



NEWSLETTER

Friends of Oxley Creek Common Inc.

"Our Community Caring for Our Common"

February 2019 - Number 32



SAVE THE DATE

OCCA General Meeting

Tuesday 26th February

Red Shed 5.30 for 6.00

TUESDAY COMMON CARERS

gather every Tuesday in the car park
to begin at 7 am.

AUSTRALIA DAY CLEAN-UP

March 3rd, 9 – 12 noon.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Steve Gray

Welcome to 2019, the year we should begin to see progress on implementing the Oxley Creek Transformation master plan. Work is beginning upstream from the Common and on current schedules it will be a few years before it affects Oxley Creek Common. For a start, the land needs to be handed over from the state government to the council's business unit, Oxley Creek Transformation Pty Ltd (OCT).

Following our (mainly) successful negotiations with OCT, the Common is earmarked as a future bird sanctuary, and OCT has committed to another round of public consultation before work begins. Friends of Oxley Creek Common welcome this undertaking.

The Courier Mail ran a piece headlined: "Bacteria Levels in Creek Pose 'significant risk'" highlighting the poor condition of Oxley Creek and its "sickly" levels of bacteria. While this fact is widely known, we thank the media for highlighting the issue. A significant part of the transformation process will involve cleaning up the water through wetlands management.

Hyacinth is slowly enveloping the largest of the lakes on the Common and will need to be addressed, as will the growth of woody weeds in areas that are no longer grazed.

Oxley Creek Catchment Association is joining with Sherwood Scouts to host a Clean Up Australia Day event at the Common on Sunday, March 3, from 9am - 12 noon. It would be great to see some of the Friends

BECOME INVOLVED IN OXLEY CREEK COMMON

JOIN Friends of Oxley Creek Common.

LIKE the **Facebook Page** of Friends of Oxley Creek Common to keep in touch.

CHECK bird sightings on **Oxley Creek Common Birds Facebook Page**.

ADD your own photos to the **Oxley Creek Common Birds Facebook Page** to help build up a library of birds and other fauna.

SIGN your friends up to receive the newsletter.

there. A free barbecue will await those who volunteer.

Friends of Oxley Creek Common are looking for help in the areas of IT, administration, publicity etc, so if you want to contribute to the future of this very special part of Brisbane, please contact us. Details on the last page.

BIRD WALK

Dollarbirds come to Australia in September to breed and return to New Guinea and Indonesia around April. Dollarbirds were seen at the Common, earlier in January. Their name comes from the distinctive white circles (dollars) under each wing. They are high flyers. The frozen bodies of Dollarbirds have been found 4,500 metres above sea level in New Guinea.

Dollarbirds nest in cavities in tree trunks or may burrow into earth banks to make their nests. Between 2 and 6 white eggs are laid. Both parents incubate the eggs during the day, but the task goes to the female during the night.

Observers of a nesting pair in Mareeba registered both regular foraging and frenzied foraging. During regular foraging the parents delivered 126 meals at an average rate of one every 10 minutes, but during frenzied foraging a total of 347 meals arrived in 252 minutes. That is a rate of 1.4 meals per minute. The frenzied feeding consisted of single termites. (*Wingspan* March 2006 p18 Clarkson & Clarkson)



Adult Dollarbird and juvenile, wanting food. The adult photo was not taken at the Common, but there were plenty around when the juvenile was snapped. LF&SG

At 6 am on Sunday, January 13th, about 50 bird enthusiasts set off from the Red Shed, under the guidance of Hugh Possingham. Our first stop at the bank before the gate was rewarded with the fly-past of several birds, including a Koel.

The dry weather and the heat have made this a very difficult time for birds, as insect populations are greatly reduced. However, Hugh posted 72 sightings on e-bird, an amazing tally during such a dry summer. Of particular interest were the Dollarbirds (juvenile?) near Jagera Corner and the Plum-headed finches on the way to the lagoon.



Plum-headed finch captured by Sean Nolan.

