



NEWSLETTER

Friends of Oxley Creek Common Inc.

"Our Community Caring for Our Common"

November 2019 - Number 35



SAVE THE DATE

FOOCC BIRDWALK

Sunday 15th December 5 pm

Conducted by Hugh Possingham

Meet at the Red Shed

Come along and bring your friends

Committee Meeting 3.30pm

TUESDAY COMMON CARERS

gather every Tuesday in the Red Shed

car park to begin at 7 am.

Ph: 0429911555

OCCA Christmas BBQ

Catchment Centre

9 Macdevitt St, Coopers Plains

5 - 7 pm; Friday 13th December

RSVP:

info@oxleycreekcatchment.org.au

PH: 33455541

BIRD NEWS

Hugh Possingham

The dry conditions inland have seen many interesting species turn up including several Pallid Cuckoos, several Brown Songlarks, interesting birds of prey, a Red-capped Robin, Cicadabirds and our first Fuscous Honeyeater (species #214 according to eBird). Sadly, while the spectacular Glossy Ibis still enjoy Jabiru swamp, there is little surface water (the third inaccessible lagoon is completely dry) and the Common is showing off its abilities as a drought refuge.

The Black Kites (which only arrived a few years ago) successfully bred, and maybe a Brown Falcon pair is nesting. These are very rare breeders in Brisbane - but I don't know where our Black-shouldered Kite pair has gone.

The Brown Quail along the path have been in large numbers (c40) and very tame. It is so important for this species that dogs are kept on leads. If you see dogs running free along the path, please remind people that this presents a serious hazard to the Brown Quail - which are a special favourite of the many photographers.

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

Remember, everyone can find the illustrated checklist for the Common on eBird at <https://ebird.org/australia/hotspot/L967148/media?yr=all&m=>.

TUESDAY COMMON CARERS

The last few months have been a busy time. Because of the extremely dry weather, watering has been essential, in order to save young plants that are shrivelling in the heat.

We have been working at two sites on the creek bank: south of Commelina Gully near the large casuarina and just south of Stoney Gully. The first site looked like a relatively easy place to work but proved very difficult. The Asparagus Fern was entangled in the Cockspur and was very difficult to remove. The weeds on this site had prevented anything from growing, except for one struggling Tuckeroo.



Cleared space for Mangroves and Phragmites to spread.

The second site gave us plenty to do: a large patch of Singapore Daisy was removed, masses

of Asparagus Fern were dug out and Coral Berry was uprooted. A large Pitted-leafed Steelwood, *Toechima tenax*, is growing in this area and there are a lot of seedlings nearby. This section of creek bank has extensive areas of Marine Couch, *Sporobolus virginicus*, a large clump of Mangrove Fern, *Acrostichum speciosum*, and a *Crinum pedunculatum*, which is in such a precarious position it will be impossible to gather the seeds. New mangroves and *Phragmites australis* are poking through. This area promises to be a delightful spot.

Wayne Brown has been extending his time at the Common, working away in several difficult places. One spot that is now a delight is the gully at the first cement culvert. He has unearthed a huge Mangrove Fern, *Acrostichum speciosum*, and extensive Marine Couch, *Sporobolus virginicus*. This gully was once an impenetrable mass of Asparagus fern and Coral berry. In its new glory it has been dubbed 'Fern Gully'.

Marie Hollingworth kindly propagated a tray of *Alternanthera denticulata*, which will be a welcome addition to the creek bank. Hopefully, we can return the favour as the source of these plants has disappeared in the drought.

Congratulations to this dauntless band of workers.



Mangrove Fern has come to life in Fern Gully.

VOLUNTEERS

Thursday Creek Care have worked at the Common twice during October. This group tackled some very stubborn infestations of Asparagus Fern, weeded a Rotary planting and watered. Thanks, Noel for giving us an extra week and thanks to all the willing workers.

