# MOGGILL CREEK CATCHMENT GROUP

P.O. Box 657, Kenmore 4069

# MOGGILL CREEK CATCHMENT NEWSLETTER

**Winter 2005**

**Newsletter of the Moggill Creek Catchment Group**

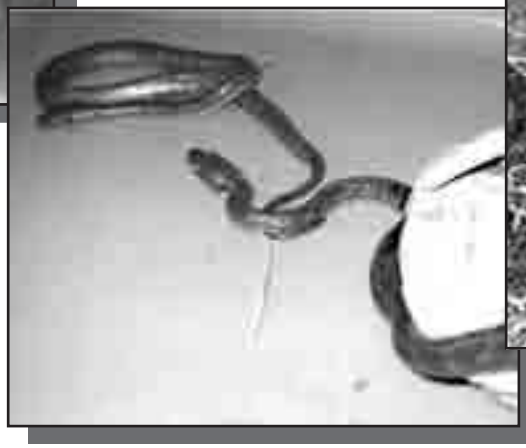
## Activities for young and old

Wildlife talk at Gum Tree Day (page 7)

Some members at Smith's Scrub walk (page 2) ▶

Let's look at the fish in our creeks (page 6)

What are you doing to save the gliders? (page 3) ▶



Snakes Alive! (page 8) ▶

# Chairman's Report

Over the last quarter MCCG has hosted three highly significant events. The first was the week-long display in Kenmore Village Shopping Centre and the second, the 'Life in a Gum Tree Day' at Brookfield Hall, on Sunday 10 April. This event, targeting families, was outstandingly successful – we catered for 100 and around 300 came to learn about their local environment and wildlife! Although very much a team effort, also involving neighbouring catchments and groups, credit for the day surely belongs with Chris Hosking who put the event together and Martin Fingland, our coordinator, with his local fauna. The third event, postponed from last spring because of rain, was our walk around Smith's Rainforest Nature Refuge, on Sunday 8 May. About 30 members enjoyed an informative visit, with Andrew Wilson and David Moore being our expert guides. Thanks are also due to Don Sands, who over lunch gave us a brief introduction to his new Richmond Birdwing Butterfly project, which is being supported by MCCG (watch this space for further details!).

Several of our Bushcare Groups have been very active since the New Year. Supported by an Envirofund grant, Malcolm Frost's group has been removing a large area of Chinese elms with the goal of planting a selection of more fauna-friendly local natives. Along McKay Brook a large area of elephant grass has been eliminated preparatory to planting in June and considerable progress is also evident along Gap Creek. We are also getting help from Greening Australia to control vines in the Moon's Lane Reserve.

By now many of you will have met Martin. Already the Catchment is benefitting from Martin's commitment and enthusiasm. Martin has been active at many of our working bees and has made contact with a number of landholders, discussing their revegetation programs. He is also developing opportunities to improve our website.

Another new initiative that Martin has developed is to arrange for a group of Environmental Resource Volunteers to work on priority areas throughout our catchment. This includes working on private land as well as helping on Bushcare sites. So if you have a major weed problem that you would like to tackle but is beyond your resources, contact Martin on 0408 774 631. Martin will select which tasks the Group works on, but we see priorities as being significant infestations of cat's claw or Madeira vine. Martin would be happy to consider other potential projects too, so don't hesitate to contact him. We expect the Environmental Resource Volunteers will be equipped to start work in mid-May.

In the summer 2004 issue I wrote an article about local rainfall, indicating that Smith's Rainforest Nature Refuge has a mean annual rainfall of 1212 mm and stressing how dry the last few years had been. The years 2000-2003 had rainfall of 575, 969, 675 and 885 mm, all well below average. The next year, 2004, totalled 1462 mm, a little above average, thanks to good falls in November. However, so far, 2005 doesn't look too good, with just 176 mm so far (26 April) at the Nature Refuge – and that was supposed to be our wet season! Many of us are finding we are losing trees, even quite big ones. We can learn from the experience which species are the most hardy – in my case, celerywood, crow's ash, white tamarind and white bean appear to be among the tougher rainforest species.

