

Festival Places: Revitalising Rural Australia

Final Draft

On display: Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show and the assembly of place

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Wildflower Shows

They arrive
jammed in boxes
their tiny flowers
massing colour on
the sorting room floor.
Delicate spider orchids
dangling from icecream buckets
a sundew sitting in a
cracked saucer.

Holding fading specimens
eager pickers ask.
What name is this?
Amateur botanists mumble.
Names change
we'll let you know
next year.

Laurel Lamperd, in *Wildflower Country*, 2007.

Each September since 1983 in the rural Shire of Ravensthorpe, Western Australia, volunteers collect samples of up to 700 wildflower species which are then displayed in the Ravensthorpe Senior Citizens Centre from 9.00am to 4.00 pm daily over a two-week period. This chapter offers an ethnographic interpretation of this enduring annual event

focusing on the 25th show held in 2007. The study contributes to understandings of the complex and nuanced role of local wildflower shows in shaping and supporting rural senses of place and of community. Importantly, this particular type of festival, and more specifically this local instance, foregrounds a less-remarked aspect of festivals, namely the (re)production and celebration of place-specific knowledges through validations of, and interconnections between, scientific flower classification and emotive experience. This feature, encapsulated in Laurel Lamperd's poem above, invites consideration of the ways in which local place knowledge and the simultaneous (re)production of 'place' is constituted by a complex layering of rational, objective ways of knowing and those which emphasize emotions, aesthetics and memories. This rural wildflower show not only mobilizes both the rational and the emotional in 'making sense of the world' for local residents and for tourists but also offers insights into the production of place as constituted in and through relations between humans and non-human life forms (Cloke & Jones, 2001; Conradson, 2005).

The Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show is part of a vibrant local culture supporting a range of events including, for example, week-long writer-in-residence programs, the Hopetoun Summer Festival, regular dramatic productions, Australia Day breakfasts, and art shows (Mayes, 2010a; Mayes 2010b). The Shire of Ravensthorpe, with a population of 1,900 persons (ABS, 2007) occupies 13, 000 square kilometers incorporating extensive national parks and nature reserves. Broad-acre farming is the consistent principal industry, along with large-scale mining for a brief period in the late 2000s. A small tourism industry is supported by the long-standing volunteer-based Ravensthorpe Visitor Centre and Museum. The nearest city is 300 sparsely-inhabited kilometers away, and the capital city of Western Australia is 550 kilometers distant.

The following discussion is grounded in my participation in a range of convivial activities which themselves suggest something of the social aspects of the organization and running of wildflower shows. Similarly, the following list provides a glimpse of the hive of activity that happens around the seemingly static display of wildflowers. My involvement included spending a day as a volunteer tasked with door-keeping duties,

selling merchandise, washing specimen bottles and arranging specimens. I assisted a local picker with the collection of specimens and attended, as part of a large audience, the book launch of *Wildflower Country*, a 'collection of poetry and photography celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show' (Southern Scribes, 2007a). I interviewed two long-term high-profile volunteers, and engaged in informal conversations with several local women also with long-term close involvement in the show. The analysis also draws on committee minutes and publications produced by Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show Inc. (pamphlets, website, book, video and DVD), together with reportage of the wildflower shows in the local newspaper from 2007 to 2009 [endnote 1]. This study thus privileges 'insider' perspectives and experiences drawing forth a range of local roles and practices around an event which traditionally attracts many more tourists than locals.

Integrated tourism

Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show is highly successful in attracting tourists. Committee records show attendances ranging from 1000 in the early years to 2000 in more recent years, averaging in the vicinity of 1200-1500 in latter years. A substantial number of international visitors are recorded each year, hailing in particular from New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the USA and Europe, along with consistently large numbers of interstate visitors. The majority of visitors arrive via one of 16 Western Australian and interstate coach companies which include a stop in Ravensthorpe as part of their September (if not 'wildflower') tours (Wildflower Show Committee correspondence). As a long-serving committee member noted, 'There is actually quite a circuit of wildflower shows' the majority of which take place in September and October. Indeed, in 2009 the Ravensthorpe Show was one of nine rural wildflower displays (described variously as 'shows' and 'festivals') listed by the Wildflower Society of Western Australia. As another committee member explained, 'The circuit is identified by tourist agencies and coach companies promoting wildflower tours—which are big business for many coach companies.' However, the coach companies 'do not seem to focus on individual wildflower shows.' In fact, the local committee believes that 'despite forwarding information to coach companies it is rarely passed on to the drivers and tour

