



MOGGILL CREEK CATCHMENT GROUP

P.O. Box 657, Kenmore. 4069

Moggill News, May 2001

Newsletter of the Moggill Creek Catchment Group

From the Chairman

Make sure you visit the MCCMG stand at the Brookfield Show, which this year is over 19th and 20th May. You will find our tent just inside the main entrance. Exhibits will cover the range of activities of the MCCMG and there will be Committee members on hand to answer your questions about revegetation and other environmental issues.

For the June meeting our guest speaker will be Dave Kington from Brisbane Forest Park. Dave has over 20 years experience as a Forest Ranger in the Mt Nebo area. His areas of expertise are feral animal and weed management and the management of fire in forest ecosystems. Dave's talk will focus on interactions between dingoes and the rural/residential community, as well as some of his experiences working in Brisbane Forest Park. After the recent tragic fatality on Fraser Island, this topical talk should be of interest to us all.

Our current funding from Natural Heritage Trust, which supports our co-ordinator, Michael Reif, comes to an end this September. With Brad Wilson of Brisbane Forest Park we are currently applying for further funding to support Michael for another year. If successful, the emphasis will be rehabilitating private land, while still interacting with the Bushcare groups. These will be largely supported by the City Council and their future, at least in the medium term, is secure.

The article by Antoon de Vos, published in this newsletter, reinforces what many of us have long suspected. Although his experience comes from Pullenvale, undoubtedly the same trends are present in our catchment. Frequently 'development' for housing blocks entails extensive bush clearance, often with 'land-scraping', and transforming natural grassy woodland into areas of mown grass. Is it any wonder that the wildlife is disappearing? We should all consider the likely effect of our actions on the wildlife community around us.

Notes from the Field Officer (May 2001)

As we approach the end of our 3-year funding period MCCMG projects are preparing for the challenge of working without my guidance. The process of introducing working bee groups to working without my direct assistance has been very successful and most groups are now comfortable working on their own. I have had an excellent response to my Private Landowner Project application forms with 25 forms returned. Many of these forms include detailed maps of revegetation projects currently under way on private property. If you live within the Moggill Creek Catchment and would like advice on how to revegetate your property make sure you contact me before our NHT funding ceases at the end of September.

Another project on the go is the monitoring of MCCMG sites for 2001. This will be the third monitoring document produced and should show with photographs and data how the revegetation sites have developed over the last 2-3 years. Some of our sites that are nearly 3 years old already have trees around 5-6m in height! The monitoring document will also give the group a full picture of what has been achieved in terms of trees planted and area rehabilitated. Our nursery continues to produce quality plants for our revegetation sites. If you would like to come and see how the nursery operates there will be an Open Day from 9am-12pm on Wednesday the 27th of June. The nursery is located in the grounds of Gold Creek Reservoir, at the end of Gold Creek Road.

Where has all our Wildlife gone?

Many people have expressed concerns about the progressive deforestation in South-Eastern Queensland, but not much has been said about how this and other changes in native habitats and other environmental conditions have affected wildlife.

Fourteen years ago my family and I moved to a 4 ha block in Pullenvale. Our land covers a hill and part of a valley with an intermittent creek and was surrounded by other 4 ha blocks. Only four other houses were present in the immediate neighbourhood. The land was once a dairy farm and is now covered by pasture land in the valley and remnants of dry eucalypt forest on the hills. Almost all the land surrounding us is now split up into 1 ha blocks; on most of these barrier fences have been erected and houses constructed.

The further subdivision of the land has resulted in considerable changes in the environment, such as further clearing of bushland, construction of driveways and the establishment and fertilization of lawns. As a result, much wildlife cover has been removed and the creek has become more polluted and silted up. No wonder, then, that conditions for many wildlife species have deteriorated.

During the first five years of our residence I counted 70 species of birds on our property. These included single observations of White-necked Heron, White Ibis, Plumed Whistling Duck, Spotted Crane, Japanese Snipe, Wonga Pigeon and Tawny Frogmouth. Some of these species may be rare in the area.

However, more recently I have noticed a decided decline in several species, including Scaly-breasted Lorikeets, Brush Turkeys, Straw-necked Ibises, Masked Lapwings and Peaceful Doves. Bandicoots and Red-necked Wallabies have been absent from our property for many years. Bearded Dragons, once common, have almost completely disappeared. Blue-tongued Lizards and green frogs are no longer to be seen. Snakes, and particularly Carpet Snakes, are much less common.

It is difficult, and often impossible, to determine why a certain wildlife species has decreased in abundance, but at least for some species, likely reasons can be suggested. Among the various factors affecting wildlife populations, habitat changes appear to be by far the most obvious cause. Removal of rough, grassy areas and lantana no doubt have resulted in the disappearance of the Easter Whipbird, Variegated Wren and Double-barred Finch. Masked Lapwings have reduced in number as a result of loss of suitable nesting habitat. Brown Pigeons may have disappeared because of lack of suitable food sources.