Staff from the OCCA BSU come to the Common on a regular basis. They focus on removing the difficult asparagus fern from the creek bank, filling the tanks and doing general weeding. Their help is invaluable.

Thanks to OCCA's Partnership team, a group of about 50 people from KPMG worked at the Common in October. Some volunteers established a large planting beside one of the University plots, while others weeded and collected tree guards.



Working out of the office. Photo: Camilla Duff Burford.

LIVING AT THE COMMON

Brown Quail are now regularly seen at the Common, delighting local and overseas visitors alike.

Knowing that Quail need long grass for shelter, Tuesday Common Carers have been nervous about clearing weeds from around isolated patches of *Einardia nutans*, concerned that open

space will make these ground dwellers vulnerable to prey.



A Brown Quail's white streaks highlighted by the sun. Photo: Judy Lucas.

We have been delighted to see that not only do the Quail use the *Einardia* for food but wriggle right under the plant. Perhaps they are finding both seeds and shelter while they forage. They seem to be happy, providing there is tall grass nearby to scramble to, in case of danger. Cleared areas are also giving them increased opportunity for dust bathing.

Quail hide under vines or 'rubbish' – anything that gives sanctuary and is an adequate barrier from a perceived threat. They have also been observed foraging right on the creek bank among the mangroves. Occasionally, they take

to the wing when startled, rising at a sharp angle and landing in nearby grasses.

Wayne Brown, a keen observer of these birds, has noted coveys of up to 30, earlier this year. Currently, however, they are more likely to be in pairs or small groups, possibly because of the breeding season. Despite seeing these birds frequently, he has never seen a nest or broken shells.



This untidy looking pile is home to Quail.

Quote from Monty Don in Down to Earth: If you want to encourage wildlife, the best thing to do is to stop gardening.



Kevin Habbit was lucky enough to be at the lagoon when the Jabiru was there.

Long-billed Corellas have been sighted feeding in the paddocks with their cousins, the Little Corellas. Long-billed Corellas are distinguishable by a red crescent on the neck and red feathers behind the bill. Once, found only in south-west Victoria, they can now be found in coastal NSW and Queensland.

Ian Frazer in *Birds in their Habitats* (page 97) says the key food for these parrots was Yam Daisy (Murnong), which once covered large areas of Victorian and southern NSW grasslands. There are accounts of the flowers turning the 'plains golden to the horizon'. Aborigines ate the yam tubers, and the Long-billed Corella's bill was ideally suited to digging out the little tubers and so cultivating the soil. Settlers' waggons turned up vast quantities of the tubers, which were often left to rot. Sheep and ploughs

finished off the tubers. Surviving Corellas learnt to eat wheat, which meant they became another target.

A line of birdwatchers at the fenceline, with cameras at the ready, suggested something had landed in a tree on the way to the lagoons. To everyone's delight, a **Pallid Cuckoo**, was easily seen on one of the lower branches.



Paul Francis caught the Pallid Cuckoo in flight.



Where can a Pheasant Coucal get some privacy?



Aidan Byrne captured this Fuscous Honeyeater.



One of the two White-necked Heron on the look-out for food. Notice the maroon feathers.



The Sacred Kingfishers are back for the Summer. *The Australian Bird Guide* notes that the buff scaling becomes 'worn' and the underparts can become white with age. The distinguishing feature is the orange stripe above the lores.

Thanks to Kevin Habbit, Judy Lucas, Paul Francis and Aidan Byrne for their photos. All the unattributed photos are mine.

Thanks to Carole Bristow for her generous advice.

Contributions, comments and corrections are welcome.

Mary Lou Simpson.
maryloulit@hotmail.com

WEEDS IN SEED

Although regarded as weeds, there is such a shortage of food that birds welcome any seeds.



Rhodes grass, *Chloris gayana*, was introduced to Australia as cattle fodder.



Slender pigeon grass, *Setaria parvifolia*. Photos: Judy Lucas.

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: _____

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Membership:

Single	\$15	<input type="checkbox"/>
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