



NEWSLETTER

Friends of Oxley Creek Common Inc.

"Our Community Caring for Our Common"

February 2020 - Number 36



SAVE THE DATE

FOOCC Annual General Meeting

10.30 Sunday 31st May, preceded by a BIRDWALK at 6.30 am.
All welcome, members new and old.

TUESDAY COMMON CARERS

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

JOHN SINCLAIR MEMORIAL LECTURE

To honour the work of John Sinclair in preserving Fraser Island, K'Gari, an inaugural lecture will be held on **Saturday, 7th March, 2pm at the Masonic Lodge, 311 Ann St. Cost \$25.**
Guest speaker: **Dr Aila Keto**
<https://fido.org.au/the-john-sinclair-memorial-lecture-2020>

BIRD NEWS Hugh Possingham

About 15 hardy souls gathered for the Sunday morning birdwalk at 6:30am under the threat of rain, which magically disappeared for the three-and-a-half hour walk. The vegetation was lush, the waterbodies were full, and we identified 85 bird species. Early arrivals were greeted with a display of many low-flying White-throated Needletails.

Near the start of the walk was a single dead acacia, where we viewed a virtual parade of beautiful species: male Mistletoebird, Rainbow Bee-eater, Australasian Figbird, Little Friarbird, Striated Pardalote etc. The group obtained excellent views of a Dollarbird, Sacred Kingfisher, and all three Fairy-wren species. An Australian Hobby sat obligingly in a far distant dead tree. Dead trees are extremely important for birds and birdwatchers. You can't plant a dead tree, so keeping the few we have is very important.

FRIENDS of OXLEY CREEK COMMON COMMITTEE

President: **Hugh Possingham**
Secretary: **Karen Gillow**
Treasurer: **Matthew Mendel**
Minutes Secretary: **Robyn Mulder**
Media Co-ordinator: **Erica Heaton**
Tuesday Common Carers and
Newsletter Editor:
Mary Lou Simpson
Committee: **Colleen Enchelmaier**
Lynn Whitfield
Zina Dinesen

A highlight at Jabiru Lagoon was a Wandering Whistling Duck, which has only about ten *eBird* records for The Common.

While small brown birds are not everyone's cup of tea, the short grass and track beside Jabiru lagoon also afforded us with excellent views of Australasian Pipit, with an Australian Reed Warbler in the Brazilian pepper bush

beneath the “drum tree”. Three Magpie Geese, another rare visitor to The Common, flew overhead.

A few of us were lucky enough to see Plum-headed Finches (they can be anywhere, but usually out in the grassland) and a pair of Tawny Frogmouth by the canoe pontoon.

See the list at:

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S64254749>.

Birds at The Common

3500 *ebird* checklists for The Common

221 species recorded on *ebird*

150 species seen so far this year

85 species identified on the birdwalk

10 *ebird* records for Wandering Whistling Duck

8 new species seen since November.



Malcolm Gray captured this Plum-headed Finch.



A front and back view of Rainbow Bee-eaters.
Photo: Malcolm Gray

Large numbers of Bee-eaters have been breeding at The Common this summer. Some migrate to Indonesia and New Guinea during

winter. They forage on flying insects in the air, typically bringing their food back to the perch to bash it against the branch before eating it.



Pale-headed Rosella. Photo: Malcolm Gray

FOOCC Committee Meeting

The first meeting for 2020 was held after the birdwalk, on the 9th February. Before the rain on the tin roof at the Red Shed made it impossible to hear, the Committee discussed:

- re-establishing contact with Corinda High School.
- the new web site: <https://friendsofoxleycreekcommon.org/>
- new membership categories: **become a Life Member or pay for five years for the price of four.**

- the successful Facebook Page: **feel free to post comments.**
- Tuesday Common Carers, who, like the weeds love the rain and **welcome new members.**

LIVING AT THE COMMON

The rain has transformed life at The Common. The gullies are running -a rare sight - and fungi and butterflies are abundant. The birds seem happier too.



This is just a fraction of the masses of Monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*) on a Monkey Rope Vine on the way to the lagoons.



This wonderful picture of a Brown Kite shows the speckled wings, angled tail and powerful talons. Enlarge it on your computer. Photo: Malcolm Gray



This is one of the puff ball fungi (*Geastrum saccatum*) Photo: Matt Mendel.

Perhaps someone can identify these other fungi.





TUESDAY COMMON CARERS

Work began in February on the massive resurgence of weeds, that have germinated over the wet summer. (Actually, 6 people turned up a week early, realising that there would be plenty to do.)

Not to be daunted, we have begun near the Red Shed, where there was a huge germination of glycine. The main growth has been of Green panic and Rye grass. The rain has transformed the whole area: 'dead' stumps have sprouted leaves, *Trema tormentosas* have come to life; *Alphitonias* are shooting from the roots, and there is fungi and moss. And of course, the pasture grasses are marching across the landscape.

Special mention must be made of Wayne Brown, who is moving to the Sunshine Coast. He has worked tirelessly at The Common, for many more hours than our Tuesday session. Fern Gully is just one spot, where he has worked alone, removing a mass of Asparagus fern to reveal a delightful gully. He has been a wonderful observer of the environment, a secret planter of trees, and an indefatigable weeder. Thank you, and all the best, Wayne.



Among the many new plants that have self-seeded since the rain, is this native Glycine. The photo is posed, and the single flower belongs to a spike. Perhaps someone can identify it as '*tormentella*', '*tabacina*' or '*clandestina*'.

