

The Fort Bushland Reserve

April 2009 Notes - by John Lahey

This month I added *Goodenia rotundifolia*, *Senecio tenuiflorus*, *Plantago debilis*, *Cyperus bowmannii*, *Cyperus laevis* and *Cyperus trinervis*; and removed *Xanthorrhoea johnsonii*; from the list of native plants growing in the Reserve.

Goodenia rotundifolia (Star Goodenia)

This small perennial herb is growing on the open sandy slopes in the northern part of the Reserve where it falls steeply to the Brisbane



River. All the plants I found were prostrate like the one photographed here but it will grow erect to about 50 cm high.



Senecio tenuiflorus (Woodland Groundsel, Beaked Fireweed, Narrow Groundsel)

It was very interesting to discover that the only other recorded specimen of this plant in the Brisbane area was one collected at Mt Gravatt by C. T. White (the then Government Botanist) in 1918. However it is relatively inconspicuous and may often be overlooked. It is an annual or biennial herb growing to about 80 cm with small yellow flowers. It is a food plant for caterpillars and this plant was severely defoliated by caterpillars like the one in the photo below right.



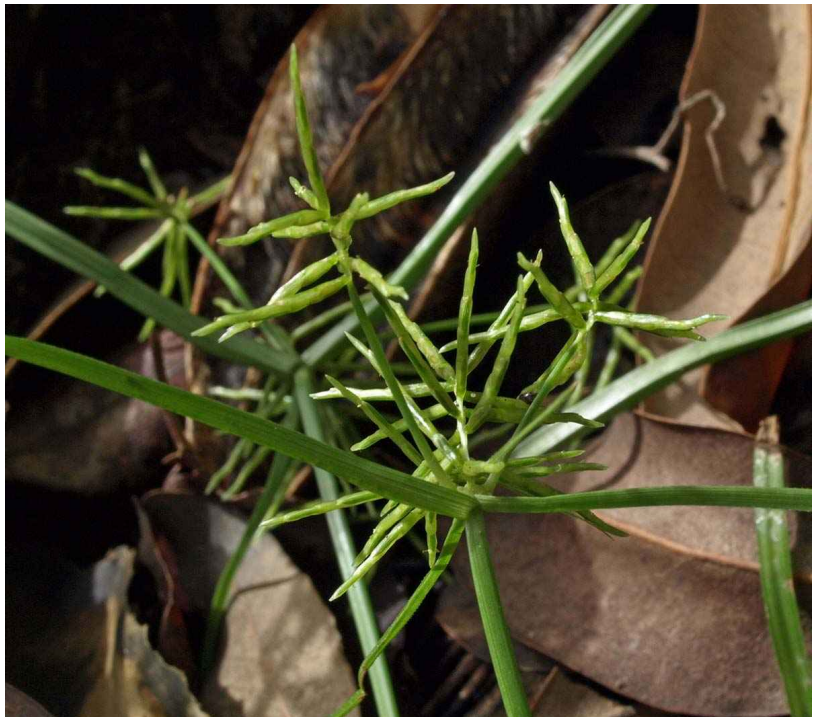
Plantago debilis (Weak Plantain, Shade Plantain)

This species is widespread and common throughout much of Australia and would often be considered a weed in home gardens. However it does not appear to be particularly common in the Reserve. It is an annual or perennial herb with a persistent slender taproot.



Cyperus bowmannii (Sedge)

The genus *Cyperus* contains over 600 species, many of which are native to Australia. I think we have at least half a dozen species in the Reserve but I have only had four identified so far. *Cyperus bowmannii* is an annual and the plants in the Reserve are reaching maturity now and starting to die off. However they will come up again from seed next year.





Cyperus laevis (Sedge)

This small tufted perennial sedge grows from about 15 to 55cm in height. The culms (or flowering spikes) are triquetrous (like an equilateral triangle with concave sides) in cross-section which I find makes it easy to differentiate from the other sedges I've found in the Reserve.



