

The Fort Bushland Reserve

October 2007 Notes - by John Lahey

The focus of the last bushcare working bee was Cat's Claw creeper. Our goal is to prevent the Cat's Claw on the northern side of the major erosion gully from producing any more seed – ever. So far I haven't seen any flowers on the creepers in this area this year and as they didn't flower last year if we can stop seed being produced this year it is likely that there will be no more viable seed in this area. I did see a few flowers on the creepers in the south-east corner.

I believe the best control is achieved by cutting through all the Cat's claw around the trees at chest height and then cutting them off at ground level and swabbing the stumps of all creepers thicker than your finger with Glyphosate (50% dilution). The regrowth around the trees can then be sprayed a few months later with Glyphosate (1% strength).

New Table and Benches - Fort Road

With the removal of the exotic plants and clearing of the rubbish and long grass, the area beside Fort Road now looks really attractive. The provision of the picnic table and benches now makes this an attractive spot for morning or afternoon tea or a picnic lunch. The bollard "fence" along Fort Road to prevent cars driving into the reserve, has just been finished.



Peter installing the King Parrot nestbox

Nesting Boxes

On Sunday 14th October Ric Natrass and Peter installed the 16 nesting boxes supplied by Hollow Log Homes. The design of these boxes is the result of years of observation and experimentation to ensure they are ideally constructed to suit specific birds and animals. They are also designed to exclude unwanted species such as Noisy Miners, Indian Mynahs and Common Brush Tail possums. As part of the contract with the Council, Ric will monitor the boxes for 12 months and provide a report on the animals and birds he finds using them.

The following boxes have been installed:-

- 1 x Eastern Boobook Owl nestbox
- 4 x Rear entry Glider nestboxes
- 1 x King Parrot nestbox
- 2 x Feather Tail Glider nestboxes
- 4 x Possum nestboxes
- 4 x Parrot/lorikeet nestboxes

This month I made two additions to our list of native plants growing in the Fort Bushland.

Marsdenia coronata (Slender milk-vine)

This is a fairly uncommon vine and is classified as a vulnerable species. I found a small clump of 3 or 4 plants about 30 cm high.



Callistemon salignus
White Bottlebrush
Sweet willow bottlebrush

While I had seen this plant before, I incorrectly assumed it was already on our plant list. It has a papery bark and willow-like leaves which are pinkish when new. The flowers are creamy white and typical bottlebrush shape.

The following plants have flowered this month.



Mallotus philippensis (Red Kamala)

This small tree is quite common and scattered through the reserve. It seems to lose most of its leaves at the end of winter and is now looking very attractive with the reddish flush of new leaves. It is another dioecious species and bears male and female flowers on separate plants in terminal racemes. The photo on the left is of male flowers and the one on the right shows female flowers. While there seemed to be lots of male plants, I found it very difficult to find any female flowers.



Acronychia laevis (Glossy Acronychia)

I've found about a dozen of these small trees at a few different locations across the reserve. The glossy leaves are strongly scented when crushed. The small greenish white flowers are carried sparsely in small clusters of typically three flowers. The fruit is up to 12 mm in diameter and varies in colour from white to purplish.





Melia azedarach (White Cedar, Chinaberry, Cape Lilac)
 This is normally a small to medium sized tree but can grow to 30 metres in its natural habitat. It is deciduous and produces masses of lilac coloured flowers with the new growth in spring. The flowers are followed by bunches of yellow fruit to 12 mm in diameter which persist on the trees until after the leaves fall in autumn. The fruit is poisonous. It is widely cultivated as an ornamental tree in Australia and in many other countries throughout the world.



Acalypha nemorum (Hairy Acalypha)

This is a monoecious plant with separate male and female flowers on the same plant. It grows to about 1.5 metres high. I found three plants and they all carried female flowers but no male flowers. The photo on the left shows the strange looking female flowers. The male flowers are short catkins arising from the leaf axils.



