

MOGGILL CREEK CATCHMENT GROUP

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NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2006



◀ We can now show the Richmond Birdwing butterfly in colour.



▲ We seem to have lost the fig parrot (see p. 5 Interactions). *From a painting by Sally Elmer.*

▼ Don't overlook the macro fungi for interest and often beauty.



▼ School children helping (see p. 6 Conservation Partnership)



About MCGG

Moggill Creek Catchment Group is a volunteer action community group aiming to conserve and improve the natural environment of its catchment on both private and public land.

Editorial

In the last issue we said that we were looking in to the possibility of going to colour. At the time of writing we have decided to do so and hope that it has happened with the present. Every page carrying colour costs more so we are going with two such pages, one being the front where we have been placing pictures to draw attention to some of the content. The other will be used for pictures belonging to articles describing plants, animals etc. where reality in the illustration is important. Unfortunately that removes the picture from immediate view for the reader but presents no real difficulty in our few pages. It is likely that we will at times have more pictures than will fit on that page and those where colour is less important will remain in black- and-white with their articles.

A matter to be resolved is that of photograph quality, particularly in the electronic sense. We need good pictures to make the colour worthwhile. A compromise between size and convenience of handling has to be settled on.

A further need for a good picture is white paper, to which we have gone, and of better quality than previously. Therefore our old practice of different colours for the four annual issues ends.

The last issue referred to our restored website (shown on p.1) and you are encouraged to visit it for the varied and useful information-including past issues of the Newsletter. As with all we do, we will do it better if we get constructive feed-back. That we very rarely do receive such can not be that what we do is perfect, hopefully it does not mean that nobody reads this, leaving the likelihood that members or even others who receive this are reluctant to comment. Surely some of you have ideas.

Chairman's Report

I am delighted to be able to report that a new Coordinator has been appointed and we all give him a big welcome. Our new coordinator is Greg Siepen, who has a wide range of skills that will add a considerable measure of depth to our Catchment activities. We are sad to say farewell to Martin – he has truly done a magnificent job during the year he has been with us. However, we hope to invite him, together with some of his menagerie, to future MCCG events.

The drought continues. In the Summer 2004 edition of Moggill Creek News, I reported rainfall records for Smith's Rainforest Nature Refuge, which had a mean rainfall (1970 – 2004) of 1212 mm. The four years 2000-2003 inclusive all had less than 80% of the mean for the site. Thanks to late rain in November and December, the total for 2004 was 1163 mm, just a little below the average. However, the total for 2005 amounted to just 755 mm, just 62% of the mean. These tough conditions have certainly sorted out the sheep from the goats, with *Harpullia pendula*, *Flindersia* spp., *Jagera pseudorhus* and *Dysoxylum* spp. faring particularly well on my ridge-top block. In contrast, *Elaeocarpus grandis*, *Homolanthus* and *Macaranga* have not survived the drought.

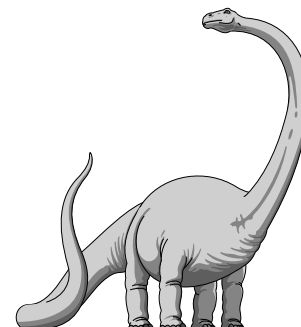
Our sincere congratulations to MCCG member Rachel Griffiths. Rachel received an Australia Day Achievement Award from Lord Mayor Campbell Newman for her community work with The Hut Environmental and Community Association (THECA) and her many contributions to bushcare.

Keeping young plants alive can be a problem in hot weather, and many of our soils seem not to absorb water when you water plants, the water only penetrating to a few millimetres. A way of getting over this problem (and conserving water) is to sink an empty flower pot into the soil fairly close to your planted seedling. It is a good idea to sink the pot on the up-hill side of the seedling. When the pot is filled with water, the water seeps into the soil at depth, where it should be more beneficial to your plant.

Bryan Hacker

Did you know?

We all know about the terrifying carnivorous dinosaurs, but did you know that some dinosaurs ate grass? It used to be thought that grasses were not common until long after the dinosaurs died out at the end of the Cretaceous period, but a recent article in the journal *New Scientist* (26 Nov 2005, p. 7) gives good evidence that dinosaurs munched on at least five quite advanced species of grass more than 65 million years ago. The evidence comes from several different forms of silica crystal found in fossilized dinosaur dung in India, which have been linked to different grass species. This was a surprise to many plant scientists, who believed that grasses evolved much more recently.



Bryan Hacker

HOLY MOSES - MOSSI LIKES MY MOWER!

