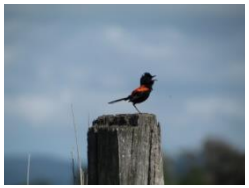
NEWSLETTER

Friends of Oxley Creek Common Inc.

"Our Community Caring for Our Common"

November 2018 - Number 31



SUMMER

The Bureau of Meteorology predicts warmer than average days and nights from December to February.

If you are walking at The Common, you could carry a bottle of water to give any wilting plants a chance to survive the summer heat.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Steve Gray

The final Oxley Creek Master Plan was released recently and as far as Oxley Creek Common is concerned it does, in the main, reflect the process of public consultation.

However, there are some changes from the draft master plan that are causing concern.

The position of a bridge from the area near Cliveden Reserve and the pony club has been moved and this "shared path" (i.e. cyclists) now intersects with the pedestrian trail.

There is also a proposal to "investigate bike, canoe and kayak hire facilities" near the Red Shed. Kayaks and canoes perhaps, but the inclusion of possible bike hire is disappointing. We have asked that cycling be calmed on The Common, and this proposal seems keen on promoting cycling there.

We'll be making further representations to Oxley Creek Transformation (OCT) regarding these matters.

Fortunately, OCT has promised another round of public consultation and another community reference group before the final plan for The Common is settled.

We understand that negotiations regarding transfer of the land are underway. On current timelines, work on The Common is scheduled to begin in 6-10 years.

The Master Plan is available on the OCT website.

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.

See back page for details.

TUESDAY COMMON CARERS

Work has continued along the creek bank towards Stoney Gully. Our aim has been to establish a path, so the creek bank is accessible. Happily, this has been achieved and the lower bank is almost weed-free.

The first problem was the removal of waist-high glycine that was engulfing a planting done by the Green Army in 2017. Thursday Creek Care helped with this area. Amazingly, many of the trees were still alive.

Work has been slow along the creek bank. One massive obstacle was a dense infestation of our favourite weeds intertwined with cockspur. After four weeks solid work by Brian and Wayne, there is space for mangroves to regenerate.

Elsewhere, we have been removing asparagus fern, rescuing trees from glycine and removing *Rivina humilis,* which is about to seed. Green panic and rye grass are being cleared away from struggling plants. Most weeds in this area have been undisturbed for years, so there is a large seed bank in the soil.

This is a beautiful area to work in and we have been rewarded with natural regeneration of marine couch, self-seeded *Mallotus,* Warrigal greens, *Eclipta* and Tuckeroos. We always have the pleasure of birds calling while we work. A large water dragon was unfazed by the Thursday Creek Care planting nearby. We look forward to the new and old plants enjoying a good growing season.

The OCCA BSU team, with the help of volunteers, have planted the slope on the northern side of the fence with native grasses and low growing shrubs. The BSU team continues to monitor difficult spots further along the track.

We hope that walkers enjoy the changes that are occurring. Hopefully, the rescued trees and regeneration is supporting wildlife. It is good to see birdwatchers accessing previously impenetrable areas. Thanks to all our hard workers who are making this possible.

Before

Area cleared of glycine earlier this year. Photos: MS

After

Phragamites australis have room to spread.

LITTLE HELPERS

The playgroup, Wild Kids, which meets at the Red Shed on Tuesday mornings, have offered to do some planting. If you notice new plantings close along the path, it will be the work of these little helpers and their mums.

Lucy and daughter Elinor of Wild Kids. Photo: MS

FIRE ANTS

Steve Gray

A sighting of a Fire Ant nest in October, prompted a quick response from the Fire Ant Program Team. They marked and baited several other nests as well. With many of the paddocks slashed, now is the time to locate nests, which are marked with pink flags.

At my request, the team undertook to report that The Common needs further attention to locate and neutralise nests. In the past we've had helicopter baiting and emu parades to locate nests. Apparently the helos are now tasked to the outer perimeter of the infestation around Brisbane.

If you see any nests, please mark them and contact us at: friendsofoxleycreekcommon@gmail.com.