Jasminum simplicifolium (Stiff Jasmine)
 I've found this strong scrambling climber growing in several places through the reserve. There is a large plant growing on the *Argyrodendron trifoliolatum* in the north-east corner. It normally flowers from August to December or after rain. The beautifully scented white flowers are followed by shiny black berries that are about 10 mm in diameter.

Clerodendrum floribundum (Lollybush)

There are only a few of these small trees scattered through the reserve. We found this plant in the middle of a very dense patch of *Ochna* while clearing Cat's claw creeper. It is a mature tree about 8 metres tall with a stem diameter of about 12 cms. It is covered in dense heads of creamy-white buds and white flowers with prominent stamens. The fruit is black and shiny, about 10mm long, and seated in the red fleshy calyx; hence the common name for this plant.



Cryptocarya microneura (Murrogun, Brown Jack)

I've only been able to find the one plant of this species in the reserve. It is growing on the tongue of land that extends from the main part of the reserve to the river. It is

a small tree about 10 metres high with dark grey bark and a stem diameter of 20 cm. It didn't flower last year, but is in flower now so I was able to take a specimen to the Queensland Herbarium to have it identified. The flowers are followed by small black fruit that are about 12 mm in diameter.



Gossia hillii (Scaly Myrtle)

There is a small clump of two or three mature plants growing on the bank of the lower part of the erosion gully. The plants are in flower now so I was able to take a specimen to the Queensland Herbarium for identification. The species was confirmed as *Gossia hillii*. I have amended our list of native plants as I think this plant had previously been listed as *Austromyrtus* sp. (Brookfield) which is now *Gossia punctata*. The pretty white flowers are produced singly from the leaf axils. I've noticed that there are no flowers open on days when the air is very dry.



Belenois java (Caper White Butterfly)

You may recall from the November and December 2006 Notes that the Caper White butterflies laid some eggs last year but that the newly hatched caterpillars quickly devoured the very few new leaves and then perished because they were not big enough to feed on the mature native caper leaves. This year the conditions were quite different and when the Caper White butterflies arrived the native capers - *Capparis arborea* and *Capparis sarmentosa* – had produced

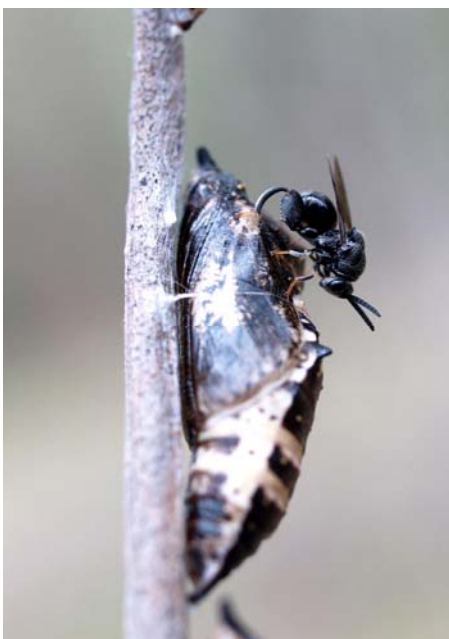


masses of soft new growth. Their caterpillars grew rapidly and eventually stripped all the leaves from some of the native capers. The photo on the left shows a plant of *Capparis arborea* that has been denuded of all its leaves by the caterpillars. However before all the leaves were gone most of the caterpillars had reached maturity and pupated. Their chrysalises completely covered some of the stems. I think the lack of predators was the main reason the



caterpillars really thrived. However with such a bountiful supply of caterpillars and pupae the predators

are starting to multiply. I've spotted quite a number of small parasitic wasps of the genus *Brachymeria* laying their eggs on the pupae. The wasp larvae will feed on the developing pupae and eventually kill them before the butterflies can develop. Nevertheless the first butterflies have already started to emerge from the chrysalises and in some parts of the reserve there are now hundreds of Caper White butterflies. However there is really no food left for the larvae of any eggs these butterflies might lay.





Croton insularis (Silver Croton)

These trees flowered a few months ago (refer to the July Notes) and are now carrying their three-lobed fruit.

The next working bee will be held on Sunday 4 November at 8 am.