

MOGGILL CREEK CATCHMENT GROUP

www.moggillcreek.org.au



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NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2008



▲ Our new coordinator (see Chairperson's report p. 2)



▲ Forest kingfisher
Photo: T. Groenestein

Three kingfishers
(see Kingfishers p. 4)



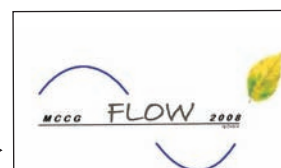
▲ Fruit of peanut tree (see Plant Families p. 7)
Photo: Graeme Wilson



▲ Sacred kingfisher
Photo: N. Fifer

▲ Azure kingfisher
Photo: N. Fifer

MCCG Flow logo
(see Editorial)



Editorial

In the last issue we decided to stop fussing about the weather and to carry on as if all is well; a useful attitude as it turned out with this splendid growing season. Actually, it is a case of both good and bad news. The native vegetation is flourishing with widespread seed production, so that in the near future we will have in our nursery a better range of species than ever. And there is extensive appearance of self-sown natives in our bushland, which if they survive will far exceed what we can do by planting. The down side is that weeds are doing the same thing, and we are faced with a quandary. If we attack the weeds with herbicide, we will lose the native newcomers. Each of us will have to make a decision.

So far, with the Cottage lease, nothing much has happened but hopefully that will soon change. What I look forward to is this: We have a home and thus a focal point. There will be events and ongoing activities there. It is the place where decisions are made about the whole MCCG program. Although our members and their activities are scattered over the catchment, they all link to the Cottage which strengthens our sense of community.

On the front page is the FLOW logo. Those who had a look at the recent MCCG Kenmore Village Display should know what this is about. It arises from deliberations among our PR group. They decided to give emphasis, in planning what they will do, to the interconnectedness among the things which concern us; the social, physical and biological environments and our activities aimed at achieving our objectives. They see all that as flow, and we expect to continue showing this logo in following issues of this Newsletters as a reminder of that.

You said -----

Some say that the great decline in goanna population over the last few decades is the result of cane toads. Others say that the great increase in scrub turkeys during that time follows from the disappearance of goannas which raided their mounds for eggs. Being troubled by those birds, it was a pleasure to see a beautiful big goanna in the vicinity of the turkey mound in my garden. I hope that it gets on with restoring the balance of nature!

(Actually it was not you but I who said that. But space is available for you to say something next time. Ed.)

We were serenaded by this fellow (photo on p 5) and his mates for several evenings recently and when I later became aware of many tadpoles in my small water feature, I was hoping they were his offspring. I had an uncomfortable feeling however, that they could be cane toads - but unfortunately hadn't noticed the spawn when the strings of toad spawn would have been easy to spot.

Luckily I found a well-illustrated and informative fact sheet on recognising tadpoles at the cumbersome internet address of : http://www.frogwatch.org.au/documents/file_store/49A858F4-C09F-44B0-F14B7DB700564F60.pdf and am now convinced that the majority of the tadpoles are green tree frogs and am watching them with great interest.

Dianne Lloyd

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

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Chairman's Report - February 2008

After a challenging first three months as Chairperson of MCCG. I have an even greater appreciation for the efforts of my predecessors, Bryan and Gordon.

Greg Siepen, our Coordinator, resigned, but thanks to a concerted effort by BCC a new Coordinator, Jennifer Mulchrone will start with us on March 3. Jenny holds a Bachelor of Environmental Science majoring in environmental rehabilitation. She has been working as the Community Support Officer for Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare Inc for the past four years and prior to that she was the Landcare Information/Support Officer for Murrumbidgee Landcare Association at Wagga Wagga. At the time of writing this article (mid-February) we are finalising the induction program for Jenny. I anticipate it will take her a little time to grasp the variety and diversity of projects and roles conducted by MCCG but hopefully we will have her up to speed at an early time. Jenny demonstrated great skills and experience during the selection process and I believe she will prove to be an asset to us and both help consolidate and capitalise on our work to date.