Thanks to the organisers of this event and especially to Hugh Possingham, who generously

shares his enthusiasm and knowledge. Birdwatchers learn so much from his tips on identification, location and behaviour.



The second culvert usually rewards birdwatchers. MS

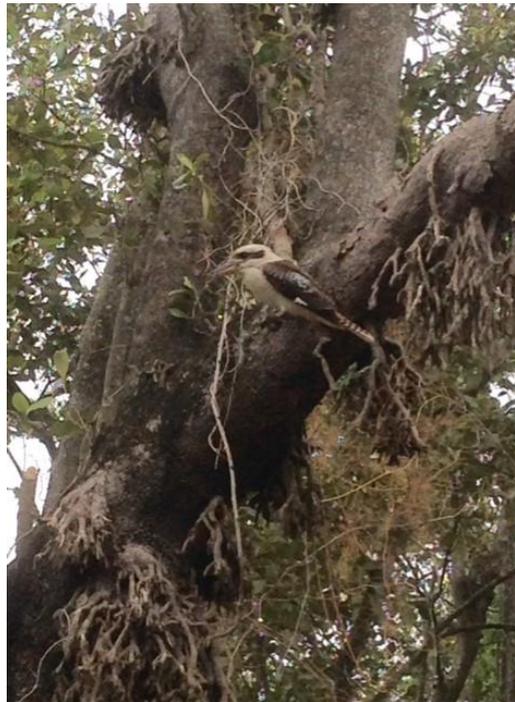


This Black-shouldered kite had captured the group's attention. MS

LIVING at THE COMMON



Jan Bartonik, a keen observer of snakes, supplied these photos of a Red-bellied black and Eastern browns.



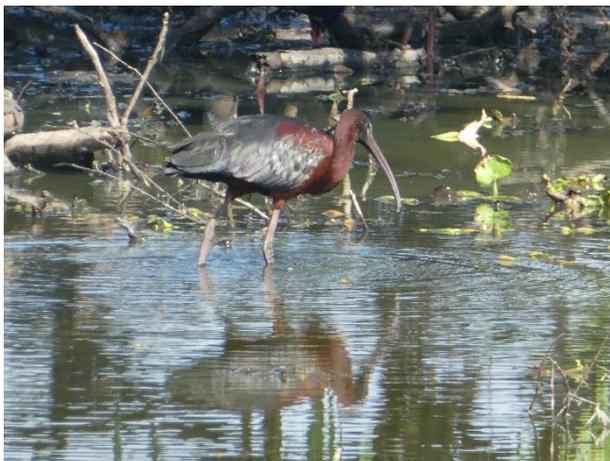
This Kookaburra used this amazing specimen of *Avicennia marina* a Grey Mangrove on the bank of Oxley Creek. It has plenty of pneumatophores. Notice the dead asparagus fern still hanging on the tree. This species can grow to 20 metres.



Black-fronted Dotterel are usually at the water's edge at the first lagoon. MS



Jan Bartonik kindly held this whip-snake, which he had been observing for some time. MS



Several Glossy Ibis have been at the lagoon for the last few months. This one was feeding beside a Little Egret and two White Ibises. MS

TUESDAY COMMON CARERS

Weeding officially began in the first week of February, although several stalwarts have been going to The Common during January to water the latest plantings, which have struggled during the heat of January. There were no storms to help our new plants.

Our first project has been to prepare a site for the Rotary planting on February 24th, when it is expected that several hundred plants will go into a space where there is no canopy at all.

Despite the lack of rain, the natural regeneration continues. There are tiny seedlings of *Ipomoea plebeia*. The distinctive double U-shaped leaf matures into an elongated heart-shaped leaf.

Known as Bell Vine, this plant was first found in Stoney Gully, but can now be found further afield.



