

*Wildlife & Native Plants
Study Group Newsletter.
Issue 27.*

**ISSN 10387897
WINTER/ SPRING 1999**





Editor: Kathleen Davies.
Artwork/Illustrations: K.Davies.
Membership Fees: \$5.per year. \$10. per year Overseas members.

Welcome to all members!

As always, written contributions are always welcome additions to our newsletters. Please forward them to: **Kathleen Davies, 3871 Casino Road, Lawrence. NSW. 2460. Or Ph: (02) 66 477 143**, if you live close to that address and I can make arrangements to visit and write a story for you.

Is anyone interested in taking on the role of Study Group leader/coordinator for the Wildlife & Native Plants Study Group? If so, could you please let me know on the above address or let our State Study Group Coordinator know on their address.

I have organised an **Art & Sculpture Exhibition** to be held for one month duration in the foyer of the Maclean Shire Council Building and Offices in Maclean township in northern New South Wales. The exhibition will begin on the 19th of July, 1999.

I am hoping to raise the profile of our study group and increase membership and interest in our objectives by presenting information and a diverse display of artwork relating to wildlife and Australian native plants.

Some of the work on display will be for sale with a percentage of sales being donated to our study group's yearly running costs.

Works on display will include paintings in oils, and acrylics and pen & ink illustrations depicting many species of Australian wildlife and the native plants of each habitat. Timber sculpture pieces will also be displayed, as well as photographic work.

Entry is free and all are welcome, so tell your friends! Hours are 9:00am to 4:00pm weekdays.

Exhibit space is free and other expenses (if any) will be covered by myself.

There are also five wonderful bus tours organised in September, 1999, to tour some of north coast New South Wales' beautiful National Parks and see first hand the special interactions between plants and animals!

Details are available for both of these events on further pages of this newsletter.

DID YOU KNOW?

Planting clusters of *Conostylis candidans* (Straw Flowers or paper Daisies), provides drifts of attractive colour in sunny sites. Insects will find the blooms irresistible, and these will in turn attract insectivorous birds such as wrens, to your garden.

Interesting Fact.

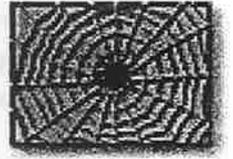
Without the cover and variations of native vegetation, including flowers and the many colours and varieties, many insects would be completely visible and vulnerable to predators.

Creatures like the humble leaf insect, praying mantis, spiders, butterflies and even the eggs and larvae of many of these types of animals, rely on the leaves and associated foliage (living and dead) for protection and camouflage particularly in the daylight hours.

Take this cover away and these creatures really stand out to our naked eye. Imagine the feast predators would have because, generally, their vision is much better than ours. All organisms, right down to the micro-minis are essential in some way to the well being of our native gardens.



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ASGAP

The Pheasant Coucal.

The Pheasant Coucal (*Centropus phasianinus*), can be found from the northern coast of Western Australia, across the Top End of northern Australia and coastal areas of Queensland, down as far as the mid to central coast of New South Wales.

Their habitat preference is for thickly vegetated areas, so they are commonly seen emerging from sugar cane fields, which have replaced the native vegetation thickets of Bracken Fern (*Pteridium esculentum*) and Blady Grass (*Imperata spp.*) in a lot of their home range throughout NSW and Queensland.

Much of the natural vegetation these birds once enjoyed has been removed, cleared for grazing of livestock, development and cropping including growing of sugar cane. These birds are adaptable, like so many of our native wildlife species, but only to a certain extent.

Introduction of weed species, such as Lantana (*Lantana camara*), has provided Pheasant Coucals, and other bird species, with replacement shelter, and food sources. But at what cost to the environment?

Population numbers of these birds still declines even with the replacement shelter. This could be attributed to a combination of several factors.

Introduction of feral animal species such as cats, dogs and foxes has resulted in greater predation on the eggs and young birds of the Pheasant Coucal, as it is a ground nester.

Extremely clumsy in flight and slow to remove itself from the path of motor vehicles results in a high mortality rate on the roads.

Their long tails and pheasant-like appearance give rise to the common name, and the bird's physique lends itself more to long gliding flight styles rather than rapid wing flight styles. Their habit of scurrying low through the undergrowth often appears reminiscent of a rodent or reptile rather than a bird.

Pheasant Coucals are the only member of the Cuckoo family that don't take advantage of other birds by laying their eggs in someone else's 'basket'. They prefer to build their own nest.