Another major factor affecting the survival of wildlife is domestic and feral dogs and cats, as well as an increase in Red Fox populations. This, no doubt, has affected ground-nesting species, such as Wonga Pigeons, Brush Turkeys and Bush Thick-knees. The removal of nesting mounds of Brush Turkeys must also play a role. There is also the possible effect of introduced birds, such as Indian Mynahs, on the local avifauna. These have been present on our property over the last seven years, and are known elsewhere to compete with native birds. Other factors affecting local wildlife include the use of particular pesticides, various diseases, and, possibly, changes in local climate through global warming.

A decline in the number of wallabies can be attributed to decrease in suitable habitat, road kills, predation by dogs and the erection of barrier fences. The decrease in number of snakes can mainly be attributed to the tendency of many residents to kill them on sight, regardless of whether or not they are venomous.

I would not like to leave the impression that the human-induced factors referred to are necessarily detrimental to all wildlife. Indeed, several species of birds may have benefited, including Crested Pigeons, Rainbow Lorikeets and Pied Butcherbirds.

Undoubtedly, efforts made by local Catchment Groups to control introduced species of plants along creeks and replace them with native species will be helpful in the protection and survival of native wildlife. The maintenance of continuous strips of native vegetation along creeks is valuable to certain wildlife species. Fortunately, the Brisbane City Council has become increasingly active in the protection of native forests and wetlands, through Vegetation Protection Orders, and assisting Catchment Groups in establishing nature reserves and environmental parks.

Increased awareness of the needs of wildlife and efforts to impose conditions for certain wildlife species which are now gradually disappearing should be helpful in the long term. This can be enhanced by efforts in conservation education, particularly in schools.

As I reflect on my 14 years in this area, I must sit back and reflect on the state of nature and wonder what increasing man-made changes in our environment will lead up to.

Antoon de Vos
(retired Professor of Wildlife Biology)

Acknowledgements: I am indebted to Peter Ogilvie and Ian Gynther, both of the Queensland Environment Protection Agency, for their comments on an earlier version of this article.

Pennisetum along upper Moggill Creek – how to control it

Several MCCMG members in Upper Brookfield have expressed concern over a robust grass which is taking over sections of upper Moggill Creek. The grass is elephant grass (*Pennisetum purpureum*) or possibly a hybrid between elephant grass and pearl millet. Both of these grasses have been introduced to Australia for cattle feed and for windbreaks in orchards. They can grow to a height of 4 metres or more and are extremely competitive, spreading by short rhizomes and soon forming pure stands. Leaves are broad, and the inflorescence, produced in winter, is superficially similar to that of setaria, but broader. They require moist to wet conditions and fertile soils, so in our area are restricted to the creeks. Fortunately, they do not spread to any marked extent by seed – the hybrid is totally sterile and elephant grass itself produces little viable seed. Commercially, propagation is by stem cuttings, and spread of this grass is certainly by stems and basal parts of the plant washing downstream and re-establishing in mud on the banks.

In response to a request from MCCMG, the Council did a search of land under its control between Peronne Rd and the western end of Upper Brookfield Rd, and established the fact that only a single small area of BCC land is infested with *Pennisetum* (at 590 Upper Brookfield Rd.). The major portion of the infestation is on private land, and we should really encourage landowners to control it. Section 6, under Michelle St Baker, is making it a priority, focussing on doing a limited area thoroughly and creating a buffer, rather than a broad-brush approach.

Elephant grass and its hybrid may readily be controlled with glyphosate. Cut back the tall stems to close to ground level and, after 3-5 weeks (in spring-summer), spray with glyphosate at the recommended rate. A follow-up spray may be necessary. When cutting back, cut stems may generally be left where they are cut. However, if there is a risk of them being carried downstream in a flood, it is better to carry them above flood level. After killing the elephant grass, replace with native trees, selecting at least some fast-growing species to stabilise streambanks and shade out competition.



Around the Catchment

Section 5: Work on Private Land

With approximately 55 landholders, Section 5 is almost entirely private land. The area is made up of dry Eucalyptus forest with some dry rainforest and riparian zones. There is a percentage of open grassland used for horse paddocks, areas of lantana and wattle regrowth, and some land used for cropping.

Seventeen landholders have been actively engaged in planting around 4000 plants on areas of their properties. These include riparian, hilltop and hillside plantings of rainforest and eucalyptus species.

Another six landowners are eliminating environmental weeds on their properties. One landowner has been clearing the creek on their property of elephant grass.