Cyperus trinervis (Flat Sedge)

This is another small tufted perennial sedge growing to about the same size as *C. laevis*. Again the culms (flowering spikes) are three sided but thinner than *C. laevis* and flat or slightly convex. This species seems to be uncommon in the Reserve.



Xanthorrhoea latifolia (Grass Tree)

While there are a couple of these plants on the southern slopes of the ridge they are very common on the northern side where the Reserve slopes down to the Brisbane River. While this species can develop a trunk to 3 metres in height, none of the plants I found had trunks. The plant on the right in the photo has a three metre tall flower spike which is covered in small white flowers. Other plants that flowered in previous months have spikes covered in sharp ripening seeds.

My plant census previously listed two species of *Xanthorrhoea* obtained from plant lists produced by two botanists. However while *Xanthorrhoea latifolia* is common, I am unable to find any plants of *Xanthorrhoea johnsonii*. Since the botanist that listed *X. johnsonii* did not include *X. latifolia* I can only conclude that he misidentified this species and I have therefore removed *X. johnsonii* from my census. However if anyone does find a plant of *X. johnsonii* could they please let me know.



Leaves and base of the flower spike



Flowers



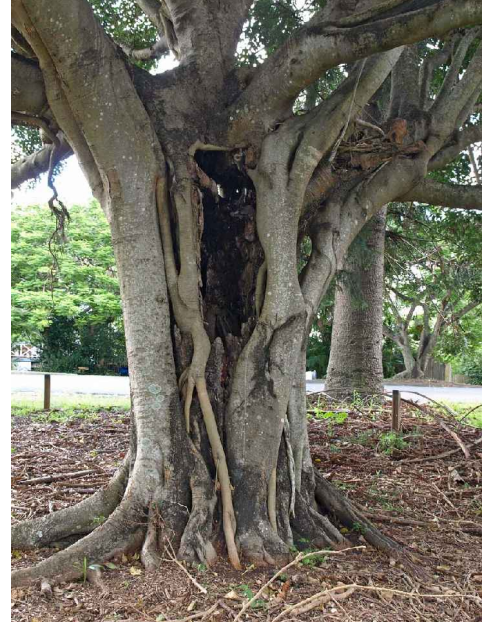
Seeds – fully developed but not ripe

Ficus obliqua (Small-leaved strangling fig)

This is a medium to large tree with a dense crown of glossy dark green leaves and a massive trunk of coalesced roots. The trees in the Reserve have just finished fruiting and they have provided fig birds and other fruit eating birds with a great feast. The small fruit are about 6 – 10 mm in diameter and are produced in pairs from the leaf axils. They turn from yellow to deep orange when ripe. All the trees I've seen in the Reserve have germinated either on dead trees or in the fork or on the side of a living tree. The fig's roots gradually envelope that tree which eventually dies and rots away.



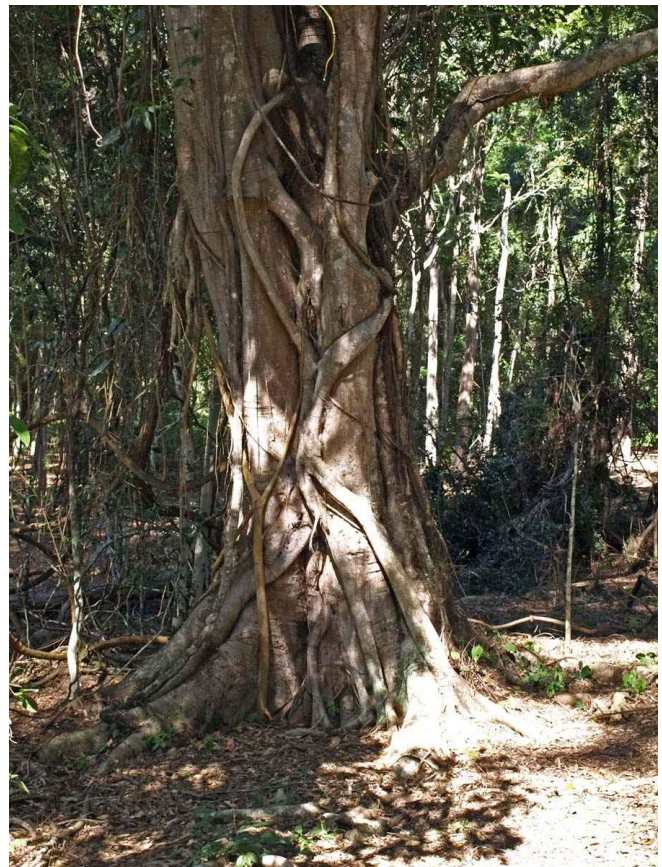
Ficus obliqua – Mature tree beside Fort Road.