Garden pests can be controlled by birds such as the Pheasant Coucal, and the haunting calls throughout the summer months break the stress of modern living.

MANGROVES - HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THEM?

(Article published in the Coastal Views newspaper).

by National Parks Information Officer
Kathleen Davies.

Inside

ART SHOW!

- * Good Books, Newspaper Articles.
- * Grafton Artsfest Tours.
- * Study Group Members & distribution list.
- * Did You Know? Interesting Facts.



It is true that mangrove areas are prone to mosquitoes, midges and mud, but they are also areas of great environmental importance.

Mangroves need to be hardy and able to tolerate a lot of abuse. They have the ability to tolerate being submerged regularly in salt and fresh water.

The nutrient rich mud in which they grow is generally lacking in oxygen.

The 29 mangrove species found in Australia have adapted to the harsh environment in which they exist by various ways and means.

Mangroves cope with the levels of salt through either exclusion, accumulation or secretion of the salt.

Providing air for the tree's survival is achieved through specialised and varied root structures, such as peg roots, knee roots and stilt roots.

Seedlings are able to develop while still attached to the parent tree and drop from the tree to be dispersed by the tide.

A recent comment during a guided tour of the Sandon River system from a visitor from the city related to the "unsightly and mosquito infested swamps along the river banks". This comment prompted a mass outcry from other patrons.

Mangroves provide shelter for many species. They provide important nursery areas for commercial fish stocks. They provide habitat and shelter for many birds (including migratory birds from the northern hemisphere), molluscs, prawns, crabs and algae. They are a food source for many of the same species of animals in indirect or direct ways.

Mangroves also help to control erosion and act as filtration systems.

They are essentially of great importance environmentally and commercially in the long term scheme of life and deserve understanding and a better public image.

WILD, WILD LIFE AT RESERVE.

(Article published in the Coastal Views newspaper).

*by National Parks and Wildlife Service Officer
Kathleen Davies.*

Although you may walk the same trail a hundred times, there is always something new to be seen, heard or discovered.

I am constantly amazed at nature's little surprises!

One such example happened recently while leading a group of visitors through the Iluka Nature Reserve rainforest. About halfway through the rainforest (just past the fallen tree where the local pygmy tribe lay in wait to ambush unsuspecting adults), myself and the group I was leading were startled to hear loud, crashing footsteps moving in our general direction. Nothing was visible through the undergrowth, but the footsteps were getting louder!

One young boy in the group - being an avid 'Goosebumps' reader and 'X-Files' fan - immediately announced that it was probably some sort of monster, invisible to the human eye, running through the bush to make a meal of us.

I steadied their nerves (as well as my own) and prepared for the onslaught of whatever it was!

A final explosion of leaves, berries and branches and we were confronted by a dishevelled and very surprised young adult emu stumbling onto the track. It looked just as surprised as we all did. Having never seen an emu in the rainforest before, this encounter came as a major surprise.

"I hope it's friendly" was the comment from the boy's mother. We all did, as animals can be unpredictable especially when they are startled, cornered or you 'in their way'.



As it turned out, this oversized chicken wasn't interested in us at all. It quickly adjusted its feathers, regained its composure and pushed rudely past us, head held high as if to avoid any more embarrassment. The emu continued its search for food along the track, trying to appear aloof, yet elegant, with the sound of chattering people and clicking cameras filling the air.

Nature can surprise us in many ways. The chance sighting of a wild animal at such close quarters is one of the most exciting.

The guided walk through the rainforest the following evening proved to be little less fruitful, with the emu failing to make a second appearance.

Nevertheless, the illuminated tree tops, vines, lianas and elkhorn ferns created an eerie atmosphere, very different from the daytime mood.

Glistening spider webs, moths and many other insects of the night were highlighted in the beams of spotlight and torches. Several small birds, active during the daylight hours, slept on in our presence, oblivious to the bright lights piercing the darkness around them.

For those people who care to venture into the Iluka Rainforest, the "creatures of the dark forest" are waiting to greet you.

WOODY PROVIDES THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS.

(Article published in the Coastal Views newspaper, 1996).

by NPWS Field Officer Kathleen Davies.

The northern New South Wales coastline is dotted with rocky headlands, rock shelves, reefs and platforms, joined by ribbons of sandy beaches.

Nestled amongst tuckeroo, banksia and other coastal vegetation is Woody Head.