I am used to swatting mosquitoes after rain as I try to mow the slopes of my steep block at Upper Brookfield but never before did I find cicadas ñ quite large ones – circling my ride-on mower and settling on me as I cut grass! 15 November 2005 was a humid day and at about 1230 hrs while mowing beneath hoop pines (*Araucaria cunninghamii*) more than 30 individuals of an unusual black cicada, *Psaltoda mossi* Moulds, appeared to be attracted to the sound of the mower. When I cut the engine they rapidly flew off but returned again when it was restarted. Both sexes flew about me but those I caught were mostly males.

Marc Coombs (pers. com.) informs me that some species of cicadas can be stimulated to call by the sound of machinery. For example, he noted the **Black Friday** cicada, *Psaltoda pictobasis* (Walker), began calling in response to a tractor passing nearby at Moree, NSW. Similarly I recall the **Red Eye**, *P. moerens* (Germar), began calling when a train passed by a property where I lived at Wahroonga, near Sydney.

Psaltoda mossi is not usually common in the western suburbs of Brisbane but this year in November they seem to be very abundant. It certainly was a new experience to have cicadas settling on my shirt!

Large cicadas such as *P. mossi* have long life cycles, with immature nymphal stages feeding underground on sap from plant roots, for 6-7 years or more. By contrast their deafening adults live less than two weeks above ground during warmer months. Some years the species can be rare while in other years they appear in unpredictably immense numbers. Almost all male cicadas produce sound, each different according to species and the larger species can be deafening as they call to attract their mates. The males of two very primitive cicadas, the **Hairy Cicada**, *Tettigarcta crinita* Distant, occurring from the Blue Mountains to Victoria and **Tasmanian Hairy Cicada**, *T. tormentosa* White, are the only living representatives that produce no sounds.

I am grateful to Dr Marc Coombs, CSIRO Entomology for identifying the species of cicada.

Don Sands

Our New Coordinator

Our new coordinator, Greg Siepen, comes to join us with a wide background of experience in natural resource management. Greg graduated from the University of New England with a Bachelor of Science, majoring in ecology, and worked for several years with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. He progressed to NSW State Landcare Coordinator and then to a position as Manager of Community Nature Conservation in the Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage, where he led the team that set up the Nature Refuge system, Voluntary Conservation Agreements and the Department's Bushcare Program.

After completing a Masters degree in Colorado in 1994, Greg took up a lectureship at the Gatton campus of the University of Queensland. His teaching and research roles have been in the fields of Community Nature Conservation, wildlife, and attitudes of rural landholders to conservation issues.

Greg is Vice-President of THECA (The Hut Environment and Community Association), a group that carries out environmental work, education and promotion in Chapel Hill.



Bryan Hacker

Notes from the Nursery

The timely rain last Winter and Spring has resulted in a better than usual supply of seed, both species and amount. We have a wonderful group of Nursery Volunteers to handle the opportunity. And we have increased our bench space. As a result, we anticipate holding more tube stock than we have in the past. What we need now is really effective rain to encourage planting, particularly on sites where ongoing watering is impractical.

We still have a few Richmond Birdwing Butterfly vines suitable for sale to our members. After they have gone, there will be a long wait for the hundreds of young plants to be ready to go out. So if you intend planting some, get them now.

Graeme Wilson



▲ Common Brushtail Possum (see p. 7)



▲ Mountain Brushtail Possum (See p. 7)



▲ *Thumbergia* (see p. 5)



▲ Tina and student (see p. 6)



▲ *Dondonea cuneata* (see p. 5)

Dondonea triquetra (see p. 5) ►



***Thunbergia alata* (black eyed Susan)**

Thunbergia alata (black eyed Susan) is a slender climbing weed that can twine up shrubs and small trees to a height of several metres. It is quite common in the Brookfield area – although not as aggressive as some of the introduced climbers, it can still be a nuisance in new plantings.

Like many of our environmental weeds, *Thunbergia alata* was purposefully introduced as an ornamental. The flowers are 3-4 cm across, orange with a dark centre. (Photo on p.4) The species is native to East Africa. The genus is named after the Swedish botanist Carl Peter Thunberg (born in 1743) and the species name ‘alata’ is derived from the word ‘alate’, meaning ‘winged’. This is because the petioles (leaf stalks) have a distinctive narrow wing along each side.

The best way to control *Thunbergia alata* is by hand-weeding, tracking stems back to the slender crown. However, getting rid of it totally is a difficult task, as this species flowers right through the summer. Each flower gives rise to a 4-seeded fruit, so over a period of time numerous seeds are released into the soil.

