

MOGGILL CREEK CATCHMENT GROUP

P.O. Box 657, Kenmore 4069
www.moggillcreek.org.au



NEWSLETTER

Winter 2006



◀ We have turtles too, in our creeks (see p. 6 Moggill Creek Turtles) *Photo: David Booth*



▲ Have we made the Bell Miner a pest? (see p. 3 Interactions)
Photo: Geoffrey Dabb



▲ Animal, Vegetable or Mineral? (see p. 8)
Photo: Graeme Wilson

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.



▲ This handraised, orphaned Tawny Frogmouth refuses to leave for the wild. *Photo: Christine Hosking*

Editorial

We approached our last issue a little nervously because of the introduction of some colour and a need to separate coloured photographs from the text to which they belonged. From our members' reception of the result, we need not have worried and will continue along the same lines.

Readers may have noted another change which is carried a little further this time. Some discussion with them revealed a preference for short articles, less than half a page. Adopting this has the advantage of allowing greater diversity of subject matter, although that is at the expense of a more useful treatment of some topics which is desirable for many persons who are seriously attempting environmental protection and restoration. We will be guided by your opinions, which we can't guess!

With a view particularly towards member participation in providing content, a new section is introduced under the heading "You said...". It will accommodate very brief observations, opinions, ideas etc. which you submit.

In the interests of space saving, the usual Notes from the Nursery is omitted. Suffice it to say that activity at the nursery continues as usual in plant production and distribution, and with the well attended and much enjoyed working bees.

Graeme Wilson

Chairman's Report

Wild deer are causing increasing concern in our Catchment as well as the neighbouring Pullen Pullen Catchment. There are apparently several species. They cause considerable damage to native vegetation through browsing and stripping the bark off young trees. If you sight any deer on your land, Glen Alchin of BCC Pest Management Services would appreciate a call on 0411 822 800. Glen is also the person you should contact with regard to wild or feral dog sightings.

We have had several enquiries regarding actions members should take when they are aware of potentially illegal activities in the neighbourhood, such as pollution in creeks, destruction of vegetation, extracting gravel, and so forth. The Council has an enquiries number for this purpose – 3403 8888. On telling the telephonist your concern, she should provide you with a number, which you can use if you need to follow up the issue. In my experience the Council follows up such cases quite promptly.

Planning for Rafting Ground Park has come up with a design which should please those of us with environmental concerns. It is not clear at this stage when work will proceed on a bridge across Moggill Creek, but it does appear that there will be minimal adverse change to the lower rainforest area. Thanks to an initiative by MCCG (and PPCG) member Sandra Bishop, the Council has allocated funding to attack a major glycine and Madeira vine infestation in the Park.

A "Wines and Vines" function on 25 February attracted about 60 members. Many thanks to Chris Hosking and her supporters for the arrangements. Whether people came for the talks about vines or to sample the carefully selected wines was not recorded! Thanks to Don Sands for an excellent talk on native vines, and to Tom McHugh, Habitat Brisbane, who provided a free native vine to everybody there. I drew the short straw and talked about problem weed vines. There was a good display of vines, which created considerable interest.

Bryan Hacker

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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An Important Meeting

Brisbane City Council's series of Neighbourhood Planning Workshops comes to Brookfield this month. It is about what the future holds for us, so come along and at least hear what is said, but preferably have your say.

Brookfield Hall Thursday 22 June 7.30 – 9.30 pm

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INTERACTIONS 3

There are few birds more evocative of the Australian bush than the Bell Bird, or Bell Miner. (see photo p.1) However, this native bird (not to be confused with the exotic Indian Mynah) appears to be indirectly responsible for 'dieback' of tens of thousands of hectares of eucalypt forest in northern New South Wales, extending into southern Queensland. The problem is of considerable economic importance as well as potentially leading to a significant loss in overall biodiversity. Bell Miner Associated Dieback (BMAD), as it has been called, has been increasing rapidly through moist eucalypt forests on northern New South Wales since the early 1990s. How, one might ask, could a small bird cause so much damage?

