

A DESCRIPTION OF "COMPUTE-A-EUC" :
A REGIONAL LISTING OF ALL EUCALYPT SPECIES.

by

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requirements for the degree of Master of Environmental
Studies in the Australian National University.

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THE PURPOSE OF THESE NOTES
AND NOTES TO "COMPUTER-A-FILE"

THE NOTES THAT FOLLOW DESCRIBE A COMPUTER-BASED LISTING SYSTEM WHICH
OPERATES ON A MINI-COMPUTER AT THE CENTRE FOR RESEARCH AND ENVIRONMENTAL
STUDIES, LIFE SCIENCES BUILDING, WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY,
CARBONDALE.

DECLARATION

WHILE THIS DESCRIPTION IS INTENDED TO SET OUT THE FEATURES AND USES OF
THE SYSTEM, IT DOES NOT CONTAIN DATA OR SHOW ANY DEGREE OF ACTUAL
SELECT

Except where otherwise indicated, this dissertation is
my own work.

THIS IS THE FUNCTION OF THE PROGRAMS THEMSELVES. THE MATERIALS REQUIRED
FOR ITS OPERATION ARE AVAILABLE FROM THE SIMULOGRAPHER AT THE CENTRE,
AND APART FROM THESE NOTES THEMSELVES, ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. Magnetic computer tape labelled "J.R.H. HOOK". This contains the
"Computer-A-File" main program at file 8.
2. Magnetic tape labelled "Binary File". This contains the
data in one large file (file 1).
3. Large map of Manitoba. The map shows the provincial boundaries
outlined on p. 12 in relation to towns, roads and other physical features,
to allow accurate placement of an area of interest in the appropriate
province.

J.R.H. Hook
J. R. H. HOOK

OTHER MATERIAL AVAILABLE

1. Listing in BASIC of "Computer-A-File" main program. This is not
required for operation of January 1979. It was here included to
allow inspection of the program and selection procedures.
2. Complete list of data on the binary file. This is not required for
normal processing operations; it was here included to allow inspection
of the actual data used for species selection, and examination of the
codes for any particular species.

THE PURPOSE OF THESE NOTES,
AND ACCESS TO "COMPUTE - A - EUC".

THE NOTES THAT FOLLOW DESCRIBE A COMPUTER - BASED LISTING SYSTEM WHICH OPERATES ON A MINI - COMPUTER AT THE CENTRE FOR RESOURCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES, LIFE SCIENCES BUILDING, AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, CANBERRA.

WHILE THIS DESCRIPTION IS INTENDED TO SET OUT THE FEATURES AND USES OF THE SYSTEM, IT DOES NOT CONTAIN DATA OR ALLOW ANY DEGREE OF ACTUAL SELECTION BETWEEN EUCALYPT SPECIES.

THIS IS THE FUNCTION OF THE PROGRAMME ITSELF. THE MATERIALS REQUIRED FOR ITS OPERATION ARE AVAILABLE FROM THE BIBLIOGRAPHER AT THE CENTRE, AND APART FROM THESE NOTES THEMSELVES, ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. Magnetic computer tape labelled 'JOHN HOOK'. This tape holds the 'Compute - a - Euc' main programme at file 5.
2. Magnetic tape labelled 'Binary File'. This tape holds the coded data in one large file (file 1).
3. Large map of Australia. The map shows the province boundaries outlined on p.5a in relation to towns, roads and other physical features, to allow accurate placement of an area of interest in the appropriate province.

OTHER MATERIAL AVAILABLE:

1. Listing in BASIC of 'Compute - a - Euc' main programme. This is not required for operation of the programme; it has been included to allow inspection of the scanning and selection procedures.
2. Complete list of data on the binary file. This is not required for normal programme operation; it has been included to allow inspection of the actual data used for species selection, and examination of the codes for any particular species.

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ABSTRACT

'Compute - a - Euc' is a computer-based system designed to assist in the identification of species and subspecies of the genus Eucalyptus. It is intended for use by both botanists and those with a minimum of specialist training who wish to become more familiar with eucalypts.

