

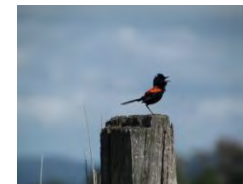


# NEWSLETTER

## Friends of Oxley Creek Common Inc.

"Our Community Caring for Our Common"

September 2023 - Number 50



### SAVE THE DATE

Sunday, 26<sup>th</sup> November 2023

FOOCC Bird walk 6.30am

Morning Tea and

General Meeting 10 am.

Tuesday Common Carers

Tuesdays 7 – 9 am. Meet in the car park. New members welcome.

Walk and Weed

1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of the month. 7-9am

To register call 0429911555

Bushcare and Beer

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month, 2.00pm

Weed before a beverage at Helios Brewery.

OCCA Annual General Meeting 27<sup>th</sup>

November at the Red Shed.

### NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hugh Possingham

#### Mistletoes along Oxley Creek

You might have noticed mistletoes growing in trees and bushes along the track at Oxley Creek Common. Some people think they are exotic invaders from Europe, others think they kill trees; neither is true. The truth is that they are a valuable part of a healthy ecosystem, and we are very lucky to have at least six species at Oxley Creek Common!

Mistletoes are "hemiparasites" – which means half parasites – because they take water and nutrients from their host, but they generate energy (fix carbon) by photosynthesising themselves. A full parasite gets everything from its host – you have *thousands* of full parasite species in your digestive system, so it is something quite normal.

Most importantly, mistletoe is fabulous for birds. Not only is it the favourite source of food for the iconic Mistletoebird, it provides nectar for many honeyeaters. Research by

Professor David Watson (Charles Sturt University) has shown that where there are mistletoes, not only are there more species in the canopy (that use the fruit and nectar), but there are also more species of bird on the ground and in the understory because mistletoe changes nutrient recycling in woodlands and forest

[https://ecosystemunraveller.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/mistletoe\\_diversity\\_gundaroo.pdf](https://ecosystemunraveller.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/mistletoe_diversity_gundaroo.pdf).

On bird walks at the Common I often point out the four more common species of mistletoe:

**Needle-leaf mistletoe** (*Amyema cambagei*) which has lovely red flowers and grows on the casuarinas; **Alphitonia mistletoe** (*Amyema conspicua*) which, unsurprisingly, grows on the Alphitonias that are common especially in the first km of the track (green flowers and yellow berries); **Bronze mistletoe** (*Amyema miquelii*) which is always in eucalypts and often has a bronze colour to its foliage (red flowers and greeny-yellow barrel-shaped fruits); and **Grey-leaved mistletoe** (*Notothixos incanus*) on the melaleucas, with striking grey-blue foliage and pale berries. All seem to have prospered in the revegetation, testimony to the ability of our Mistletoebirds to spread them far and wide.

Perhaps even more remarkable than these four more common mistletoe species are two less common species that are hyperparasites, which means, they only parasitise other parasites! I have seen the **Golden mistletoe** (*Notothixos subaureus*) in a couple of locations, and one specimen of the **Leafless jointed mistletoe** (*Viscum articulatum*) attached to a Needle-leaf mistletoe living on a casuarina. It is remarkable that such complex ecological interactions can reassemble in such a disturbed location. Nature is resilient. I suspect there are two or three more species of mistletoe to discover, as there are over 20 species in the Brisbane area, so keep your eyes up.

As you walk along the track and start to pick out the mistletoes from amongst the rest of the foliage, you will notice that many trees have no mistletoe, but some have a lot. In general, hosts will try to resist the mistletoe incursion and this defense works in healthy trees with healthy stems. When a tree is stressed, or a branch is damaged, it is more susceptible to mistletoe. Experiments have shown that a few mistletoes have little or no impact on a healthy tree, but a stressed or dying tree may die more quickly if heavily infested. As with most parasites, there is no advantage to killing your host – which brings us back to why thousands of parasites live happily in your gut, generally with no ill effect.

## BECOME INVOLVED IN OXLEY CREEK COMMON

**JOIN** Friends of Oxley Creek Common.

**JOIN** one of the weeding groups to help maintain the natural bushland.

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

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

**VISIT** the Friends of Oxley Creek Common website:

<https://friendsofoxleycreekcommon.org>

**CHECK** you have paid your membership fees. See the form below.

## BIRD WALK

Hugh Possingham

About 30 enthusiastic birders found 77 species in our 3-hour walk through the Common. We were lucky to see the unusual Pink-eared Duck (aka “zebra duck”) on Jabiru Lagoon again – there are now 4. The pair of Black-shouldered Kites gave us fabulous views along Willie Wagtail Way – they have previously bred at Oxley Creek Common so let’s hope they will again this year. Scarlet Honeyeaters, a late

winter and early spring visitor to the Common, were calling everywhere – and a few of us had good views of the spectacular male (not me 😞).