guides.’ Instead, in the experience of the Ravensthorpe organizers, coach itineraries are largely governed by pre-booked overnight and lunch stopping places. There is also evidence of what might be called ‘private’ circuits; one volunteer noted, for example, that there have been groups of keen botanists who visit the Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show regularly from distant Europe and whose itineraries often include other wildflower shows. While ‘many visitors from some of the coach tours will omit or cut short their lunch break’ in Ravensthorpe in order to visit the Wildflower Show (which is just a few minutes walk from the lunch venue), organizers have observed that ‘the people most interested in the flora tend to be those traveling independently.’

Wildflower shows have a long history in Western Australia: in 2009 the Busselton Wildflower Exhibition was in its 84th year (Wildflower Events, 2009), the Mullewa Wildflower Show was in its 22nd year (Mullewa, 2009), and the Chittering Wildflower Festival was in its 13th year (Chittering, 2009), the latter suggesting that wildflower displays in Western Australia are not exclusively a product of the 1980s or earlier. The other Western Australian shows tend to follow similar practice to the Ravensthorpe event with extensive displays of local flora, naming of the species and, more recently, concurrent satellite events. The particular events associated with each show confirm local difference. For example, the Mullewa Show in 2006 and 2009 featured kangaroo stew made by local Indigenous women, whereas the 2009 Busselton show featured a wood turner working with local timbers. The Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show, in addition to its particular associated events and unique species, is prominent among the various local shows for the size of the collection, described locally as ‘one of the largest in the world’ (Taylor, 2009). The wildflower display traditionally includes a ‘Wildflower Show Shop’ selling mostly but not exclusively local craft and produce with a wildflower theme. (see Figure 1 [photo 066]). In Ravensthorpe the events vary from year to year, and in this manner the show is to some extent re-invented (and re-vitalised) each year. A ‘Market Day’, introduced for the first time in 2007, offered sixteen stalls and displays, free talks from ‘environmentalists’ on ‘nature-based subjects’, along with Devonshire Teas. A well-known botanical artist worked on-site and, as noted above, a volume of poetry was launched in honour of this silver anniversary of the show.

Before the Wildflower Show Committee was formed, the Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show was organized jointly by the Ravensthorpe Historical Society and the local senior citizens group. The show continues in the service of these two community groups from which a substantial number of volunteers are still drawn. Participation in larger tourism flows achieves significant financial benefit for these two community groups. The 2009 Visitors' Book lists 1300 attendees and \$17,500 was raised from entry fees and sale of merchandise. In the words of a key organizer, the show is a 'major fundraiser for the senior citizens and historical society. In fact both of those organizations rely fairly heavily on this funding'. The bulk of the merchandise on sale at the show has local origins; these sales in addition support local artists. As this suggests the annual Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show is an exemplar of integrated tourism (Oliver & Jenkins, 2003: 295) demonstrating clear connections with local resources, products and inhabitants. Its success, and longevity, derives however from participation in, and also creation of, a range of connections and flows within and between local communities. The Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show, so far, has been able to draw on significant local participation (as opposed to local attendance). As described by one local resident, and confirmed by committee records: 'there are about 50 people who assist in one way or another' with contributions including setting up, staffing door entries, maintaining the display, and cleaning up and packing away.

The show each year thus depends on the considerable, sustained labour of a large number of volunteers. The majority of these volunteers have contributed for many years—some of them since the very first show. Not surprisingly then, 'Most members are aged from late middle-age to getting-on-a-bit!! New, younger people would be very welcome' (H.T., 2007: 19). Not all volunteers are locals; enthusiasts travel from other communities while yet others, for example, are volunteers from the Western Australian Herbarium who of their own accord regularly assist in Ravensthorpe. In this way the show is constitutive of wider community networks, traditions and friendships.