Ficus obliqua – hollow where original tree has rotted.



Ficus obliqua – The arrows show the old tree that has almost gone.



Ficus obliqua – Mature tree in the middle of the Reserve.



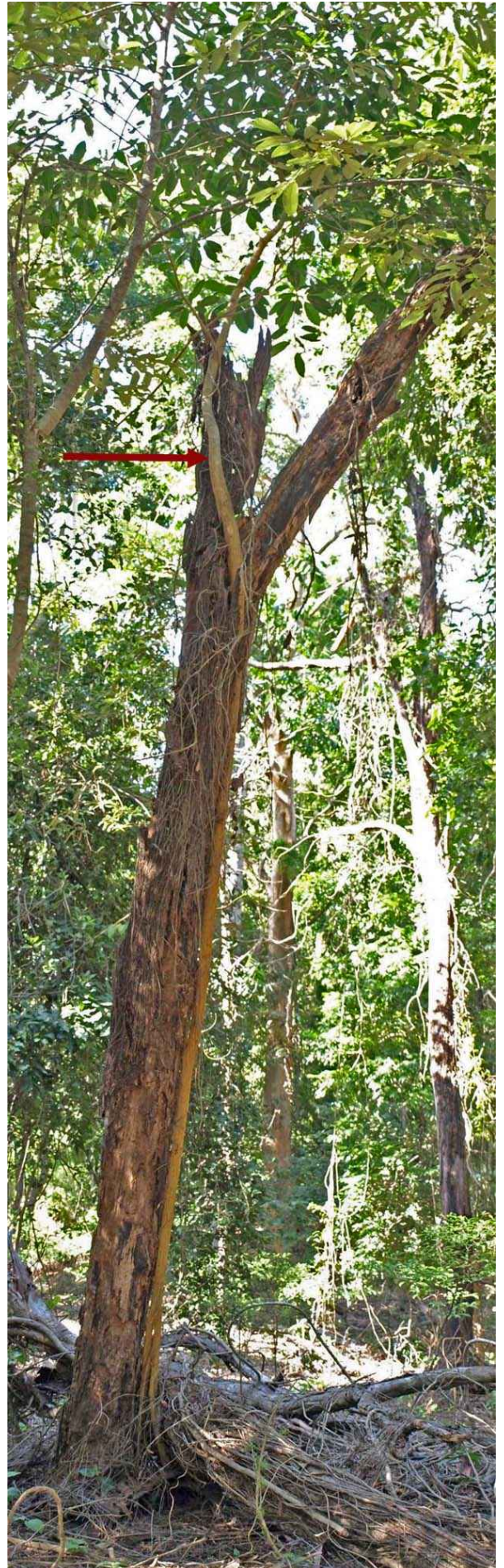
Ficus obliqua – Fruit turns from yellow to orange when ripe.



Ficus obliqua – Medium sized tree that germinated on a fallen *Lophostemon confertus*.



Ficus obliqua – Small tree that germinated on a fallen log.