The regrettable conduct associated with the clearing at Brookfield State School (in November last year) was a low point and demonstrates that we all have to be more proactive so as to stop such actions occurring in the future. Whilst the clearing was disappointing my greatest concern was the message sent to students. The Minister for Education, in response to our letter informing him of the clearing of large native trees, wrote "I share your disappointment" and also that "the School Community will work with MCCG and AKF to develop a revegetation plan".

Roads continue to be a hot topic. Chris Hosking and Bryan Hacker with assistance from other management committee members have done some great work on the Gap Creek Road upgrade issue. I believe MCCG should look at the roads issue as a whole (i.e. Kenmore Bypass, Western Transport Corridor and Gap Creek Road) and formulate a policy so we can present a united and forceful presence on this topic. The roads issue will intensify as population in the western corridor grows. I would be interested in hearing people's views. Please email me at rw@gpsinvest.com.au if you have any comments on this issue (or, indeed, any other matter).

Special credit must go to Chris Hosking and her PR team for the new "Flow" campaign. This really gives us a great concept to support and grow.

Membership numbers and participation is a subject I will probably harp on about during my term. Whilst already a strong group, large membership numbers help us drive our policies and attract funding and sponsorship. Please encourage friends, family, neighbours and acquaintances from our catchment to join MCCG.

There is also plenty of work to be done so if you can assist us with some time or other resources then please contact any member of the management committee.

Richard Woodhead

Moths don't blow trumpets!

A significant event for our Catchment occurred on 10 December 2007, when a number of tiny moths were released from their cage in Oxley. A small group of people were present to witness the event, which occurred in an area of bushland smothered in cat's claw creeper, *Macfadyena unguis-cati*. Although there was limited interest by the public – and no trumpets were blown – this could be a major step in the control of one of our most aggressive environmental weeds. The moth, pictured on page 5, is quite small, only about 7 mm long, and called *Hypocossia pyrochroma*. The moths' caterpillars feed destructively on the cat's claw creeper leaves by tying them together in silk webs – hampering growth and production, as shown on page 5.

Prior to release, extensive testing was carried out by Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries entomologist Dr K. Dhileepan and his team. Dr Dhileepan said the leaf-tying moth had been approved for field release by Australia Quarantine & Inspection Service and Department of Environment and Water following a comprehensive host-testing program involving 37 plants species. This is the second agent released with the aim of controlling cat's claw; a sap-sucking tingid (*Carvalhotingis visenda*) was released earlier this year. Cat's claw is native to South America, and it was from Brazil and nearby countries that the control agents were initially introduced.

MCCG has volunteered several sites in our Catchment for release of the moth, and community groups are encouraged to get involved in the mass-rearing and field release of both the moth and the tingid. Both are available, along with technical advice on rearing and release, to MCCG members - for more information phone DPI&F Business Information Centre 132523.

Bryan Hacker

Kingfishers

There are 90 species of Kingfisher in the world and 10 occur in Australia. Four of these can be seen in our catchment.

Australian kingfishers are divided into two families. The Alcedinidae, or river kingfishers, typically sight prey from a perch and dive into water to capture it. The other family is the Halcyonidae or tree kingfishers; they mostly forage over land and can often be seen perched on power lines or fences, etc. They eat small mammals, small birds, nestlings and eggs, insects, reptiles, fish, frogs and crustaceans.