The lagoon area is also excellent for bush birds – a Horsfield’s Bronze Cuckoo was calling incessantly, and some Rainbow Bee-eaters flew low overhead. Fairy-wrens were sparse and we could not see or hear a Brown Quail. Hopefully there will be some spring rains that will see the recovery of these species that dwell mainly on the ground or in the long grass.

As the inland areas of Australia become dry, we may see more and more waterbirds. It is a pity that the state government has allowed the lagoons to degrade so much. You can find the full list for the morning here <https://ebird.org/checklist/S148176579>.

**Thanks to Hugh for providing birdwatchers with instructive tips.**



**Pink-eared ducks** Photo: Susan Marrinan

## NATIVE FISH

The existence of native fish in local waterways depends on a variety of circumstances: sufficient water in lagoons, the ability to move between freshwater and the estuary unimpeded by barriers such as weirs and culverts, and low competition from introduced species, such as tilapia, mosquitofish, carp, goldfish and swordtails.

Some native species that may exist in Oxley Creek freshwater lagoons are: freshwater catfish (*Tandanus tandanus*), fork-tailed catfish (*Neoarius graeffii*), spangled perch, crimson spotted rainbowfish, fly-specked hardyhead, Pacific blue-eye, mouth almighty, bony bream, snub-nosed garfish, Australian bass, sea mullet, freshwater mullet, olive perchlet, long-finned eel and short-finned eel.

Gudgeon species: empire gudgeon, fire-tailed gudgeon, western carp gudgeon, flat-headed gudgeon, dwarf flat-headed gudgeon, striped gudgeon, and purple-spotted gudgeon.

Some of these species need to move between freshwater and the estuary to complete their life cycle.

For native fish to exist in the lagoons at the Common there needs to be good connectivity with the Brisbane River and healthy habitat in both the creek and the lagoons. Establishing shady riparian edge zones and improving aquatic habitat complexity can help the native species compete.

Source: Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

## TUESDAY COMMON CARERS

Despite some chilly mornings during winter, this hardy band of weeders has been at work. Our focus has been weeding and replanting the section between Mangrove Fern Gully and Snake Gully. The new plantings have suffered badly from the dry weather.

Many hours have been spent at Scrub Wren Point, where Rivina has been a major problem. This area has now been replanted, thanks to a corporate group IPPData, who donated the plants and the labour. Hopefully this area will now resemble natural bushland with ground covers, medium understory plants and a good canopy.

Work has commenced on the area just before Scrub Wren Point. As usual, when the weeds are removed there is very little native vegetation left. We will immediately plant this section, hoping that we haven't disturbed the

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

**President:** Hugh Possingham

**Secretary:** Karen Gillow

**Assistant Secretary:** Zina Dinesen

**Treasurer:** Matthew Mendel

**Newsletter Editor:** Mary Lou Simpson

**Media Secretary:** Cath Tavatgis

**Committee:** Simon Murray.

habitat of the Buff-banded rail that frequents this area.

Work hasn't finished at the Pocket. Although this strip is a reliable haven for birds, Asparagus fern has taken over and there is little middle storey.

Tuesday Common Carers have been working now for 8 years, which was a call for celebration. Thanks to OCCA who marked the occasion with a cooked breakfast and to Anna Jack who warmed us up with mulled wine and coffee. Photo: Lynn Whitfield





## VALE Wayne Brown

Recently, Creek Carers received the sad news of Wayne's death. He was a member of Thursday Creek Care as well as Tuesday Common Carers and committed to restoring the natural environment. On Tuesdays, after we finished at 9 am, Wayne would carry on working for the rest of the day.

He was dauntless in attacking huge infestations of weeds; he created signs for trees; propagated plants and shared his knowledge with everyone. He was delighted to discover the Mangrove Fern in the gully that now bears that name. Einardia World is another reminder of his work. Having cleared the area of weeds, he was so pleased to see the Einardia return, that he named the area. Hopefully, his move to the Sunshine Coast brought him happiness before his untimely death.



## LIVING AT THE COMMON



Red-backed Fairy-wren Photo: Susan Marrinan

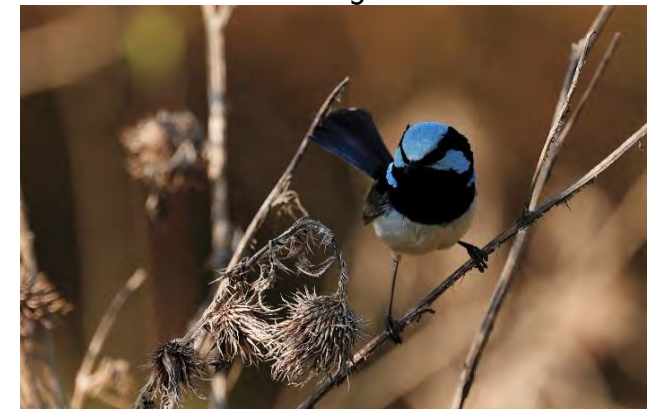


Black-winged Stilt Photo: Susan Marrinan

This shot allows us to see the white strip on the stilt's back and the black ridge at the back of the neck. In flight, the long legs trail behind. Stilts nest on islands and at the shore. If their chicks are threatened, they give off loud 'yelps'.



