

MOGGILL CREEK CATCHMENT GROUP

www.moggillcreek.org.au



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NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2009

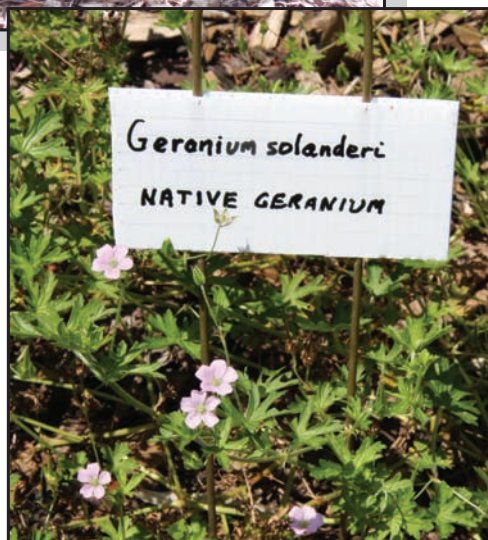


◀ Lace Monitor (see p. 8)
Photo: Bryan Hacker



Dollar bird (see p. 4) ▶
Photo: Tom Tarrant

Native geranium (see p. 6)
Photo: Dale Borgelt ▶



Squirrel glider (see p.8)
Photo: Dale Borgelt
▼



▶ Platypus (see p.6)
Photo: K. Lawson

Predatory shield bugs (see p.7)
Photo: Mike Ford
▼





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.

Chairman: Malcolm Frost

Secretary: Kate McVicar

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Editorial

With the current obsession with climate and thus weather change, and consequences for us, I was tempted to start with that here. But looking back to Editorials for a couple of years where it occurs regularly, I won't!

There is a subject which has become rather urgent for us; member participation in our activities. Read elsewhere in this issue about the Forums which have been held, with an objective of involving members in discussion about what we do or perhaps should do. A lot has been said but it means little unless members not presently carrying the weight of activity step forward to do these things. With the now large-and increasing-membership, there are surely many who could do small things which would total a lot.

An example of need is given in the article herein on progress with the Cottage Garden. This is a quite exciting undertaking, but whose success will depend on intensive maintenance provided by a substantial number of volunteers, each coming only occasionally.

Those of us who bear the main load of MCCG activity are not persons looking for something to do. We have other interests, but are prepared to sacrifice some involvement in them, in support of the MCCG program.

Management Committee 2009-2010

Malcolm Frost	Chairman, Section 3 Leader	3374 0649
Adrian Webb	Vice Chairman, Section 8 Leader	3374 1407
Kate McVicar	Secretary	3374 0723
Joanna Yesberg	Treasurer	3374 4703
Dale Borgelt	Public Relations	3374 1035
Bryan Hacker	Landcare Adviser, Section 11 Leader	3374 1468
Graeme Wilson	Nursery Manager, Newsletter Editor	3374 1218
Damien Egan	Section 4 Leader	3378 5199
Gordon Grigg	Section 9 Leader	3374 1737
Michael Humphries	Section 12 Leader	3374 1467
Richard Woodhead	Section 5 Leader	3374 4691

Chairman's Report

The successful Annual General Meeting of our Catchment Group prompts me to review our year's activities. I have written a more detailed annual report that can be viewed on our web page. It is impossible in this short report to thank everybody for all that has been accomplished but I congratulate and thank all the volunteers who in different ways have made great contributions. I thank our Management Committee without whose efforts MCCG would have achieved little and also I thank Shelley Dunlop our new Catchment Coordinator. Shelley has been with us for only a few months but already she has made a huge impact. Finally I would like to express my thanks to Habitat Brisbane and to our local politicians for their substantial and regular support.

