

Leave Redwood alone

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

IN 2019, the Toowoomba Regional Council and Lockyer Valley Regional Council voted unanimously to endorse the Escarpment Mountain Bike Master Plan 2019-26, to establish a series of mountain bike trails in Redwood and Jubilee parks.

Since then, there have been numerous letters to the editor of The Chronicle, most of which object to any mountain bike trails in Redwood Park (Jubilee Park is already riddled with bike trails).

Objections to establishing mountain bike trails in Redwood Park are mainly based on environmental concerns, such as the presence of threatened and endangered plant communities and animal species; increased soil erosion and weed invasion; loss of amenity.

Also, the impact of high speed downhill mountain bikes on more leisurely activities, such as hiking, birdwatching and nature studies.

During the drought in 2018 and 2019, I sat quietly near one of the last remaining waterholes along Gatton Creek (not far from the picnic area) and was treated to an amazing diversity of wildlife coming to the water to drink and/or “skinny dip” or just doze in a tree nearby, like the majestic powerful owl.

Waves of honeyeaters and finches, usually led by a vanguard of silvereyes descended on the waterhole at regular intervals.

At times there were so many birds coming in to drink it was impossible to count them.

Some species, like Lewin’s honeyeater appeared to be the most numerous or just the thirstiest of the nine species of honeyeaters seen.

And then to cap-off, one morning a magnificent male regent bowerbird appeared showing off his gold and black duds.

On several occasions a brown goshawk or a collared sparrowhawk silently appeared and sat quietly in a nearby tree hoping to snatch a midmorning snack.

In total I recorded 61 species of birds, three species of reptiles and one mammal species (short-beaked echidna) at this site.

On one occasion a magnificent large and very sleek Eastern brown snake glided silently past me within about a hands length away looking for a drink and maybe a bird snack.

Redwood Park is home to a healthy number of lace monitors (a type of goanna), and one day a very large lace monitor came down the sandstone ridge behind me and literally sat down about a metre away.

It looked me over and probed the air with its long, forked tongue to sense what odours I was emitting.

It then decided I was probably too old to be a threat and not decomposed enough to offer a tasty, succulent meal, so, it moved on with the typical swaggering monitor lizard gait towards the creek.

Can these magic moments occur again if mountain bikers are thundering through this area? I don't think so.

In my opinion regional councils, like the TRC which consists mainly of members/supporters of the LNP have little empathy for the environment unless it can be used to generate an income for business enterprises.

Development to generate income for small and big business is "hardwired" in their DNA, so I doubt the TRC will backflip and not allow any mountain bike trails within Redwood Park, unless there are legal reasons preventing these trails from being constructed.

The TRC has been blindsided by the grossly inflated estimates of the economic benefit of \$20 million per year from these new trails.

I think the Tooth Fairy must have been active in council chambers.

The big question is where these trails will go once the Environmental Assessment Report is finalised.

I doubt that the TRC would allow trails through the endangered dry rainforest because this ecosystem has a several threatened species which are protected by state legislation.

So, wherever these trails are located there is going to be some impact on the plants, animals, soil, water quality in Gatton Creek and loss of amenity for passive recreation.

Redwood Park is probably an important drought refuge for wildlife because apparently there is always some water in Gatton Creek even during severe droughts.

So what will happen if some of the proposed mountain bike trails cross Gatton Creek at these important drought-refuge pools? Low impact recreational activities (hiking, bird watching, etc.) don't generate much income unless they are actively promoted by regional councils.

So, Mr Mayor and councillors please leave Redwood Park for the preservation of its high biodiversity, historical and cultural values.

Keep mountain bikes out of this great natural asset so that visitors can enjoy the sights, sounds and smells of nature in action without mountain bikes hurtling through the area.

Mountain bikers are well catered for with numerous authorised and unauthorised trails in Jubilee Park and below Picnic Point.

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