*Bryan Hacker*

# EDITORIAL

*Space available for this has had to give way to the amount of material submitted for this issue. That volume was not, unfortunately, a response to the appeal for interesting observations or opinions from our membership at large. Nor did a request for views on the content of the Newsletter bear fruit. We do hope that someone reads it! The invitation remains open.*

*This issue includes an article on wattles, reproduced from a Land for Wildlife publication. It is an interesting addition to our pleas for recognition of the value of wattles; ours on the basis of their role in regeneration, this on a significance for associated wildlife. Your attitude to wattles reveals whether you really understand what we are on about.*

*Also included is an article provided by the Coordinator of our northern Catchment neighbour, about their survey of fish in their creeks. That is an area we have not yet taken on board but should. In this issue there is notice of our next public meeting, which is on the subject.*

## Seen any platypus splashing about in your local creek lately?

Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland is conducting a survey, as part of a national one, of the distribution and numbers of platypus. In the course of doing so, it is hoped to raise awareness of the issues facing platypus conservation, including riparian management, water pollution and land management in general, which will benefit many species. This is of particular interest to us.

These shy and unique animals are good indicators of the health of our creeks and are still in our catchment. The best times to see them are dawn and dusk. If you are lucky enough to spot one, please call Christine on 3374 3453.

## When Your Home is a Hollow

Working in the Moggill Creek Catchment and becoming more familiar with the landscape, I've quickly come to appreciate the diversity of vegetation and topography which exceeds most other areas fringing Brisbane.

Of note are the large number of mature eucalypts and other old 'habitat' trees, particularly the Forest Red Gums (Eucalyptus tereticornis). So often these are the first trees to go when development and closer settlement take place and as we know, they support a wide range of wildlife due to their sheer size and high number of hollows.

What is probably less well appreciated though is that Australia has the highest number of hollow dependent animals of anywhere in the world. This is in large part due to the dominance of the eucalypts in our landscapes and is characterised by their propensity to produce hollows, usually aided by the activities of termites and bushfire.

By virtue of being one of the most biodiverse regions in Australia, South-east Queensland (SEQ) and hence our local area, has a disproportionally high number of hollow-dependent residents. These include many birds which nest and/or roost in hollows, a number of reptiles, amphibians and a whole host of invertebrates. Mammals such as species of microbats also rely on hollows, but if you want to pick a group of charismatic, furry critters, that as a group are totally dependent on hollows, then look no further than the gliders.

Of Australia's six glider species, five can be found locally and unlike the Brushtail and Ringtail Possums which tend to thrive throughout the urban area, the gliders, due to their dependence on hollows and more specialised diets, are generally only found in the outlying areas where tracts of suitable forest remain.

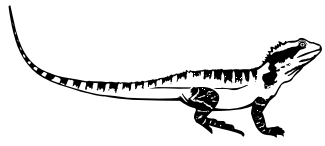
Apart from all sharing the unusual attribute of being able to volplane, the gliders are connected by their dependence on eucalypt forests, not only for hollows and nesting materials, but also for food. Their diets include the leaves, pollen, nectar, sap and even the honeydew excreted by sap sucking insects. The tiny Feather-tailed Glider is a nectar specialist, the medium sized Sugar and Squirrel Gliders are more versatile, the larger Yellow-bellied Glider enjoys sap which it extracts by making incisions into tree trunks. The largest species, the Greater Glider feeds almost exclusively on eucalypt leaves, and like the koala, has an enlarged caecum to assist digestion.

So the adage about planting eucalypts for koalas will benefit a whole range of other eucalypt-dependent fauna also. However, whereas a koala can browse on the foliage within a few short years, hollow dependent animals have to wait decades to obtain their accommodation needs. The formation of hollows often takes more than 50 years and with some trees it can take more than 100 years. The solution is a simple one but getting more difficult to achieve… don't cut down hollow trees in the first place. Unfortunately, mature tree loss is inevitable, due in part to storms, drought, safety concerns and inappropriate land management practices.

The loss of a habitat tree in an otherwise healthy patch of bush can sometimes be given a short term fix by the introduction of alternative accommodation… a nest box. It's definitely no substitute for a tree but can become a short to medium term home. One of the main considerations when building or selecting a nest box is the size of the entrance hole. Big holes attract big animals such as kookaburras and Brushtail Possums. No self respecting glider will consider using such a nest box for fear of an owl, python or goanna paying it a fatal visit. A general rule is the entrance hole should be no more than the head width of the animal it is intended for, which for a Sugar Glider is about 25mm.

