

At the Sanctuary – November, 2018

Robyn Howard

With the very hot weather accompanied by hot dry winds in the latter part of the month, it was anticipated that much of the vegetation would be stressed and looking poorly. Really, it was only many of the Milky Mangroves which did not cope well and they were carrying yellowing leaves and becoming denuded.



Yellowing Leaves on the Milky Mangroves

Mostly, other plants were looking healthy with many showing lovely new growth. The Mangrove Ferns in the Melaleuca Forest were thriving.



So much fresh growth on the Mangrove Ferns. Lots of birds and insects here.

The first thing notable on arrival was that at last the cicadas had emerged and were calling loudly. In the garden, some Black Prince cicadas and Razor Grinders were the loudest, but not the deafening noise which they can sometimes generate. A large Carpet Python had shed its outer skin and left the evidence near the Information Centre. The skin has been added to the items in the Display Cabinet.

Because of the heat, this visit began in the early morning, and even the butterflies were out early with a skipper sunning and ready to take flight at 6.40 a.m., with other butterflies already flying and feeding. Along the walkway, the strength of the winds was clear. The paths were very untidy with heavy leaf litter and lots of twigs and small branches. The Sunshine Coast Council was made aware, but could not promise a quick response as the sanctuary was one of many sites requiring attention for similar reasons.

All through the sanctuary, birds were moving about, feeding and calling – Bar-shouldered Doves, Rainbow Bee-eaters, Eastern Whipbirds, Brown Cuckoo-Doves, White-throated Treecreepers, Shining Bronze-Cuckoos, Large-billed Scrubwrens, both Grey and Rufous Fantails, and Collared Kingfishers.



Looking up at the Shining Bronze-Cuckoo

Groups of Rufous Fantails were chasing each other in three different areas, and one pair had built a nest. Maybe it was abandoned without use, or maybe they had not yet commenced laying eggs. The Rose-crowned Fruit-Doves are again resident. They are always easier to hear than to see, but it is great to know that they have returned.



Rufous Fantail nest – appearing complete, but not in use.

At low tide, literally thousands of crabs were feeding on the mud, especially along the waterway which flows beside the crab-viewing platform. Fourteen Australian White Ibis were located throughout the mangroves hoping for unwary crabs, but most swiftly disappear down burrows when threatened.



Many of the Swamp Oaks have fruited prolifically, and the Tuckeroo has green fruit. The River Mangroves are still producing buds at a time when flowering would be expected to be completed. A group of four parachutists floated above the sanctuary, but managed to redirect their 'chutes so they landed across the river.



Casuarina glauca with lots of cones



One of the parachutists caught in a strong breeze

The Marine Couch has at last recovered to be in healthy condition and has seeded well. Much of the mud which was bare for years has gradually been covered once more and the brown couch has been replaced by healthy green grass.



Prolific seed on the Marine Couch

With the Black Prince Cicadas calling so strongly amongst the Grey Mangroves and Casuarinas, it was difficult to identify some of the other calls. Brown Bunyips, Flourey Bakers and Mangrove Cicadas were present, but sometimes when one species predominates, it is difficult to separate sounds and identify them all.



Black Prince is the most common cicada at the Maroochy Wetlands Sanctuary and easily found on Grey Mangroves