

**Centenary and District Environment
 Action Incorporated**
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Mount Ommaney Qld 4074
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**NEXT MEETING –
 THURSDAY 28th FEBUARY
 Mount Ommaney Library**

**Dr John Hall –
 “Can weeds save a
 rainforest? Fragmentation,
 Restoration and
 Succession”**

Although seldom talked about, habitat fragmentation is one of the fundamental issues of our age. Secondary regrowth - where vegetation regrows naturally and spontaneously following a history of habitat loss, without human intervention or management - can restore much needed biodiversity and connectivity to fragmented landscapes. However, such "passive restoration" may be degraded in the sense of having reduced species diversity, and a dominance of exotic weeds. Intuitively, such "weed forests" seem a poor outcome, but in this talk I present some surprising results from the Camphor Laurel forests that dominate regrowth on former rainforest lands in northern New South Wales.

If you drove along Westlake Drive in mid-January, you may have noticed a 4WD and people on the grassy bank of Mount Ommaney Creek opposite Wileys Scrub, which is part of the area looked after by the Jindalee Bushcare Group.



The people in this area were researchers from Griffith University, studying our local bats . This is their story:

FLYING-FOXES AT MOUNT OMMANEY

(Rachael Smethurst, Research Assistant, Environmental Futures Research Institute, Griffith University)

Underappreciated, misunderstood and sometimes treated with animosity, many Australian bat species play an invaluable role in Australian ecosystems. The largest Australian bats, flying-foxes, are nocturnal pollinators. They play an essential role in dispersing seeds and pollen over great distances, adding to the genetic diversity of native forests.

Brisbane is home to up to three species of flying-foxes. These are the Black flying-fox, Grey-headed flying-fox, and Little Red flying-fox. At the Mount Ommaney colony, all three species co-exist at certain times of year, and all are protected by Australian law. The colony may experience large seasonal fluctuations in flying-fox numbers as these keystone pollinators tend to follow the flowering and fruiting of native food trees, flying up to 50km in search of food every night.

Unfortunately, changing landscapes and the ongoing loss of foraging areas are increasingly causing flying-foxes to

abandon natural habitats and exploit resources often associated with human settlements, leading to increased human-bat conflict. Misconceptions about bats have also caused many people to be afraid of them sharing our urban areas.

Our team of researchers from Griffith University recently studied the Mount Ommaney colony, setting up 20m high nets to capture ~60 flying-foxes (Black flying-foxes and Grey-headed flying-foxes) as they flew in after a busy night of pollination and seed dispersal. We took measurements, looked at body condition, and took many biological samples (urine, faeces and blood), to analyse the health of these bats.

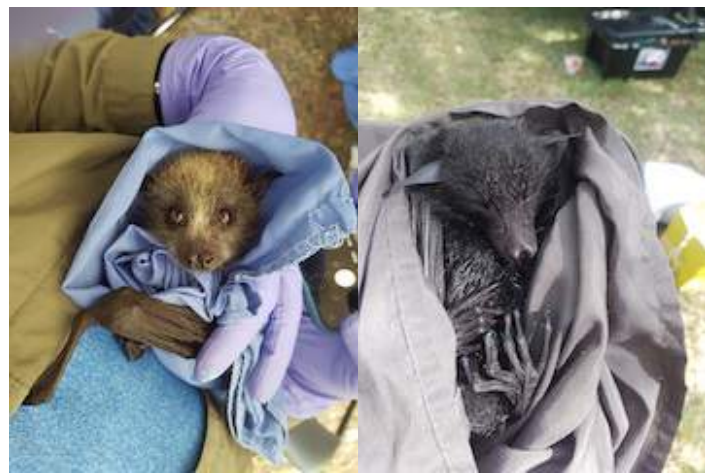


Mandy Todd capturing flying-fox (Photo © Griffith University Researchers)



Collecting data from a flying-fox (Photo © Griffith University Researchers)

The risk of humans catching diseases from bats is very low, particularly if there is no



Grey-headed & Black flying-foxes (Photo © Griffith University Researchers)

direct contact. For this reason, our advice to members of the public is always 'no touch, no risk'. There are no major health risks to humans associated with living nearby to flying-fox colonies, but since we are handling and working in close contact with the flying foxes, we wear protective equipment to protect the bats as much as us.

Our research will address the hypotheses that the root cause of urbanisation of flying foxes is the loss of critical habitat needed to sustain their feeding ecology. We believe that chronic and acute food shortages are affecting bat health and feeding habits, ultimately leading to increased risk of viruses being passed to horses. Our project aims to commence a long-term habitat restoration project to reverse some of the trends of chronic and acute food shortages leading to increased viral 'spillover' from bats to horses. This will involve public education and engagement, as well as collaboration with local landcare groups. Ultimately, we aim to develop an evidence-based program to reverse the negative human-wildlife interactions that lead to epidemics and loss of wildlife.

Our collaboration is addressing the dynamics of bat movement and health, Hendra virus transmission, and human responses to bats and spillover. While studying the dynamics of this system, we are also addressing the hypothesis that restoring critical winter habitat patches would allow flying foxes to return to their

nomadic lifestyle and return to a diet based on native food. Evidence for this potential is seen during infrequent pulses of winter flowering that attract urban bats out of their roosts. Restoration of bats' nomadic behavior could potentially reverse the nuisance and disease spillover consequences of urban habituation and could improve vertebrate pollination services to fragmented native forests. Moreover, restoration of winter flowering habitat would also help conserve threatened bird and mammal pollinators and endangered plant communities.

