

Visiting the Sanctuary May 2012

It is lovely to be able to visit the sanctuary again after a few months of boardwalk closure. One or two cold nights have reduced mosquito numbers dramatically, so it is pleasant to be walking.

The rain made it hard on the workers building the upgraded boardwalk, but it is a great job, and interesting to see the new materials used in the construction. The weather was just perfect on the first day I was able to visit, and the bird songs indicated they were certainly enjoying themselves. The blossom on the melaleucas is a wonderful resource for the honeyeaters, butterflies, possums, bats and insects. The new section of boardwalk now means it is possible to walk from the car-park to the pontoon without stepping off the wheelchair accessible tracks.

The crabs do not like the cool weather, so it is necessary to look harder to find the little creatures. Some of the butterflies are still active, and we actually found some freshly laid eggs and some caterpillars, so I hope they are able to cope with the cold and continue to develop.

A group of about fifteen men and women from the Noosa Parks Association Botany Group visited on the last Sunday of May. They enjoyed tea and coffee in the Mangrove Room before setting out. They had not concentrated on mangroves previously and learned quite a bit from their visit, as well as passing on some information on other plants to us. It was a lovely visit and they enjoyed the birds especially. A couple of the group apologised for the slow pace of progress along the walkways, but since I am a bird observer, I know how long it can take to cover the ground. They learned about two new vines which they have not seen in the Noosa area - the Mangrove Vine and a yellow legume. Several of the group had not visited before and were impressed by the things we could offer, and those who had been on other occasions commented on the wonderful changes since their last visits.

The Orange Mangroves are still producing some blossom, and any hypocotyls forming are still quite small. There may not be a heavy production of fruit this year. The River Mangroves had a particularly strong fruiting, and thick batches of fallen fruit are covering the boardwalk in places. Flowering and fruiting appears poor on the Grey Mangrove. It is strange that there is such a disparity in reproductive success.

The area off the long loop to the first crab hide which was once almost devoid of any vegetation is gradually filling in. Pneumatophores of the Grey Mangrove are very evident, with Grey Mangroves, River Mangroves and Orange Mangroves now growing there. This affects the crab population as the two species of Fiddler Crab (Two-toned and Pink-clawed) which reside there both require open space habitat. This may mean they need to move, or simply that they will have reduced habitat.

There have been two new species of birds added to our Fauna List lately – the White-throated Nightjar, and the Black Bittern. As well, the Shining Flycatchers, which were seen on a very irregular basis in past times, now seem to be permanent inhabitants. Both male and female have been seen regularly, as well as having a juvenile with them on one occasion. They are such beautiful birds, the male being so black that he appears to be blue, and the female with her equally black head, very chestnut-rufous back, and pure white undersides. They are stunning birds and a joy to watch as they flit near the mud chasing insects.

Robyn Howard

Photos: Preparation for construction, foundations and joists, completed structure

