



NEWSLETTER

Friends of Oxley Creek Common Inc.

"Our Community Caring for Our Common"
August 2019 - Number 34



SAVE THE DATE

**FOOCC Birdwalk followed by
Committee Meeting**

Red Shed 6.30, Sunday 1st September

TUESDAY COMMON CARERS
gather every Tuesday in the Red Shed
car park to begin at 7 am.
Ph: 0429911555

OOCA General Meeting
27th August; Red Shed, 5.30 for 6 – 8.
Speaker: Warwick Willmott on the
geology of South-east Queensland.
Ph: 07 3345 5541

OCCA AGM
Corinda Bowls Club
5.30 for 6 – 8; 19th November
Speaker: Kylie Hughes, Director of
Waste Policy, Dept Environment and
Science

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hugh Possingham

It has never been more important to remain engaged with the Friends of Oxley Creek Common. The Oxley Creek draft master plan is publicly available. Check it out on: (<http://oxleycreek.com.au/sites/default/files/Oxley-Creek-Transformation-draft-Master-Plan.pdf>) and we are told that work in the Archerfield area will start soon. We need to ensure we are vigilant around enhancing and maintaining the values of Oxley Creek Common and connections along the entire watershed.

Steve, Fasney and Liz have done a fabulous job leading the group for a long time and in their collective absence I decided to partly fill the gap. We have a large and active committee (see opposite) and we welcome ideas and comments. You can email the committee on: friendsofoxleycreekcommon@gmail.com or you can email me directly hugh.possingham@tnc.org.

FRIENDS of OXLEY CREEK COMMON COMMITTEE

President: Hugh Possingham

Secretary: Karen Gillow

Treasurer: Matthew Mendel

Minutes Secretary: Robyn Mulder

Media Co-ordinator: Erica Heaton

OCCA Representative:

Lynn Whitfield

Tuesday Common Carers and
Newsletter Editor:

Mary Lou Simpson

Committee: Colleen Enchelmaier

Zina Dinesen

You can also be involved by coming to our general meetings: helping Tuesday Common Carers; joining a bird walk, or just chatting to people as you walk around the Common.

BIRD NEWS

Hugh Possingham

The bird list still stands at 214 species, with no new species recently. You can find an illustrated checklist on eBird at <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L967148/media?yr=all&m=>.

Some of the more interesting species around this winter have been:

- a very beautiful Spotted Harrier,
- Black Kites - once were very rare but now are regular visitors
- Varied Triller - one or two pairs are usually about, but not always easy to find.

Winter honeyeaters:

- Eastern Spinebill
- Yellow-faced Honeyeater
- White-throated Honeyeater and
- the spectacular Scarlet Honeyeater

The waterbirds have not been great as Pelican Lagoon remains infested with introduced fish that stir up sediment and Jabiru Lagoon is choked with aquatic weed. Despite that, the Black-necked Stork has paid the odd visit and the cute little Black-fronted Dotterels can sometimes be seen in the small pond under the 44-gallon drum gum tree.

The Common has several pairs of Willie Wagtails, which people may take for granted. These busy little birds are generally thought to be in decline across Australian cities and I can testify that the pair that once inhabited Sherwood Arboretum has now gone.



This family of Purple Swamp Hens were tramping over the layer of weeds looking for breakfast.



Grey Fantails are regular winter visitors. This one sat still long enough for Mark Gillow to take this photo.



© Mark Gillow

A Chestnut-breasted Mannikin perching amongst the thorns. These birds are often seen in flocks, swinging acrobatically on long grass, darting into trees and pecking at seeds lodged in the gravel path. Photo: Mark Gillow.



Food for honeyeaters and silvereyes.

TUESDAY COMMON CARERS

Mary Lou Simpson

Since May, this willing band of workers has been busy at several sites.

Commelina Gully has been a special focus, because an area had been cleared for a volunteer planting organised by OCCA. The gully is almost free of the invasive *Commelina* and asparagus fern, which was metres high in the trees, as well as carpeting the ground with new seedlings.

Wayne Brown has been working tirelessly at the first cement culvert, where the gully was impenetrable. The removal of weeds has revealed a large mangrove fern, which has prompted the name, **Fern Gully**. Puddles of water remain in this gully after high tide.

Several weeks were spent removing glycine and coral berry between the large gum and the second cement culvert. The group also worked steadily on the slope below birdwatchers' ridge, otherwise known as **Heartbreak Hill**, where a variety of weeds keeps appearing.

Chris Jones and Dylan Bennett have been monitoring the **Rotary planting** just before

Stoney Gully. Thanks to their care and persistence, this is a very successful planting.

Congratulations to everyone who is working to rehabilitate the natural habitat at the Common. We are 4 years old and can see the results of our work. There is still a lot to be done, so new members are welcome.

LIVING AT THE COMMON



Fan-tailed Cuckoos can be seen at the Common in the winter months. They are often on an exposed perch, perhaps on the lookout for a host nest. They prefer the dome-shaped nests of Wrens and Thornbills. Photo: Leon Cole



The Black-shouldered Kite is a regular resident, having nested in the Eucalypt near the power lines, for several years. Photo: Leon Cole



A lovely sight on a winter's morning are the cobwebs with sparkles of dew.

WATTLES

Visitors to the Common during July and August, could not help but enjoy the sight and the scent of the flowering *Acacias*. Several varieties of *Acacia* readily self-seed, which is fortunate, as they are a relatively short-lived species.