Three members of the Halcyonidae are found here. The largest, noisiest and most obvious is the Laughing Kookaburra. The other two are the Forest Kingfisher and Sacred Kingfisher. These species are very similar and difficult to differentiate. The Sacred Kingfisher is more common. Its head and upper body are mostly greenish-blue, the underparts and collar are a variable buffy-white. Between the beak and the eyes, there are two dark buff spots (loral spots). The Forest Kingfisher is described as deep blue above, pale turquoise on back; underparts white; the loral spots are white. One diagnostic feature is that a white wing patch can be observed when the bird is flying. To sum up the Sacred Kingfisher is, in general, a greener blue, underparts, collar and loral spots are buffy white; the Forest Kingfisher is a brighter blue with a turquoise back, with white underparts, collar and loral spots. In flight, it shows a white patch in the wing. The Sacred Kingfisher is the more familiar as it has adjusted to a wide variety of habitats from woodland to open areas including gardens and parkland. It is a summer breeding migrant, arriving September/October and after breeding departing northwards during March/April. The Forest Kingfisher is less common as it rarely visits gardens or settled areas preferring woodland near water. It is not migratory. Both species nest on debris in tree hollows or cavities tunnelled in termite-nests.

In our area, the only member of the Alcedinidae is the Azure Kingfisher which can be seen perched on roots or low branches overhanging water or flying swiftly and low along creeks. This is the smallest of the local kingfishers; it has a long slender beak and stumpy tail. The upper body is a glossy dark blue with white or buff spot on side of the neck, its under-body is orange rufous. Azure Kingfishers live mostly along well-vegetated creeks, especially with still or slow flowing water. They nest in burrows in banks above flood level.

Dawn Beck

Aspects of Insects – A Talk by Dr Geoff Monteith at our 2007 AGM

I must admit that the idea of listening to a presentation about insects would not normally feature on my list of ‘things to do’. But I can honestly say that I could have listened to Dr Geoff Monteith’s presentation at the November 2007 AGM for much longer than the allotted time. He recently retired as Curator of Insects at the Queensland Museum, having established an impressive resource of over 70,000 ‘databased specimens’ in 100 drawers available for study.

He spoke with enthusiasm about three subjects – the first being the Brisbane City Council (BCC) Invertebrate Survey which provides invaluable ‘base line’ data on insect species across a range of BCC-designated sites, one of which was Gold Creek. The overview from the study was fascinating. For example, across all of the survey sites, there were 256 species of ants alone. This included over 70 different species at Gold Creek where, unlike the other sites, introduced ant species dominated. This base line study will be invaluable for future analysis when tracking the impact of habitat change on insect populations.

He used data on insect movements when turning to the second part of his presentation. Demonstrating the impact of global warming on insect habitat, he illustrated his presentation with case studies of ants, beetles and butterflies all ‘moving south’ within Queensland. Malcolm Frost was not alone in being delighted that this included a rare central Queensland beetle which is attracted to Chinese elms as a food source, moving in to the local area!

Finally, he spoke about ‘How Dung Beetles will Save Mankind’. Although there are over 400 native species of dung beetles, apparently none of them found cow dung ‘attractive’, hence the introduction of non-native species into Australia by the CSIRO. The Western Suburbs are home to 37 different species of dung beetle (32 of which are native to Australia) – with 21 of these identified at the Gold Creek site. The presentation ended with the audience wearing 3-D glasses to look at some of these ‘well armed’ beetles in quite close-quarters.

Cathi Lawrence

Australia Day Honours for MCCG members

Two of our members, Graeme Wilson and Deborah Tabart received Honours associated with Australia Day 2008.

Graeme was presented with an Australia Day Achievement Award by Lord Mayor Campbell Newman. According to the citation, “Graeme is regarded as an accomplished Agricultural Scientist and a role model for his selfless, ongoing environmental conservation efforts” adding that he “has inspired the community to become involved in native plant propagation.”

At a National level, Deborah Tabart, who lives in Brookfield, was awarded an Order of Australia Medal in the General Division, for “Service to the conservation, management and protection of koalas and their habitat through the Australian Koala Foundation.”

Congratulations, Deborah and Graeme!