Located on the coast at the southern tip of Bundjalung National Park, just 10 minutes drive off the Pacific Highway to Iluka. Woody Head provides the angler and the nature lover the best of both worlds.

Noted for its excellent camping facilities and great fishing, Woody Head camping area boasts a wide expanse of rock platforms and miles of sandy beach to explore.

Ancient sedimentary and conglomerate rocks lay submerged under salty waves and high tides. Their presence is revealed at low tide, only pools of tepid water rimmed with salt crystals left as tell tale signs.

The many rock pools and crevices become refuges for marine creatures stranded by the receding tide, and provide close encounters with still more animals and plants that spend their entire lives in these natural rock aquariums.

Coloured sea anemones, soft corals, octopus, juvenile fish, sea weeds and sponges, many varieties of snails, crabs and sea urchins mingle together to form the interesting environments we try to recreate in small glass tanks in our homes.

Guided rock pool walks are an excellent way of becoming familiar with the plants and animals that exist in the coastal habitats.

Activities such as this are conducted regularly during school holidays and throughout the rest of the year by special arrangement, providing opportunities to learn and identify marine life and coastal features.

Snorkelling is also another great way to view the underwater life.

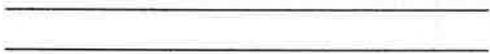
Sea birds and waders patrol the shoreline in search of a quick meal. Migrating humpback whales, stingrays,



marine turtles and dolphins can be seen in the more open water.

Back on land the campsites are often visited by lace monitors and birds of many types, such as the cheeky Lewin's Honeyeater.

As this camping area borders some of the last remnants of littoral rainforest - rainforest habitat located close to the ocean - it is a significantly valuable place to visit and also to protect for the future.



GOOD BOOKS.

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, *A Birdwatcher's Guide, Birds of the Iluka Area*, 1995. NSW NPWS.

A 24-page publication produced after many years of research by ornithologists Greg Clancy and Steve Wilson, and produced by the NSW NPWS in conjunction with the Iluka Chamber of Commerce.

Cover art and illustrations throughout have been produced by wildlife and landscape artist Kathleen Davies.

The book details where birds might be seen and gives helpful advice on safety, the various habitats on the Iluka Peninsula and types of birds frequenting the area, including rare and exotic species.

Some of the bird species listed are at their southern most habitat limit and are quite rare throughout most their range.

Mention is also made of the vegetation types found in the area.



MEMBERS LIST and newsletter distribution.

Alan Baker,
New Zealand.

Robert Heyblok,
Spit Junction, NSW.

Linda Harris,
ANBG, Canberra, ACT.

Ki Cornwall,
Eudlo, Queensland.

B. Fox,
The Basin, Victoria.

Cam Crofts,
Bondi Junction, NSW.

Colleen Keena,
Bellbowrie, Queensland.

Mark Simpson,
*Sugar Loaf Animal Hospital,
West Wallsend, NSW.*

A & D Rees,
Mirboo North, Victoria.

Barry Nilsson,
Maraylya, NSW.

Rosemary Blemings,
Flynn, ACT.

Jeannette Glass,
*C/- Tasmanian Society for Growing Australian
Plants, Tas.*

SGAP NSW Ltd, Blue Mountains Group,
Glenbrook, NSW.

SGAP Victoria inc.,
The Basin, Victoria.

SGAP Maroondah inc.,
Ringwood, Victoria.

Society for Growing Australian Plants,
Canberra Region inc.,
Civic Square, ACT.



Wildflower Society of Western Australia,
Nedlands, W.A.

Australian Plants Society, State
Membership Officer & Study Group
Liaison Officer,
Woodford, NSW.

Newsletter Editors:
Australian Plants,
Picnic Point.

ASGAP,
Willunga, S.A.

Canberra Region,
Waramanga, ACT.

NSW Region,
Castlereagh, NSW.

Qld. Region,
Lawnnton, Qld.

SA Region,
Netherby, S.A.

Tasmanian Region,
Acton, Tas.

Victorian Region,
Killarney, Vic..

Wildlife & Native Plants Financial Statement.

Westpac Bank Statement Account closing credit balance as at 10 June 1999:-	\$549.65
Postage, stationary & printing costs for June 1998-July 1999:-	\$175.25.
Bank Charges:-	\$2.63.
Interest:-	\$0.85.
Outstanding accounts:-	NIL.

BEAUTY AND THE BEASTS (5 DAYS).