The science of nest boxes is very well summed up by Allen and Stacey Franks in their book 'Nest boxes for Wildlife – A Practical Guide'. The Franks operate Hollow Log Homes: info@hollowloghomes.com.au, a business dedicated to building and researching nest boxes. They have amassed an amazing amount of information and film footage of hollow dependent animals in SEQ. They have proven that with proper design, construction and positioning, it is possible to provide substitute homes for many hollow-dependent animals including gliders.

To maintain the biodiversity and character of the Moggill Creek Catchment we should try to retain as many mature 'habitat' trees as possible; remembering that if a tree does meet its demise and it is likely there are hollow dependent animals in the vicinity, a well designed, properly positioned nest box can provide a temporary alternative home.



*Martin Fingland*

## Images of a Catchment, 2005 Photography Competition

Yes, it's on again for young, adult, amateur and professional photographers, the annual Moggill Creek Catchment Group's Photography Competition.
Let your camera show how you view Environmental Issues, Native Flora and Fauna and People participating in restoration work, all within Moggill Creek Catchment. Encourage your school to create a photographic record of some Catchment images.

**Entries are to be submitted Saturday 27th and Sunday 28th August at Brookfield Hall.**
**The display will take place from Monday 29th August to Sunday 4th September.**
**Cash prizes will be awarded.**

For an entry form outlining details, please send a stamped self addressed envelope to:

MCCMG Photography Competition
PO Box 657 Kenmore, 4069 OR Contact Robyn Frost 3374 0649

# Menisperm Vines and their Moths in the Moggill Creek Catchment

Native vines are not particularly popular in gardens and their plantings are often neglected in bush rehabilitation projects. Plant nurseries find the twining habits a nuisance as they climb and tangle other nearby plants. However, the environmental significance and values of vines in our bushlands are rarely understood or appreciated and few, including vines of the family Menispermaceae, are replanted or cultivated.

In southeastern Queensland about nine menisperm vines occur in rainforests but in northern Australia some deciduous species are adapted to open woodlands. One rare species, *Tinospora tinosporoides*, is known in Queensland only from Burleigh Heads. All have alternate leaves (not opposite) on the stems, no tendrils, and the leaf petioles of most species are swollen at one end. Some species ramble near the ground while others climb high into rainforest canopies. Young growing shoots are free of leaves and climb twigs and vegetation by curling their apex like a corkscrew. All menisperms are dioecious (male and female flowers on different vines) climbers and have red or black globular fruit which develop in umbels from the base of the petioles. The fruit are eaten by birds but all are probably toxic to humans and livestock.

Menispem vines are rich in organic chemicals and some are used in traditional medicines in Asia. All the species have intriguing relationships with insects. For example, caterpillars of large noctuid moths feed on the leaves and concentrate the toxic compounds. Caterpillars with red, black, white and cream markings do not have to hide from the predators that might otherwise be tempted to attack them. Moths (*Eudocima* spp.) developing from these caterpillars are capable of damaging ripening fruit. Known as 'fruit piercing moths' they pierce the skin of fruit with their heavily armoured proboscises to extract sugary juice. One serious pest species (*Eudocima fullonia*) is therefore not popular with tropical fruit growers and the presence of their food plants in nearby forests have sometimes been used to excuse the ruthless clearing of rainforests in the mistaken belief that removing vines will keep moths away from orchards. However, the large moths travel great distances and can memorise where the orchards are located, returning night after night to revisit and feed on tasty bunches of lychees, carambolas, citrus and almost any other sweet fruit. Clearing rainforest has no effect on abundance of the moths.

Best known of our menisperms is Tape vine (*Stephania japonica*), occurring close to the ground in forested areas. It has peltate leaves (petiole attached to leaf inside from edge) and very strong stems. These stems are used in Papua New Guinea as 'string', to bind rope ladders and bridges over gorges, and to strap the uprights of village houses. Tape vine is the food plant for larvae of the large (8 cm) 'silver stripe' fruit piercing moth (*Eudocima salaminia*). A similar vine *Stephania aculeata* (once common in Cubberla Creek) is much rarer in our Catchment than *S. japonica* and has soft 'prickles' on the stems. When its chemistry was investigated the tubers were found to contain compounds of pharmacological interest. The related *S. bancrofti* from northern Queensland also contains compounds that have been investigated as a possible source of anti-inflammatory drugs. It has bright red sap to warn animals of its toxicity but the leaves and stems are very palatable to the moth caterpillars.

