

Redwood Park

A RUFOUS Fantail swings its tail feathers around in apparent delight.

A Buff-breasted Buttonquail scurries through the undergrowth, anxious not to be seen.

A Powerful Owl surges through the cool night air, hunting for a tasty morsel.

These residents of Redwood Park all share an unfortunate common ground; they may not be around for too much longer.

With Threatened Species Week held recently, I'd like to give a shout out to these special neighbours that delight so many of us, and that need our help.

Toowoomba is fortunate enough to house within its boundaries a very rare and threatened ecosystem in Australia – Dry Rainforest.

Confusingly known by many names, this understudied ecotype is rapidly gaining more attention.

The term “Dry Rainforest” itself is a headscratcher. The “rain” part should say it all, right? Classic to the Australian experience, these forests experience less reliable rainfall than their tropical or temperate counterparts.

Hardier and more drought-tolerant than most rainforest species, the plants that thrive in Dry Rainforests are gaining a lot of attention for their applications in forest regeneration and even backyard gardens.

As our climate continues to warm, these types of vegetation that are preadapted to harsher conditions are going to be invaluable, to both humans and animals alike, provided we can support and learn about them now.

Dry Rainforest was once far more widespread in southeast Queensland, part of a connected landscape of forest types. Now it exists in fragmented, isolated patches that provide refuge to species that would otherwise have nowhere to go.

Species like the Rufous Fantail.

These perky, flittering little birds snatch insects out of the air in the shade of moist gullies while filling the air with their sweet song.

Like the Buff-breasted Buttonquail. Perhaps the most understudied species in Australia, there are thought to be as few as 500 of these shy and elusive birds left and Toowoomba houses one of their rare sanctuaries.

Like the Powerful Owl. This is Australia's largest owl species. Their distinctive “woo-

hoo” call resonates through the night air as they hunt their prey.

These are just the stories of a select few. Get to know them. Get to know others. Your voice may be the only chance they have.

With the council proposing to develop parts of Redwood into a fast paced, competitive mountain bike track and event site, these species are facing an imminent threat.

This is no adventurous family bike ride through a serene landscape.

No, what is being proposed is an endurance speed track which will damage and disturb the vulnerable flora and fauna (and the current visitation from walkers, bird watchers, and nature lovers), despite other available options on the Toowoomba escarpment.

The earth is currently experiencing its sixth great extinction

event. Akin to when a meteor took out the dinosaurs, we are now losing species at an alarming rate. This time, however, the cause is us.

Our endless expansion and unsustainable use of resources has landed us in a sticky situation, and our current Federal Government is pushing legislation in the Senate which will make it easier for companies to make short term profits off long term damage. Damage which is already causing economic, social and health issues in our community.

We can make a difference by starting small and saving our little patch of paradise.

We need to show, as a community, that we can support development of mountain bike tracks in Jubilee Park while leaving Redwood intact to protect its vulnerable species.

We need leaders who will listen.

Leaders who will lead, negotiate and compromise.

Maybe if we can do that here we can set the stage for a national conversation.

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