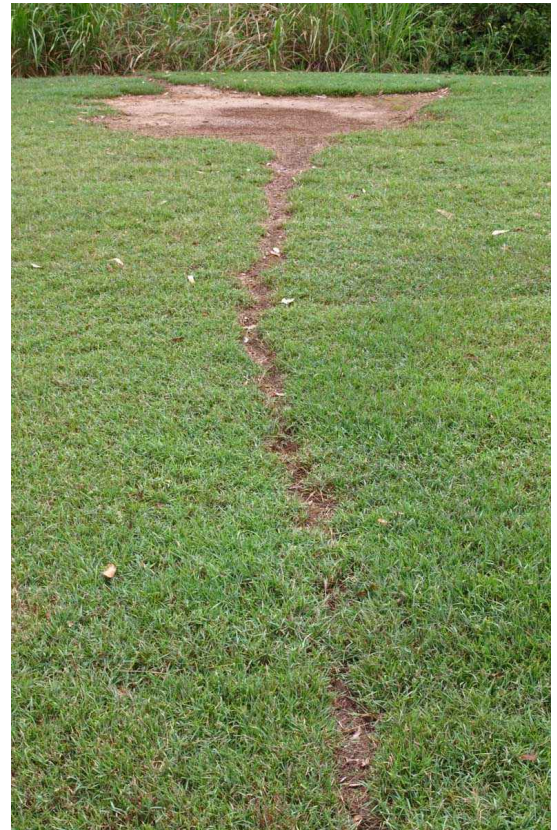
Young *Ficus obliqua* on a dead tree. The arrow marks the approximate point at which the seed germinated.

***Iridomyrmex purpureus* (Large Purple Meat Ant)**

Ants of this genus have been in the news lately as a possible control for cane toads. I know of two nests of these ants in the Reserve – one in the picnic area beside Fort Road and the other on the ridge to the east of the Passionist Fathers' property. These aggressive ants develop very large colonies and build massive underground nests with many entrances under a gravelly dome. They dominate their territory. Note how they have cleared the area around their nest in the picnic area of all vegetation and maintain a cleared pathway to a feeding area near Fort Road. These ants lack a sting but have powerful jaws and they repel any attacks



Iridomyrmex purpureus nest on the ridge to the east of the Passionist Fathers.



Iridomyrmex purpureus nest in the Picnic area.

by their sheer weight of numbers. Is there any boy who hasn't stomped across a meat ant's nest just to watch the ants "boil" out of their entrance holes to defend their territory? Note the size of the gravel on the top of the nest. The stones are just small enough to be carried down an entrance hole. These ants are active all year and they use the stones to "air condition" their nest. The stones heat up during the day and can be carried into the nest on a cold night.

I recently found another nest on the northern side of the reserve.

The Hidden side of the Reserve

The northern side of the Reserve between the ridge and the Brisbane River is very different from the rest of the reserve. It is generally quite steep, sometimes covered in deep sandy loam but mostly composed of stony sandy soil with sandstone outcrops and small cliffs. The vegetation too, is markedly different. While it is generally open eucalyptus forest there are large stands of *Allocasuarina littoralis*; and *Acacia complanata* and *Xanthorrhoea latifolia* are also common. It is very pleasing to discover large areas that are full of native grasses and almost weed free. Also common is *Cyclophyllum coprosmoides* var. *coprosmoides* and there is one magnificent tree that must surely be at least 50 years old that is laden with fruit. Unfortunately (or maybe fortunately to keep it unspoiled) this part of the Reserve is relatively inaccessible, and I suspect it is rarely visited. I've included a few images from this special area.