Native 'grape' (*Legnephora moorei*) is common throughout the Catchment along creeks and slopes and is the tallest - growing of the local climbers with large, oval, or sometimes peltate leaves and large black grape-like berries that should not be eaten. Another vine, *Sarcopetalum harveyanum*, with shiny, bright green, heart-shaped leaves occurs near Gold Creek Dam and in wetter gullies towards near Mt Nebo. With duller green leaves, 'snake vine' (*Tinospora smilacina*) has distinctive blister-like glands on the stems and the ability to re-grow roots from severed stems. Unlike *S. harveyanum* and other menisperms, snake vine is always deciduous in late winter and spring. It is rich in active compounds and was used by the aboriginal people of Northern Territory to treat painful and swollen joints. *Pleogyne australis* is another low-growing vine with dull green leaves. It often grows in dry rainforest whereas the similar *Hypserpa decumbens* has pubescent leaves and grows taller in moist rainforest of wetter parts of the Catchment.

*Carronia multisepalea* is common in the higher rainfall areas of Mt Nebo and Mt Glorious. It has long, slender, glossy, dark green leaves. The vine grows on basaltic soils and is the food plant for larvae of the very rare southern pink underwing moth (*Phyllodes imperialis* ssp.), a giant moth with its wingspan reaching 13 cm. The adult moth sucks juices from rotting fruit of figs, and unlike its cousins the fruit piercing moths, it does not damage intact fruit. It is federally listed as an 'endangered' species as it only breeds in old growth undisturbed rainforest, itself a truly endangered ecosystem. To date this beautiful moth has been confirmed breeding only near Maleny where it shares its primary rainforest habitat with the threatened Coxen's fig parrots and Richmond birdwing butterflies. The caterpillar of this moth is equally spectacular with huge purple and white banded 'pseudo-eyes' that it displays when disturbed.

Menisperm vines used as traditional medicines and adult moths that eat fruit may sound to be strangely connected. However, I would be remiss if I failed to refer to related moths from SE Asia. One species (*Togarishachia albistriga*) drinks from human and animal tears while another moth (*Calyptra eustrigata*) from Malaysia pierces the skin of water buffalo, deer, elephants, zebu and tapir to extract blood. To obtain a photograph of an adult feeding, the author Hans Banziger made a prick on his finger tip to induce a moth to feed. The moth took one taste, promptly moved towards the wrist and forcefully thrust its proboscis into a much juicier part of his finger! Poised with camera in the other hand, Hans held tight and muttered a sharp word or two as he recorded this now-famous photograph of the moth sucking blood (1971, Fauna 1: 4-16) from the deep puncture it made with its proboscis! We have at least one Calyptra (*C. minuticornis*) in Australia – could it be a bloodsucker here? The same moth certainly does feed on the blood of animals in SE Asia!

The menisperm vines, as with most other native vines, support a 'zoo' of invertebrate wildlife and all are important contributions to the Moggill Creek Catchment's biodiversity. Every other species of vine has a wealth of insect life dependent on it for survival. If we do not want to grow a menisperm vine to see showy caterpillars feeding, who would not grow the native grape (*Cissus opaca* – fruit not poisonous!) as a food plant to attract into gardens the beautiful black, red, green and yellow day-flying Joseph's cloak moth (*Agarsita agricola*)?

*Don Sands*

# Molasses Grass is increasing in our Catchment

Except for upland wooded areas, almost all the grasses one sees along the roadsides, in fields and in paddocks in our catchment are exotic, and are mostly of African origin. Perhaps I hear you say – "What does that matter? Aren't all grasses much the same?" The answer is definitely "No!!". Most of the African grasses one sees are much more vigorous than our native species (which is why they were introduced in the first place). They crowd out and smother any native tree seedlings and herbaceous species and, in a fire, burn more hotly, killing or damaging larger plants.

