

HFNC Excursion to Kanawalla Railway Flora Reserve

Sunday 11 December 2011

Rod Bird

Present were Rod Bird & Diane Luhrs, David & Lyn Munro, Yvonne Ingeme & Reto Zollinger, John & Glenys Cayley.

This year we decided to make an afternoon excursion and combine that with a late afternoon bar-b-cue to end the year. Keith Cumming had slashed the grass on the rail trail and the overhanging branches had been cleared away earlier so we were able to drive from the Hensley Park Rd entrance down the track to the centre (the south end of the old Station Ground) where there is shade, shelter, plenty of parking space and a bare area to set up a portable gas stove to cook on.

We walked back to the gate and inspected the new sign at the gate (part of a Bush Guardian project with designs by Reto – see photos) and our plantings of 2006 and 2007, finding that most of the trees and shrubs had done rather well, although Black Wallabies had chewed a few and many trees near the gate have suffered from the hard conditions there (this was part of the siding and has been heavily compacted) and the weeds that thrived on the spillage of fertiliser in the latter half of last century. Silver Banksias, in particular, have been slow-growing and subject to the attention of the wallabies. The wire guards that were fitted over the plastic sleeves of quite a few plants have given some protection.

Drooping Sheoaks, where attacked early or slow-growing, have also suffered in some areas. The patch of sheoak in the far SW corner of the Station Ground has outgrown the wallabies and are now most impressive. The carpet of needles has suppressed the long grass that dominated that area following the falling of the huge old pines there. Hopefully that will also happen in other places where we have established such groves.

The trees (Manna Gum, Swamp Gum, Tree Everlasting and Sweet Bursaria) planted amidst the stumps of the former Cypress patch have mostly done well, although weed growth there has been prolific. A leaf hopper and dense clusters of another small sap-sucker attended by black ants (see photo) have attacked the eucalypts but they will probably be OK. We knocked down most of the tall thistles and freed a few of the smaller trees from weeds. Some patches of Phalaris need to be sprayed.

We found several dozen small Briar Rose sprouting along various parts of the reserve and they will also need treating in 2012, along with *Oxalis purpurea* at a few spots along the south-east fence line (plants were treated earlier but follow-up is required).

Flowering plants seen included Yellow Grass-lily, Blue Grass-lily, Blushing Bindweed and Common Centaury. Birds seen included Grey Shrike-thrush, Crimson Rosella, Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoo, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Brown Thornbill, Flame Robin (females or juveniles), Grey Fantail, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Rufous Whistler, Silvereye, Restless Flycatcher, Long-billed Corella, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Laughing Kookaburra, Common Blackbird and Rufous Fantail.

The highlight of the day was the sighting by Diane of 2 pairs of the Rufous Fantails, the males busy displaying – a notable find for this bird is rarely seen in this region, although it is seen in the Cobobboonee forest, Otways and (on occasions) the Grampians. The attached photographs scarcely do justice to these beautiful birds.

Notable also were the large numbers of Common Brown Butterflies (see photo) as we walked through the reserve.

A relaxing and pleasant time was enjoyed on this fine, calm afternoon and we concluded the day at 8 pm.

