

# The Fort Bushland Reserve

## January 2009 Notes - by John Lahey

The spring and early summer rains have been wonderful for all the plants in the Reserve and the trees now have a thick canopy of leaves. The sunlight at ground level in many parts of the Reserve is now noticeably reduced which thankfully tends to inhibit the regrowth of weeds. Nevertheless weed growth has been rampant over the past few months and we bushcarers need to be particularly vigilant to prevent the annual weeds reaching maturity and spreading their seeds. Each seeding annual can typically produce hundreds of new weeds next season.

### *Trema tomentosa* (Poison peach, Native peach)

I continue to be astounded by the hundreds (possibly thousands) of seedlings of this species that have germinated in the cleared areas; particularly so because I have never found a mature plant in the Reserve. It is difficult to believe that so many seeds could have been distributed so widely by birds. I can only conclude that this species must have been common on the site before it was overrun by the cat's claw creeper and that the seeds can lie dormant for an extended period. The plants that came up about 15 months ago are now in flower and starting to set fruit. This plant seems to be an excellent pioneer species in the regeneration of the areas that have been cleared of cat's claw, Ochna and other weeds. It also seems to be a favourite of the swamp wallabies as most young plants have the tips and new growth eaten off.



### *Einadia trigonos subsp. stellulata* (Fishweed)

This little perennial herb has made a scattered appearance in the cleared areas. It is in the same family as saltbush and has a slightly fishy smell when the leaves are crushed. The plants grow from a central relatively thin taproot and spread to about a metre in diameter. When growing well it makes an attractive groundcover as illustrated in the photograph below. The plants produce copious quantities of small black dry seeds. The individual plant life expectancy is reported to be from 2 to 5 years but I've observed some plants which have grown as annuals while others appear to be more than 5 years old.





*Einadia trigonos* subspecies *stellulata*



***Flindersia schottiana*** (Cudgerie, Bumpy Ash, Silver Ash)

— Refer November 2008 notes

Most of the trees that flowered so well a few months ago are now laden with their large prickly seedpods. The photo on the left shows two unopened pods and a third that has split open and is in the process of releasing about 25 to 30 flat papery seeds. The pods split asymmetrically and tend to break apart before falling to the ground.

***Flindersia australis*** (Crow's Ash)

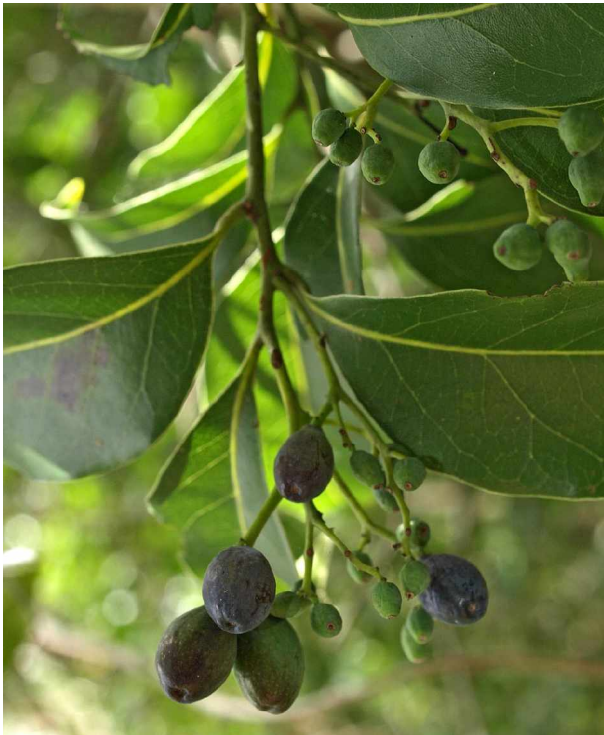
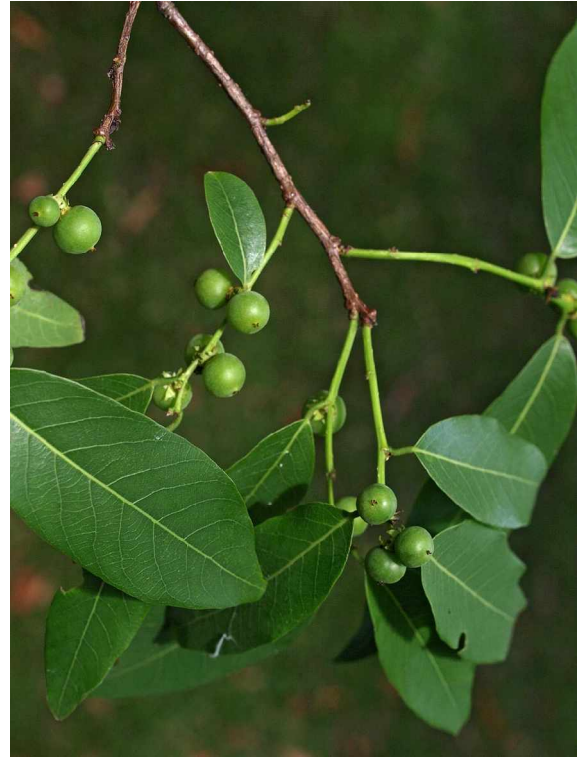
This is another species from the same genus which also flowered in November. Its seedpods are also in five segments and covered in coarse prickles. However, unlike *F. schottiana*, its pods normally open symmetrically and retain that shape when they fall. The pods also carry about twenty to thirty flat papery seeds. Saplings are common in the Reserve and there is a large mature tree in the gully on the eastern boundary.