Changing places: flowers on the move

Much of the above community volunteer labour is centered on the movement of flowers. The Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show depends for its existence and success on the natural production of flowers (in the wild) and their subsequent movement, as specimens, from ‘the field’ to the display area. Whereas collecting specimens for the local herbarium requires collectors to follow a precise and carefully documented process, picking flowers for display at the show, in the words of a volunteer, is more a case of ‘you just go out and look for flowering plants really. You need enough to display; that’s all.’ As is pointed out, ‘none of us started off with other than the most basic of knowledge about plants, so the main requirement is enthusiasm’ (Ravensthorpe Regional Herbarium). This enthusiasm is a key aspect, part of which, as signaled in Lamperd’s poem, lies in discovery. Likewise, the poem offers the relationship between ‘eager pickers’ and ‘amateur botanists’ as central to the (local) experience of wildflower shows, suggesting a desire to participate in this construction and sharing of local place knowledge, and a hierarchy of knowledges. The extensive yearly display both requires and produces intimate knowledge of what plants are found where and, more specifically, where the best specimens in a given year might be found. The picker I travelled with had a deep knowledge of this ‘what’ and ‘where’ for that specific season.

Importantly, the wildflower show provides motivation for and a legitimated mode of being in the local countryside. The collecting, for the many regular pickers, is a ‘return’ to particular areas, building a diachronic relationship with specific sites supported by rich stores of memories around the presence or absence of wildflowers. The picking is ‘authorised’ in the sense of conforming to (and thereby overcoming) restrictions to access: ‘Unlimited gathering is illegal and collectors obtain licenses to pick’ from the Department of Environment and Conservation (Taylor, 2009: 1) and from the Shire. Picking is more than a recreational undertaking: an article in the local newspaper light-heartedly suggests both adventure and conquest:

Armed with secateurs, buckets and gloves, a battalion of wildflower pickers has been out at dawn for the past week infiltrating the bush armory of prickles,

running the gauntlet of sleepy dugites and fighting their way through blockades of spider webs. (R.G., 2008: 1)

An attendant civic dimension of this work and its direct benefits for the local population is made clear:

This sacrifice is all for you, the people of the Ravensthorpe Shire, so that you may see in comfort, enjoy en masse, the botanical wonders of our environment. (R.G., 2008: 1).

Not surprisingly, attempts to recruit new volunteers emphasize that ‘It’s a great way to help the community and learn about our fabulous flowers’ (H.T., 2007: 19).

Embedded in the trope of a ‘battalion’ of pickers, and the attendant notion that the wildflowers specimens are won through an organized battle with nature, is a sense of collaboration and sociality. Whether pickers work individually or in groups there is a clear social element as occurs for example in the arrangement of a roster of pickers to cover the region and in opportunities to meet up either at the Senior Citizens Centre or in the field. Withers and Finnegan (2003: 334, 337) in their discussion of ‘the role of fieldwork in the activities of natural history societies in Victorian Scotland’ argue that it was a significant part of ‘the making of local natural knowledge.’ Fieldwork, they demonstrate, is also about how knowledge travels; it is about the civic display of a ‘locally encountered nature’. Picking for the wildflower show, though also undertaken for pleasure, is principally about the systemic ‘field work’ collection of ‘evidence’ to be identified, ordered and publicly exhibited. It is an important part of the making and enactment of a socially valued form of local knowledge of nature. Picking for the wildflower show (not least as social event), as Withers and Finnegan (2003: 335) find in their analysis, functions as ‘a means of making the social world scientific and the scientific world social’.

An overarching goal of the wildflower show, in the words of a long-serving organizer is to promote Ravensthorpe in ‘an eco-tourism fashion’. In 2007, for example, the show included a display by the Department of Environment and Conservation (H.T., 2007). Broadly, the show attempts to ‘be an educational tool and to bring to the public

something that they don't necessarily get a chance to see in other ways.' For instance, the wildflower show 'helps to illustrate to people the variety of flowers there are in the different families because we display the flowers in family groups so that you have say all the banksias together.' Reinforcing the rural as no longer 'synonymous with agriculture' (Oliver & Jenkins, 2003: 295), the sharing of intimate place knowledge with those who pass through is thus an important aspect of the show, just as it positions Ravensthorpe in a 'new' or 'alternative' role for rural regions in Australia, as steward of natural resources (Stayner, 2005).

