

Highfields Falls Bushland Park Report 2023

Jane Butler

The team of 6 volunteers working at Highfields Falls have been very active in the last year; clearing the 3 main weeds (Lantana, asparagus fern and broad leaf privet), planting in the cleared sites and keeping up the watering to these young seedlings.

Last November The Toowoomba Christian College gave us 2 days of their time and sweat. We targeted the 3 main weeds with Max taking a group to clear privet, Bob to demonstrate his special technique of clearing asparagus ferns and the rest of us over saw the enthusiastic attack on lantana. We had no interruptions from the weather this time and consequently achieved a great deal. Many thanks to the teachers from TCC who were a great support and of course the children who put in a great effort.

We started this year with a planned trip to Yarraman to spend the day with another group of volunteers who had been clearing and revegetating with native trees along the creek there. We were greatly inspired by their work of 20 years. There was a clear difference between the areas they had cleared and replanted to the untouched zones not only with the vegetation but with the bird life as well. We came away with renewed enthusiasm.

The weeding and revegetating here at Highfields Falls are done in patches or as we call them zones. These patches are along the circular track that follows the creek. We have done it this way as we are conscious of wildlife needing corridors of shelter as they approach the creek for a drink. When replanting our aim is to replace the monoculture of the privet and lantana with a variety of mainly local native plants that will provide the wildlife with a diversity of habitat, shelter and food source. For example, the Brown Cuckoo Dove who is now mainly reliant on privet for its food source at Highfields Falls can turn to a variety of sources it once had with our reintroduction of plants such as *Breynia longifolia*, *Trema tomentosa* and *Wikstroemia indica*.

Through Penny's instigation we have started to monitor whether the diversity of plants helps to increase the numbers of birds and the variety of species as we surmise. We want to know for sure the work we are doing at the Park is having a positive impact on the bird life. Penny has marked out 3 small triangles within 2 of our zones of different stages of regrowth and has recorded the number of plants and types. Each season the number of plants, types and amount of regrowth will be recorded. Along beside this monitoring of plant diversity we have been recording the number of birds and species in these zones.

This year we have been very pleased to receive help to revegetate a planned site from one of our local companies. Metalcorp, who wishes to help with carbon harvesting by planting trees approached Rob for advice where the best place for such an ambition would be. With approval from the council and help from Crows Nest Community nursery who provides us with most of our plants, we have helped with advice, encouragement and 2 acres of our patch (thereabouts!). They provided the effort, the water and paid for the plants. Thankyou Metalcorp.

To conclude, I am very grateful for the support, enthusiasm and encourage from Team Highfields Falls. Without the team support we would not have made the great progress I think we have achieved this year.