***Bridelia exaltata*** (Brush Ironbark, Scrub Ironbark, Grey Birch, Brown Birch)

This is a medium to large tree attaining a height of about 30 metres, but the tallest I have seen in the reserve is only about 15 metres. It is relatively common here and quite distinctive in the way it produces root suckers when its roots are disturbed. A small clump of these can be seen towards the bottom end of the northern firetrail. This species is monoecious with separate male and female flowers on the same tree. I didn't spot the flowers but the trees are now carrying a good crop of fruit. The fleshy fruit generally carry two seeds and turn yellow then black when ripe. Birds are reported to be attracted to the ripe fruit.



***Cryptocarya* species “*Worlds End Pocket*”**  
(Totem Pole, Boonah *Cryptocarya*)

This undescribed species of *Cryptocarya* grows in an area from Boonah to Maryborough attaining the height of a small tree. It is the most common species of *Cryptocarya* in the Reserve and I'd guess there are about twenty to thirty plants. For the first time since I've been observing them, several of the trees flowered in November last year and are now carrying ripening fruit. This has allowed a specimen to be sent to the Queensland Herbarium for positive identification.

***Arytera foveolata*** (Pitted Coogera) (Refer September 2007 Notes)

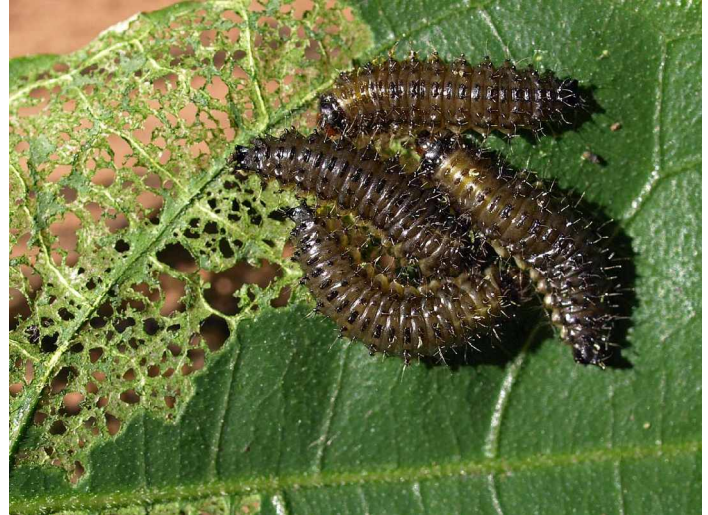
The larger trees of this species flowered quite well in September but set relatively few fruit. The orange seed capsules contain a black seed surrounded by a thin red fleshy aril.





## Sawfly

The *Ficus fraseri* (Sandpaper Fig) has had many of its leaves reduced to a skeleton by an invasion of sawfly larvae. The sawfly is related to wasps and their larvae usually feed in groups removing all the soft tissue from leaves. On maturity they drop to the ground where they pupate in the soil before emerging as adult sawflies. Even though this tree has lost a lot of leaves it is carrying a bumper crop of figs that the fig birds find irresistible. It often appears as if it is in a mini tornado when it is beset by a flock of feeding fig birds.



## Common Brown Robber Fly - Family Asilidae, Subfamily Asilinae, Zosteria sp.

Robber flies are fast and agile, and have excellent eyesight, which makes them very successful predators. They prey mostly on other insects such as flies, wasps, bees, grasshoppers and dragonflies and will even take spiders. They normally catch their prey in mid air and then return to a perch to digest the meal. This is done with their stabbing proboscis that injects saliva containing neurotoxins and enzymes into the prey to kill it and dissolve the body tissues. The liquidised remains are then sucked up through the proboscis. Robber flies deposit their eggs on plants or in gaps in the soil. The fly larvae, which are also predators, live in the soil or in rotting wood feeding on eggs, larvae and soft-bodied insects.

I spotted this common brown robber fly on the bollards bordering the Reserve at the end of Eddystone Road, where it had established its perch in a nice sunny location. It continually made hunting forays always returning to the same spot. I estimated that it was about 30mm long and probably the largest robber fly I have seen. Check out those magnificent eyes.





***Decaspermum humile*** (Silky Myrtle) (Refer October 2008 Notes)

The trees that flowered in October are now carrying ripening fruit. The fleshy fruit are about 7mm in diameter and contain about 3 - 5 small seeds. The fruit is edible and the plant is recognised as a “bush tucker” species.



***Aviceda subcristata*** (Crested Hawk or Pacific Baza)

Story continued from December 2008 notes.

At the end of December the parent bird started to leave the nest unattended so I assumed the egg/s had hatched. A few days later I occasionally caught a glimpse of a chick and then about a week later saw two chicks in the nest. The two chicks grew rapidly and the larger of the two had started to develop barring on the breast feathers when I took this photo. The smaller chick is just visible in the background. Regrettably this story has a sad ending. Both chicks were found on the ground under the nest on 17/18 January. The larger chick had a broken wing which the vet was unable to mend as it was too badly broken and the smaller chick was dead. I don't know what went wrong but can only guess that possibly other birds such as crows drove them out of the nest. The Saturday was very windy so it is possible that they were blown out of the nest.



The next working bee will be held on Sunday 1 February at 8 am.