It is in essence an index to Eucalyptus species, based on geographical occurrence and a number of readily apparent field characteristics. It has been developed as a guide to recorded natural distributions and field appearance, rather than as a 'key' eventually yielding the name of a single taxon. Through its use the work of scanning individual descriptions is reduced, and access given directly to a 'short list' of species between which botanical comparisons are appropriate.

The output from the system is in the form of a computer-generated list of those species and subspecies that match a combination of descriptive variables selected by the operator. The order in which taxa appear and their nomenclature are based primarily upon the classification of Pryor and Johnson (1971).

The principal feature by which species are selected is their geographical distribution. The area in which eucalypts occur naturally - Australia, New Guinea and a number of islands to the near north - is subdivided into seventy-seven regions or 'provinces'. The operator may specify one or a combination of these provinces as the basis of the list.

Further subdivision may be selected according to thirty-three essentially non-botanical field characters. These relate to the size and form of the plants, their bark type, their preferred habitat and the form of the plant community in which they typically occur.

This information was compiled from a broad range of the available descriptive literature, and especially the following publications of the Australian Forestry and Timber Bureau:

CHIPPENDALE G.M. (1973) Eucalypts of the Western Australian Goldfields.

Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.

HALL N, JOHNSTON R.D. & MARRYATT Rosemary. (1963) The Natural Occurrence of the Eucalypts. 2nd ed. Leaflet 65.

Canberra: Forest Research Institute.

HALL N, JOHNSTON R.D. & CHIPPENDALE G.M. (1970) Forest Trees of Australia. Canberra: Aust. Govt. Publ. Service.

HALL N. et al. (1970-75) Forest Tree Series. Leaflets 1 - 191.

Canberra: Aust. Govt. Publ. Service.

HALL N, BROOKER M.I.H. et al. (1977-78) Forest Tree Series.

Leaflets 192 - 216. Melbourne: Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization.

Reference:

PRYOR L.D. & JOHNSON L.A.S. (1971) A Classification of the Eucalypts.

Canberra: The Australian National University.

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CHAPTER 1

THE SCOPE OF THE PROJECT.

The importance of the genus Eucalyptus in Australia can hardly be overstated. Its member species constitute a characteristic and most significant element of the Australian flora, dominating a great many plant communities and ninety-five percent of the country's forested areas (Hall, Johnston and Chippendale, 1970). They can be found from the arid continental interior to the alpine tree-line, and make a major contribution to the Australian wood industry. Eucalypt timbers are world-renowned for strength and durability.

As might be expected of such a widespread genus, it is one with many species. The precise number varies depending on which of the many published taxonomic combinations are accepted as valid. They number approximately four hundred and fifty, and in sixty or so of these there are two or more subspecies. These subspecies may correspond to distinct 'races', or represent extreme forms of a species which gradually changes across its range, perhaps in response to a change in some environmental factor (Pryor, 1976). Exploration of relatively inaccessible regions, especially in Western Australia, still results in the discovery and description of new Eucalyptus species.

Eucalypts not infrequently hybridise. A number of hybrids have been described, and occasionally misinterpreted as distinct species. Hybrids display morphological features intermediate between those of the parent species, and this aids their recognition.

With such a preponderance of plants of the one genus, identification of locally-important species is unusually dependent on relatively fine botanical distinctions. Many visitors to the country, and not a few Australians, voice the opinion that Australia's gum trees 'all look the same'. Under such circumstances identification of species can present many problems to those with little specialist knowledge or experience. Yet correct identification is a satisfying and important exercise: timber properties, correct propagation techniques, growth habit and suitability to certain soil types may all vary widely between species.

'Compute-a-Euc', a guide to the species of eucalypt that may be encountered in various parts of Australia, is designed to assist a wide range of users who wish to become more familiar with the genus and correctly identify its species. Many of the references available organise their descriptions of Eucalyptus species either alphabetically or on the basis of botanical affinities. Both of these arrangements can be difficult to use in the field in the absence of much knowledge of the species of the area. 'Keys' to the whole genus can suffer from similar disadvantages: distinctions between species may be made on the basis of botanical features that either require experience to interpret or that may not always be present on trees in the field. The key of Blakely (1965), while a most useful reference, can be difficult to use in the field for both these reasons.