At the same time the display encourages other knowledge flows. For example, in 2007, the Director of the Western Australian Herbarium is locally reported as having 'found two new species on the [Ravensthorpe] shelves. (We'd known about them all the time!!)' (H.T., 2007). While it wasn't the case that these species were 'unknown to science', as one organizer pointed out, it was in 'the course of a conversation' with the director—a conversation between parties brought together by the show—that the 'anomalous situation where a couple of specimens [in the local collection] appeared different but had been identified as the same by the Western Australian Herbarium' was drawn to his attention. Subsequent taxonomic work confirmed the difference identified locally. In 2008, an ABC reporter examining the food values of native plants attended the show, a professional photographer took studio portraits of the flowers, and a Japanese doctor came to study medicinal properties of the plants (R.G., 2008). This external 'expert' attention plays a role in the place-making of Ravensthorpe as 'rich' and 'valuable' landscape. Knowledge of local species is also deployed on behalf of the community; volunteers associated with the wildflower show and the herbarium draw on these resources to provide advice on such things as local reseeded projects (see also Gibson and Wong, this volume). More generally, as a volunteer explained:

we provide knowledge about where things will grow for the different areas for rehabilitation, for any source, and plants that would be salt tolerant and things of that nature, and also where flowering plants when they occur for beekeepers and things like that.

The well-stocked display demonstrates this local knowledge, providing quantitative and qualitative evidence of a landscape celebrated as ‘one of the richest areas of native plants in the world’ in which the flowers are ‘special because they are unique and diverse’ (Craig, 1995: vii). The impressive variety of flowers amassed in the exhibition counters the lack of sweeping displays in the landscape. Similarly it enacts a temporal compression, a concentration across both place and time as suggested by the following local comment:

For the tourist people who are spending a very short time, it’s nice that it’s there and it’s in one place and that people can look at a whole bunch of stuff that’s all local.

This emphasis on the needs of the tourist and the value of the show for this audience is indicative of a wider local perception of the show. In the words of a Shire resident with limited involvement in the show:

From my perspective, its value is to tourism because from what I’ve seen, very few of the locals actually go to it because we live here, you know, we see all these flowers, we can go out there and wander through the hills every day of the week if we want to during the wildflower season.

This is not to say that the wildflower show is not intended for or valued by the wider local population; rather, the lack of local attendance is a direct corollary of successfully (re) producing what are seen to be widely available local experiences and knowledges. Through articles in the local newspaper, for example, the committee nevertheless strives to encourage local residents to attend and takes heart from each success as exemplified in the anecdote of the local couple who after living in the area for 20 years finally attended and ‘loved it’. Even so, the actual audience for the show, as volunteers concede, is ‘mostly interstate and intrastate visitors’.

Committee members note, however, that recent additions to the show, such as the Market Day, are ‘primarily a local attraction’. In this way local support may be more extensively demonstrated. As a further example of this tangential interest, other local groups ‘are now tending to link some of their activities to the wildflower show weekend’ so that art exhibitions and guided wildflower tours of the region’s national parks provide

opportunities for local (and visitor) participation in a more extensively conceived wildflower program. Each year the show is reported in the local press maintaining community awareness. Thus, though the number of local attendees may be small, the show focuses community attention on not just the presence of the flowers but also on the extent and value of local knowledges about them and their importance in and to the local community, the broader region and beyond. The annual show articulates a local celebration of the landscape independent of local attendance.

What name is this?

The activities described above draw on and promote a ‘scientific’ way of understanding. As a long-standing volunteer commented, the wildflower show has ‘developed more scientifically in that first of all it was just a display of wildflowers and then we started putting it in families and definitely trying on the educational angle as well.’ A critical aspect has been the scientific classification of flowers and plants:

And a small band of faithful botanists **name all the specimens** that are put on show (all 700+ of them). It’s a painstaking business. (R.G., 2008: 1, bolding in original)

This ‘painstaking’ process takes place in the herbarium adjoining the main display area (see Figure 2 [photo 234]), where volunteers spend many hours ‘totally absorbed’ in ‘dissecting flower components and squinting into their individual microscopes’ (Taylor, 2009: 2). Recording the number of species collected each year and accurately identifying the correct scientific name and family of each specimen appears to be a consistent feature of local wildflower shows in general.

The Ravensthorpe Regional Herbarium is central to the acquisition and ongoing availability of skills and resources to make this naming possible. The presence of the herbarium was the result of an invitation extended in 1997 to the Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show Committee to participate in the ‘Regional Herbaria Programme’ (Ravensthorpe Regional Herbarium). Run entirely by volunteers, the herbarium inspired the committee to:

the lofty aim of collecting every flowering plant in the Shire of Ravensthorpe. [...] There are currently about 3000 specimens in the herbarium—some of them duplicates’ (Ravensthorpe Regional Herbarium).