You can read more about our research at www.bat1health.org/

VALE LESLIE SELWYN HALL (1942 – 2019)



You can listen to a [Conversation between Les Hall & Richard Fidler](https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/conversations/les-hall/7027208) - <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/conversations/les-hall/7027208> (Photo © ABC Local)

On Monday 18th February, I attended the funeral of Dr Les Hall. Since retirement from The University of Queensland in 2001, he has lived in Maleny where he is known locally as the “Bat Man”.

The Queensland Natural History Award for 2015 was presented to Les in recognition of his contribution to our knowledge of bats (see https://www.qnc.org.au/QNHA/qnha2015_LesHall.htm for more information). Les was a co-author of “[A Natural History Of Australian Bats](#)”, with Greg Richards & Steve Parish, published by CSIRO in 2012 (<https://www.publish.csiro.au/book/6783/>).

BENCHES AND BUSHLAND

(Shealagh Walker)

New benches? No - expertly refurbished old ones! The Rotary Club of Brisbane Centenary has recently repaired and painted two benches it had installed along Wilsons

Walkway in the Mount Ommaney Bushland Reserve some time ago. The benches were looking very tired and uninviting.

Centenary and District Environment Action and Jindalee Bushcare Group recently approached the local Rotary Club and asked for the refurbishing. The group agreed and hey presto!

There is a smart brown bench near the old quarry and a lovely blue bench further along the track. Of course, both have wonderful views of the Brisbane River.



Bianca and Lachlan Savage enjoying the newly refurbished bench on Wilsons Walkway, Mount Ommaney Bushland Reserve. (Photo © Shealagh Walker)

The blue bench was built by Rotary first, then some time later, they installed the brown bench. It was one of a number constructed by volunteer labour in the workshops of the Wolston Correctional Centre in 2006 and donated to the community as part of the *Wacol Precinct Correctional Centres' 'Building Bridges'* program, using funds from the *Jamboree Ward Livability Committee*.

Four were strategically placed for good views along the walking track in the Wolston Creek Bushland Reserve in Riverhills and one facing the Brisbane River on the Coucal Trail in the Westlake Riverhills Bushland.



But why a blue bench? Well, two Rotary members doing the refurb went to a local

paint shop to see if they could help at all. The shop just happened to have a four litre tin of blue paint that had been tinted the wrong hue - not what the Rotarians originally had in mind but they decided it would be just fine, and it was free.

CDEA then asked Cr Bourke if the benches along the walking track at Wolston Creek Bushland Reserve could be refurbished and he has arranged with another Rotary group to do the work. We've found another bench at one end of the Coucal Track in the Westlake Riverhills Bushcare group's area that needs care as well...

Not only do the local bushland walking tracks have benches, they have picnic shelters, drinking fountains and a couple even have toilets. Some bushland reserves are lucky enough to have a BCC Bushcare Group looking after them - removing weeds and revegetating bare areas with local native plants. This work not only benefits the community, it also makes good habitat for local wildlife. You might see an echidna at Wilsons Walkway, you will definitely see flying foxes! If you're after kangaroos and wallabies, take a walk through the Wolston Creek Bushland Reserve. You will see beautiful native birds in all of them.

The Bushcare Groups are always needing volunteers, it is amazing what can be achieved with just two hours a month. No experience necessary. It's a good way to meet people as well, and lovely to be out in the bushland making a difference. You can probably thank the Bushcarers as well as BCC for the facilities; it's often the Bushcare Group that asks for them!

In fact, thank you to Jamboree Ward, Habitat Brisbane, the Bushcare Groups and to the Rotary Clubs that all work together to make such great places for the community and the environment!

Check on a group near you on <https://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/environment-waste/natural-environment/biodiversity-brisbane/habitat-brisbane>. You can also phone the Jamboree Ward Office for information and contact details: 3407 7000.

WESTLAKE/RIVERHILLS BUSHCARE GROUP IS REGENERATING ITSELF *(Shealagh Walker)*

Westlake/Riverhills Bushcare Group is needing new bushcarers. The group has waned rather over the last couple of years and recently the leader had to give up, as did a couple of members.

The original leader, Ed Parker, and members of the CDEA committee had a meeting with Paul Devine, the BCC Habitat Brisbane Officer, to discuss possibilities for the continuation of the group. Ed volunteered to be an interim leader and Paul said council would distribute circulars to the neighbourhood asking people to volunteer and telling them the new times and contacts. Over the last few years the working bees have been during the week but these will change to a couple of hours one Sunday morning a month.

The Westlake/Riverhills Bushcare Group was the first in the Centenary suburbs back in the early nineties. It runs from Balaton Street, through lovely bushland along the Brisbane River, to Tennent Road and has beautiful river vistas.



Coucal Trail in Westlake-Riverhills. (Photo © Shealagh Walker)

A lot of planting and weeding have been done over the years but the weeds never stop coming and there is more revegetation to be done. Habitat Brisbane and Ed Parker have a great deal of experience so even if you have none, you will be welcome and will soon learn. It is very enjoyable being out in the bushland and feeling you are making a difference.

Will interested people please contact Cr Bourke's office for Ed Parker's contact details: 3407 7000.