Bryan Hacker



▲
Green Tree frog
Photo: Dianne Lloyd



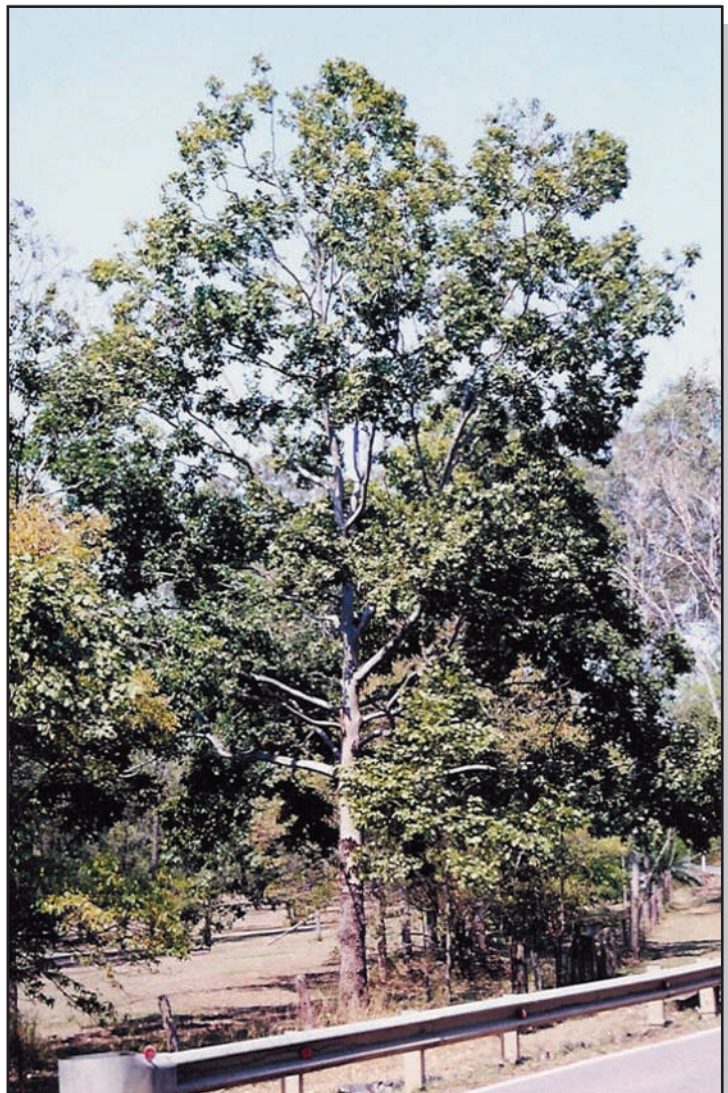
▲
Proiphys cunninghamii flower (see Brisbane Lily, p 6)
Photo: Bryan Hacker

Orphaned channel billed contemplates the world outside
Photo: Christine Hosking



▲
The cat's claw moth and its damage (see Moths don't blow trumpets!
p. 3)

Corymbia torelliana (see Cadaghi , p 6)
Photo: Bryan Hacker



Cadaghi (*Corymbia torelliana*)

A gum tree you should not have in your garden.

Two native plant species are considered to be weeds in our catchment. One is the umbrella tree, the other, cadaghi, *Corymbia torelliana*. Both are native to north Queensland.

What is wrong with growing a gum tree, I hear you ask. There are several good reasons:

- (i) It spreads into native bushland, potentially competing with local species of trees;
- (ii) Native bees collect the seeds but these have a waxy appendage. The resin in this appendage melts easily and clogs up native bee hives. Many native plants rely on native bees (rather than the introduced honey bee) for their pollination. If the resin is collected by honey bees it is generally deposited at the hive entrance or within the honeycomb, clogging the honeycomb and sometimes sealing the hive entrance, killing all bees inside;
- (iii) Cadaghi hybridizes with the local and related broad-leaved spotted gum (*C. henryi*), a comparatively uncommon species. If these hybrids are fertile, this could lead to the eventual loss of *C. henryi*. Cadaghi does not hybridize with spotted gum, *C. maculata*, as they flower at different times of the year;
- (iv) Cadaghi has been declared an environmental weed by Brisbane City Council.