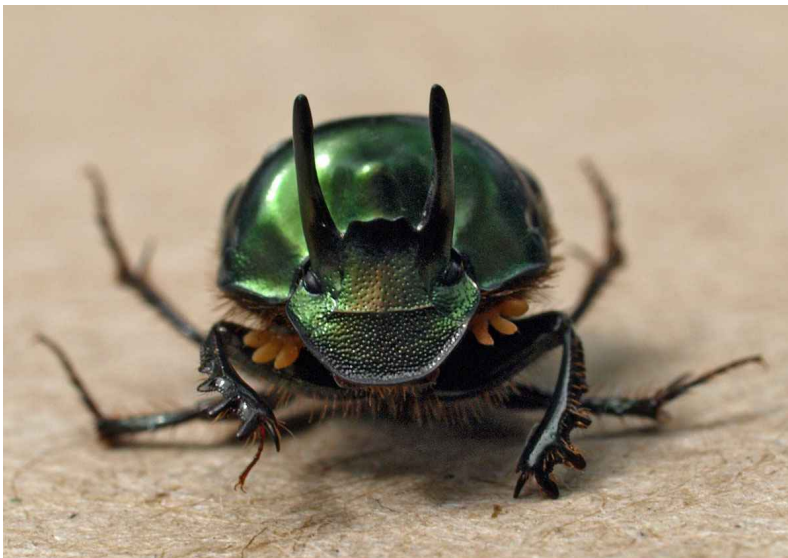


Doleschallia bisaltide australis (Australian Leafwing, Australian Rustic)

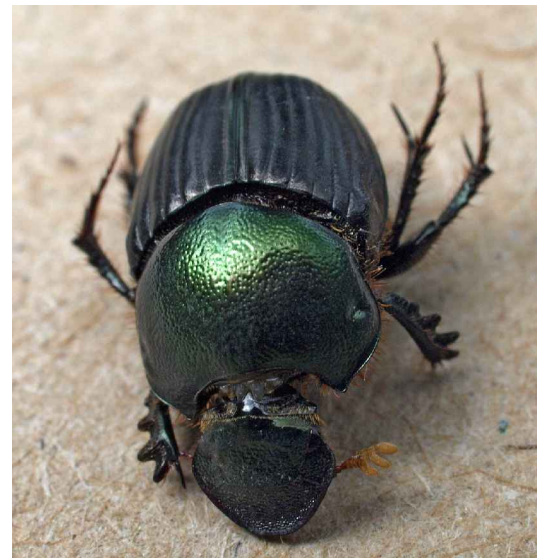
I found the caterpillar of this leafwing butterfly feeding on *Pseuderanthemum variable* (Love flower) leaves. The butterfly is of medium size and normally settles on a flower to feed with its wings closed where it resembles an autumn leaf. However when it flies it opens its wings to reveal their bright orange upper surfaces surrounded by a broad black border.

Onthophagus tweedensis (Dung Beetle)

We recently set a trap to determine if any dung beetles were active in the Reserve and caught 3 native dung beetles, 2 females and one male, that were identified as *Onthophagus tweedensis*. This species is relatively uncommon in the Brisbane area and has previously been recorded at Chapel Hill and Mt. Coot-tha. These beetles are about 10 mm long with the male slightly longer than the female. I have previously observed *Onthophagus dandalu* in the same part of the Reserve (Refer January 2008 Notes).



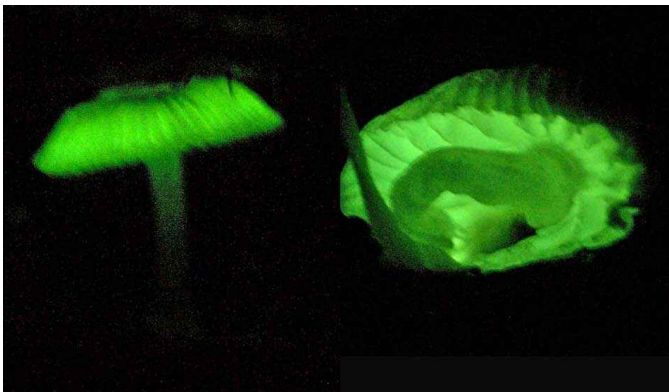
Male



Female

The recent rains have produced a wide variety of fungi of different shapes, sizes and colours. Many are growing on the dead trees and assist in their decomposition. I've included a few images from across the Reserve.





A small number of the fungi are luminous and emit a ghostly glow at night. Unfortunately when I took this photo the fungi had been up for several days and had started to collapse and lose their luminosity.

The next working bee will be held on Sunday 3 May at 8 am.

I'm taking a short break, so I won't be writing any notes for the next two or three months.