Bell Miners live in colonies of 20-200 that may remain in one limited area for many years. In our area there is a colony along Gap Creek Road, not far from the Recreation Reserve. They feed largely on small sap-sucking insects called psyllids, and their nymphs, known as 'lerps', which are covered with a sugary coating. Like their cousins, the Noisy Miners, they are very aggressive, chasing away other birds – especially other insectivorous birds that feed on psyllids. As a result, psyllid numbers increase, to the detriment of the eucalypts on which they feed. Over time, the eucalypt becomes unhealthy and may even eventually be killed.

What is less clear is why the numbers of Bell Miner colonies (and associated dieback) have been increasing so drastically. There are a number of possibilities, mostly associated with human disturbance. These include weed infestation, especially lantana, burning regime and physical disturbance, such as roads. Practices that lead to changes in forest canopy structure are believed to be a contributing factor.

For further information, refer to the Bell Miner Associated Dieback Working Group, www.bmad.com.au

Bryan Hacker

Ivorywood – *Siphonodon australis*

A rather attractive tree I came across a little west of Upper Brookfield village was identified as ivorywood, *Siphonodon australis*. (photos p.5).

Ivorywood is endemic to (restricted to) Queensland and N.S.W. It grows in light or depauperate rainforests but is reported to be rare in the Brisbane area. Ivorywood can grow up to 30 m tall, and has simple, oval, leathery leaves up to 13 cm long. Flowers are small and sweetly scented, the fruit oval to pear-shaped, quite large, 2-5 cm in diameter.

Seeds should be sown fresh but germinate slowly. The timber of ivorywood is suitable for carving and engraving and has been used for keys in harpsichords and other early keyboard instruments.

The Aboriginal name for ivorywood in Northern New South Wales is "Curraelbum," in Queensland, "Umpurr". Ivorywood has also been called native guava or bonewood. In the Flora of South-east Queensland ivorywood is placed in its own one-genus family, Siphonodontaceae, although in other texts it is often referred to the Celastraceae.

Bryan Hacker

Photography Competition

The 2006 MCCG Photography Competition, with cash prizes sponsored by local businesses, will be held at the Kenmore Village Shopping Centre from 11-16 September, with Awards Presentation on Saturday 16 September at 11am.

Entries are invited from:

- Adult amateur photographers
- Professional photographers
- Young photographers up to Grade 7
- Young photographers from Grades 8-12

Photographs should be delivered to the Trustees' Room, Brookfield Showgrounds, from 10am to 2pm, on Saturday 9 September. All photographs must have been taken within the Moggill Creek catchment and submitted in one of the following categories:

- People at Work on Catchment Activities
- Flora and/or Fauna Native to the Catchment
- Environmental issues (eg weed infestation, water/visual pollution, soil/bank erosion, and waterwise gardening practices).

Further information may be obtained from Robyn 3374 0649. Entry forms will be obtainable from local shops, Pullenvale Ward Office, or by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to MCCG, PO Box 657, Kenmore, 4069.

Elusive Bush-hen Uncovered

If you're conjuring up images of wild chooks roaming the catchment, get out the bird book and look up the Bush-hen, *Gallinula olivacea*. You'll find it amongst the Crakes, Rails and Water Hens. It's a rather drab bird with dark grey-brown plumage and a greenish-yellow bill, similar to the more common Purple Swamphens and Dusky Moorhens often seen around our creeks and dams, from which it differs as they both have bright red beaks. Likewise, the Bush-hen is larger than the locally occurring crakes and rails. (photo p.5).

To hard core twitchers (bird observers) this species is a rare sight, a shy, highly elusive bird, probably uncommon and capable of avoiding humans and operating largely in the deep undergrowth. To not only see one, but to actually find it nesting within a few metres of an MCCG member's house in Upper Brookfield, and to be able to photograph it, was a rare privilege. This particular bird was sitting on seven eggs (possibly a record number for this species). As far as we know the eggs hatched successfully.

Interestingly, this Bush-hen chose to nest in a lomandra tussock on a revegetated section of the creek despite there being acres of elephant grass nearby! It certainly suggests that native vegetation is preferred by this species. The bird had woven the strappy lomandra leaves into a crude dome shaped nest, which despite the open, mulched surroundings, was quite difficult to detect.