Cadaghi is a readily identifiable eucalypt (see photo p 5), with a much denser crown than any local species and broad leaves. The most distinctive feature, though, is its trunk, with a well-defined dark 'sock', above which the trunk is smooth and pale green. As seedlings, too, cadaghi can be identified easily, with its broad leaves and pink and hairy shoot apex. Although cadaghi can be quite attractive, in a humid summer it is generally covered in an ugly sooty mould.

For further information, visit www.davidmcminn.com/ngc/pages/cadaghi.htm and www.hear.org/pier/wra/pacific/eucalyptus_torelliana_htmlwra.htm

Bryan Hacker

The Brisbane lily – *Proiphys cunninghamii*

The Brisbane lily is an attractive plant that occurs naturally in lightly shaded situations in and close to rainforests from northern New South Wales to southern Queensland, including the Moggill Creek Catchment.

Leaves are produced from an underground bulb and have petioles (stalks) up to 150 mm long, the leaf blades glossy green and up to 350 mm long and 130 mm wide. The fragrant flowers (see photo p 5) are white, about 30 mm diameter, and have six petals; they are produced in spring in clusters of 5-12 at the ends of long stalks. Flowers are followed by glossy spherical fruit about 20 mm in diameter, initially green but turning orange with maturity. Leaves and habit are similar to those of the commonly grown South American Eucharis lily *Eucharis grandiflora*.

Brisbane lily germinates readily from seed but early growth is slow. It is an attractive plant in shaded parts of a garden and I have also found that it thrives in a large flower pot. Leaves may disappear during periods of drought but appear again given good conditions.

The genus *Proiphys* includes three species, *P. alba*, *P. amboinensis* and *P. cunninghamii* and belongs to the Amaryllidaceae family of flowering plants. All three species occur in Australia, although only the Brisbane lily (*P. cunninghamii*) is endemic to (occurs only in) Australia.

For further information, visit <http://www.anbg.gov.au/gnp/gnp14/proiphys-genus.html>

Bryan Hacker

Please plant figs

At least seven species of figs (*Ficus*) are native to this catchment; *macrophylla*, *rubiginosa*, *superba*, *virens*, *fraseri*, *coronata* and *opposita*. It is quite likely that *F. watkinsiana* was also here but has been lost through the clearing of wetter rainforest. And fairly certainly figs would have been abundant; but because their timber was of no use (an important criterion of worth in early days), they preferentially occurred on the better soils which were cultivated, and the roots of some can damage drainpipes, building foundations, pathways and roads, they were removed and are now quite scarce.

The figs are generally abundant producers of fruits highly sought after by many species of birds and some other animals. It is therefore important that we ensure that figs are well represented in our plantings. In addition, attracting birds leads to the introduction of seed of other species, that being valuable in natural regeneration. Unfortunately, the early view that figs are "bad" seems to be entrenched. Please recognize their importance in our objectives. We have six of the species at the nursery now and hope to have all in the near future.

Graeme Wilson

Plant Families 14 – Sterculiaceae

The Sterculiaceae is a family of some 50 genera and anything from about 700 to over 1200 species (depending on whom you consult) scattered around the world but largely in more tropical parts. It takes its name from the genus *Sterculia*; itself of not very attractive origin, referring to something stinking, the flowers of some smelling that way.

Three species are internationally famous; *Theobroma cacao* and the two species of *Cola*, *acuminata* and *nitida*. The first of these provides us with cocoa and hence chocolate, while the other two turn up in Coke and Pepsi!

Locally, we have seven species. There are three of *Brachychiton*; *acerifolius* (Flame Tree), *discolor* (Lacebark) and *populneus* (Kurrajong). All are admired ornamentals. *Sterculia quadrifida* (Peanut Tree) has seeds about the size of peanuts, which can be eaten. (The photo on p 1 shows the spectacular fruit with seeds.) All species so far mentioned, including *Theobroma* and *Cola*, have large fruits and seeds. Not so with our other three.