In view of such difficulties it was felt that a system based primarily on the natural occurrences of species would, like the regional keys, offer the advantages of being easily applied and selective. As many eucalypts are of quite circumscribed occurrence, indexing and initial segregation by location is a good starting point for identification, providing ready access to the large amount of reference information and reducing the number of species requiring botanical comparison to more manageable and less daunting proportions.

This is the objective of 'Compute-a-Euc': to be a practical system giving quick access to a 'short list' of relevant species. Such a list is, in fact, the output from the system. The operator selects one or a number of pre-defined regions or 'provinces', into which Australia and a number of islands to the north are divided - this region being the total extent of the natural occurrence of the genus Eucalyptus - and obtains in the list the names of species and subspecies recorded as being found in the selected area.

To increase selectivity, and to assist familiarization with the eucalypts of a given area, species may be further subdivided according to a number of readily-apparent features. These are the size and form of the plant, the appearance of its bark, its characteristic habitat within the area of occurrence and the type of plant community in which it is found. All these features to a greater or lesser extent segregate species into smaller and smaller groups.

'Compute-a-Euc' may be used before venturing into the field to give a preliminary idea of the names of the species of the region, what they look like and where they are characteristically found. Thus for specified regions one may obtain lists of those species which are tall trees more than thirty metres in height, or which are smooth-barked; which occur above nine hundred metres of altitude, or which typically grow along streams; which are found along the coast, or typically in moist 'wet sclerophyll' forests. With the assistance of such lists identification becomes much easier.

Alternatively after a trip during which specimens have been collected, 'Compute-a-Euc' can be used to restrict as far as possible the number of species that the specimen may have come from. By combining the selective features - by obtaining a list, for example, of all the 'stringybarks' in the region visited that occur between six hundred and nine hundred metres of altitude on the undulating country of tablelands in dry sclerophyll forest - the number of species may be limited to a very manageable number between which botanical selection is much easier.

To summarize; 'Compute-a-Euc' scans a data file representing the whole range of Eucalyptus species for those that in nominated circumstances deserve further consideration. From personal experience manual scanning of the literature can be a very time-consuming and tedious way of selecting against species that do not occur in the location in question, or do not match the appearance of the chosen tree in the field. A computer however is well suited to such work.

CHAPTER 2

THE "COMPUTE - A - EUC" VARIABLES.2.1 Provinces

The core of the 'Compute - a - Euc' system is the use of area of natural occurrence to select species for listing. In such a system it is necessary to define in advance areas or 'provinces', in respect of which species can be recorded as present or absent. The regions chosen, their size and extent have very important effects on the form, content and value of the final lists. For this reason much care was taken to define provinces that would be as far as possible the most useful and appropriate basis for distinction. In choosing the boundaries of these provinces, a number of considerations were taken into account.

Firstly, it was decided to make the provinces conform to the State boundaries. The State boundaries are relatively well-defined 'on the ground' and serve as useful landmarks when in the field. Also many descriptions and 'floras' give their information in terms of State occurrences, and this is a valuable cross-check on accuracy during coding.

Next, the size of the provinces had to be kept within appropriate limits. If province area was made too large, the value of regional groupings tended to diminish as the number of species included within the boundaries increased. On the other hand too small a province size tested the accuracy of the source data, increasing the possibility of error in coding species as present or absent because the sources did not map occurrences at the level of detail required for smaller areas. The size eventually chosen was such that mainland Australia is covered by seventy-one provinces, Tasmania by five and the islands to the north, referred to by Pryor and Johnson as Malesia, by one, to make a total of seventy-seven (Pryor and Johnson, 1971).

The size of provinces was adjusted to some extent, however, so that areas with a great diversity of species were covered by generally smaller provinces than the inland arid regions with comparatively few species. The size was nevertheless kept consistent with the accuracy with which occurrences were mapped in the sources.