Bryan Hacker

Hop bushes – quick-growing local shrubs

Dodonaea species, commonly known as hop bushes, are in the plant family Sapindaceae, which also includes local native trees such as foam bark, guioa and hairy bird’s eye, as well as the weed balloon vine. The genus was named in 1754 after Rembert Dodoens, a 16th Century Flemish botanist, who was professor of medicine in the University of Leyden, the Netherlands. There are 69 species of *Dodonaea*, most of which are native to Australia. Flowers are insignificant but the fruit are quite showy; most species have male and female plants. Commonest in our area are probably *D. triquetra* and *D. cuneata* (see pictures on p 4).

Hop bushes grow naturally in partially shaded areas, on the edge of rainforest or wet-sclerophyll forest. *D. triquetra* grows to 3 m tall, while *D. cuneata* is lower-growing. Both species are extremely quick-growing in cultivation, the former exceeding 1 m in the first year of growth and producing masses of 3-winged fruit. *D. cuneata* will also fruit in the first year of growth. Both species are useful additions to a planting providing conditions are not too arid, and we usually have plants available at our nursery.

I was told that king parrots are attracted to hop bush fruit, but king parrots in my area have shown little interest in my hop bushes. However, according to Don Sands, *Dodonaea* spp. are food plants for *Hypochrysops ignites*, the Fiery Jewel butterfly. One of many good reasons for planting local natives is to provide shelter and food for native wildlife, including butterflies.

Bryan Hacker

Interactions 2

Coxen’s fig parrot (see photo on p.1)) has at least two requirements for its existence. One is a plentiful and continuous food supply, the other a nesting site. While it may have a few secondary foods, it depends mainly on fig seeds which are not produced in the absence of pollination by particular species of wasps, with different species required for the various species of fig. The parrot is now rare in S E Queensland where it was once plentiful and has not been seen in our catchment for a long time..

There are about 10 species of fig native to our catchment, adapted to dry rainforest and riparian zones, the areas most thoroughly deforested following European settlement. Remaining figs are few and widely dispersed. New trees in intervening areas arrive by way of seeds carried by birds in the case of natural regeneration, or plants coming from nurseries. In either case, appropriate wasps do not come with them. These have to arrive from original trees in reasonable proximity, and thus spatial continuity of each fig species has to be re-established. Further, a wide range of fig species is required to ensure continuity of fruit through the year.

The parrots nest in holes they make in rotting branches, which are not available in the absence of old trees. These are few as a result of earlier extensive clearing, partly for grazing and cultivation, partly for timber, and not least because of a belief that clearing was in itself “a good thing”. And even now, many landholders routinely fell old trees for various-often not good- reasons.

Graeme Wilson

Membership Reminder

If you did not renew your MCCG Membership in 2005, now would be a good time!

Send your details, including your new email address if it has changed, and \$10 to:

The Secretary, Membership

MCCG, PO Box 657, Kenmore, Qld 4069

Plant Families 7 – Rutaceae

The family Rutaceae takes its name from the genus *Ruta* (rue) which does not occur here. It is one of great economic importance worldwide because it includes the citrus species, while we have a few species over several genera in our catchment.

Citrus occurs mainly in SE Asia and spills over to Australia, giving our catchment two species, *C.australis* and *C.australasica* (the former with more or less spherical fruit and the latter with elongated fruit). Another shrub is *Achronychia laevis* which has a marked citrus smell in the fruit (not edible!).

Then we move to some fine trees in the genus *Flindersia*; *F. australis*, *F. bennettiana*, *F. collina*, *F.schottiana* and *F. xanthoxyla*. Other trees include *Bouchardartia neurococca*, *Dinosperma erythroccum*, *Meliocope micrococca* and *Zanthoxylum brachyanthum*.

Like many families, this one has given us an exotic weed, again via ornamental horticulture; *Murraya paniculata* (murraya or mock orange, and it does continue the citrus perfume in its flowers). It is hardy and thus suited to a wide range of soils, is a prolific seed producer and is so widely cultivated that there is a seed source just about everywhere. There is a native *Murraya* in the north.

Graeme Wilson

A Conservation Partnership In Action

On a mild morning in late 2005, a local school and the MCCG joined forces to learn about and care for the environment.

Students from the Upper Brookfield Primary School joined the Moggill Creek Catchment Group for a morning of rehabilitation work along a formerly degraded section of upper Moggill Creek at Kittani Street.

This long section of the creek that Tina Heybrook (see photo p 4) has worked on tirelessly had received little assistance, but thanks to funding from Natural Resource Management Southeast Queensland (NRMSEQ) and willing support from Brisbane City Council (supplying plants and tools), we can now fully rehabilitate the whole section.