Mangroves to Mountains lists 64 varieties of *Acacias*, which can be found in south-east Queensland. The most obvious *Acacias* at the Common are *Acacia fimbriata* and *Acacia podalyriifolia*.



Fine leafed, *Acacia fimbriata*, sometimes called Brisbane Wattle, can be found at Stoney Gully and in the university planting.



Also known as the Silver Wattle or Queensland Wattle, is *Acacia podalyriifolia*, which has silvery-grey leaves and ball-shaped flowers.

Other varieties that have been planted are: *Acacia melanoxylon*, which has creamy white flowers and twisted seed pods.

Acacia leiocalyx, whose leaves have 3 or more longitudinal veins and flower spikes.

Acacia disparimma, which has rod-shaped flowers to 7 cm, and flat woody pods with deep indentations.

WEEDERS' PET HATE

A native plant prevalent along Oxley Creek is Cockspur, *Maclura cochinchinensis*. It grows into a thicket, several metres high, has shiny alternate leaves, yellow flowers, which are rarely seen, and orange fruit. Cockspur easily regenerates itself, with seedlings sprouting quite a distance from the host plant and new plants suckering from old roots.

Weeders know to be wary of the thorns, which can be 30 mm long. The needle-sharp points can easily penetrate a soft sole or glove.

Neither do the thorns lose their sharpness when the branches have been cut. This plant could be left alone, but frequently it is the host to asparagus fern. Coral berry, *Rivina humilis*, and Cobbler's Pegs, *Bidens pilosa*, grow around its base.

Although weeders have great difficulty working around the thorns, birds seem not to worry. Quail scurry under the arched branches, small birds such as Scrubwrens dart inside the branches for safety and larger birds eat the fruit. Even Pheasant Coucals hide in the branches.



This female Figbird has found a Cockspur fruit, which it eventually gets down its throat. Figbirds have been observed swallowing several fruit at once. It appears that the fruit is

massaged in their throat, until the clean pip is eventually regurgitated.



© Mark Gillow

A thorny perch for these Red-backed Fairy Wrens.

Photo: Mark Gillow

WHICH IS WHICH?

A small plant that can easily be confused with a Cockspur seedling is *Pittosporum multiflorum*, also known as Orange Thorn. Both these plants have thorns and red fruit that are yellow, turning orange to red. The leaves are alternate on each plant. When mature, the plants can be distinguished by the size of the leaf, the length of the thorn and the habit of growth.

When they are immature the distinctions can be difficult to see. Both species can have small immature round leaves, but the medium sized Cockspur leaves will grow out their round shape and resemble their mature leaves.



Photo:http://www.saveourwaterwaysnow.com.au/_dbase_upl/dscn4077macl.jpg

Below is *Pittosporum multiflorum*. It is a smaller shrub and the leaves are rounder and smaller (12mm) as are the thorns (15mm). The branchlets are rough and the flowers are white and tubular.

The petiole (the part forming the attachment of the leaf to the stem of a plant) is much shorter (sometimes indiscernible) in the *Pittosporum*, than in Cockspur. If you can see any tiny thorns around the edge of the leaf, that will identify it as *Pittosporum multiflorum*.



When you see what looks like a Cockspur, it is worthwhile having a closer look. It might just be something else.

WEEDS IN SEED

Leucaena (*Leucaena leucocephala*) is an import from Mexico and is beloved by graziers of dry climates, because it provides cattle fodder. It is sometimes called 'Tree Lucerne.' Plantations of it can be seen in central Queensland.

Lucaena can be found at various places at the Common. For the last few months it has been producing its seed pods, which are now ready to burst. It is a prolific seed producer. This plant can grow to 10 metres.



Seed pods of a felled Leucaena plant.



This plant has grown well above its neighbours. The wind will spread the seeds far and wide.

BIRD PLAY

About one percent of the world's birds have been observed playing. In Australia, magpies and parrots are the most commonly seen in play. Corellas, Black Currawongs and White-winged Choughs often play with small objects and a Rainbow Bee-eater has been observed tossing a pebble in the air and catching it in its beak, seemingly practising catching insects in the air.

Some birds seem to indulge in mischief, while others appear to be enjoying the wind currents or swinging upside down on power lines.

Source: The full article 'Fowl Play' by John Peter can be read in *Australian Birdlife* Vol 7 No 1 March 2018.



Seen on Willie Wagtail Way, these adult magpies appeared to be having a friendly wrestle. Several other magpies were perched on the fence, enjoying the show. After watching rather quizzically, this juvenile magpie walked off, seemingly in disgust.

Thanks to Leon Cole and Mark Gillow for their photos. All the unattributed photos are mine. Contributions, comments and corrections are welcome.
Mary Lou Simpson. maryloulit@hotmail.com

Friends of Oxley Creek Common Inc.
represents a broad range of individuals
and community groups that have shared
visions in educational, social, ecological
and agricultural sustainability.

Become a friend of The Common

Pay your membership directly into our
BOQ account – BSB 124017 – A/c
20161909

Return this form or the appropriate details to:
friendsfoxfordcreekcommon@gmail.com
or
PO Box 319, SHERWOOD, Qld 4075

Tick the box to receive our newsletter.

Name: _____

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P/code: _____ Date:

Membership:

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