A further two landholders are gathering information for plantings of cabinet timbers and it would appear that they will proceed in the middle of 2001.

Public land in the section is very limited. However, one landholder is liaising with BCC's Tom McHugh regarding some creekside plantings within the road reserve.

At this stage 26, or around 50%, of landholders in the section are actively involved in these various ways on their properties.

I have been involved in a regeneration project on my land under the South East Queensland Rainforest Recovery Program. This involves the planting of 2250 plants in an area of approximately 2000 square metres. All the species being planted are represented in the existing rainforest.

New plantings in the section generally have been limited by the low rainfall over the last twelve months. It is to be hoped that better rainfall will encourage more of the 50% of landholders not yet committed to become interested in the catchment project.

John Smith

Section 12: Creekside Park and Walkway

Section 12 is a 5ha strip of public land along Gap Creek opposite the Brookfield Tennis Centre and running through to Kookaburra Street with access to Gap Creek Road. Mike Humphreys and his group of volunteers have so far weeded, planted and maintained around 1ha beginning at the Brookfield Road end. They are gradually transforming and extending this area as a pleasant public amenity and walkway that is also an environmental asset.

Planting in this section has been assisted by the number of large local trees surviving among the weeds. In removing the strangling weed vines and choking understory, some hardy survivors from an earlier planting project around ten years ago have been rediscovered. These are a help but also a reminder with the numbers of unoccupied stakes of the need for ongoing maintenance of new plantings.

Work so far has been on the eastern side of the creek as the mown pathway has made this accessible for clearing and removing weed trees such as Chinese elm, camphor laurel, pepper trees and privet. Clearing and planting along the pathway have been slowed by the need to maintain the planted areas as well as continue weed clearing and replacement planting further along the creek. So far, around 1000 new plants have been started and monitored.

Regular work on this project has come from Anita Humphreys, Andrea Humphreys, Neal Jenkinson, Theresa Collofello, Don Webster, Jack Talty and, before his illness, Rob Johnstone. Occasional volunteers have been Marie Kuipers, Mary Gallagher, Dianne McCann, Rebecca Ryan. Mike Humphreys has also found time outside scheduled monthly working bees to do some checking, watering or weed spraying.

Michael Reif until recently gave valuable assistance before he has become more involved in private land projects.

One working bee last year was given a boost by members of the women's group, Soroptimus, who take on projects from the local to the international level. This welcome group of volunteers included Councillor Margaret de Wit, anonymous among the busy figures

planting and mulching and linking in bucket brigades. Soroptimus will return to help out on a nominated Sunday later this year.

As with all the sections, more volunteers are always welcome, particularly if we are going to eventually weed and plant clear through to Kookaburra Street.



The Bigger Picture

When working in our own sections of the Moggill catchment it's good to keep the bigger picture in mind. Catchment awareness and management are part of a wider state and national plan concerned to improve the environmental health of our waterways. The sorry state of the Murray Darling basin caused by land degradation and salination and the consequent threat to the sustainability of agriculture and drinking water for towns and cities has been taken as a note of dire warning to the whole country.

As part of that country, the Moggill catchment occupies 57.6 square kilometres. Its creeks and waterways disperse rainfall through the suburbs of Kenmore, Kenmore Hills, Brookfield and Upper Brookfield. The Moggill Creek's tributaries include Gold Creek and Reservoir, Gap Creek, Wonga Creek, McKay Brook and a number of short creeks and tributaries that begin on residential hillsides or in the Brisbane Forest Park.

Its boundaries are Kenmore Road, Moggill Road, Bielby Road, Sir Samuel Griffith Drive, Gap Creek Road, the Brisbane City Council border, Haven Road, Royston Road, Westridge Road and Woodfield Road.

As a volunteer catchment management group established in 1997 by local community members with assistance from the BCC and with some funding from the Natural Heritage Trust, it's a good time to reconsider the larger plan as outlined in the original MCCMG brochure. How are we going on restoring the waterways, for example, or controlling the 'non-local invasive plants'?

How are we going on creating wider awareness that all of us live in a catchment somewhere and the catchment is essential to our supply of life-dependent water? In the driest continent on earth, water has become a national priority and one of the local ways this is reflected is in our work with the Moggill Creek Catchment Management Group. Our working bees are all part of that bigger picture.

MCCMG Field Officer Aids Landholders

The initial work of the MCCMG volunteers has been on public land. This work has been aimed at improving creekside environments through the removal of dominant weeds and replanting with local creekside vegetation. To a lesser extent, it has also been concerned with monitoring water quality.

However, most of the Moggill Creek catchment is on private land. This includes residential suburbs, commercial areas, residential acreage, farmlands and natural bushland. Improving the Moggill catchment on any scale clearly needs the cooperation and understanding of private landholders in the area.