This *Ipomoea plebeia* shows the unusual indentations on the seedling leaf. MS

The track that now exists along the creek, south of the fence, has revealed a large area of Saltwater Couch, *Sporobolus virginicus*, a smaller area of *Eclipta platyglossa*, a stand of Mangrove Fern, *Acrostichum speciosum*, new mangroves and several *Mallotus philippensis*, or Red Kamala. None of the self-seeded plants appear to have suffered with the hot, dry summer.

[Anyone who would like to join our group is welcome. Weeders come whenever they can and do whatever they are capable of. If you can't commit to Tuesday mornings, but would like to be a custodian at Oxley Creek Common, call Mary Lou on 0429911555. It is a great way to learn about the plants and animals at the Common.](#)

PELICANS

Our attention has been turned to these magnificent birds with the release over summer of the new film, *Storm Boy*. As you reflect on the film consider these facts:

- Pelicans have the longest bill of any bird species on Earth.
- A Pelican is the same weight as a tomcat.
- Pelicans are masters of elasticity, being able to collapse and inflate their bills, stomachs and feet.
- The tongue is the size of a toothpick.
- When the stomach is empty it is about the size of a walnut.
- Under the skin is a special layer resembling bubble-wrap, which gives them buoyancy.
- During incubation, Pelicans wrap one foot around each egg.

Source: *Wingspan*, June 2006, p16, Milewski A.



This Atherton Tableland pelican settled down close enough to show its topknot. MS

Julian Reid's memory while studying the ecology of the Coongie Lakes in far north-east South Australia in the late 1980's and 1990's.

I would sometimes lie back in awe and watch the spectacle of one or two thousand pelicans take off from one lake, flapping initially and increasingly soaring upward in spirals, until at a great height one bird would take the lead, break out of the thermal that was carrying it aloft and head for a distant lake. Successive birds would peel off, one by one, to follow its lead. Small skeins would continue to take-off from the lakes' surface. It could take half an hour for a large flock to take flight ... climb the thermals and follow the departing birds to their new feeding grounds.

Boom and Bust Robin, Heinsohn and Joseph eds. p95

WHICH IS WHICH

It is sometimes tricky to distinguish between plants. Seedlings can be particularly puzzling.

Check the three photos below:

- *Rostellularia obtusa*
- *Calyptocarpus vialis* (Cinderella weed);
- *Dyschoriste depressa*

Which is which? See the answer below.



1. *Dyschoriste depressa*, originally from South Africa, was first noticed in Taringa in 2000, and has since spread to other suburbs. It is a persistent weed on footpaths and in parks. It seems to enjoy being mown. Unmown, it grows to 60cm. Worrying monocultures exist along Ithaca and Enoggera Creeks. Small pale flowers grow in the upper leaf forks. The stems are thicker than the other two plants.

2. Cinderella weed, *Calyptocarpus vialis*, looks very much like *Dyschoriste*, but is not such a dark green, has weak sprawling stems growing from the base, and when mature has little yellow flowers. The leaves are not as soft as *Dyschoriste*. This weed originated in Mexico.

3. *Rostellularia obtusa* is a low growing native. The leaves are much firmer to touch and slightly hairy. It grows to 30 cm. The flowers are pink, hairy spikes growing at the top of the stems.

This photo of *Rostellularia* is from Cliveden Avenue. Although it hasn't been seen at the Common, it may be there, perhaps growing amongst the Cinderella weed, and so easily overlooked. Luckily, there is only one site, that we know of, where *Dyschoriste* is growing.

Source: Carole Bristow,
www.weeds.brisbane.qld.gov.au
Mangroves to Mountains



The recent king tide has reached low-lying parts of the creek bank. Here it has come up the gully to soak the casuarinas. WB

Send comments, corrections and contributions to
Mary Lou Simpson. Email:
maryloulit@hotmail.com

PHOTO CREDITS:

SG: Steve Gray;

MS: Mary Lou Simpson;

SN Sean Nolan;

LF: Liz Ferguson;

WB Wayne Brown.

Thanks to Jan Bartonik for the photos of the snakes.

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:

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Donation: \$...