

At the Sanctuary – June, 2017

Robyn Howard

Throughout June, the Maroochy Wetlands Sanctuary was in winter mode, though with some spring attributes.

Both vegetation and avian fauna were celebrating the “good times”, with plants appearing in their best array of fresh growth, and birds singing loudly, some even breeding. A few reptiles warmed and chased insects in patches of sunlight.

Amazing numbers of crabs have been feeding each time we have arrived. Carole and I took visitors on a guided walk on the first Sunday of June, and without exception, all were amazed at the wonderful place we have, and learned a little more of its interests and values. Watching the crabs feeding was fascinating for them.

The cool weather deterred mosquito breeding and very few bothered us. Butterflies still presented themselves, particularly some of the small Blues, and both Jezebels.

A group from Native Plants Queensland requested an accompanied tour which Deb organised, with Carole and I to assist. As with so many folk, they were astounded by the beauty and bounty of the sanctuary. With “wetlands” in the title, they had anticipated just one not extremely diverse habitat, so were pleasantly surprised by the discovery of the diversity of habitats. Naturally, they were knowledgeable about many of our plants, but we were able to highlight some features and introduce them to a couple of plants which were not familiar to them, especially our Mangrove Vine. They may have had a major botanical interest, but they still enjoyed all aspects including the bird sound and especially the antics of our crabs.

On one of the days John was volunteering, he stood in the garden area and watched a small black and white bird darting around the foliage on the verges of the rainforest, obviously chasing insects. John enjoys the birds but does not count himself an expert, so as soon as the bird departed, he went to our library for field guides to identify it. His description of both its appearance and behaviour matched his identification – a White-eared Monarch. Every bird observer would be jealous! This bird rarely visits the sanctuary and is not often seen in coastal areas, so it was an exciting sighting.

George is doing excellent work and during the month, our motion camera captured the usual images at night, but caught the Swamp Wallaby active during the day. Again, the Short-eared Brushtail Possum was snapped as it descended a Melaleuca at night. I hope that there are both males and females present to keep the population viable in the long term. The Common Brushtail is common as was witnessed by the scats found on the garden paths!

The Sunshine Coast Council organised a “Questagame” activity during the school holidays, so many families visited and young people submitted their photos. Most photos seemed to be of the Orange-clawed Fiddler Crab, I guess because they are so colourful and obvious, but some took the trouble to find other crabs, reptiles, molluscs, birds and insects, as well as a marine flatworm which has not yet been identified at species level. The photo below is one I had taken previously.



Photo: Tom Tarrant

White-eared Monarch



Unidentified Marine Flatworm