

Can you have too many Bellbirds?

Most people like the melodic 'ding' sound of bellbirds as they drive through a bushy area. Henry Kendall's famous poem goes:

"And softer than slumber, and sweeter than singing,

The notes of the bell-birds are running and singing."

You may not know there is a dark side to these iconic birds. Bellbirds, or Bell Miners, don't like sharing their nesting area with other birds and aggressively chase off visitors. Many trees, especially eucalypts, have sap-sucking insects called psyllids on their leaves. They build little sugary houses called lerps to hide under. Bellbirds like to eat the lerps but they protect the psyllids to ensure ongoing food. With no small birds to control the psyllids, their numbers explode causing damage to the leaves and eventual defoliation of the trees.

In some areas, vast numbers of eucalypts have died by this process. It is called "Bell Miner Associated Dieback". Where this occurs there is often a dense, single-species understory such as lantana or privet where the birds nest and launch attacks on other birds.

On a property in Blacks Road Arcadia there are large eucalypts with dense privets underneath. Bellbirds have taken control, and the eucalypts on 5 or 6 adjacent properties are suffering increasing defoliation. Our Landcare group has been successful in winning a grant to clear the privets and plant native shrubs and trees. A contract for Stage 1 has been let and work will begin in July. This is challenging work for our small group. We would like residents to help us in later stages of the project.

Find out more by contacting us at StillCreekLandcare.com.au or facebook Still-Creek-Landcare or 9653 2056.

The Australian Plants Society

The Australian Plants Society-North Shore Group will meet on June 14th at 8 pm in the Willow Park Community Hall, 25 Edgeworth David Avenue, Hornsby.

Mark Abell will talk about "Potting Mixes". All welcome. Further details at www.blandfordia.org.au



Cumberland Orchid Circle inc.

The next meeting of the Cumberland Orchid Circle will be on Wednesday 26th June 2013 in Community of Christ Neighbourhood Centre at 10-14 Taylor Street, West Pennant Hills. The meeting will start at 8.00pm and will last approx 2.0 hrs. Circle members Yin and Sau-wan Chan will present a talk on conservation and culture of Australian native terrestrial orchids.

At each meeting there is a sales table selling plants brought along by members, in addition to accessories used for orchid culture. During our supper interval, there will be time to "compare notes" and seek advice from other members.

Visitors & new members are always welcome. For more information, contact the Circle's secretary on 0412 982 830.



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