In the words of a founding member it is ‘quite a reasonable collection I think considering the length of time we’ve been working and we have been lucky enough to have been given grants for computers and a microscope and books and things like that as well.’ Although the wildflower show predates the herbarium, and is what precipitated the offer to be part of the regional scheme, the herbarium has become central to the show. Significantly, the herbarium establishes credibility:

This results from the fact that the volunteers collect two specimens along with the necessary data, and when pressed, one specimen is forwarded to the WA Herbarium. There it is identified and data-based with the result being sent back to us, giving our specimens the necessary provenance. (Ravensthorpe Regional Herbarium)

This credibility underpins the worth of the work undertaken each year in attempting to correctly identify each plant, just as it underpins the validity of local knowledge in the context of what might be termed the ‘scientific’ or ‘botanical’ community.

Engaging Emotions

Alongside this ‘scientific’ perspective, the show celebrates subjective emotional and aesthetic pleasures and ways of knowing. Lamperd’s evocative poem, for example, highlights not only a sense of excitement around the identification of the flowers but also the social interaction and friendship sustaining the process, and, in its comfortable reference to ‘next year’, suggests a desire for and sense of enduring tradition. Accounts of the show foreground the smells and ambience of the flowers through descriptions which emphasize, for instance, the ‘heady perfume’ and the ‘blaze of colour’ (Taylor, 2009: 2). The ordered displays are each year accompanied by massed displays of the flowers (see Figure 3 [photo 056 OR 057]).

A unique feature of the 25th anniversary show, *Wildflower Country* as a whole honours a quarter-century of local emotive experiences of and relationships to a landscape

presented as intensely local. The inclusion of Lamperd's poem, written some time in the first few years of the show (personal communication), signifies an ongoing emotional tenor of each show. Dedicated to 'Jim McCulloch OBE', who was responsible, in the face of considerable local resistance, for the first show in 1982 (Craig, 1995), the volume is the work of Southern Scribes, a long-established creative writers group whose members live 'in or near the towns of Ravensthorpe and Hopetoun' (<http://www.southernscribes.com/index2.html>). Each poem in the book is accompanied by a photograph; images of local flora predominate and are often the subject of the poems they accompany, with a handful of landscape photographs including one of local residents enjoying a picnic. The photographers are acknowledged in an index which provides a title for each photograph. These titles include the common name of the plant in question along with its botanical name: for example, 'Qualup Bell—Pimelea physodes'. Vernacular knowledge, subjective experience and scientific naming are thus brought together in highly place-specific ways. The description on the back of *Wildflower Country* makes the connection to the local explicit: 'you don't need to have visited the region to enjoy this book, but it will make you want to experience the colours and textures, the tastes and perfumes that belong only here' (de Garis, 2007).

The book celebrates experiences of the local countryside as shaped by age and gender ('Grandmothers Have Time'), reflects on place change as a sense of loss and on the importance and origins of stewardship ('At Starvation Bay') and grapples with the ways in which progress/civilization impinges on the natural landscape ('Dampiera sacculata' and 'Daybreak Highway 40'). Emotions such as pride, pleasure, joy, friendship and belonging infuse the senses of place under the rubric of 'Wildflower Country'. The book articulates what Jones (2005: 205) has argued is an 'inevitable' conjoining of 'emotion, memory, self and landscape,' facilitated and brought to the fore by the (repeat) occasion of the wildflower show. Emotions are fundamental to making meaning both in terms of 'producing a *meaningful* world, a world worth caring about' and shaping 'our modes of 'being-in-the-world'' (Smith, 2005: 220, 291). These emotions have not only spatial but also temporal referents, and in coalescing 'around and within certain places' point to 'relational flows, fluxes or currents, in-between people and places rather than 'things' or

‘objects’ to be studied or measured’ (Davidson, Bondi & Smith, 2005: 3). The annual wildflower shows are thus about more than the taxonomic ordering of flowers and visual objectification, though these are to some extent privileged. For example, the mixed, massed floral displays, though an important part of each show, are made from plants remaining *after* the specimens for display have been selected.

