

Newsletter

Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens

2016 No.7

We are in the middle of Spring and some of the Flora and Fauna in the Botanic Gardens have been putting on a show! There are lots of images to view...as they say a picture tells a thousand words. Enjoy our latest newsletter.

Spring in the Gardens put a spring in our step!



Spring started with Wattle day...

Wattle day has been celebrated across Australia since 1992 and back in 1988 the Golden Wattle *Acacia pycnantha* was officially gazetted as Australia's national floral emblem.

← Pretty Wattle *Acacia decora*

Every day during September we posted Spring flowers on our Facebook pages... Such variety!

See some more of our Spring flowers sprinkled throughout this newsletter.



Golden Everlasting Daisy
Xerochrysum bracteatum



Swamp Hibiscus
Hibiscus diversifolius



Liniment Tree
Asteromyrtus symphyocarpa

Spring in the Gardens for Small Explorers had spring showers.

Venturing out to do a 'Spring' flower hunt, we were met with raindrops, but it produced some opportunities for puddle jumping, seeing a special butterfly and impromptu singing under the Heritage Garden shelter while we waited for the rain to stop.



No such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing choices... they say!



Spring showers continued... but then...

Lots of books, storytelling, creatures and drawing too in the dry meeting room... a great morning!



Spring in the Gardens brings out the birds and the bees ...



Red-backed Fairy-Wren (male in red)



Australasian Grebe and 2 chicks on her back.



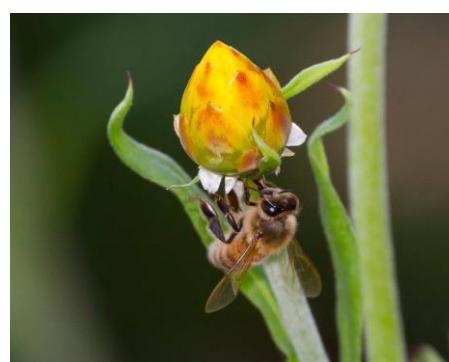
Three Hornbill Friar Bird babies waiting for food



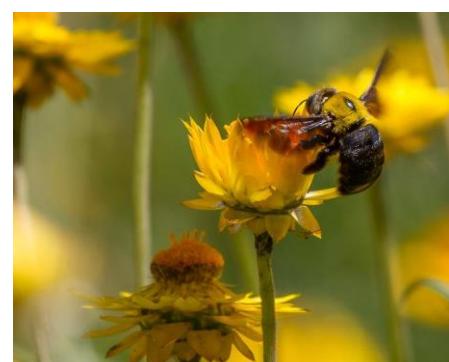
Young male Sunbird.



Willy Wagtail on nest



European Honeybee

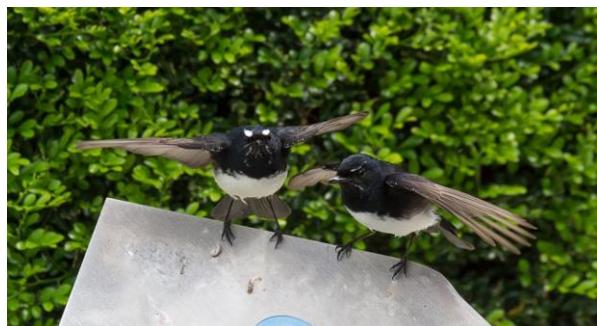


Carpenter Bee (native)

Birds of a feather flocked together during Spring School Holiday activities.

It's a Bird! It's a plane! No, it was a bird!

Children participating in the Bird watching School Holiday activities saw a range of birds and binoculars made them seem even closer. Did you know we have 146 different species of birds at the Botanic Gardens? Some of the birds live here all the time, especially the wetland birds, but also many bush birds like honeyeaters, wrens, figbirds and sunbirds. The children later made bird nests and birds too from clay, grass and feathers.



On our walk around the Botanic Gardens we saw Willy wagtails doing distraction dances so we wouldn't go near their nest where babies were hiding.

Pelicans put on a good show demonstrating their feeding action of spearing the water and glugging down any fish caught.



Binoculars certainly helped to see the small floating brown nest made by the Australasian Grebe.

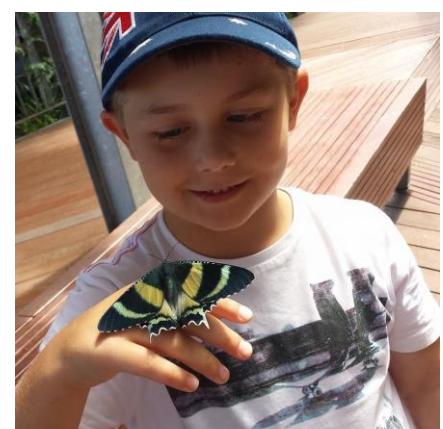


Pee Wee birds (or Mudlarks) make nests from mud and grass. We often see them near the lagoon edge collecting mud. The children later made bird nests but instead of mud used clay, grass and added feathers to their clay birds.