NOSWORTHY PARK our neighbour across the creek Marie Hollingworth

The environment of Nosworthy Park has come a long way since the first working bee of the Nosworthy Park Bushcare Group (NPBG) in October 2004. For many years the park was used for grazing. Once the animals were removed, the area became grassland. The mowers swept through, spinning around the only trees – endemic, *Melaleuca bracteate*, now thought to be about 100 years old. Wedding photos were taken beneath these trees and generations of the neighbourhood's children tobogganed down the grassy slopes on strips of cardboard.

The initial clearing and planting of trees occurred in the early 1990s, inspired by the desire to restore the scrub that was cleared for housing development. But any such project needs maintenance and 10 years later it took the first members of OCCA's Creek Care team to tackle the Climbing Asparagus and Guinea Grass. As well, much of the area was boggy and weedy due to springs and a storm water outlet. Who would want to venture in?

The Bushcare Group took on this daunting task. Initially, we planted native trees to provide shade and retard weed growth. In 2006, we succeeded in obtaining a

Commonwealth Water Grant, to deal with significant erosion. With assistance from Council, rock chutes and pools were built, which slowed water flow following heavy rain.

Over the last 15 years, major projects have included the removal of three large Camphor laurel trees and huge stands of bamboo. Despite the disturbed history of the park, there has been continual natural regeneration of both tree species and native ground covers. This resilience delights bushcare workers.

The main 'U'-shaped track was constructed in the 1990's, under the LEAP employment Scheme. A number of other paths has been created by an enthusiastic local Scouting group, with the intention of drawing walkers into several rather special vegetation areas – a cathedral like fern gully, an ephemeral wetland of huge Melaleucas, an open dry woodland, and a riparian strip. In the woodland is a perhaps the largest local specimen of the threatened *Gossia gonoclada*. There is a variety of riparian vegetation, including the velcro-like leaves of *Leersia hexandra*, which returns each year to the same spot. There is a stand of remnant *Flindersias*, with their distinctive 5-fingered spiky seed cones. At the end of the ridge, an old *Angophora* was home to a family of five Southern Boobook Owls last year. Kookaburras, Kingfishers and even possums, live in hollows and termite mounds in old

spotted gums, which have survived lightning and fierce winds.

This is all a far call from the grassland that was once maintained with a couple of hours mowing. The park now provides a peaceful natural area, where birds flit about, butterflies and other insects go about their business, and soft sunlight streams between the trees. There is plenty to observe: fruit, flowers, and the vegetation's response to the seasons.

Residents have much to gain from involvement in a bushcare group: friendship, learning about the environment, being part of the community and building the health of the local environment and of oneself. There is great satisfaction knowing that plants and wildlife are flourishing, because of your contribution to a bushcare working bee. New members are always welcome. Come when you can. NPBG meets on the first Saturday of the month, from 7.30 for 2 hours followed by smoko and a chat.

Visit Nosworthy Park and venture off the beaten track, to discover those delightful environments that have been rescued from weeds, planted and maintained by community members who come to work in the park.

Like us on Facebook: *Nosworthy Park Bushcare* or for more information contact Marie Hollingworth.
– marie.hollingworth@bigpond.com

Correction: In the article on Brown Quail in the November Newsletter: 'Coveys of up to 30' should read: 'Coveys of up to 13'.

Thanks to Malcolm Gray, Matt Mendel and Erica Heaton for their photos. All the unattributed photos are mine.

Contributions, comments and corrections are welcome.
Mary Lou Simpson.
marylouit@hotmail.com



An evening Birdwalk was held in December 2019. This was one of the delights of late afternoon at The Common. Photo: Erica Heaton.



A Golden-headed Cisticola looking for dinner.
Photo: Malcolm Gray

UNSEEN FUNGI

While we have been enjoying the fungi on the top of the ground, it is worthwhile to remember the research of Suzanne Simard in the forests of British Columbia.

Foresters had weeded out paper birch saplings, in order to give the Douglas firs better soil nutrients. The unexpected consequence was a deterioration and death of the firs.

Simard looked into the soil and found a vast interconnection of ‘pale, super-fine threads (hyphae)’, which weave themselves into the tips of plant roots, ‘thereby creating an interface through which molecular transmission might occur.’

To discover what might be transmitted through this system of threads, Simard injected the fir trees with radioactive carbon isotopes. Tracking revealed that the isotopes moved down to the trees’ root tips, then along the hyphae to the roots of other trees. Along the way, the fungi collected and adapted resources. Trees were interconnected in a surprising and intricate way. Some old trees were connected to ‘as many as forty-seven’ other trees. Thus, weeding out the birches, actually reduced the nutrient intake of the firs, which caused their death.

Simard sees the forest as a vast co-operative system. Her first major paper was published in *Nature* in 1997. Since then research has boomed and revealed a ‘language of the forest network’.

Source: *Underland, a deep time journey* by Robert Macfarlane, Hamish Hamilton, 2019, p 88 - 91.

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: friendsfofoxleycreekcommon@gmail.com or PO Box 319, SHERWOOD, Qld 4075

Tick the box to receive our newsletter.

Name: _____

E-mail: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

P/code: _____ Date: _____

Membership:

Single \$15

Concession: \$12

Family: \$20

Group: \$30

Corporate: \$80

Life \$400 or Concession \$320

For the price of 4 years membership, you receive 5 years membership.