NATIONAL PARKS DISCOVERY TOURS -

These tours have been designed to provide participants with an insight into the many different natural environments, and enable close-up views of the North Coast's special areas, including World Heritage listed Washpool National Park and Iluka Nature Reserve. Whale watching, bird watching and bushwalking are activities that you will enjoy in pleasant bush settings. From mountain rainforests to rocky ocean headlands, experience the magic of nature on one or all five of the National Parks Discovery Tours. Every tour offers a glimpse into the heart and soul of a different world ranging from oceans and rock pools, rainforest growing by the sea, rainforests growing high in mountain country, a kaleidoscope of colour and perfume from brilliant wildflowers, ancient granite boulders, deep valleys and tree top perches. These tours are suitable for all ages (adult supervision for under 16's). **Morning/afternoon teas and lunches must be provided by the participants.** All tours will return to Grafton in time for evening events.

DAY 1.

Sunday September 26 - 9.00am start from Grafton.

Bus tour to Northern Yuraygir National Park - Guided walk to include some of the most scenic coastline from Mara Creek to Shelley Beach Headland campground and return to Mara Creek. Wildflowers are in abundance at this time of year, it is also good whale watching from many vantage points along this route. Humpback and Orca whales are moving south at this time of year. Several Aboriginal sites are also located along this route and will be



pointed out by the guide. Eastern Grey Kangaroos rest in the shade. Honeyeaters and other birds congregate among the banksia flowers. Reptiles and echidnas may be encountered behind the sand dunes, and birds of prey circle above in search of food. The longest stretch of undeveloped coastline in NSW. Walkers will discover pristine beaches, heathlands, swamps and lagoons.

DAY 2.

Monday September 27 - 9.00am start from Grafton.

Bus tour to Washpool National Park and Coombadjha Creek - Guided walk through World Heritage listed Washpool National Park taking in the 'mini-Washpool' walk. Includes walking amongst ancient stands of rainforest trees, chance encounters with platypus in the clear creek waters, friendly Red-necked Pademelons, secretive rainforest birdlife and enjoying the serenity of 'rainforest magic'. Enjoy the lavish plants and earthy smells on the Coombadja nature stroll, a 1.5 kilometre circuit walk.

DAY 3.

Tuesday September 28 - 9.00am start from Grafton.

Bus tour to Gibraltar Range National Park - Join your guide on an exhilarating walk through granite country carved into deep valleys and boulder stacks and enjoy the sights and scents of Australian wildflowers in the peak spring season. Birdlife is abundant.

DAY 4.

Wednesday September 29 - 9.00am start from Grafton.

Bus tour to Dorrigo Rainforest Centre, Cafe and Information Centre and Dangar Falls - Guided walks through exhilarating rainforest, including walks out onto the 'Skywalk' and 'Walk with the Birds'

boardwalks. The boardwalks are suitable for wheelchairs. The Rainforest Centre has a video theatre and walk through display providing messages and images about World Heritage rainforest. The visitor centre sells books, gifts, guides, posters and other souvenirs. Morning tea/lunch can be purchased at the Cafe or brought by participants to eat at the picnic areas.

DAY 5.

Thursday September 30 - 9.00am start from Grafton.

Bus tour to Woody Head Rock platform and World Heritage Iluka Nature Reserve - Explore the rare rainforest reserves at the southern tip of Bundjalung National park on the Iluka Peninsula. The rock pools and tidal flats at Woody Head hold a wealth of secrets only revealed at low tide to the keen observer. The chance sighting of migrating whales and playful dolphins is a possibility in the surrounding waters. The Iluka Nature Reserve contains one of the last remaining stands of littoral rainforest on the east coast of NSW and has been protected from development. Enjoy a guided walk under the cool shade of the leafy canopy with the roar of the waves and the chattering of inquisitive birds in the background. Home to creatures large and small and filled with features of interest to keep you looking and wondering on the 2.5 kilometre walk. Wheelchair access is possible along part of the trail and it is level for most of the way.

Tour Fee: \$250.00 for 5 days or \$50.00 a day per person.

Includes all coach travel and informative literature. **No discounts on day trips.** All details will be advised upon enrolment. **Please contact Grafton Artsfest Inc., PO Box 465, Grafton. NSW. 2460, telephone: (02) 6643 1528, Fax: (02) 6643 4933, Mobile: 0419 448 442 for an**



application form, bookings, cancellation information and details of other courses available.

Your Tour Guide - Kathleen Davies.

