

## At the Sanctuary – 29<sup>th</sup> October, 2014

Robyn Howard

Another beautiful day at the Maroochy Wetlands Sanctuary. As I alighted from my vehicle, a pair of Eastern Yellow Robins and a Grey Shrike-Thrush were all on the ground chasing insects. I headed to the building to sign the volunteers' book, and a greeting party of three Bar-sided Skinks were at the front door. It seems to be a favourite haunt of theirs.

It was a special day for insects. Lycid Beetles must have had a successful breeding, as there were quite a few in a small area. Their colours of brick red or orange with black are a warning to predators that they do not taste good, or are toxic. They are so successful with the strategy that several other insects have evolved as "look-alikes", although they are quite different species. Mimics include wasps, flies, moths and other beetles. Some of these creatures are also toxic, but most of them are simply frauds, riding on the success of the Lycid Beetles. Yellow-shouldered Ladybirds have been resident recently and I also found butterflies such as Blue Tiger, Swamp Tiger, Lemon Migrant, Black Jezebel, and Caper White. Caper Whites have been migrating on the southern part of the Sunshine Coast, but there was no evidence of high numbers at the sanctuary. Outdoor toilets are a favourite hiding place for the Granny's Cloak Moth, but I disturbed one sheltering under the timbers of the boardwalk in the Orange Mangrove forest. There were also the tiny orange moths which often occur in large numbers and must be a great resource for small birds. I was amused to watch them fly short distances, land, and then run quickly before settling, very "unmothlike". The only cicadas heard were in the Melaleuca forest.

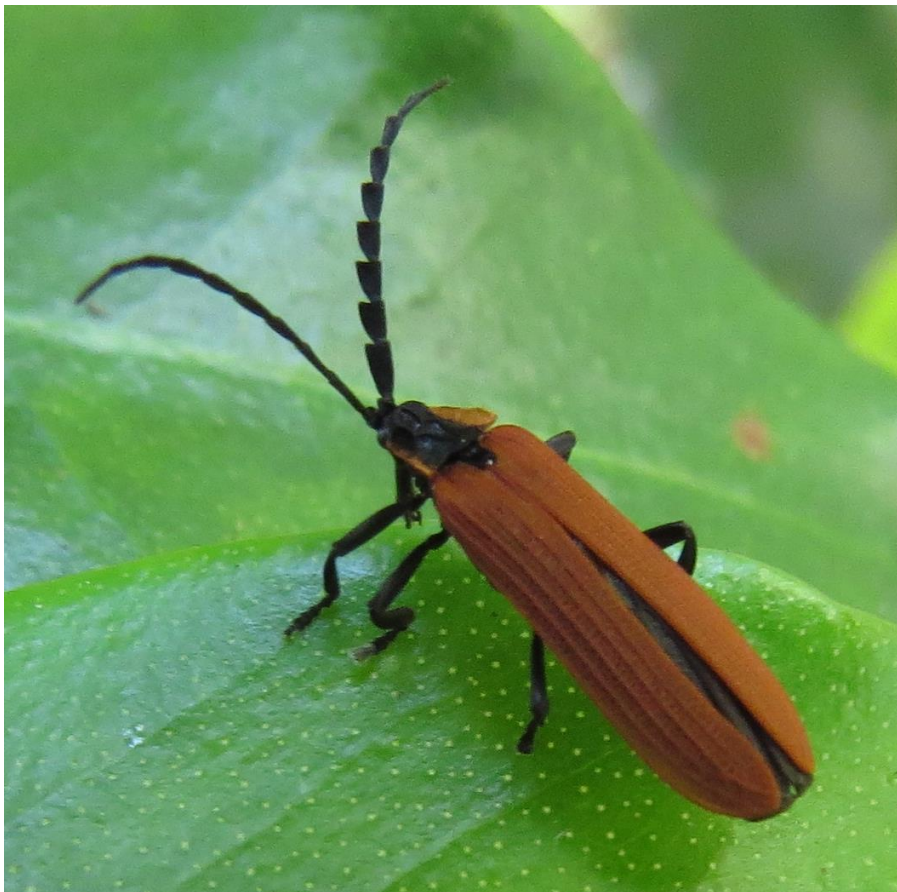
Bees were interesting. The River Mangroves were in good flower, but apparently, because of the dry weather, were not producing pollen and nectar to any extent. [In the heat and dry, several other plants have died or are wilting badly.] I saw over one hundred honey bees throughout, but with the exception of one bee, they were not carrying pollen, and obviously not finding nectar as they swiftly moved from flower to flower. There were no native Sugarbag Bees, and I found only one small native bee of a different unidentified species. I found a False Blister Beetle with spotted transparent wings also seeking food in the same flowers. False Blister Beetles are pollen feeders and are pollinators.

Other notable flowering plants included Swamp Lily (*Crinum pendunculatum*), Red-fruited Palm Lily (*Cordyline rubra*), Supplejack (*Flagellaria indica*) and the Macarangas. Brown, Lewin's and Dusky Honeyeaters were sharing its bounty.

