

NEWSLETTER

Friends of Oxley Creek Common Inc.

"Our Community Caring for Our Common"

September 2024 - Number 54



SAVE THE DATE

FOOCC Bird walk 6.30 am Sunday, November 24th, followed by morning tea and a General Meeting at 10am. Numbers are limited for the birdwalk. FOOCC members are given priority, then newsletter subscribers. Check your email for notifications.

Tuesday Common Carers

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

Walk and Weed

1st Saturday of the month. 7-9am
To register call 0429911555

Bushcare and Beer

3rd Sunday of the month, 2.00pm
Afterwards a quencher at Helios Brewery. Check the OCCA Facebook Page for confirmation for September.

OCCA Annual General Meeting

Tuesday, 26th November, 5.30 for 6
at Archerfield Wetlands facility.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hugh Possingham

August bird walk

Over three hours, about 30 of us found 72 bird species on the August bird walk. The weather was perfect and - aside from a good number of birds - notable was a huge number of bird watchers. The University of Queensland Ecological Society also had a walk (20 students) and there were at least another seven individuals or couples birding.

This year alone there have been more than 500 new eBird lists from 240 separate observers, recording 155 species for the year so far. Check <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L967148?yr=cur> to see what has been recorded. For every person entering an eBird list I estimate there are 3 more birding groups, and if the average group size is 3, this means there have been 6000 person visits by bird watchers and bird photographers in about 8 months. Let's just call that circa 900 a month or 30 people per day.

Some recent highlights include several sightings of: Brown Falcon, White-bellied Sea-eagle, both

gerygone species and Scaly-breasted Munia (aka Nutmeg Mannikin). While the Munia is introduced, it is slowly in decline in the Brisbane area and Oxley Creek Common is one of the best places to find it. In other introduced species news - the flock of Common Starlings, appearing mainly in winter, is in decline, and House Sparrows turn up only once every few years, although decades ago they were abundant.

Early September will bring migrating Sacred Kingfisher (the odd one has already arrived), Leaden Flycatchers and maybe a Koel or Channel-billed Cuckoo. Scarlet Honeyeaters have been in good numbers most of the winter, but they will start to move away, as will the Grey Fantails and Australian Golden Whistlers.

Currently, the best wetland for birds is the ephemeral and grazed wetland below the high ground, a few hundred metres east of the Red Shed. You need good binoculars to see what is there: Pied Stilt, egrets, herons and Grey Teal are the most regular species. Some grazing is good for some species, and it is important that parts of the wetland system are grazed to maintain the bird diversity.

In other good news, the Brown Quail are starting to return in numbers since being decimated by the 2022 flood. They are not quite as tame as they once were, but if we can keep those dogs on leads, they will soon habituate to walkers.

BECOME INVOLVED

JOIN Friends of Oxley Creek Common. See the end of the newsletter.

JOIN one of the weeding groups to help maintain the natural bushland. Check Save the Date on page 1.

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 FOCC website:
<https://friendsofoxleycreekcommon.org>

**Sunrise
at
the
Common**



FIGBIRD or ORIOLE?

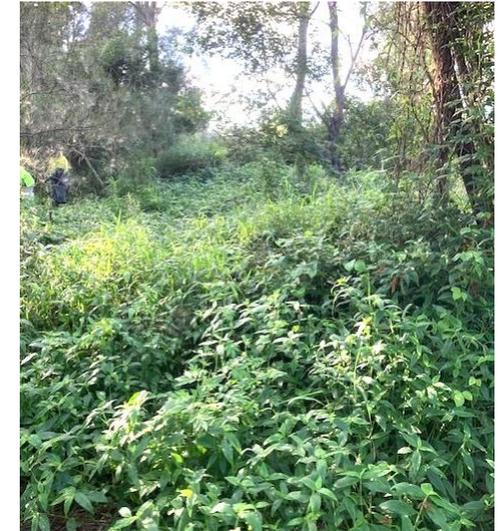


Hugh's iPhone photo allows him to identify the key difference between an Olive-backed Oriole and a female Australasian Figbird.

These two species are hard to tell apart in poor light - it is all about bill shape (it doesn't matter how old or what sex a bird is - its shape is fairly constant once fledged). The Oriole bill is dagger-like (on the right) while the Figbird bill is more stumpy. The stripes on the Oriole chest are also thinner and better defined. Of course, the Oriole call is the real giveaway, but over autumn and winter they can be very quiet. They are noisy now.

TUESDAY COMMON CARERS

Mary Lou Simpson



This image is an indication of the infestation of weeds confronting Tuesday Common Carers this year. In the foreground is *Commelina benghalensis*, sometimes with multiple runners meters long; behind it is green panic; underneath is likely to be masses of Glycine, Cobbler's pegs and Blue billygoat weed.

Undaunted, between 12 and 17 weeders get to work each Tuesday morning. So far, 4 huge areas have been cleared of Commelina and grass. Because Commelina doesn't degrade easily, mounds have been covered in black plastic, to help speed the disintegration. Quail have been seen foraging in cleared areas.



These two photos show the same area before and after clearing the commelina. Birdwatchers may think that some areas are looking very bare, and that bird habitat is being destroyed.