Argyrodendron trifoliatum (White Booyong or Brown Tulip Oak) is a source of good timber. It has winged seeds. *Commersonia bartramii* (Brown Kurrajong) is favoured by us as a pioneer species for replanting, at least on better soils. *Seringia arborescens* is apparently quite uncommon here, only a few trees having been seen. It looks very similar to the Brown Kurrajong and in our nursery is fast growing. We hope that members will take this species and give us a report on its performance. Both these species have very small seed which requires hot water treatment for rapid germination.

Graeme Wilson

Bladderworts

The surface of one of my dams is substantially covered with dead *Salvinia* (the floating fern) which has become the basis of a floating “garden”, supporting, among other things, large sedges and one of its periodical stands of a Ladies’s-tresses orchid (*Spiranthes*- probably *sinensis*). In the gaps, the water surface, is a great amount of a floating *Ludwigia*, with abundant yellow flowers standing well above the water. Looking more carefully, I see many small yellow flowers on short stalks arising from the water but without apparent attachment to something like ordinary plants. They are bladderworts.

The bladderworts comprise over 200 species of *Utricularia*, occurring on practically all land surfaces except the very dry or permanently cold. Their particular interest is that they are carnivorous plants, not capturing prey above ground as most of us are familiar with (e.g. pitcher plants and *Drosera*), but in traps under water. Most species occur on saturated soils so that the underground parts are in water. Mine is a true aquatic. The terrestrials have some leaflike structures on the soil surface, providing for photosynthesis. Below the surface there is nothing like the usual leaf, stem and root; instead, long stems (stolons) to which are attached strands which are photosynthetic in the aquatics, and the bladders (which give the plants their name).

The bladders are the traps. Up to some 10mm in the longest dimension in some species, they have thin but rather rigid walls, and a quite elaborate trapdoor. In action, the plant “pumps” water out of the bladder, creating a vacuum, drawing in the walls, the door sealing effectively so that water can not enter. There are bristles on the edge of the door. If these are touched by a swimming organism, the door is deformed, the seal broken, the vacuum released, the walls spring back to give full volume and water containing the organism rapidly drawn in to the bladder. The door then closes again and the whole sequence is repeated.

Graeme Wilson

Moggs Hill or a Water Dragon?

Following the formation of MCCG we decided that we needed a logo. Someone told us that the origin of the name Moggill was that the Aboriginal name for the water dragon was magill. And so our logo became that animal, in spite of an opinion that our information was wrong: that originally there was a Moggs Hill.

I have a friend who has no interest in our activities but does like to establish facts. He sent me the following:

On a trip up river to Ipswich, about 1855, on the steamer “Swallow” “We called at a place which some people then spelt ‘Moghill’ and I thought what a strange name ‘Mog’ was for a hill”. OPALS AND AGATES; OR SCENES UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS AND THE MAGELHANS: being memories of fifty years of Australia and Polynesia, by NEHEMIAH BARTLEY, pub. Brisbane, Melb etc. 1892, Gordon and Gotch.

The elderly locals informed us when we came in 1968 that a Mr Mogg had lived here in the 1840s, and the postal or delivery address became Moggs Hill. There are still people named Mog or Mogg in Ipswich.

We may have been misled but a water dragon looks a great deal better than Moggs Hill as a logo!

Graeme Wilson

Wildlife Program

Brisbane City Council is seeking property owners to voluntarily join an innovative city-wide environmental program. Lord Mayor Campbell Newman said the Wildlife Conservation Partnerships Program (WCPP) played a significant role in protecting Brisbane's biodiversity and providing habitat for native wildlife.

Contact the Council's call centre on 3403 8888 if you want to join the conservation program.