Finding a Bush-hen nesting within 18km of the city reinforces what a special place the Moggill Creek Catchment is, particularly in terms of its biodiversity and the surprise species that continue to bob up.

Martin Finland

Ruellia tweediana (Mexican petunia) – a weed to watch out for

This pretty flowering plant is likely to become a major riparian weed. It comes from Mexico, and was almost certainly introduced purposefully as a garden ornamental.

Ruellia tweediana (Mexican petunia) - photo p.5 - is noted as a significant weed from Louisiana to Peninsular Florida, and in Queensland is of concern in Enoggera Creek Catchment to our north, and also around Gladstone. It is strongly rhizomatous, with erect stems to 80 cm tall and opposite leaves to 250 mm long and 25 mm wide. Flowers are quite large and purple, rather like those of petunia (hence the common name). All parts of the plant are poisonous.

In our Catchment *Ruellia tweediana* is abundant along McKay Brook, where it forms dense patches in moist or swampy areas, out-competing native plants. Its rhizomatous habit makes it difficult to control by hand; it is reported to be sensitive to glyphosate, but extreme care should be taken when spraying close to water.

On checking the internet through Google, I found 158 entries under "*Ruellia tweediana* + weed" but 13,500 under "*Ruellia brittoniana* + weed". The latter species (common name Mexican bluebell) is the only exotic species of the genus included in the Flora of South-east Queensland, and appears to be a distinct species, described as 'sometimes woody'. Both species are listed in the Global Compendium of Weeds, together with ten other species of *Ruellia*.

Bryan Hacker

You said-----

Congratulations to the Editor and all involved in the production of the MCCG Newsletter. I have always found it a most informative publication but the new format and coloured photos make it even better. Well done.

Margaret de Wit
Councillor for Pullenvale Ward

I noticed that in an area that had been planted in 2003 with many different native trees and shrubs, many of these were beginning to be covered by glycine. But the glycine showed no inclination to cover a 1.5m well formed *Pavetta australiensis*. Has anyone else noticed that glycine is reluctant to spread over some species?

Malcolm Frost

The Love Flower (*Pseuderanthemum variable*) - see photo p.5 - is one of many inconspicuous plants of the forest understory which are overlooked, carelessly or even deliberately destroyed along with weeds, overtaken by weeds or obliterated in some way by livestock or humans.

But it is the only food plant for the caterpillar of the Leaf Wing butterfly – photo on p.5. Destroy the plant and we lose this interesting and attractive butterfly.

Dale Borgelt



▲
◀ The bush hen and its nest (see Elusive Bush Hen p.4)
Photo: Martin Fingland



▲
◀ The Leafwing butterfly and its food (You said ..., p.4)
Photo: Dale Borgelt



▲
Ivorywood flower and fruit.
(see Ivorywood article p.3)
Photo: Bryan Hacker



▲
Ruellia flower (See Mexican petunia p.4)
Photo: Bryan Hacker

Plant Families 8-Moraceae

The family Moraceae takes its name from the genus *Morus*, the mulberries. It comprises some 1400 species in over 50 genera, with a number cultivated worldwide, including the fruits, such as figs, mulberries and breadfruit; and then, of different character, hops and cannabis.

The family is dominated numerically by the figs, *Ficus spp.* of which there about 1000 species. We have 10 native to our catchment and they are ecologically very important because they provide much food for birds and fruit bats. That brings in seed from a wide range of other species where they have been feeding. Unfortunately, early settlers were very destructive of figs. Other members of the family here are *Streblus brunonianus* (Whalebone tree), *Trophis scandens* (Burny vine) and *Maclura cochinchinensis* (Cockspur). The last two continue to be destroyed by the numerous vine haters.

The fruits of many (but not all) of the family are unusual, in that what we see as single fruits are in fact compound fruits, based on a cluster of flowers. An extreme case is the fig, where an extension of the stalk as a more or less spherical structure, open at the apex, carries numerous tiny flowers on its inside surface. The mulberry has a cluster of small flowers along a stalk, while in the cockspur the flowers are arranged as a tight spherical cluster. In both these cases the mature fruit remains as a cluster of separate fruitlets, each derived from a single flower. Those of you who know the jackfruit (in this family) will see that the flowers and subsequent fruit are fused in a single structure (as happens in the pineapple, which belongs to a very different family).

