

## May 2011 in the Sanctuary

Robyn Howard

It has been just delightful to be able to spend some time in the sanctuary during the month of May. We needed some additional photos of crabs, etc., for a new brochure which will be produced later this year, so I have spent time just sitting, looking and listening.

The joyous songs of the birds made it sound like spring, and there have been few mosquitoes. It was still warm enough to find some reptiles sunning, and with a little patience, some of the crabs would appear and start to feed – the majority of them juveniles. The River Mangroves had some flowers, and they are lovely.

The cruise boat has been calling a couple of times a week, so I was able to chat with their visitors and point out the Great Egret resting at the base of the Grey Mangroves. Some of the cruise folk hope to call back and spend more time when they are next on the Sunshine Coast, but they all seemed to be enjoying themselves. I was quite impressed with their desire to learn.

Work has well and truly commenced on the new entrance and parking for the disadvantaged. The route for the new boardwalk has changed and is much better than the original plan in that it uses more of the old track and destroys less vegetation. It is obviously quite a mess during construction, and the original entrance was blocked off, but access was available through the old exit section. If you haven't been to the sanctuary in the last few weeks, be prepared for big changes! The whole boardwalk is to be closed at some stage to allow more upgrading to the boardwalk further down.

As I was returning from one visit to the river, the biggest Swamp Rat I have ever seen lolloped across the track in front of me. Perhaps a heavily pregnant female? It was visible for ten or fifteen metres, a rich dark brown.

One of the uncommon birds which uses the mangrove habitat is the Shining Flycatcher. As I neared the first crab hide, the beautiful jet-black male flew across in front of me, and a few metres further on, I stopped to watch the female across the water as it flitted about on the mud and roots feeding. Her chestnut, white and black colouring was magnificent in the sunlight. Again, as I sat at the hide waiting for crabs to reappear, the male started darting around in front of me, and the Striated Heron slunk silently beneath the mangroves searching for food. Later, as I sat at the far crab hide patiently trying to capture the brilliance of an Orange Clawed Fiddler, the Azure Kingfisher kept diving in the water behind me. It was frustrating to be unable to simply turn around and concentrate on the kingfisher, but since I had taken half an hour waiting for the Fiddler to emerge, I didn't dare move! Mudskippers are back for the first time since the January floods.



Mudskipper



Great Egret