The MCCMG field officer, Michael Reif, has begun assisting private landholders in the catchment area. So far, around eighty landholders have contacted Michael and received advice on managing their land in ways that consider its effects on the health of the catchment's environment.

For some material assistance, Michael has developed an application form that asks landholders to draw up and submit a plan for their property or at least for the areas to be cleared and planted. The plan asks them to consider the numbers and kinds of plantings in three broad categories of creekside, hillside or ridgetop and the proportions of canopy, understory and groundcover plants required.

The plan is a useful discipline as it forces applicants to be realistic regarding the practicalities of time and cost and scale. One-off 'backyard blitzes' are just not appropriate for larger properties. However, a good plan has significant long-term advantages regarding both environmental health and maintenance.

To assist planning, Michael has prepared an information booklet for interested landowners and is continuing to work on this as he gains through his contacts more information on local landowners' needs and particular problems.

Common requests for assistance are with: recognition of and advice on the removal of environmental weeds; recognition of local species already in place; advice on appropriate local species for particular areas; and sources of local plants. More broadly, people without botanical backgrounds are interested in good sources of information about local plants and bush regeneration.

For advice and possible assistance on managing private land as part of the catchment, members can phone the MCCMG field officer, Michael Reif, on 0408 109 210 or 3300 4855 or email michael.reif@dnr.qld.gov.au

What Motivates Catchment Volunteers?

While weeding and planting on these beautiful days in Autumn can be a pleasant task, the same thing in a humid summer can make volunteer catchment workers ask themselves just why they do it. Just what is it that keeps volunteers coming back to fight the lantana and madeira vine and the whole cohort of aggressive invaders on behalf of the locals? A talk with two regular volunteers, Neal Jenkinson and Theresa Collofello, gave some reasons that are probably shared by other catchment volunteers.

Both admitted a long-standing interest in the environment and a feeling that recognized environmental problems need not only talk but action. More specifically, the activity is free, it's healthy exercise, and, unlike gym work, it's outdoors and you don't need elaborate gear. not only that, you meet people, including your neighbours, you learn in a practical way about plants and ecology, and you get the rewards of seeing your work grow and knowing you are doing something positive for the community and the next generation.

There is also a growing sense of ownership of a project as you see it taking shape and this draws you back.

Attracting and maintaining volunteers on catchment projects remains a problem. Maybe if the work were seen more as a community sport or leisure activity it could attract more players.



Weed Watch

Upper Brookfield resident, Tina Heybroek, alerted MCCMG members and neighbours to the threat to the creek system posed by outbreaks upstream of elephant grass (*Pennisetum purpureum*). Her own attack on some of the tall, bamboo-like stands was assisted by neighbours, John Wilson and Peter Young, and by MCCMG section leader and BCC representative, John McKenzie. Bryan Hacker has included a note here on the weed potential of this escaped fodder grass.

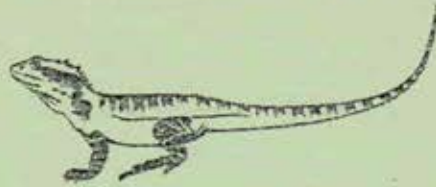
Section leader, Michelle St Baker, took some before-and-after photographs of their attack on the grass and these, along with some captive elephant grass, will be on display in the MCCMG tent at the Brookfield Show.

For information on the environmental weeds that invade our creeks and properties, Michelle has drawn attention to the Greening Australia Queensland (Inc.) website and its Brisbane Weed Guide. The website includes lists, pictures and descriptions of major weeds as well as sources of further information. The website address is:
www.qld.greeningaustralia.org.au/weedguide/BrisWeedGuide

See You at the Show

The anchor for the display of catchment work for the Brookfield Show will be Vic Blake, who works in Malcolm Frost's Section along Moggill Creek at Huntingdale. He will be assisted by a roster of members keen to explain the work of the MCCMG and enlist new members.

Bring along any friends who are not members and encourage them to sign up. It's still only \$5.50. Inactive members help with the costs of communication and more volunteers at the various catchment sections' working bees are always welcome. As an incentive, new members who enrol at the Show will receive while they last a free plant and brochure donated by BCC's Bushcare through Tom McHugh.



AN INVITATION

From

Moggill Creek Catchment Management Group.

A public mid-year meeting is to be held on

Wednesday, 20 June, at 7.00pm

In the Brookfield Hall,

Brookfield Showgrounds.

**Speaker Dave Kington from Brisbane Forest Park
will discuss the interaction between dingoes and the
rural /residential community.**

**Come to hear an expert speak with authority and
passion on this issue.**

Supper provided.

**Further information : Chairman,
PR Officer,**

**3374 1468
3374 1738**