Dense commelina is impenetrable, provides no food and kills most things underneath it. Breyntia seedlings, a struggling Black bean and a sandpaper fig with a few remaining leaves were found under this infestation.

Hopefully, in the next few weeks, we will have most areas in the condition they were a year ago and will be able to replant newly recovered areas.

We celebrated our 9th birthday in July, with a morning tea of delicious food and drink and convivial conversation.



OTHER HELPERS

Thursday Creek Care worked at the Common, in July, despite the impending rain. They raked and stacked a large area of slashed Commelina on the creek bank near Tank 2.

Bushcare and Beer certainly earn their beverage at Helios Brewery. They have been working near Tank 2 and have prepared a site for a planting in the fence strip. Well done to the volunteers, who are ready to learn about weeds and keen to work away at difficult areas.

Corporate volunteers organised by OCCA planted a large area just before Jagera Corner.

OCCA planted thousands of seedlings in the paddock for National Tree Day.

BSU continue to do the difficult creek bank work where Asparagus fern has infiltrated the Cockspur.

A huge thanks goes to all these people, including Anna Jack who works tirelessly several times a week. Oxley Creek Common, which is visited by an increasing number of people, is truly a community project.

øø øø øø øø



Usually secretive, this Buff-banded Rail investigated the shorter vegetation. Photo: Anna Jack.

SEEN AT THE COMMON



A group of tourists was in awe of this Keelback snake, which was making its way through the Red Shed. Keelbacks are non-venomous, semi-aquatic snakes, often found hiding in timber or under plants. Unlike other animals, they eat their prey from the back, rather than head-first. They produce a clutch of about 18 eggs.

Source:

<https://environment.desi.qld.gov.au/wildlife/animals/living-with/snakes/keelback>



This scrap of land is a popular spot for a range of species: a White-necked Heron and a Little Egret shared, as did the Pelicans and Little Black Cormorants.



Photo to the right. Harry Ting snapped this Rakali in Pelican Lagoon. The Rakali is one of Australia's few mammals that know to flip over cane toads in order to remove the heart, liver, and toxic gall bladder before eating the rest. Source: wildlife.org.au



Brown Goshawk Photo: Jay Young.





Bracket fungus, which attaches itself to trees was discovered underneath the debris of grass, timber and weeds. Notice the leaf blades growing through it.

Photo: Robyn Mulder.



Yes, it is a fungus, but the lovely yellow is fallen wattle flowers. Photo: Anna Jack



Double-barred Finches keeping warm on a chilly morning. Photo: Paul Francis.



Jay Young captured this Red-browed Finch, which was one of a group of about 15 Double-barred and Red-browed Finches foraging on the track.

Native Grasses

Finches feed on seed and have been relying on the seeds of Green Panic, *Megathyrsus maximus*, and Rhodes Grass, *Chloris gayana*, both introduced as cattle fodder, and both prevalent in the paddocks and in the public track. Both these grasses grew so prolifically last summer that clumps of grass were so heavy the plant couldn't support itself. Consequently, whole areas of bushland were impenetrable. To reclaim our plantings, a lot of grass has been removed. Where the grass has been slashed, it has already started to regenerate.

Happily, there is natural regeneration of native grasses. Around Stoney Gully are large areas of Wheat grass, *Anthosachne kingiana*. At Commelina Gully, hopefully the *Eriochloa sp* will return, despite having been mowed by the contractors. Other grasses have been planted: Blady grass, *imperata cylindrica*; Kangaroo grass, *Themeda triandra*; Sorghum *Sarga leiocladum*. We plan on having plenty of food for finches.



Hovea Acutifolia

The new logo

Thanks to Lara Edith for this lovely design.



Scan this image for a guide to the birds at Oxley Creek Common.

Willy Wagtails' tail wagging



Research by Jackson and Elgar suggests that tail wagging flushes out insects. It seems the rapid tail movement changes light intensity, which startles insects. The rate of wagging in bright sunlight was less than half the rate of wagging when the birds were foraging on overcast days.

Researchers observed that Wagtails didn't wag their tails when perching. Were they on the lookout?

Wagtails have been observed following a horse, annoying it enough to make it shake its head and move. The movement disturbed insects, which were then captured by the Willy Wagtail. The birds only harassed the horse when it didn't move or graze.

Source: *Why do Birds do That?* Dr Grainne Cleary p 120.

Please send contributions, especially photos, comments and corrections to Mary Lou Simpson.

maryloulit@hotmail.com

Photo credits: Jay Young, Anna Jack, Paul Francis, Harry Ting and Robyn Mulder. All other photos are by the editor.



The bend in Oxley Creek as it heads towards the neck, before circling the secret forest. The BSU workers, who were contemplating the creek on a rainy day found some words to describe it:

**Swirling dirt
Carrying current**

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

or

Return a cheque with this form or the appropriate
details

PO Box 319, SHERWOOD, Qld 4075

You will automatically receive the Newsletter.

Name: _____

E-mail: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

P/code: _____ Date: _____

Membership:	1 year	5 years	
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:	\$...		