Graeme Wilson

Moggill Creek Turtles

There are two species of freshwater turtle that are relatively common in Moggill Creek, the Brisbane river turtle (*Emydura signata*) which is the commonest and the broad-shelled river turtle (*Chelodina expansa*) – photo p.5. Another two are likely to be present but are far less common; the saw shelled turtle (*Elseya latisternum*) and the eastern snake-necked turtle (*Chelodina longicollis*). The broad-shelled river turtle and the eastern snake-necked turtle have long necks (head and necks about as long as their shell), and the broad-shelled river turtle is distinguished from the eastern snake-necked turtle by its flattened head and much larger size (shell length 20-35cm vs. 10-18cm). Both long-necked species are specialist, sit and wait predators ambushing small fish and invertebrates, and both species are rarely seen basking out of water. The broad-shelled river turtle nests over March - September and often travels 100-200m from water to nest. The eastern snake-necked turtle nests September-November. The saw shelled turtle and Brisbane river turtle both have short necks and grow to a similar size (shell length 20-28cm), but the saw shell turtle has a larger wider head. Both species are omnivorous and opportunistic feeders, feeding on small fish, invertebrates, carrion, aquatic plants and fruits and flowers that fall into the water. Both species are spring/summer nesters and can be found nesting close to water after rain from September through to January. The Brisbane river turtle is frequently seen basking out of water on logs.

David Booth

What to do if you find a sick/injured possum or a dead female with a live young in the pouch.

- Drop a thick towel over its whole body, covering the head completely. This will make the animal quieter.
- If it has a Joey in its pouch, do not touch the Joey, even if the mother is dead.
- Put it in a secure box or cat carrier or leave it covered and place a box or laundry basket over it. Then, options are to:
- Take to a local vet who will provide emergency care and contact a wildlife carer.
- Phone the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Emergency number on 3030 2245 and they will put you in contact with a wildlife carer.
- Take to The University of Queensland Veterinary Hospital (weekend and all night emergency care). Phone 3365 2110.
- If you find a furless or just-furred Joey without its mother it must be kept warm. Wrap it up completely in a towel (including head - it will still be able to breathe!), and then place it on a hot water bottle, with only LUKE WARM not hot water. Keep it warm and quiet and follow the same steps as above.

Chris Hosking

Wildlife carers

Urgently needed. Call Chris on 3374 3453 for more information.

Species variability

There is much variability within most species and for several reasons. In the first place, taxonomists “create” and define species by aggregating individuals with numerous characters in common, while there is fairly clear discontinuity with other such groups (species). To a large extent, species do not interbreed. (If they did, continuity would be established across a wider range of variability and species identity lost.) This variability, apparent in physical characters, is based in part on genetic variability.

However, for the genetic composition (known as the genotype) which an embryo possesses, the characters of the individual which develops from it are influenced by the environmental conditions under which that occurs. That leads to phenotypic variation, within which individuals are known as phenotypes. Presumably this phenotypic plasticity is an adaptation which allows the plant to be better adapted to the environment in which it finds itself.

Another cause of variability goes beyond merely being a matter of interest, to something which affects decisions in our revegetation activities. When a species is distributed over a region where there are barriers to interbreeding between populations in different places, the slow process of evolutionary (genetic) adaptation to local environments is under way, and the genetic compositions of the populations drift apart. These populations are referred to as local provenance. It leads to the conclusion that if we are going to put in plants best adapted to our conditions, we should base it on local provenance; i.e. on material sourced from the region in which it is to be used.

