

The Fort Bushland Reserve

June 2010 Notes – by John Lahey

Our last bushcare working bee coincided with Queensland Day, Sunday 6th June. Matthew Bourke used this occasion to unveil the official name for this 10.5 hectare block on the corner of Fort Road and Cliveden Avenue which was bought in 2006 by the Brisbane City Council using funds from their Bushland Preservation Levy – “THE FORT BUSHLAND RESERVE”.



Alyxia ruscifolia subsp. *ruscifolia* (Chain Fruit or Prickly Alyxia) Refer August 2007 Notes

This shrub with small prickly leaves grows to about 4 metres and is scattered across the Reserve but not in any great numbers. This year all the plants seem to be flowering profusely with their small clusters of perfumed white flowers. The arrangement of the bright orange fruit is quite distinctive with chains of up to four fruit looking for all the world like plastic beads strung together.



***Trema tomentosa* (Poison Peach) – Bush tucker for native wildlife**

Refer July 2008 and January & March 2009 Notes

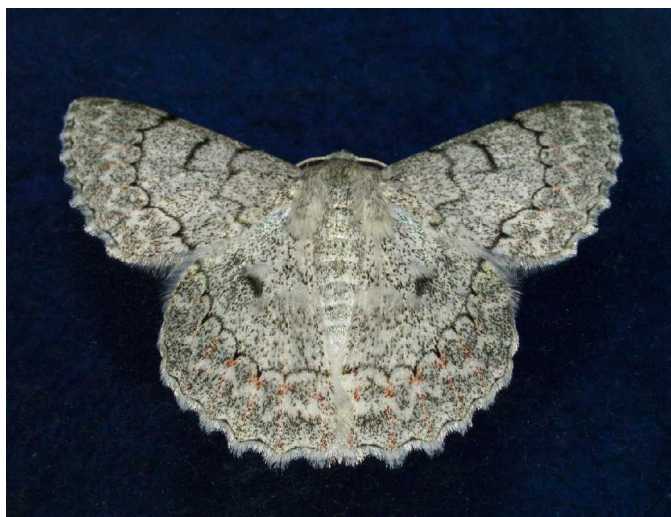
As I have noted in previous articles I'm amazed at how many plants of this species have appeared in the areas where the cat's claw and *Ochna* have been removed. Hundreds of plants have come up and continue to do so. This is despite the fact that a few years ago I could not find a plant anywhere in the reserve. While these plants are not very exciting in appearance, I think they are particularly useful in our current regenerating environment. They are an early pioneer species and grow quickly. However they are especially useful for providing bush tucker for the native wildlife.

- Our swamp wallabies seem to love nibbling the new growth on the ends of the lower branches.
- The plants start to flower and set fruit when they are about three years old. The small black fruit attract fruit eating birds such as Silver eyes and Lewin's Honeyeaters. Even though these shrubs produce copious quantities of fruit the birds seem to take all the fruit as soon as it is ripe.
- The leaves of this species also provide food for many insect larvae. For this reason the plants generally have a fairly ragged appearance. Even though many of the leaves show the signs of insect attack, it is actually quite hard to find any caterpillars. I found two different species of caterpillars including the one on the right that is possibly a *Chrysodeixis* species. I also found *Pingasa chlora* caterpillars which I raised to the moth stage – refer next item.
- The leaves also provide food for leaf eating insects. Last year I found a large stick insect eating the leaves – Refer *Extatosoma tiaratum* (Macleay's Spectre) March 2009 Notes.
- While I was collecting leaves to feed the caterpillars I inadvertently collected the pupa of a *Tachinidae* fly; shown below on the left. The larvae of this fly live inside the caterpillars feeding on the body of the caterpillar, leaving the vital organs till last. However what emerged from the fly pupa case was the ichneumonid wasp below, whose larva had fed on the larva/pupa of the *Tachinidae* fly. "It's a jungle out there".



Pingasa chlora (Flower-eating caterpillar)

I found caterpillars of this species on both *Trema tomentosa* and *Macaranga tanarius* plants. I raised some caterpillars at home so that I could identify the species when the moth emerged. All the caterpillars that were feeding on the *Macaranga* leaves died. However this was probably due to disease or some other cause rather than an inappropriate diet. The moth pupa is on the right below and there is a photo of the moth from above and below. Look at how beautifully the moth is camouflaged on the lichen covered trunk of a tree in the photo on the right.



***Acronychia laevis* (Glossy Acronychia)**

Refer October 2007 Notes

About a dozen of these small trees that grow to about 10 metres are scattered across the Reserve. The glossy dark green leaves are distinctly jointed where the petiole meets the leaf blade and are quite strongly scented when crushed. The fruit is glossy, four-angled with a ripply surface and up to 12 mm in diameter. The fruit are edible but have a rather resinous taste.



The feral deer are back! — refer December 2009 Notes

Late last year I was puzzled by the appearance of large scratch-marks on the trunks of many saplings. At that time I thought the swamp wallabies might have been causing the damage to eat the bark on the trees. However it was pointed out to me that the culprits are feral deer that are using the trees as a scratching post to rub the dead velvet from their antlers and possibly to eat the bark. This has been and continues to be a serious problem in the Jindalee and Mt. Ommaney areas where many young trees have been completely ring-barked. There appears to be a herd of about two dozen feral deer living around the McLeod Country Golf Course. This is a serious problem that needs to be addressed as the deer threaten the restoration of the native bushlands and the large stags with their spreading antlers could be danger to anyone walking through these areas. I've referred the problem to the Brisbane City Council. However if you see any feral deer in this area could you please refer the sighting to the City Council Information Centre.

Bird Notes:-

Recently I've been delighted to see a Wompoo Pigeon feeding on the bright red fruit of the *Vitex lignum-vitae* trees. These birds have bright green and yellow wings, a grey/white head and dark crimson/purple breast.

A pair of Spotted Pardalotes has excavated a tunnel nest on the earthen bank of the erosion gully. It may be the same pair that nested there last year.

On several evenings recently Hazel has heard the distinctive "Whoo! Hooo!" call of the Powerful Owl.

The next Bushcare working bee will be Sunday 4th July at 8am.