

Upper Dawson WPSQ July Newsletter

Compiled by Ann Hobson

Please email upperdawson@wildlife.org.au if you'd like to join us, raise an issue, or share a discovery or observation.

Winter rain has been generally more steady than the summer downpours, with good falls in both the Taroom and Theodore districts, attracting a lot of birdlife to the wetlands and keeping grasslands green and the river flowing. There's been some inconvenience due to temporary road closures, and delays in harvesting or planting due to boggy conditions, but, in general the rain is welcome.

Recognition of volunteers.

On behalf of the Branch's members, Ann and Loraine were able to attend the Fitzroy Basin Association's morning tea at The Caves 24 June to acknowledge the work done by many volunteers in collaboration with the FBA this year. Those involved in the Theodore nature signage project over the last two years were acknowledged. Particular thanks to Melanie, Anne Chater, and Loraine.

We were taken to see regeneration areas where groups of school children had pulled half a tonne of invasive 'Coral berry' and had planted native tube stock to help re-vegetate scrub destroyed by cyclone and fire. The caves are now subject to hot and drying air passing through and killing off the rare ferns once found on cave walls. With the aid of fine sprinklers and by growing ferns from spores, it is hoped to restore the cave vegetation until the trees now planted outside can once again provide the insulation that has protected both the cave ferns and human visitors from scorching heat in the past.



Coral berry

It was encouraging to hear from other volunteers how further cat control action on Taunton Conservation Park has continued the improvement in the bridled nail-tailed wallaby numbers that began with systematic strategic grazing of buffel grass on the Park following recommendations from our Branch; how the turtle team is helping save turtle eggs on Keppel Coast beaches by sniffing out foxes and eradicating their lairs; and how OGRES (Old Guys Regenerating Endangered Sites) are replanting where fires and clearing have endangered native ecosystems.

Townsville Visit

Ann has also met up with the Townsville Branch of Wildlife Queensland while visiting family there, joining a birding outing along the Ross River, only to hear the familiar notes of the same brown honeyeater that dominates the soundscape in Theodore, as well as two osprey, a caspian tern, a tawny grassbird, and a yellow honeyeater, not so common in the Upper Dawson. Some of this Branch's members volunteer with Landcare, propagating native plants, including some seen growing along the riverside walk/cycleway in an effort to stabilise banks built up over many years by land-fill, and heavily eroded during the severe flooding of 2019. Some mangroves are beginning to regenerate in the mud along the waterline, slowly building a narrow buffer where once broad mangrove mudflats have been buried. A brief tour of areas flooded to the roof in 2019, reinforces the wisdom of those who relocated to higher ground in Taroom after early floods there. Filling in flood plains means the water has to go somewhere else, and building on them has become a national issue for future planning.

Challenges that the Townsville group face include littering, very evident in drying waterways, and erupting out of every bin in sight. There's habitat loss endangering bandicoots, flying foxes, and gliders, as well as many bird and reptile species. Invasive plants include *leucaena*, choking many coastal streams from Rockhampton north; *parkinsonia aculeata*, often found in Townsville, and 'Ivy Gourd', a vine introduced from Hawaii as a food source, and now smothering many local trees.



Meeting

Our next meeting on 20 August, will include planning for a bird hide in Taroom. Please make

suggestions to John Hay for a suitable bird hide location. As we've been successful in receiving some funding from Aeris Resources, we'll also be planning for the Butterfly days in Taroom 15th and Theodore & 16th October. I rescued this butterfly off the road one chilly morning, and it revived enough to climb up to my shoulder. This is a snip of the selfie. The Butterfly Day will be a great opportunity to learn more about these creatures and how they come to have such intricate patterns and colours. Book the date now!