Qualifications in Environmental Management, Travel & Tour Guiding, Journalism, Cultural Heritage, Bush Regeneration, Weed Control and Environment and wildlife Interpretation, member of ORCCA Marine mammal rescue and training. She is a self-taught artist, selling works nationally and overseas with award-winning works exhibited at country shows around Australia. Kathleen has worked in many ranger and tour guide situations and is currently Discovery (Interpretations) Ranger Coordinator with NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service in the Grafton District.

DID YOU KNOW?

The value of retaining trees on rural land is now recognised more widely throughout rural communities.

These trees provide shade and shelter for stock in hot conditions, and help to stabilise the soil.

They also provide feeding, breeding, resting and shelter places for many native birds and animals, from insects to predatory and nectar eating birds, to marsupials and reptiles. All found to be perfect partners in the effective control of pests in the rural

WILDLIFE & LANDSCAPE ARTIST. KATHLEEN DAVIES.

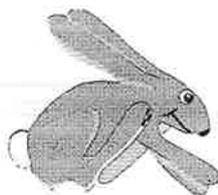
Ph: (02) 66 477 143 or write to 3871 Casino Road, Lawrence, NSW. 2460, for details on wildlife and landscape art for sale and commission work for individual works or publications.

Works produced in oils, pencil, pen & ink, watercolours and acrylics.

Publications, wall murals, brochures, standard framed artwork.

Portfolio available for viewing by arrangement.

AVAILABLE FOR IMMEDIATE START on YOUR PROJECT.



ART SHOW

To raise awareness of the Wildlife & Native Plants Study Group, the Australian Plants Society and the beauty and necessity of wildlife, native plants and the artistic qualities both possess, which we often take for granted.

- ✧ On show at the Maclean Council Chambers foyer, River Street, Maclean township, northern NSW. 2463.
- ✧ All works available for sale and contact numbers/business cards provided.
- ✧ Exhibition dates from July 19th to August 16th, 1999.
- ✧ Entry is free to view exhibits.
- ✧ Study Group information will be available.
- ✧ Please contact The Secretary, Wildlife & Native Plants Study Group, 3871 Casino Road, Lawrence. NSW 2460. Ph: (02) 66 477 143, for details.



WHAT A GOOD IDEA!

Don't throw twigs, grass clippings and leaves out with the rubbish.

Place them all on your garden beds. This provides lots of places for lizards to hide. And lizards, as you know, keep down the insect pests in your garden!

WAR AND PEACE!

It is said that for every creature in nature, there is a natural predator. This keeps nature in balance.

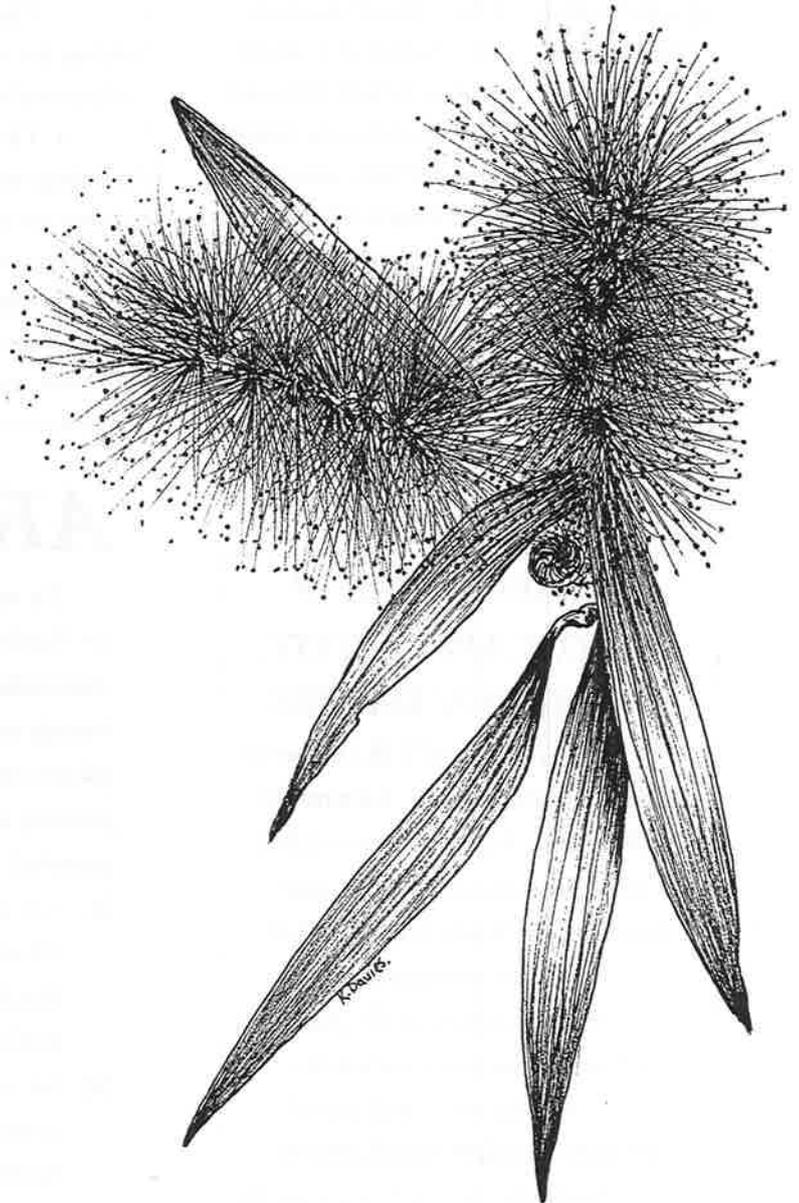
In the natural world, there is a natural solution to every threat.