We were very fortunate to see Darters, Pelicans, Cormorants, and Spoonbills... four of the six birds in the story "The Best Beak In Boonaroo Bay".

Other winged creatures joined in the school holiday activities too...like this gorgeous Zodiac Moth...



Spring in the Gardens brings out lots of orchids...



Swamp orchid *Phaius australis* (above) puts on a splendid show during September, but only for a short time. Once the flowers are pollinated the show is over!



Longer lasting is the Christmas Orchid *Calanthe australasica* (white orchid) and the Purple Ground Orchid *Spathoglottis plicata* (purple orchid to the right) flowering for many months.



Golden Orchid *Dendrobium discolor* (below left) is very common around our region and spray of golden flowers can be seen in the trees in surrounding bushland and even growing on rocky outcrops near the sea. Our Queensland Black Orchid *Cymbidium canaliculatum* (below right) is also flowering prolifically with six flower spikes arching out from the wharf log it is mounted on. No wonder the **Orchid Extravaganza** is held in September every year.



Spring is the time for our Emblem to shine!



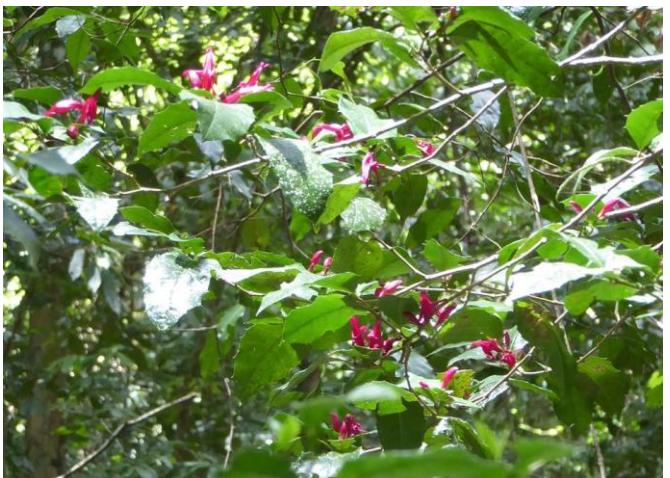
Mount Blackwood Holly *Graptophyllum ilicifolium* is a rainforest understory shrub that grows in granitic soils with dark, shiny green, holly-like leaves. Clusters of deep pink, tubular flowers are borne in the leaf axils around September / October.

In 1984 the plant was rediscovered by David Champion on Mt Adder, and from that time the Mount Blackwood Holly was propagated and trialled by Society for Growing Australian Plants (SGAP) Mackay Branch members and friends. It was offered to the general public for the first time at the Australian Plant Spectacular in 1991 and is now available at nurseries - often as "Holly Fuchsia". The Mount Blackwood Holly was adopted as the floral emblem of the Mackay Branch of SGAP in 1992 and the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens in 2003.

Mt Blackwood Holly seen flowering in the wild!



25 people (Friends of the Gardens, Birdlife Mackay, SGAP members, Landcare and Botanic Gardens staff) joined Visitors Services Officer Maya and her husband Kevin on their acreage at Mt Blackwood. It was an easy walk up Holly creek (a seasonal creek) to see Mt Blackwood Holly flowering in the wild. Two of the rambling bushes put on a lovely show of flowers.



BYO Picnic lunches were eaten on the house verandas.

Later we walked to Picnic creek, some of us to the rock face where we found Hoya plants scrambling over the rocks. The creek spa pool had surprises too, a tiny, tiny orchid and new birds... 4 Topknot Pigeons and male and female Leaden Flycatchers splashing in the water. A great day in bush surrounds.



'Meadowlands' is staging different shows in SPRING!

The Grass is Greener Music festival with BMX Freestyle show at the Meadowlands Amphitheatre at the Botanic Gardens Sunday 16th October was a huge success. The event went off without a hitch, it was extremely popular – attended by over 2,700 people and it was the first ever commercial use of the Amphitheatre. Check out the photos.



Movies in the Meadow, Friday 28th October... Are you brave enough to join in?

The Botanic Gardens' will be hosting its inaugural Movies in the Meadow event on Friday, October 28 at Meadowlands Amphitheatre. What better way to relax on a Friday night than with movies under the stars.



There will be two movies to choose from including, "Monster House" at 6.30pm for families and "The Others" at 8.30pm for older audiences. The outdoor venue will also add to the spooky atmosphere of this event. Food will be available from Mackay Host Lions Food Van and Munchie Busters or bring your own picnic and movie snacks. Popcorn lovers; you will need to bring your own, as all popcorn machines in Mackay are busy or broken! Boohoo or it that BOOOOOO!!!!

Springtime in the Lagoons Gallery and Cafe too?

'BOTANICA 2016'... An Exhibition by the Mackay Botanical Art Interest Group

"Plants with a story to tell"- Colourful, curious and captivating flora is showcased in this botanical art exhibition where the artists use a range of techniques to portray their chosen subject.