One such exotic species is molasses grass, Melinis minutiflora. Driving with an open car window, one often smells that characteristic molasses smell, indicating there is a nearby stand of this species. In our area it is becoming increasingly common along Boscombe Road and on the slopes of Mt Coot-tha. It is quite similar to the related Natal grass, but is much more vigorous and flowers much later in the season, producing feathery purplish panicles. In the absence of grazing it appears to be tolerant of infertile soils and moderate shade, producing a monospecific sward. It produces large numbers of seeds which are easily carried by the wind, on clothing or in water.

Where infestations are light, molasses grass is best hand weeded, avoiding disturbing any native grasses (which is quite easy, as the molasses grass 'stems' are easily recognized by their spreading hairs). Dense infestations may be controlled by spraying with 1% glyphosate, when growth is active.

*Bryan Hacker*

Fig 1. A dense stand of molasses grass

Fig 2. Inflorescence

Fig 3. Hairy 'stems'

# Some tales from the past

Although I no longer live in Brookfield, I still retain a keen interest in the district. With my husband Harry, I spent many happy years in our home, at Massey Place, off Rafting Ground Road, not far from the Showground. The house had been built in 1874 by the Brimblecombes, one of the pioneer families of the district. Harry had grown up in Brisbane; I moved to Brookfield from Victoria in 1949 and I still have many close friends in the area. During the 1960s and before, Upper Brookfield was a significant area for fruit growing and dairying. Many of the hillsides were covered with banana and pawpaw plantations and much of the flatter land, in Brookfield, was used for grazing dairy cattle. Now, much of the steeper land has reverted to Acacia regrowth or lantana and other weeds. We left Brookfield in 1992, but only for health reasons.

I was interested to read the article on local rainfall that was published in the Summer edition of the Moggill Creek Catchment Newsletter. One of the findings in that article was that rainfall is substantially lower at the Vet Farm, Pinjarra Hills, than it is at Upper Brookfield. In the 1950s, when land was valued according to its productivity, land further along Rafting Ground Road was less expensive than that nearer to the Showground, associated with lower rainfall expectations. Indeed, the junction of Pinjarra and Moggill Roads, close to the Vet Farm, was then known as 'Hungry Man's Land.'

Another story which might interest readers concerns the platypus, now a creature of concern and seemingly becoming quite uncommon. In the 1960s, we quite often would pay an evening visit to a family by the name of Hoole, who had built a house close to Moggill Creek, near the junction of Rafting Ground Road and Greentrees Avenue. On several occasions there was a clattering sound from the laundry – a platypus!!

*Elizabeth Massey*

# Fish Survey in Enoggera Creek Catchment

(A report provided by the Catchment Coordinator)

It has been a busy couple of months for Save Our Waterways Now (SOWN), the Enoggera Creek Catchment group with March and April being Fish monitoring time. Over three weekends 30 dedicated SOWN members turned up to undertake 'fish snapshots' - monitoring local fish populations at three different sites along Fish and Enoggera Creeks.

Over the three days we were transported back to our childhood - paddling in the creek with fish nets (the trap variety – not the stockings!) seeking the elusive native gudgeons and rainbowfish. Armed with the help of the Fish monitoring guidelines jointly published by University of Queensland and QLD Waterwatch and a host of fishy paraphernalia we were well on our way to becoming monitoring experts!

Through a combination of bait trapping and dip netting we caught large haul of fish at all our sites. Once the fish were caught it was a race to identify them as quickly as possible using the taxonomic key with the aid of some colour photos. We learnt lots over the course of the monitoring, most importantly that it helps to put cat food (bait) into the traps in order to catch fish!

Our sites at Fish Creek, Yooralla St and St Johns Wood yielded mixed results, perhaps due to the dry weather of late. We found lots of stunning native fish in addition to lots of 'baddies' – aquarium escapees such as swordtails and platys and the introduced mosquitofish or Gambusia, a live bearer that threatens native fish and frog populations.

Fish creek at Waltons Bridge Reserve yielded the best haul of fish with over 83% of the total catch being native. Our haul there included many Crimson Spotted Rainbowfish and the colourful Purple Spotted Gudgeons. In addition, the discovery of the native Flyspecked Hardiheads at St Johns Wood created considerable excitement in the fish-spotting world. Enoggera Creek (St John's Wood) was not previously known to harbour this local species.