Even the Channel 10 Totally Wild crew was on hand to film these industrious labours! It was a truly integrated approach to the conservation of a local creek that feeds directly into the Brisbane River.

Christine Hosking

Catchment tour 2005

On the 4th December, 18 MCCG members and a Catchment Coordinator wearing his bus drivers hat, climbed aboard a small bus for a day touring the catchment. First stop was the end of Gold Creek Rd where Gordon and Jan Grigg were on site, ready to share their experiences and enthusiasm for rainforest regeneration and plant identification. Somewhere in the conversation the idea for a 'Vines and Wines' workshop was spawned – so early in the day too.

Next stop was Creekside Park, Huntington and Malcolm Frost became tour guide for the next hour or so. The site is a 1.5km stretch of riparian restoration, mostly viewed from the bus windows with a short excursion to see the process of Chinese Elm removal, mulching and replanting.

After lunch we ventured upstream, briefly stopping to say hello to a group of enthusiastic international 'Conservation Volunteers' weeding a creek edge site in Upper Brookfield. After climbing a steep ridge we arrived at Geoff Spanner's property in the head of the catchment. Geoff kindly agreed to show us his backyard, a eucalypt forest intersected by a beautiful gully with small rock pools. Geoff explained the different techniques he'd used for weed removal (including use of a ladder on the steep slopes!) and the challenges of living in a fire prone and relatively remote area. Most members became just as interested in Geoff's alternative energy and composting toilet infrastructure.

The tour was completed with a brief stop to see rehabilitation work at the Kittani St Bridge, a project partnered with SEQ Catchments who have provided significant funding to repair a partially degraded section of Moggill Creek. All agreed they'd learnt much and experienced firsthand the great catchment enhancement work being conducted by MCCG members. Many thanks to Brisbane Forest Park for use of their mini-bus. Hopefully 2006 will produce another opportunity to explore other sections of our diverse catchment.

Martin Finland

Possums

A few days ago I ate possum. It was at a restaurant in West End, and it came from Tasmania, where Common Brushtail Possums are regarded as pests in some areas and are harvested to a quota determined under a government Management Plan. I thought the meat pleasant, but rich, and I preferred the main course which followed, wallaby (also from Tasmania).

Common Brushtails grow larger in Tasmania than on the North Island, and many bushwalkers there recount stories about rucksacks being raided at night for food by bossy resident possums. Common Brushtails used to occur almost all over Australia, making them one of our most widely distributed mammals, but there has been a big reduction in range on mainland Australia in recent times. Foxes and habitat clearing are probably the main reason. There are no foxes in Tasmania (unless a recent introduction is not controlled) or possum numbers would likely be much lower there too. There are no foxes in New Zealand either, where our introduced Common Brushtails are in seriously large numbers and a major pest, destroying native forests and challenging biologists to find some satisfactory control method.

Around here, however, we want to conserve them! We see several species of possum where I live in Brookfield; Common Brushtails, Mountain Brushtails (also known as Bobucks) - photos of both on p 4 -, the Common Ringtail (less commonly) and, occasionally, Sugar Gliders, also a sort of possum.

All these possum creatures are classified by zoologists in the Super-family Phalangeroidea within the Marsupials. They have relatives in South America, too, a reminder that these continents were once joined as the super-continent Gondwana. Australian 'Possums' (using the term broadly) can be divided into the honey possums (one in Western Australia), feather-tailed glider (one species, Eastern Australia), pigmy possums (five species, seldom seen), gliders 'plus' (six species, including Leadbeater's Possum and Striped Possum, all eastern Australian), ringtail possums and Greater Glider (eight species, mostly eastern) and the brushtails and cuscusses (five species). There is also a diverse group of Phalangeroidea in New Guinea.

Common Brushtails and Common Ringtails are the two species most likely to be seen in the Moggill Creek Catchment, but there are also Mountain Brushtails about, so it is useful to be able to tell them apart. Ringtails are smaller, more reddish, and have the distinctive 'ring' tail, coiling it neatly from the tip forwards and downwards. Both brushtails are larger, darker, and easy to confuse with each other. The photos will help. The head and ears are the best feature to check; Mountain Brushtails have smaller, more rounded ears, a more square face, stocky powerful legs and not much fur at the end of the tail. Their fur is darker and they often have a white belly, though the belly can also be a 'pumpkin' colour. Common Brushtails have more upright, longer ears, a narrower face and much more fur at the end of the tail. They never have a white belly and, to my eyes, are more grey than black/brown. Mountain Brushtails occur in the SE coast and ranges, from about Bundaberg to central Victoria. Just to make things more complicated, David Lindenmayer from ANU has suggested that there are really two species of Mountain Brushtail, a northern one, and a southern one from central NSW down into Victoria.

