

Highfields Falls

Jane Butler

The team of volunteers working at Highfields Falls this year has grown. We are very pleased to welcome in the last year Sue, Ken, Stuart, Warwick and Sheldon (our youngest member) with his enthusiastic minder Jamie to our team.

We have been very active in the last year clearing 4 new zones of the 3 main weeds Lantana, asparagus fern and broad leaf privet, revegetating and keeping up the watering to these young seedlings. Thankfully we have had a good growing season this Summer helping the regrowth. Here we are (see photo) celebrating completing a very dense growth of lantana and Privet.

As with previous years The Toowoomba Christian College students (about 28) volunteered their time to help with clearing and planting. Unfortunately, the weather interfered and we managed only a morning of the 2 days planned. However, a great deal was still accomplished with tracks of privet been chopped down, weeds tackled and the planting of 100+ seedlings, watering and mulching, all done with great enthusiasm despite the wet weather! Many thanks to the teachers and students from TCC.

I'm excited to report a new innovation to our park for tackling the serious weed Cat's Claw. This year we had a visit from a young scientist, Renee Ould, from the Healthy Land and Water Environmental body who released Jewel Beetles on to the vine as a new way of controlling this very vigorous weed. Last checked the beetles despite the cold weather were doing their job!

Each year we plan a trip away to a site that helps improve our knowledge and understanding of our bush environments. This year we visited Dougal Johnson's farm near Hampton where he has established corridors of regenerated bush around his paddocks. It was interesting to see the coming together of farming practices and environment restoration.

FEP has been working at Highfields Falls for 4 years now. The regrowth in the very first zones we weeded and planted has been gratifying to see. The monitoring of the weeds in these zones has been manageable which considering the wonderful weather conditions we have had over these last four years and the many new zones we have opened up demonstrates solid progress. We have continued to monitor the bird numbers in our zones and feel confident the number of varieties of birds has not been affected by the initial clearing. In fact being surrounded by the bird life while we work is one of the joys of working at Highfields Falls.