The inaugural Enoggera fish snapshots is something we plan to repeat each spring and autumn to collect information on the status and habitat requirements of fish in freshwater streams. This information has direct conservation value and will help to answer many questions surrounding fish populations in Brisbane including:

1. What is the distribution and abundance of native and introduced (exotic) fish species
2. How is the distribution and abundance of native and exotic fish species changing with time
3. What are the key types of threat (e.g. habitat degradation, invasions by exotic species) that affect native Australian fish species
4. Which waterways or sites are critical conservation areas; and
5. Can particular habitat elements or the composition of fish communities be used as indicators of overall stream quality

Through this monitoring we hope to better understand native and exotic fish populations throughout our catchment and eventually be able to provide habitat in our creeks that is more attractive to native fish. Fish monitoring is combined with Waterwatch and both in-stream vegetation and habitat assessments to gain a comprehensive picture of fish populations in Brisbane.

To check out the fish monitoring guidelines go to the QLD Waterwatch webpage at
**http://www.qld.waterwatch.org.au/resources/index.html**
We hope to see you undertaking fish snapshots in your local waterway in spring!

*Melinda McLean*

## WHAT FISH ARE IN OUR CREEKS?

**Don't miss the next MCCG Public Meeting!**

**Guest Speaker Dr. Kev Warburton from the University of Queensland will talk about the native and exotic fish that inhabit our local creeks and how this information can be useful in monitoring the health of our waterways.**

**When: Thursday 23rd June 2005.**
**Time: 7.30-10.pm. (with refreshments).**
**Information: Chris Hosking on 3374 3453.**

**ALL WELCOME**

# GUM TREE DAY - IT ROCKED!

First to appear on the 10th April were the artists, right on opening time. What a wonderful response to the MCCG Gum Tree Day Art Competition! Beautiful paintings, drawings and collages continued to arrive at the Brookfield Hall in a steady stream all day.

Meanwhile, waiting in the 'quiet room' for their guest appearances was a stunning assortment of amazing native animals. An endangered quoll, a vulnerable koala, a baby orphan brushtail possum, a crested hawk, not to mention an assortment of magnificent snakes were just a few of the species the children, parents and grandparents were to be treated to seeing and learning about. Even the smaller but equally important 'bugs of the gum tree canopy' were on display with magnificent stick insects, butterflies and beetles for the children to take delight in.

There was also much interesting and valuable information provided by the many community groups who participated with displays and the sausage sizzle had to be seen to be believed (the queue that is!)

We estimate 200-300 people came along. A pity if you missed it!
Thanks to everyone involved. It was a team effort that really worked. Until next time!

*Chris Hosking*

## Art competition winners:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **3 & under** | Sarah Thomas | **7 years** | Sandra Bull |
| **4 years** | Jordie Morgany | **8 years** | sandra Cottsman |
| **5 years** | Sean Scott-Burrows | **9 years** | Sandy Wright |
| **6 years** | Stephanie Yesberg | **10-12 years** | James McCall |

**Overall winner** Madie Binz (aged 8)

# Black Wattles

*(This article originally appeared in Land for Wildlife,Southeast Queensland, April 2005. It is reproduced here - without photographs – with the permission of its author, John Bowden, Environmental Officer, Pine Rivers Shire Council.)*

Maiden's Wattle (*Acacia maidenii*) is generally lumped together with a number of other acacias called "Black Wattle". Unfortunately, this name is now often used as a term of derision.

Some landholders and developers regard the black wattles and most other wattles as "rubbish". Not appreciating their environmental worth, some people argue for them to be cleared. Then, along with the "rubbish", go the other natives typically regenerating amongst them.

In the first few years of life, Maiden's Wattle is an appealing plant, a shrub or small tree with a smooth grey-green trunk and limbs, and bright green "leaves". However, the almost colourless exuding liquid and crystalline lumps of gum, here and there along the trunk and limbs, are a prelude of things to come. They indicate insect attack.

After its brief "attractive" stage, Maiden's Wattle spends the next ten to fifteen years epitomizing the Bob Dylan line, "He not busy being born is busy dying". But what a wealth of life is nourished and housed during the dying.

