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Newsletter of the Maroochy Wetlands Sanctuary Support Group Inc.



Maroochy Wetlands Sanctuary
Support Group Inc

2019, no 02

From our President:

On the 22nd of February six members attended a very useful Guide Training Day at Mary Cairncross.

At our February general meeting Charlotte Bree Williams presented her findings to date on her honours studies into carbon sequestration in coastal wetlands. Her research is showing that there is 50% more carbon stored in mangrove wetlands than in the surrounding rainforest areas. This is an interesting result and is an excellent reason for preserving mangrove wetlands.

Just as well we are a nature reserve, beside our resident carpet snake, a resident in the roof of the visitors' centre, a Brushtail possum, recently took up residence in one of the display boxes in the children's corner of the centre. Robyn Howard advised Debra Wedmaier, who found the possum, to "just pick it up by the neck as you do to a cat". Debra declined and sent for the Council vermin remover to take it away. A week or so later Robyn took a photo of our possum back home sitting on the top rail of the back verandah, perhaps waiting for the doors to be open to be let in.

We have since learned that animals removed must be (by law) released within 300 metres of their removal point. So, if you have paid \$80 to have a snake removed recently, keep your eye out.

As we do each year, several members recently participated in Clean up Australia Day.

The Wetlands needs some good soaking rain and then some reasonable temperatures and it will be great to visit, we hope to see you there.

Robin.



Our resident Brushtail Possum



At the Sanctuary – February, 2019

Robyn Howard

February was a month for seeing the sanctuary in some of its different dispositions. There were low tides when many hundreds of crabs were out feeding, the breeze was gentle and welcoming for birds and people alike, the vegetation had mostly retained its moisture and was looking good. But then there were times when the tidal surges came up into the Melaleuca forest and there was no exposed mud for creatures to find food; the wind thrashed every tree and shrub, breaking off leaves, twigs and small branches, even uprooting small trees, heavily rustling through leafier vegetation and whining through the casuarinas, causing most of the birds and insects to just hunker down hopefully to survive the onslaught.



Even the Eucalypts were bowing before the strong winds

At the end of the month, the Piccabeen Palms were laden with ripe red fruit. The frugivorous birds were squabbling to get a share, though there was ample to go around. The Australasian Figbirds were in the greatest numbers and most aggressive, but the small Lewin's Honeyeaters were experts at rushing in and grabbing a fruit at any opportunity. The biggest bird was the female Eastern Koel, but she was too timid to join the fray and left after taking a few fruit. She moved to a nearby Blue Lilly Pilly, sheltering amongst its leaves. A Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove assessed the situation, but was frightened off by the racket. Perhaps it returned later once the excitement was over.



This female Australasian Figbird waited her turn to take some fruit



A shy female Easter Koel hid in a nearby tree to avoid the noisy mob

The Small-leaved Tamarind at the entry to the garden fruited well. For most of the year, visitors do not notice the tree, but the dropped fruit are quite remarkable and always draw comments. There does not seem to be evidence of critters feeding on them. Only some of the Melaleucas flowered – less than half – but butterflies and honeyeaters enjoyed the nectar. The Pink Euodias which had flowered so wonderfully over summer have now produced

bountiful fruit. They are still green but will eventually ripen to a dark brown enclosing black seeds.



The pollinators must have been very effective when the Pink Euodias flowered. When the weather was kinder, insects were active. Dragonflies zipping through the garden included the Graphic Flutterer and Yellow-striped Flutterer, grasshopper nymphs attacked grasses and Lomandras, Green Lacewings sat quietly waiting for evening, butterflies lolloped through the forests and gardens, lots of cicadas still called, including the Bottle Cicadas. They do not call during the daytime, so it was only at dusk that they were noticed, but with the din they create, they could not be ignored. Most numerous of the butterflies were Blue Triangle, Orchard Swallowtail, Lemon Migrant, Black Jezebel, Brown Ringlet, and Swamp Tiger.