Australian Darter. The white neck seems to indicate a juvenile. Male adults have a white streak down their neck. Females have a paler streak. Enlarge the photo to see the feather markings.



Superb Fairy-wren Photo: Susan Marrinan  
This little Fairy-wren appears to be considering the dried flowers of a Scotch Thistle. Since the 2011 flood, hundreds of thistles have seeded at the Common. Although the bane of weeders, perhaps the thistle is of use to Fairy-wrens.





Male King-Parrot Photo: Jenny Richards

Australian King-Parrots are not regular visitors to the Common. However, several were sighted when this photo was taken. They feed on seeds, fruit, blossoms and insects and will crack open tiny seeds. The female has a dark green head and chest and they choose deep hollows in eucalypts for nests. The female tends the nestlings for the first weeks, relying on the male to

supply the food. After the first few weeks both parents feed the young. Their flight is fast and direct without undulations. Sometimes their magnificent colours can be seen in flight.



A rather crowded tree at Jabiru Lagoon – 8 egrets, a Little Black Cormorant and a White-necked Heron. Is this tree a plea for more habitat?

## NOEL STANDFAST

Thursday Creek Care will miss Noel, who has moved to Bribie Island. He has been the linchpin in this group since he became the Coordinator in 2008. Noel's involvement with bushcare began at the Benarrawa site in 2006, when he joined Brian McDonald and Rob Scott. To Noel, the best part of Creekcure is the camaraderie of the members who are all committed to improving the environment in our catchment. Positive feedback is a bonus.



Noel reflected on the problems of droughts and flooding rains destroying sites, but it is testimony to his persistence that the Creekcure group have

soldiered on and can now see the huge difference their work has made at ten sites in the catchment. The vegetation from the road to the Red Shed at the Common is just one example of their work.

Noel has been a great supporter of Tuesday Common Carers; nothing was ever too much trouble. He has been tireless, efficient and positive in his contribution and we wish him well in his new 'habitat'.



## Thanks to our plant donors

**Stone and Wood** have supplied 600 tubes, some of which are along the fence strip.

**IPPD** have donated 600 plants and the labour to plant and maintain them. These plants are at Scrub Wren Point.

OCCA planted over 1500 tubes in the paddock on **National Tree Day**.

The **OCCA Nursery** has supplied plants for Bushcare and Beer plantings.

**Friends of Oxley Creek Common** fund any plants from alternate nurseries.

**Marie Hollingworth** frequently donates tubes.

**Warwick Willmott** supplied about 30 mature trees.

## Australasian Ornithological Conference

November 28 – 30<sup>th</sup>  
at the Brisbane Convention Centre.

Check out the activities at:  
[www.2023aoc.com](http://www.2023aoc.com)



Finley Johannssen, our youngest member, catches the train to Sherwood Station and then cycles to and from the Common before he goes to school. This week Chris Hogan joined the bicycle brigade.

Please send Contributions, Comments and Corrections to Mary Lou Simpson  
[maryloulit@hotmail.com](mailto:maryloulit@hotmail.com)

### Sources:

*The Australian Bird Guide* Menkhorst et al

*Australian Birds App* Morcombe M

*Field Guide to Australian Birds* Simpson & Day

Photo credits: Susan Marrinan and Jenny Richards, Lynn Whitfield. All other photos are by the editor.

Friends of Oxley Creek Common Inc.

is dedicated to preserving this natural habitat for wildlife.

Become a friend of The Common

Pay your membership directly into our BOQ account BSB 124017 – Ac 20161909 and send the appropriate details to:  
[friendsofoxleycreekcommon@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofoxleycreekcommon@gmail.com)

or

Return a cheque with this form or the appropriate details  
PO Box 319, SHERWOOD, Qld 4075

You will automatically receive the Newsletter.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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<b>Membership:</b>	<b>1 year</b>	<b>5 years</b>	
Single	\$15	\$60	<input type="checkbox"/>
Concession:	\$12	\$48	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family:	\$20	\$80	<input type="checkbox"/>
Group:	\$30	\$120	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corporate:	\$80	\$320	<input type="checkbox"/>
Life Membership	\$400	Concession \$320	
Donation:	\$...		