To a large extent we do so, but there are some difficulties, particularly arising from our limited ability to get seed we want. If a species is rare in, or perhaps lost from our catchment, which is often the case because of past land-use practices, we have to bring in material from outside; preferably close by for obvious reasons. In fact, we have fairly certainly lost some of the highly desirable genetic diversity which once existed here, so that some introduction of that is useful. There are other arguments which can't be pursued here arising from the fact that our catchment comprises diverse environments, overlapping those of other catchments; while the identification of our catchment is to some extent arbitrary when it has physical continuity with others. And another factor in all this is that physical separation is no great barrier to movement of genetic material of many species when much seed is carried by birds which travel so far.

Graeme Wilson

Wildlife Notes

Platypus and koalas; of ongoing interest

Two young koalas have been seen in Mt. Coot-tha Forest this year, in January and April! The first sadly was dead, having been attacked by an off-leash dog. The other was resting in a stringybark not far from Gap Creek Reserve.

The MCCG continues to provide information to the Australian Koala Foundation (AKF) regarding sightings of our local koalas and similarly to the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland (WPSQ) regarding platypus sightings in the area's creeks.

This is invaluable information. Historical sightings, whether two, ten or fifty years ago provide equally important information so please continue to report sightings, old or new, of these wonderful native animals to: Chris cjmhosk@optusnet.com.au, 3374 3453.

Information needed is date, location and species.

Road kills

As our catchment continues to expand and develop, an increasing number of native wildlife is being killed by cars. These statistics could be reduced if drivers were *Wildlife Wary*, particularly when driving at night.

Controlling domestic pets

Night-time is the turn of our unique native animals, many of which are nocturnal. This is when they forage for food and are most vulnerable to attack from dogs and cats. All native animals are protected under the Nature Conservation Act (1992) which means that by law, we are not to cause them harm. We can help protect them simply by keeping our pets indoors at night.

Christine Hosking

THE MOGGILL CREEK CATCHMENT GROUP'S

"LIFE IN A CREEK"

FAMILY FUN AND INFORMATION DAY

Sunday 18th June 2006, 10 am-3 pm **FREE ENTRY**

at the

BROOKFIELD HALL, BROOKFIELD

- **KIDS...**join the activities: make a creek collage, draw, colour and more!
- **Meet creek WILDLIFE:** a python, a glider, a water dragon and more!
- **Meet some BUGS** of our creeks

- **Special Guest RANGER STACY**
- **Wildlife Presentations** (11 am and 1.00 pm)
- **Kids' Craft activities**(all day)
- **Kids' 'Creek Themed' Art Competition -**
(Free. Bring entries between 10.00 am and 1.30 pm)
- **Sausage sizzle \$2.00** (all day)
- **Information displays** about our waterways (all day)



Enquiries Chris Hosking on 3374 3453

Many participants, including:

Brisbane City Council

Healthy Waterways

Pullen Pullen Catchments Group Inc.

The Hut Environmental Community Association (THECA)

Waterwatch

Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland

Animal, Vegetable or Mineral?

It (photo p.1) is none of these, but a fungus. Until recent years the fungi were regarded as members of the Plant Kingdom but are now recognized as a separate group, with the same status as plants and animals. This particular one (pictured) is a species of *Geostroma* (literally, earth star), growing in decaying wood-chips. It is the above-ground fruiting body, about 6cm in diameter, which lasts only a day or two.

Graeme Wilson

Platypus Survey

Early in May, MCCG conducted a survey which provides valuable data for the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland Platypus Care project, which we had also done last year. Twenty two volunteers took part and were rewarded with two sightings in each of three locations; Gold Creek, and both Upper and Lower Moggill Creek. Our thanks to the volunteers and in particular Chris Hosking who organized the event.

(This is a brief extract from a longer article. It is planned to include in a future issue a longer account of platypus in our creeks—Ed.)

Winter Ramble Around Gold Creek Reservoir

Instead of a tour of the catchment this year, we have organized a walk around the Gold Creek Reservoir. The 5 km track is somewhat hilly but well defined.

MEET at our Nursery (end of Gold Creek Rd.) at 9 am on **SUNDAY 16th JULY**.

We will eat lunch along the way.

BRING food, water, hat, covered shoes, appropriate clothes for the weather, insect repellent, binoculars and some energy.

Enquiries: Greg Siepen (0408 774 631 or greg.siepen@brisbane.qld.gov.au)