The centrality of flowers

The flowers—as specimens and/or aesthetic and sensory objects and/or emotional loci of and for memories—are constituted by and in turn shape the show in its multiple concurrent and interlinked configurations as natural, social, cultural and historical event. On one level understandable as a ‘natural’ state of affairs, the centrality of the flowers is something the local committee consciously strives for. Though 2007 was the ‘silver anniversary’ and plans were in hand to celebrate the show’s origin and history, the flowers were kept firmly at the heart of the show; according to a local organizer speaking during the planning for the 2007 event, ‘it probably won’t be a very big [history] display given that we still want to run the wildflower show as a wildflower show.’ Likewise, though the shows are effective fundraisers, fundraising is not offered by those involved as a motivation. Rather, fundraising is an attendant, subordinate, benefit. The focus for local participants is also the flowers. To return to the opening poem: ‘They arrive’, and the show can begin. The flowers are important also on a deeply personal level: one regular volunteer observed: ‘I do it for the flowers’. As also expressed in the poem, names may change but the flowers will still be there next year. The event itself, as discussed above, is in the service of wildflowers, not least in terms of educating people of their importance and value.

The centrality of the flowers is highly physical: the flowers colonize the display space. The Senior Citizens Centre is transformed into a display/festival place ‘filled’ by the arrival of the plants. As one description has it, the ‘treasured cargo was carried in, filling every corner with colour, pollen and the wonderful smell of the bush’ (R.G., 2008: 2). Each year the Senior Citizens’ Centre is appropriated as site in which unruly nature—the trays of unsorted flowers are confined to the kitchen area (see Figure 4 [photo 052])—is

transformed into an orderly arrangement (see Figure 5[photo 049]). Display stands and hundreds of bottles are brought out to best exhibit the specimens. Banners, signs and laminated specimen name cards used in previous years are unpacked and re-used. The yearly display of wildflowers is thus a labour of translation and of distillation in which local place knowledge and its corporeal experience travels from ‘the countryside’ to a place in turn transformed for and by their arrival. Visitors are invited to examine, learn about, photograph, and in general marvel at the flowers in a controlled fashion in terms not only of the grouping of species but also the flow of movement and activity encouraged by the rows of displays, the provision of magnifying glasses for closer inspection, and the playing of a documentary on the wildflowers of the Ravensthorpe area produced by the show committee (see Figure 6[photo 150 OR 149]).

In both the Senior Citizens Centre and in the countryside the flowers are powerful non-human actants in the dynamic production of these places. To paraphrase Cloke and Jones (2001: 655), the local plants bring the unique creativity of being able to produce flowers in the first place. The flowers are not always compliant; the number and quality of specimens varies from year to year thus informing the specificities of each year’s exhibition. As noted above, those involved over many years in the work of picking and of display engage in ‘repeated encounters with places and complex associations with them’ which ‘serve to build up memory and affection for those places, thereby rendering the places themselves deepened by time and qualified by memory’ (David Harvey cited in Cloke & Jones, 2001: 651). The Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show in its interrelated and nuanced articulations examined here enacts what Cloke and Jones (2001: 655) in their analysis of West Bradley Orchard describe as ‘a deep hybridity of people, nature, and technology which is embedded in a complex of networks, but which also has a time-thickened, place-forming dimension’. In this instance, wildflower shows are the central interconnecting and seemingly neutral category, mechanism and object motivating and enabling this local hybridity.

Assembling place

Though the Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show is the product of a historically entrenched, highly specialized interest in the biology of flowers, its yearly conduct is deeply embedded in the local community and landscape. A complex undertaking, with clear material benefits for two community groups, the show points to the substantial role integrated rural festivals play in the generation and revitalization of diverse local senses, experiences and knowledges of place. Importantly, this case study foregrounds the way in which the place-specific knowledges reproduced by this particular type of show interweave scientific/objective and emotional/subjective knowledge. The show focuses attention on wildflowers offered not only as objects of scientific knowledge, but also as central to deeply personal experiences and memories of place.