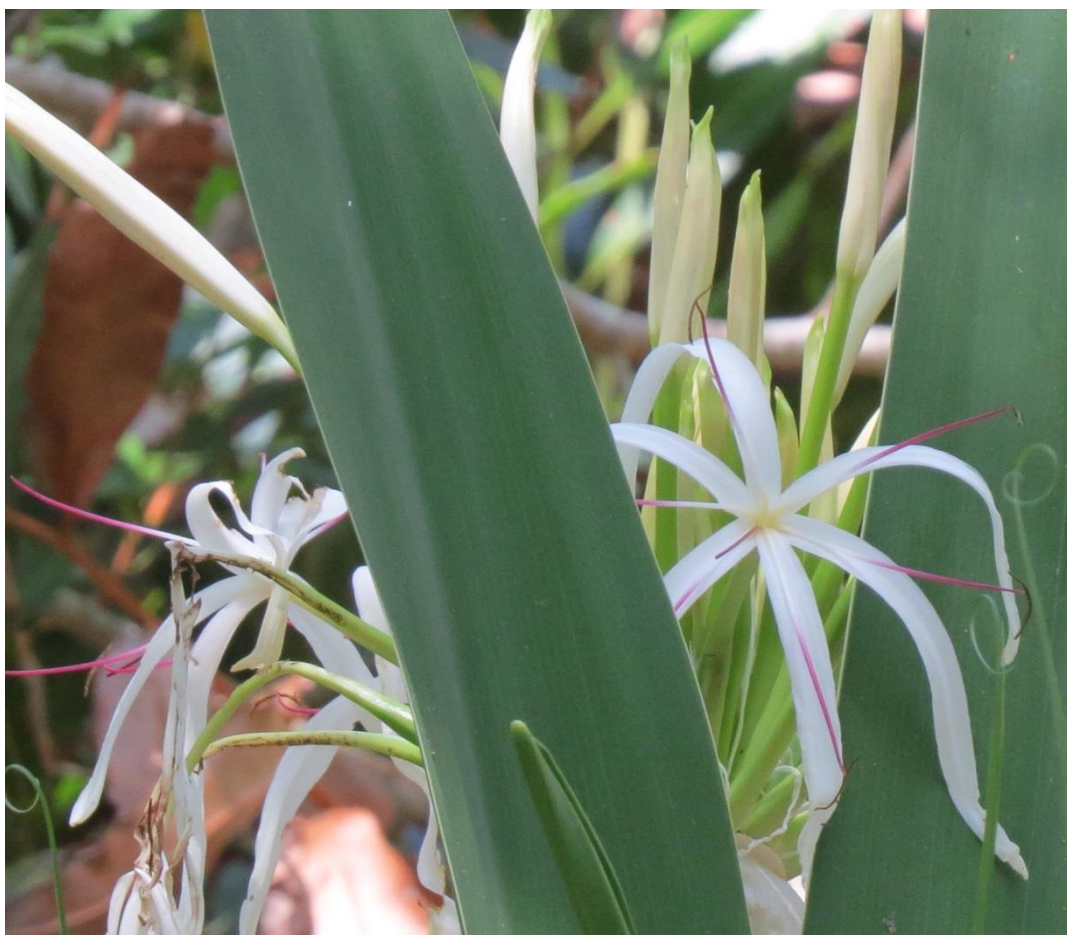
Other birds found included White-throated Treecreeper, about 20 Eastern Whipbirds, White-browed Scrubwrens, Brahminy Kite (calling mournfully), Scarlet Honeyeaters, Brown Gerygones, lots of Rufous Fantails, and eight Rose-crowned Fruit-Doves. On the river bank opposite the pontoon were 2 Eastern Great Egrets, a White-faced Heron, a Royal Spoonbill, and a Striated Heron well-hidden under trees. Thousands of tiny bait fish surrounded the pontoon. Mudskippers were on the river's edge, as well as at the second crab hide and the little drain near the first crab hide, the most I'd seen on one visit. Plenty of crabs were enjoying the heat with some 50 Two-toned Fiddlers, always difficult to find now, in their usual colony. Three male Pink-clawed Fiddlers were with them.

As I was walking back towards the turn to the Fig-tree Walk, a large bird glided silently over my head. It was a Collared Sparrowhawk, and it must have found a good concealed spot in the canopy as only one bird continued to give alarm calls.

The week prior to my visit, another local bird observer had been in the car-park at dark, and heard a strange call. He and a visiting friend tried to find where the call came from, but prior to their reaching the spot, a large bird flew in silence above their heads and into the sanctuary. They tried to find it again, but as they came closer, it flew deeper into the forest. They identified it as a Large-tailed Nightjar, one which normally is not south of Cooloola. Its call is very distinctive, so there was no mistake in the identification. Because I needed to return for a meeting in the late afternoon, I decided to stay on until round 7.00 p.m. in the hope of also hearing or seeing the bird, but without result. The sighting was certainly not the White-throated Nightjar which I have been seeing there for the last few years. It will be interesting to see if it remains in the vicinity.



Lycid Beetle [Notice the segmented antennae]



Swamp Lily





Supplejack Flowers [Notice the spider webs between the tiny blossoms – opportunists!]



Cordyline rubra at the edge of the Melaleuca Forest



Individual flowers of *Cordyline rubra*





Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove [apologies that the photo does not do it credit]



False Blister Beetle – it has very long antennae not visible here