Prey can become predators and predators can become prey.

Everything in your garden is keeping everything else in check, provided the balance is right. And you thought it was peaceful in your garden!

It's a war out there. But, if we take into consideration a restricted use of chemical controls, planting of selected vegetation for the area, an ability to tolerate all sorts of bugs, insects, spiders, skinks and so on, the balance of nature in our particular area, it will be a peaceful and natural war.

We will benefit, and so will the garden and wildlife we hope to attract and maintain in it.





CONTROLS OF VEGETATION.

A major limitation to productivity of many native plants in the ecosystems are insects: Although, with this in mind, insects are of prime importance in the recycling of minerals for plants to use.

The eating habits of plant-eating insects are included in the factors which limit plant productivity.

From another angle, these same insects feeding ravenously upon the native vegetation can be seen to be performing a valuable role in recycling nutrients which are essential to the health of the native plants.

By eating the vegetative matter, insects are able to limit the productivity of certain plants on which they feed. But, at the same time, their place in the ecosystem is essential for many reasons including nutrient recycling.

Although many gardeners may look upon the burrowing habits of creatures such as termites, ants and worms as of somewhat 'nuisance' value, their role in contributing to the aeration of soil, decomposition of vegetative matter and water infiltration into the soil, especially the lower layers, is sometimes overlooked.

Many Australian native plant species depend on insects, birds and other animals for pollination and seed dispersal.

A FEATHER IN YOUR CAP.

Recently, during research and writing of a Plan of Management for the local Lawrence Swamp Reserve, I came across some interesting features hidden in the heart of the village of Lawrence in northern NSW.

On the wetland section, the waterbird rookery was in full swing, with the many waterbird species clamouring for nesting space in the remaining Melaleuca trees.

Several of the species present had been hunted almost to the brink of extinction

in the early part of this century solely for their fine breeding plumage. With this practice now outlawed, numbers have increased. Although the reduction in habitat size and availability determines how much the numbers increase.

The observations made of the waterbirds and their squabbling for nesting and roosting space was evidence that the removal of native trees and lack of natural or artificial regeneration of the plants has resulted in a distinct lack of space.

The destruction of other areas of similar habitat has resulted in birds which would have nested in those areas, congregating in the ever decreasing remaining areas. This is resulting in overcrowding. Not, as some, observers have put it, dramatic increases in bird populations.

The Reserve is mainly a wetland habitat environment. But the fringing vegetation on the higher surrounding slopes provides a safe haven for other vegetation species who prefer not to have their 'feet' so wet for extended periods of time.

Struggling to keep their leaves and branches above the choking strangle hold of introduced weed species such as lantana, Brazilian Nightshade and Balloon Vine, were a few examples of native rainforest species once common along the Clarence River bank areas.

Examples of Red Cedar and Moreton Bay Figs presented themselves to the keen surveyor. Red Cedar were once plentiful along much of the extensive length of the Clarence River banks, but were quickly removed by timber cutters in the early part of the century.

The plentiful number of birds including the native pigeons and Fig Birds, help disperse the seed of the Fig trees. These trees are fairly slow to grow, but provide plenty of shade, food, shelter and general habitat to a wide variety of native wildlife.