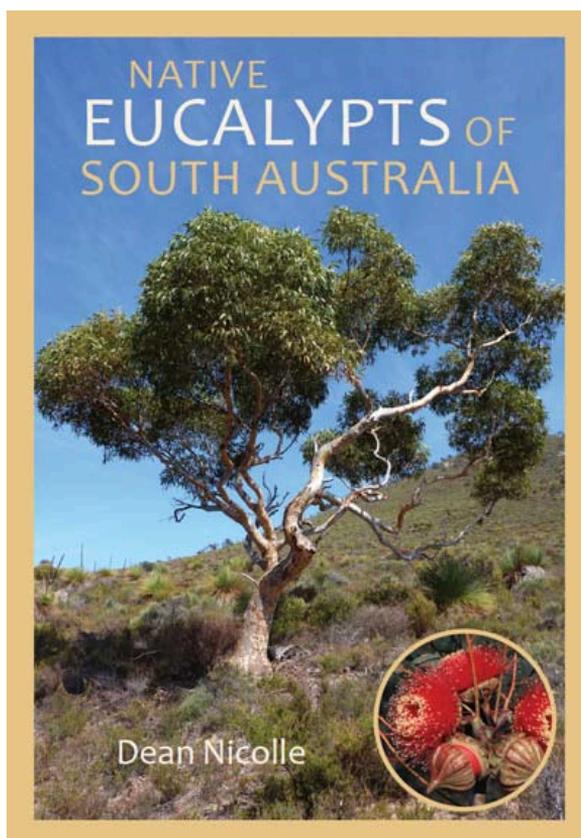
All these pages are well written and beautifully illustrated.

I went straight to the species treatments, which make up the bulk of the book. They are stunningly good. The editor and producer (Annett Börner) is to be congratulated. The layout of the pages is ideal. The first page has

sections on etymology, nomenclature, distinctive features, distribution and habitat, cultivation and uses, miscellaneous notes (usually how to distinguish other related taxa), and conservation status. The information is well written and consistent between taxa, and it is obvious that much editorial effort was expended. The page is not cluttered, with each paragraph well separated from the next. In the Notes section, exceptionally tall or large specimens are documented for some species. The distribution of the taxon is depicted as

Dean Nicolle published a guide to South Australian eucalypts in 1997. The present book is not a revision of that, being entirely rewritten and using new distribution maps and digital imagery. One hundred and three taxa are covered, all with a double page spread. The book measures 26.5 x 18.5 cm, and is definitely small enough and light enough to go into the backpack or into the car alongside the bird books and the wildflower guides.

Nicolle devotes four pages on how to use the book, where each section is comprehensively explained. A further introductory section outlines the major characters that are used in the delimitation and identification of *Eucalyptus* species, and there is a page on habitat and another on hybrids and intergrades.



a brown fill on a map of the state. With major roads and lakes shown, the map works well and it is evident at a glance where each taxon may be found.

The language and terminology are generally easy to understand, with one exception. The author uses the term “waxy” very often when discussing the morphology of various species.

¹ This web page has a list of stockists and a mail order link, as well as all the supplementary material for the book

I was very unclear about what this actually means. I know about bee's wax, candle wax, and ear wax. Does "waxy" refer to the colour of one of these, or the texture? The author evidently thinks the meaning is plain, as the term does not appear in the glossary. I remained perplexed until I came to page 12, devoted to the morphology of branchlets, where there are photographs portraying "waxy" and "non-waxy" buds and fruits. It appears that waxy *sensu* Nicolle is pruinose. Why not just use the term pruinose throughout, particularly as pruinose is explained in the glossary?

The second page consists mainly of photographic images, plus a taxonomic description in the bottom-right corner. Almost every image in the book is of a high quality. All images of whole plant and bark were taken in the wild, in sunny conditions with the sun behind the observer. The buds and fruits portrayed are ideal, in that the buds are mature or nearly so, and the fruits are similarly mature. The fruits are all photographed fresh, so that the valves are closed. In the field, it is dry, opened fruits that are most often encountered. Hopefully, the reader can extrapolate from the appearance of the unopened fruits to the opened ones. Many of the images of buds and fruits are from Nicolle's arboretum, and many have a pleasing neutral grey background. There is no scale bar for the bud and fruit photographs, but because the measurements are given in the description, this is only a minor deficiency. The botanical description is in all cases comprehensive, informative, and carefully drafted. It takes up only a small portion of the page, reflecting the fact that many people do not use or value a detailed description. For several species, the author uses the following phrase "outer stamens lacking anthers (staminodes)". This is ambiguous – it could be interpreted as meaning that staminode is another term for anther. It would be much better to stick with one or the other i.e. staminodes present OR outer stamens lacking anthers.

Spelling errors are few and far between; *Eucalyptus 'pilbaraensis'* (pages 50 & 232), should in fact be *pilbarensis*. The acronym for the herbarium at Florence is incorrectly given

as FL on p. 156, but correctly as FI on p. 112.

The nomenclature section has been very well done, and is up to date, with the exception of the type details for *E. camaldulensis*. Since the acceptance by The Nomenclature Committee for Vascular Plants of the conservation proposal by Brooker & Orchard, the type is no longer the collection by Dehnhardt held at Vienna; it is a collection made by Nicolle himself from near the mouth of the Murray River.

Two new subspecies of *Eucalyptus cladocalyx* are formally described in the book, subsp. *crassa* and subsp. *petila*. All three subspecies are geographically disjunct, with the typical subspecies confined to the Eyre Peninsula. Two taxa have had their rank altered; *E. alatissima* (formerly *E. kingsmillii* subsp. *alatissima*), and *E. ovata* subsp. *grandiflora* (was *E. ovata* var. *grandiflora*). The author has fulfilled all the requirements of the ICN so these are validly published. Some readers may be bewildered by the proliferation of subspecies in *Eucalyptus* in recent decades, and Nicolle is an avid devotee. I feel it is a necessary evil. In a complex and actively evolving genus like *Eucalyptus*, it is often not possible to pigeonhole populations into discrete species, and subspecies offer a useful way of documenting the variation that is observable in the field.

Nicolle has resurrected some names from obscurity, notably *E. cajuputea* Miq., which has long been considered a synonym of *E. odorata*. *E. capitanea* Johnson & Hill has been newly accepted by Nicolle for a taxon related to *E. incrassata*. *E. polybractea* is newly recorded for South Australia, after the author concluded that South Australian populations, often referred to as an undescribed species, do not differ significantly from those of *E. polybractea* in Victoria and New South Wales.

The book does not include a key to species, but the author refers readers to a dichotomous key written by him, and available on the Internet.

I have no hesitation in recommending this marvellous book to anyone with the slightest interest in eucalypts. In fact, it is my opinion that this is the best identification guide to eucalypts that has ever been published.