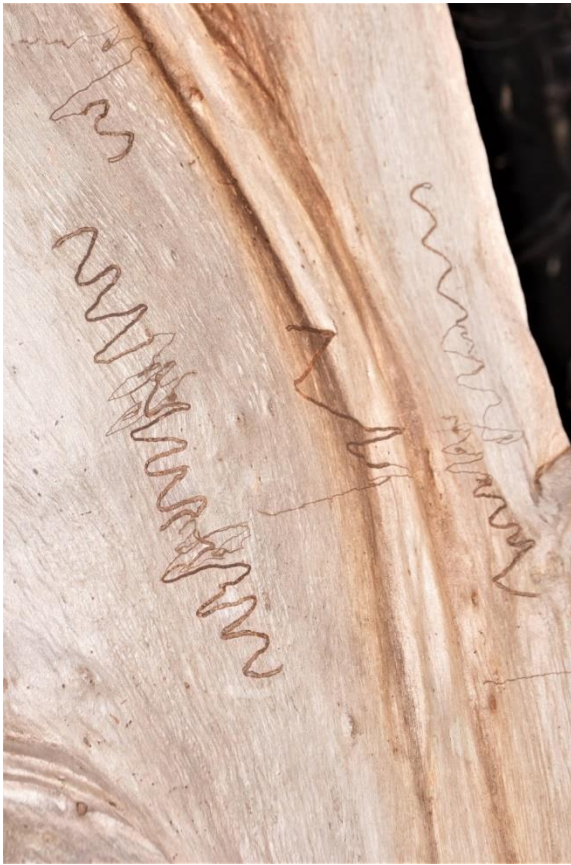
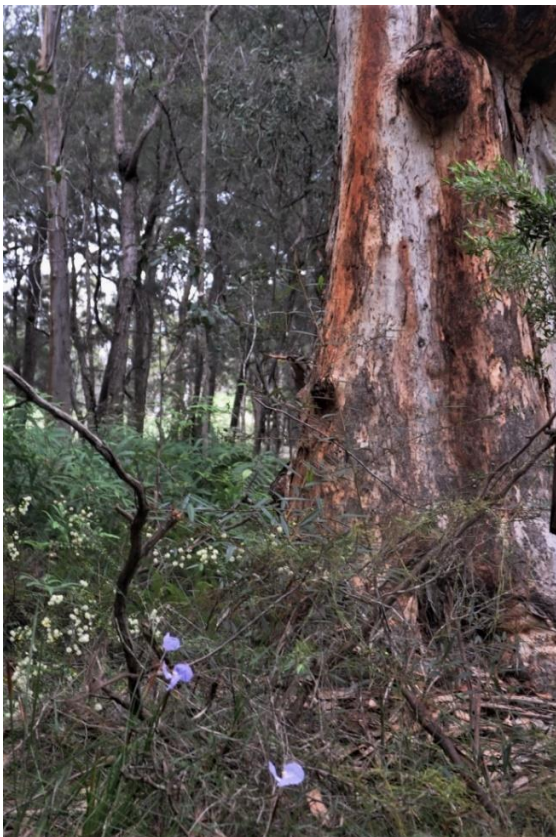


Eucalyptus racemosa (Scribbly Gum)

Readily identified by the distinctive tracks left in the bark by the larvae of the Scribbly Gum moth (*Ogmograptis sp.*), *Eucalyptus racemosa* would have once been very common on the Sunshine Coast, found growing on infertile sandstone soils with poor to moderate drainage.



It has a Regional Ecosystem (12.5.3) named for it, Queensland White Stringybark (*Eucalyptus tindaliae*) and/or Scribbly Gum (*Eucalyptus racemosa*) open forest, and has been described as one of the most attractive of Australia's many types of eucalypt forest due to the variety of its understory shrubs, notably Banksia spp., and wildflowers such as Hibbertias, Thysanotus and Grass Trees. In some areas, particularly closer to Brisbane, 90% of this vegetation community has been cleared as its occurrence coincides with prime residential land. The photos below were taken in a small patch of Scribbly Gum forest at the rear of the disused TAFE site in Tewantin. There has been talk of the potential for it to be cleared by the Tewantin Golf Club to extend a driving range.



The species was first collected in Queensland at the Brisbane River, appropriately named and until recently known here as *Eucalyptus signata* (from the Latin for marked). Unfortunately, however, it had already been described from a specimen collected in New South Wales by the Spanish botanist Antonio Cavanilles in 1797 and he named it *Eucalyptus racemosa*, that species name meaning “having racemes”. I say unfortunately because Sr. Cavanilles was mistaken, the flowers of Scribbly Gum are arranged in umbels, not racemes. This can be seen in the photo (below) of the buds and small flowers which generally appear



in the winter months, but once the two species had been declared botanically identical, the earlier name *E. racemosa* applies and, though an egregious misnomer, is the one we're now stuck with.

The tree's distribution is mainly coastal from Nowra in New South Wales to Bundaberg, Queensland and it is commonly described as having “poor form”. I think this is a reference to its often crooked, branched and relatively short trunk, features which make the tree less desirable as a source of timber but add, in my opinion, to its attractiveness. The timber does have some applications but these are limited by a high shrinkage rate and brittleness. The latter quality is possibly the reason for another common name for the tree, Snappy Gum, although this is not a name I hear used locally. It could also be the cause of a propensity for Scribbly Gums branches to break off and form valuable nesting hollows for wildlife (below).





This photo is of a tree in a small stand of three or four high on a dune in an exposed position in Noosa National Park and quite isolated from others, hence the lack of scribbles. In cases like this, an alternative means of identification is the peppermint odour

released when the tree's falcate (scimitar shaped) leaves are crushed.

In contrast, growing on the more fertile soil of the Cooroy plateau right on the edge of Tinbeerwah Rd. is this magnificent old remnant Scribbly Gum that is estimated to have a height of 27 m., a circumference of 4.45 m. and an age of 200 years.

With its smooth creamy white bark and interesting shape, Scribbly Gum is a favourite of many, including koalas for whom it is an important food source.



Robert M Price, July, 2021