The production of place functions on several scales including within broader networks of 'place' as encoded in the (re) invention each year of Ravensthorpe as part of a 'circuit' of wildflower places, characterized as much by similarity with other shows as by difference. The annual show offers Ravensthorpe not only as a place of wildflowers, as wildflower country, but also as a place to see and know wildflowers. Concomitantly, the show orders and intensifies the experience of wildflowers. Though wildflowers are central to the show, which depends upon their yearly production in 'the wild', amassing specimens according to family classifications imposes an order antithetical to their existence in 'the wild.' The result of extensive field work, itself mobilizing and confirming extensive local place knowledge, the specimens on display make highly visible a seasonal transformation less noticeable in the landscape. Offered as typical examples of flowers in the wild, the specimens function as a powerful locus of 'nature/culture'.

Understanding the Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show as 'assemblage', and therein recognizing that humans, non-humans, and texts can 'potentially change the course of events' (Hinchliffe, 2005: 195), foregrounds the complexity of this (and other rural) festival practices; the Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show productively assembles flowers, community, senses and experiences of place, poems and other written and visual texts, and tourists in a manner in which each are also actants. This particular rural festival, and

perhaps wildflower shows more broadly, suggests an ongoing rural negotiation of place as formed in and through human and non-human interaction.

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Endnotes

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CORRECTIONS TO REFERENCING IN FINAL CHAPTER

"Wildflower Shows" poem. Laurel Lamperd (Southern Scribes, 2007a) Page 2 - direct quote, page number needed NO PAGE NUMBERS IN THE BOOK

I assisted a local picker with the collection of specimens and attended, as part of a large audience, the book launch of Wildflower Country, a 'collection of poetry and photography celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show' (Southern Scribes, 2007a). Page 4 - direct quote, page number needed THIS BLURB APPEARS ON THE BACK COVER

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2007) 2006 census tables: Ravensthorpe (S) LGA (accessed August 2007). Website's URL?

<http://www.omi.wa.gov.au/WAPeople2006/Wa/Regional/Ravensthorpe.pdf>

H.T. (2007) Over for Another Year. Community Spirit 19 (18),19. Authors last name? THIS IS HOW THE AUTHOR'S NAME APPEARS IN THE NEWSPAPER AT THE END OF THE PIECE, IE JUST THE INITIALS.

R.G. (2008) Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show-Don't Miss It! Community Spirit 10, 1. Authors last name? THIS IS HOW THE AUTHOR'S NAME APPEARS IN THE NEWSPAPER AT THE END OF THE PIECE, IE JUST THE INITIALS.

Armed with secateurs, buckets and gloves, a battalion of wildflower pickers has been out at dawn for the past week infiltrating the bush armory of prickles, running the gauntlet of sleepy dugites and fighting their way through blockades of spider webs. (R.G., 2009) Page 8 - direct quote, page number needed THE YEAR IS INCORRECT IN TEXT (MY FAULT): SHOULD BE 2008 AND THE PAGE NUMBER IS 1

This sacrifice is all for you, the people of the Ravensthorpe Shire, so that you may see in comfort, enjoy en masse, the botanical wonders of our environment. (R.G., 2009). Page

8 - direct quote, page number needed THE YEAR IS INCORRECT IN TEXT (MY FAULT): SHOULD BE 2008 AND THE PAGE NUMBER IS 1

the lofty aim of collecting every flowering plant in the Shire of Ravensthorpe. [...] There are currently about 3000 specimens in the herbarium-some of them duplicates' (Ravensthorpe Regional Herbarium). Page 12 - direct quote, page number needed NO PAGE NUMBER; THIS IS FROM THE 'HERBARIUM' PAGE OF THE WEBSITE

This results from the fact that the volunteers collect two specimens along with the necessary data, and when pressed, one specimen is forwarded to the WA Herbarium. There it is identified and data-based with the result being sent back to us, giving our specimens the necessary provenance (Ravensthorpe Regional Herbarium). Page 12 - direct quote, page number needed NO PAGE NUMBER; THIS IS FROM THE 'HERBARIUM' PAGE OF THE WEBSITE

Keefe, M. (2007) Wildflower Country. Community Spirit 19 (17),14-15. Not cited in text PLEASE REMOVE

Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show Inc. Various Committee Records and publications held at the Ravensthorpe Herbarium. Not cited in text, not really a reference. PLEASE REMOVE: I PUT IT IN BECAUSE SOME DISCIPLINES/REF STYLES REQUIRE THE LOCATION OF PRIMARY MATERIALS.

Southern Scribes (2007b) Community Spirit, 19 (18),11. Not cited in text PLEASE REMOVE