A very attractive Grasshopper nymph and its mates chewed away on Lomandra in the garden



Several Yellow-striped Flutterers were sighted during the month

For the first time this summer at the sanctuary, Brush Cuckoos were heard calling back and forth to each other, and the Cicadabird was present again. They will both be due to leave us soon for the winter. Small birds were active in most areas. We have been missing the fairy-wrens and finches lately. Their usual haunts have perhaps been too dry for them but bush birds were still to be found – Eastern Yellow Robins, Brown and Mangrove Gerygones, Brown Thornbills, Mistletoebirds, Silvereyes, Spectacled Monarchs, Grey and Rufous Fantails, Rainbow Bee-eaters, White-browed and Large-billed Scrubwrens, as well as Brown, Scarlet, and White-throated Honeyeaters. At the transition between the rainforest and Melaleuca Forest, a group of Golden Whistlers were chasing through the mid-canopy. It was like activity which occurs in breeding season. There was just one female and four or five males. It appeared that one male claimed the female as his mate and continually endeavoured to keep all other males at bay. Since they do not form life-long relationships but just pair for the breeding season, it was difficult behaviour to understand. The female perched unmoving, but the male kept proudly calling whenever he was not chasing the others away. It went on for more than ten minutes, and probably longer.



The female Golden Whistler ignored all the fuss going on around her.



Not a great photo – he wouldn't sit still. This is the male who wanted to rule the roost

In January, when the highest tide should have occurred, the water was much, much lower than expected. In February, with the long-distance effects of Cyclone Oma, the high tides were considerably higher than normal. The inflow was so strong that small plants quivered and bent to the water's will. In the quieter backwaters, it was interesting to watch the fish just cruising around as usual – many small schools of mullet, some whiting, small bream, and many bait fish. One female ground spider, with an eggsac on her back, launched from a small

shrub near the ballroom, frenetically flailing all eight legs to reach the safety of a pole before becoming lunch for a hungry fish. She made it to safety, not having broken the surface tension of the water even in her panic.

Near the ballroom, birds were still active, some trying to feed and some singing. The Mangrove Gerygones warbled, the Striated Heron flew and called, the male Shining Flycatcher was singing, and a Sacred Kingfisher had caught a snack which he thwacked on a branch before swallowing it whole. White-throated Needletails were not noted earlier in the summer but circled around for fifteen minutes or more.



Sacred Kingfisher. After eating, time to check out the visitor

Cahill's Scrub Harold Place, Peachester.

Sunday 21st April at 0730 am.

We will try another visit to Peachester, this time without the rain.

For an interesting drive I suggest taking the Roys Road exit from the Bruce Highway, [This is the next exit south after the Caloundra interchange.] There are great views of the Glasshouse Mountains in the early morning along this road. At Beerwah its straight through the intersection towards Peachester.

At Peachester there are several access areas to this reserve. We will be using two at the end of Harold Place. Ample parking is roadside in this area.

From Beerwah travel to Peachester, then...

Travelling through Peachester turn RIGHT into Storrs Road, then LEFT into Fortune Avenue and RIGHT into Harold Place. Travel to the end of road.

Alternatively,...

Travel through Peachester, after the Fruit Barn turn sharp RIGHT onto Bald Knob Road, then first RIGHT into Fortune Avenue, then first LEFT [just over the creek bridge] into Harold Place. Travel to the end of road.

The tracks are level to slightly undulating with mostly slashed grass.

Toilets are in Peachester.

Bring morning tea and lunch. Chairs are needed. Suitable walking shoes, sun protective clothing, a hat, sunscreen and insect repellent. Binoculars.



Contact: Judith 0417 775 974 until 4th April

Robyn: 0458 568 199

Pam: 0428 986 601

Calendar for 2019:

	MEETINGS	ACTIVITIES
APRIL	Thursday 11 th April 1900h General Meeting	Speaker TBA 0730 Sunday 21 st MWSSGI Bird Observers outing, Peachester.
MAY	Thursday 9 th May 0900h Management Group meeting Thursday 30 th May 0830h Advisory Committee meeting	
JUNE	Thursday 13 th June 1900h General Meeting	Speaker TBA 0800 Sunday 16 th MWSSGI Bird Observers outing, Landershute
JULY	Thursday 11 th July 0800h Management Committee meeting	Friday 26th World Mangrove Conservation Day
AUGUST	Thursday 8 th August 0830h Management Committee meeting Thursday 29 th August 0800h Advisory Committee meeting	0800 Sunday 18 th MWSSGI Bird Observers outing, venue TBA
SEPTEMBER	Thursday 12 th September 1900h ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING	Bird Observers September 16 th to 20 th Extended outing Yarraman
OCTOBER	Thursday 19 th October 0800h Management Committee meeting	0730 Sunday 20 th MWSSGI Bird Observers outing, venue TBA
NOVEMBER	Thursday 14 th November 1900h General meeting TBA: date/time. Planning for 2020.	
DECEMBER	TBA: date/time. Christmas Social.	0730 Sunday 15 th MWSSGI Bird observers outing, venue TBA

For any further information regarding calendar events please contact us at the Wetlands,
Further information will be added as it becomes available.