Each 'specimen' has been chosen because there is an interesting story associated with the plant, be that historically, medicinally, horticulturally or merely folklore. Botanical art combines detail, accuracy and artistry, with many hours needed for each watercolour painting, acrylic painting or graphite drawing. **On show till Sunday 6th November...**

Image is 'Phillip Island Hibiscus' *Hibiscus insularis* by Madge Barnett.



← Turmeric *Curcuma longa*



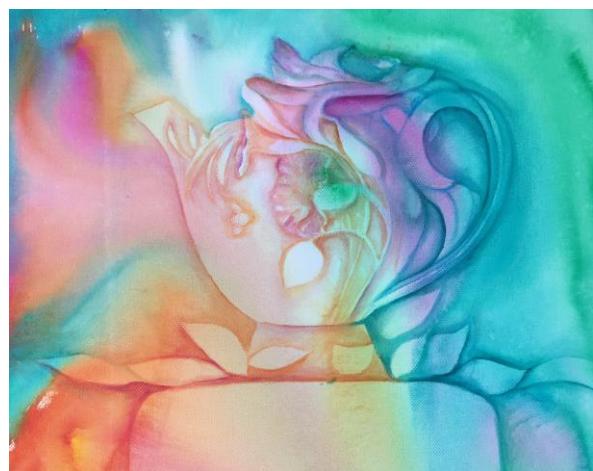
Champion's Actephila
Actephila championiae



Kapok
Cochlospermum sp.

Tea's Me... An Exhibition by Pamela Finlay and Camilla Muller.

Wednesday 9th November – Sunday 11th December 2016 in the Lagoons Gallery.



A café is a wonderful place to relax with friends. Being surprised with all kinds of delicious treats adds to the experience.

Will I try something different today or shall I stay with the old favourites; being a Devonshire tea, chocolate brownies or caramel tarts? Maybe I should try a savoury delight such as sandwich fingers of cucumber or egg and lettuce.

To sip on a refreshing cup of tea now that's what I'm waiting for. Choices, choices, should it be Earl Grey, English Breakfast or a Spicy Chai.

Image: "I'm a little Teapot" by Pam Finlay.

Enjoying the company is the most important part, chatting with friends about happy things and looking at the exhibitions on show. Pamela is a painter and Camilla is a textile artist.

Meet the Artists... 12 November from 2pm:

Please R.S.V.P. to Pam Finlay (07) 47 864384 by Wednesday 9th November or contact the Botanic Gardens on 49527300 or email botanic@mackay.qld.gov.au

Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens Lagoons Gallery is open Wednesday to Friday 10am – 3pm and weekends from 9am - 4pm. Cost: Free

Have you noticed SPRING changes in the Gardens?

The Gardens have been having a bit of a Spring clean or spruce up...

Light poles in the Gardens have been having a new coat of paint. You may have seen the cherry picker and our hard working Maintenance Officer Roy aloft in it... washing and later painting the light poles in the Cremorne and Summerlands sections of the Gardens.

You may not have realised that to assist with orientation and interpretation of the Gardens we have 6 sections, each with their own specific colour on the light poles in the section / sector.

Cremorne is a 'purple-ish' or fuchsia in colour (matching the Mt Blackwood Holly flower colour) and Summerlands is 'orange-ish' or pumpkin in colour.

Each sector is referred to by its geographical location and also by the name of a significant local heritage garden of the 19th and 20th centuries to commemorate the early history of gardening in the region. The sector names are Balmoral; Kaligui; Cremorne; Summerlands, Rawsons Hollow and Meadowlands. Our Heritage Gardens area highlights these significant places too.



It's a Big Job and we are making progress... Plant Labels!

It annoys us too that there were so many blank labels in the Gardens... but you may have noticed that most of them have disappeared!

Due to environmentally friendly ink (that doesn't last long) and some of the paper labels becoming brittle, the Gardens seemed to be a sea of blank or hard to read labels.

We have been conducting a plant audit over many months and we are nearing the end of documenting exactly what plants and trees are actually in the Gardens. Now we can make new labels precisely for the correct plant and begin placing out new labels. We are trialling some new 'outdoor/ weatherproof labels' or labels with a UV film or coating to increase their longevity in the interim of creating more permanent etched labels. We will be starting soon with placing labels along main pathways beginning from the Rawsons hollow sector (PlayGarden end).



There are lots of Upgrades appearing in the Gardens too...

A massive THANKS to the Australian South Sea Islanders Work for the Dole teams. Their efforts in the Balmoral area of the Gardens has resulted in a much tidier and neater car park, an updated bridge and deck area near the pond, as well as a smartened up hut and meeting point. We are very grateful for all these 'great work' efforts as Gardens' staff would have not had the time or 'people power' to complete them. Thank you again teams.

Please be mindful that there are still other changes happening in the Balmoral area with path upgrades and culverts replacing a bridge. We apologise for any inconvenience, but the improvements will be appreciated.

Stop Press: GREAT NEWS coming soon... What could it be? Stay tuned... Watch our Facebook and Website pages.