Throughout this time of progressive decrepitude, more and more insects – adults and larvae – feed on the wood, riddling it with holes and tunnels. In the cracks, crevices and cavities, an increasing array of animals find refuge and breeding space – pardalotes, microbats, skinks, treefrogs, insects (such as King Crickets) and spiders.

Each season, in spite of its deteriorating condition, Maiden's Wattle produces flowers that provide pollen for hoardes of insects. These in turn attract insectivorous birds.

While the plant holds on tenuously to life until the last, it continues to leak liquid sap from its wounds. This food source will have attracted many animals throughout the plant's relatively short life. Butterflies and moths, wasps and bees and other invertebrates partake of the feast. So do gliders, possums and flying foxes.

Sadly, people have been conditioned to think that all landscapes must be orderly, tidy and pretty. Maiden's Wattle is rarely planted, or retained for the term of its natural life. After a few attempts at revitalization via the "endogrub" the gardener usually gives it the chop. What a pity! The number of interesting and beautiful creatures nurtured and sheltered by his plant seems to be directly proportional to its dilapidation with age.

## Cute cat but a killer

This baby long-nosed bandicoot is a nocturnal native marsupial that is under threat in our catchment from loss of habitat, cats and dogs. It never stood a chance, butthis night-kill would have been avoided if the cat had remained inside from dusk until daylight.

***When is a Mouse not a Mouse?***
***When it is an Antechinus!***

To ensure that those creatures your cat so helpfully eradicates are indeed mice and not one of our rapidly disappearing native marsupials such as the Antechinus. Check for: light rings around the eyes, a black tail tip and a flattish broad head. (Reference: Wildlife of Greater Brisbane 1995).

***INTERESTED***

In learning more about being a volunteer Wildlife Carer? Call Chris on 3374 3453.

***REMINDER***

Please report any koala, platypus or other unusual wildlife sightings to Chris on 3374 3453.

## A snakey tale with a happy ending

Readers will remember that in our last newsletter we included an article about a carpet python that had decided our nursery was a good place to lay her eggs. The article ended saying that the eggs had not hatched, despite the fact that Mother Python had been coiled round them for about two months, and we thought they must have been infertile.

Late in February, she had left her eggs and they were covered in ants. Looking closer, an emerged snake skeleton was evident and a couple of eggs had holes, the young apparently emerged. Were the remaining eggs empty? Moving the eggs away from the ants, four baby carpet pythons emerged over the next few days and headed off into the scrubs around Gold Creek.

Many reptiles take great care about where they deposit their eggs, and even guard them during incubation or, in the case of pythons, keep them warm. Maternal care AFTER they hatch is not a strong suit among reptiles. Only crocodiles show maternal care, and if someone turns up a croc nest on Moggill Creek one day, that would give me the perfect excuse to write about that. In the meantime, if anyone sees a shivering python next breeding season, in a spot where I can get some good photos, please let me know. It is hard to get a good, natural-looking photo of a brooding python curled up and shivering in a red milk crate!

*Gordon Grigg*

## National Heritage funding for Moggill Creek Catchment

MCCG has recently been awarded a grant of $13,715 to assist in the restoration of Moggill Creek as it passes through Huntington Park close to Kailua Street. This stretch of creek bank is infested with Chinese elms. Chinese elm (Celtis sinensis) is one of the most serious environmental weed trees in Moggill Creek Catchment and Southeast Queensland. Native to China and Japan, it grows very vigorously to produce large numbers of berries whose seeds germinate rapidly. As a result, thickets of saplings destroy native vegetation. Insects and butterflies dislike the leaves and so the variety and abundance of native birds and butterflies along our creek bank are severely reduced.

Residents of Huntington Park will have noticed considerable activity over the last few months. Habitat Brisbane (Brisbane City Council), to support these efforts, has brought in equipment to destroy most of the weed undergrowth. This has enabled contractors to fell many large Chinese elms. The branches have been shredded on site and heaped to allow the seeds to be destroyed by the heat generated by the rotting vegetation. The Council workers have then spread this as mulch to extend the area for native planting.

These activities have been assisted by local neighbourhood volunteers who have actively supported the restoration work since 1998. In addition, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints have helped us clear saplings of Chinese elms and plant replacement natives in their place. These include more than forty species known to have been indigenous to the area. Particular emphasis is being placed on native plants which will encourage butterflies and native birds.

*Malcolm Frost*

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