(Source: Westside News, 2 Jan 2008, p. 6. Reprinted with permission)

Vegetation is much more than trees

We hear so much about tree-planting these days and it is widely supposed that such is the objective of MCCG. In fact, our aim is to restore and preserve the vegetation appropriate to our catchment, in which trees comprise a minority of the species. I set out to put some numbers on this. Rather than undertake the large task of going through the near 700 species we have on the catchment list and counting the trees, I took a random sample of 100 species and looked at what their growth forms are. There were 26 trees (and some of these are small enough to be scarcely regarded as trees by some people). Apart from some of the vines which are really very large, the other three quarters of species are low growing, in many cases quite inconspicuous. But all are equally important biologically.

Graeme Wilson

Natives for the Garden

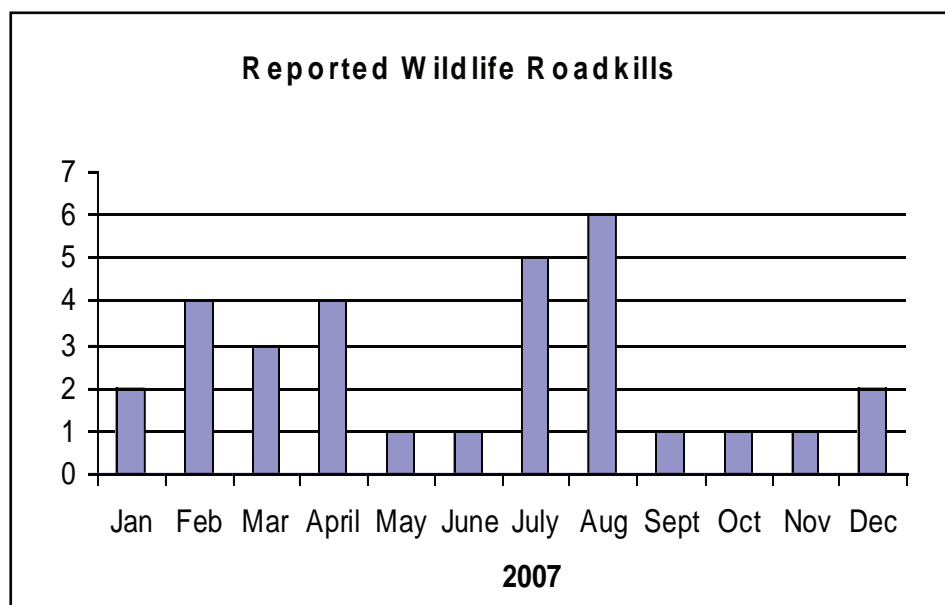
Much of our activity and talk is about species diversity in a vegetational stand, with size (area) of stand being important. Many people may not however be able or wish to meet the objectives. Owners of larger areas who do not want all their land fully vegetated are encouraged to join the Land for Wildlife program, wherein some native vegetation is maintained to support native animals. Those living on small allotments or for some reason wishing to look after a small area associated with their residences are asked by us to do something similar.

Such people may feel that they can do little because they identify native vegetation with trees, which are often quite large. (The misunderstanding arises from the widespread discussion of vegetation as "planting trees".) We encourage you to use some natives in your gardens as support for wildlife, at least from insects up. As a bonus in dry times, many natives are better adapted to drought than so many of the exotics. Some native trees which normally reach substantial size can be satisfactorily pruned, while some of the vines can be kept in compact shape.

We have in our nursery (available free to members) a substantial range of species suitable for small gardens.

Graeme Wilson

Wildlife road kill statistics for the Brookfield Area for 2007.



The Spring issue showed these data up to and including July together with those for 2006. Now we have them for the full year. Three quarters of the casualties were common and mountain brushtail possums, ringtail possums, wallabies and bandicoots. Two echidnas, two lizards and one each of brush turkey, owl and snake comprised the rest. The springtime spike is similar to that of 2006. This is when native animals become more active and are therefore more prone to being hit by cars. These data represent only those observations which are reported to MCCG and may thus be conservative.

Christine Hosking