Like all possums, the brushtails are herbivorous and nocturnal, emerging soon after dusk from tree hollows and other safe places to feed on fruits, flowers, fresh shoots and leaves. Births occur mostly in autumn or early winter and the young stay with the mother for 18 months or so, riding on her back after pouch life is over. Male Common Brushtails make distinctive coughing hissing sounds when aggressive, and I remember waking in fright one night at the sounds of what turned out to be a Common Brushtail and a koala in the same tree having a fight. The sounds were truly blood curdling.

The Bobucks prefer wetter forested areas and are not supposed to occur in the same place as Commons, but we have them both here in Brookfield. Mountain Brushtails apparently do well in riparian vegetation corridors, so the MCCG revegetation activities are likely to be helping Bobucks, while more flowering native trees will provide useful food for both species.

An important thing to note is that possums, like all wildlife, are protected and it is against the law to molest them. Unfortunately, many suburban possums get injured by dogs, they get killed on the road at night, and they sometimes get electrocuted on powerlines. Life can be hazardous for a possum.

Gordon Grigg

Quote

Let us regard the forests as an inheritance given to us by nature, not to be despoiled or devastated, but to be wisely used, reverently honoured and carefully maintained. Ferdinand von Mueller (1879). *The Chemistry of Agriculture, Melbourne.*

Committee Members and Contacts

Position	Section	Name	Phone
Chairman		Bryan Hacker	3374 1468
Vice-Chairman		Malcolm Frost	3374 0649
Secretary		Gaynor Johnson	3374 0803
Treasurer		Joanna Yesberg	3374 4703
Publicity		Chris Hosking	3374 3453
Nursery		Graeme Wilson	3374 1218
Coordinator		Greg Siepen	0408 774 631
Section 1	Pullenvale/Moons Lane	Richard Woodhead	3374 4691
Section 2	Lower Moggill Creek	Rob Waller	3378 9979
Section 3	Huntingdon	Malcolm Frost	3374 0649
Section 4	Showgrounds	Malcolm Frost	3374 0649
Section 5	Haven Road	Tina Heybroek	3374 1401
Section 6	Upper Brookfield	Daryl O'Brien	3374 4964
Section 7	Gold Creek Reserve	Tom McHugh	3407 0050
Section 8	Wonga Creek	Graeme Wilson	3374 1218
Section 9	Upper Gold Creek	Gordon Grigg	3374 1737
Section 10	Lower Gold Creek	Graeme Wilson	3374 1218
Section 11	McKay Brook	Bryan Hacker	3374 1468
Section 12	Gap Creek	Michael Humphreys	3374 1467
Section 13	Mt Coot-tha Reserve	Tom McHugh	3407 0050

Bushcare working bees

Bushcare working bees are not all held on regular schedules. For information, contact Section Leaders.

2006 Events For Chapel Hill Catchment Group 'THECA'

MARCH

Saturday, 4th **Kids' Time - Water** - Environmental activity for 4 – 8 year olds. 10.30-11.30am, bookings essential.
 Saturday, 4th **Mother of Millions Club** at The Hut, 8.30 am
 Sunday, 5th **Clean up Australia Day** Kenmore 8 am - 10 am
 Saturday, 11th **Bushcare** working bee, 1- 4 pm
 Wednesday, 22nd **THECA meeting**, Guest Speaker, Dr Tony Young, Fungi: *The Rotten World around Us*, 7.30 pm
 Saturday, 25th **Birdwalk** at Sherwood Forest Park, 7.00 am

APRIL

Saturday, 1st **Kids' Time - Eggs are EGGciting** - Environmental activity for 4—8 year olds 10.30 – 11.30 am, bookings essential
 Saturday, 1st **Mother of Millions Club** at The Hut, 8.30 am
 Saturday, 8th **Bushcare** working bee, 1- 4 pm
 Saturday, 22nd **Birdwalk** at The Hut, 7.00 am
 Wednesday, 26th **THECA Annual General Meeting**, 7.30 pm
 Saturday, 29th **Vines Workshop** with John Bowden

For more information contact **3878 5088** or theca@hotmail.net.au or www.theca.asn.au

Newsletter

The Newsletter is published quarterly, scheduled for early March, June, September and December. Material for inclusion must be with the Editor by the end of the second week of the preceding months. It is circulated to all members.

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