Fire Ant nest. Photo: SG

LIVING at THE COMMON

This front door is a little too small. Let's hope the possum got out again. Photo: MS

An unusual sighting of a Cicadabird, in late October, when they migrate to south-east Australia to breed. There appeared to be just one. Photo: SN

Another rare find: a Freckled Duck with the Grey Teals on the lagoon. Photo: SN

The flowering *Melaleucas* along the path have been a mecca for honeyeaters and insects. Photo: MS

Spring has arrived for these snakes. Photo: WB

A White-breasted Woodswallow and Sacred Kingfisher share the line. Photo: MS

Brown Goshawk seen near the pine forest. Photo JR

This juvenile Tawny Frogmouth seems quite surprised at all the attention. He was waiting patiently for a parent to return. Photo: JR

Fungi

Uffe N. Nielsen, in his article 'Hidden Diversity' in the Winter 2017 edition of *Wildlife Australia',* discusses the organisms in soil. He says that even one teaspoon of soil might contain 'more than a billion individual organisms, representing thousands of species'. This includes bacteria and fungi. There may be hundreds of metres of 'hyphae, formed by hundred of fungi species' in one gram of soil.

The largest known soil organism is in Malheur National Forest in Oregon, USA, where scientists have discovered 'several genetically unique individuals of a pathogenic fungus that stretch across hundreds of hectares and are estimated to weigh several tonnes each. Estimates suggest they might be thousands of years old.'

After the recent rain Tuesday Common Carers were lucky enough to find a variety of fungi, which had emerged from the leaf litter.

Thanks to Megan Prance for her help.

Coprinellus sp: this ink cap is dissolving into a black mess. Photo: MS

This could be a species of jelly fungi. The clusters looked like gathered chiffon but were soft. Photo: MS

This is perhaps a species of *Ganoderma.* Photo MS

CARP

Just as carp are infesting the Murray-Darling River system, so they can be found in Oxley Creek Common waterholes. Apart from the environmental damage they cause, the water in Pelican Lagoon is now so muddy that Ospreys and other species have become infrequent visitors. Steve Gray has found the following excerpt on European carp, published by the CSIRO. The second opinion was published in the *Sydney Morning Herald,* after the National OZ Water conference. The two opinions illustrate the difficulty of dealing with feral infestations.

'Below the surface'

After widespread flooding in the early 1970's, carp (cyprinus carpio) became established in the Murray-Darling. The Millennium Drought-breaking floods in 2012 took them to feral numbers. In some parts of the Murray-Darling Basin carp comprise more than 80 per cent of fish biomass, exceeding 350 kilograms per hectare.

They are mobile, hungry, breed quickly and can survive in polluted, shallow waters. They feed by sucking through gravel and mud, dirtying the water and blocking sunlight from aquatic vegetation. This affects plankton, aquatic invertebrates, waterbirds and native fish and can cause blue-green algal blooms. Carp can also get into irrigation infrastructure and block pumps, causing significant financial losses.

Scientists are working on the release of a carp herpes virus, the success of which depends on water temperature and other environmental factors.

The team, which includes health & biosecurity epidemiologists and RMIT University mathematicians are tackling the question of when, where, and under which conditions carp aggregate in the connected river system.

The initial release of a carp herpes virus needs to be followed by other measures to keep carp biomass at low levels—such as introducing daughterless carp to reduce breeding opportunities. Information gathered from the monitoring of a strategic release of the virus, will help minimise the hazards associated with massive carp kills, such as organising the removal and processing of dead carp biomass.

Carp found in Pelican Lagoon. Photo: SG

THE OTHER VIEW:

Some scientists are concerned that the release of a carp herpes virus will have a disastrous effect on other fish and invertebrates in the water systems.

They refer to the study where dead carp were placed in 2,000 litre water tanks. The oxygen levels fell below zero and remained at 10% for two weeks. Without dissolved oxygen, other fish and invertebrates died. The experiment lso showed that nitrogen levels increased up to 120 times and phosphorus up to 500 times.

Articles in 2017 and 2018 editions of *Nature* and *Science* suggested the possibility of 'catastrophic ecosystem crashes', with the release of the virus. Simon Chapman, professor of public health at the University of Sydney, likens the release of a herpes virus to the release of cane toads – well intentioned, but an unforeseen disaster.

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

PHOTO CREDITS: SG: Steve Gray; SN: Sean Nolan; WB: Wayne Brown; JR: Justine Rice; MS: Mary Lou Simpson;

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:
friendsofoxleycreekcommon@gmail.com
or
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Tick the box to receive our newsletter. ☐

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