Our committee is changed a little from last year (see details elsewhere). Richard Woodhead has relinquished the position of Vice Chairman but will continue to be active both in the Haven Road area to where he has moved and to provide us with valuable advice on legal matters. I am delighted that Adrian Webb has agreed to take his place as Vice Chairman. John Crowley has decided to retire from the position of Secretary but I am sure he will be prepared to assist us in many ways. I thank him for all his work during the year. I am delighted that Kate McVicar has agreed to return as Secretary. Most of you will know Kate was our Secretary a few years ago.

Our educational and social achievements have kept many of us very busy. The main advance has been the growing use of our Cottage and in particular Dale Borgelt's Cottage Talks which are held each month and have been well patronised. Other events we have run or supported this year include: Kenmore Village Display for Theca Forum, a display at Brookfield Show, Glen Leiper's fascinating talk, our Environmental Day and the Platypus Survey. A Cottage garden is being created with the help of many, while thanks to a Gambling Benefit Community Fund grant, a rideon lawnmower has been purchased which will allow us to keep the Cottage surrounds in order. Our Photographic Competition was again a great success.

Restoration work continues throughout most of the catchment. A total of 87 working bees were held mainly on public land where volunteers spent 3,076 hours planting 7,885 native plants. Our nursery continues to supply plants to members in amazing numbers (14,170 plants covering 135 species, with the help of 1,143 hours of volunteer work).

Recently MCCG decided to introduce the idea of Friends of Moggill Creek (FMC). Initially we sent out invitations to those whom we thought demonstrated particular interest in the activities of the Moggill Creek Catchment Group and had interest in environmental conservation. Our aim is to encourage a wider group to become more involved in our activities. Let me emphasise that we are not seeking any great or onerous commitment, but rather a willingness to contribute a small amount of time, expertise or knowledge in order to make our Catchment Group as effective as it can be. So far we have approached only about 130 members and are sure we have not asked everybody who would be interested. We would welcome anyone who would like to become a member (contact me through mr.frost@bigpond.net.au)

FMC activities began with a series of interest group Forums in late October – on the key topics of: Landcare and Biodiversity; Watercare; and Community. These forums gave participants an opportunity to develop and share ideas on how the group can expand its interests, as well as further our current activities. Our expectation is that developing from the Forums there will be ongoing groups that will identify and address Catchment issues of specific interest to them. We also are eager to make them into enjoyable social occasions. We are organising follow up meetings in the near future. MCCG's financial situation, managed calmly and competently by our Treasurer, is steady, with an expected forecast of surplus of \$35,135 in June 2010.

In looking ahead there are matters of concern. Although our volunteer numbers for restoration work in the Bush Care program are often higher than for other catchment groups, the numbers are in some Sections too low to make a significant impact on weed growth. The degree of restoration work on private land is difficult to quantify but must be substantial. Nevertheless, private land represents about 69% of our catchment and there is an urgent need to find ways of increasing the support. Finally, changes to Federal funding are likely to cause a significant drop in such funding over the next few years.

However, there is no reason to suppose that MCCG will not continue to be active in the coming years but let us hope we have no more flash floods and storms. The community is gradually becoming more and more aware of its local environment and this is reflected in our growing membership which is up from 217 to 450 over the last ten years. Our management committee is enthusiastic and is achieving a great deal. Thanks to BCC we have acquired a wonderful cottage as our headquarters and we are beginning to realise its full potential. We are actively supported by our local council, our state government and the respective politicians.

Malcolm Frost

Would you like a visit to discuss your revegetation?

Many of our members wanting to start on (or even already engaged in) revegetation on their land would like advice, including a visit, to discuss species suitability, weed control, strategy etc. We are able to give some help. If you would like it, ask our Secretary who will refer your request to an appropriate person.

We appreciate the opportunity to visit private land, which enhances our knowledge of the catchment.

Creek Ranger's Report

Well it's been a busy and exciting quarter for the Catchment group! There have been the Friends of Moggill Creek forums (more in the Chairman's report); events such as the Platypus Survey, Environment Day and Photography Competition; and of course the usual activities; Bushcare, the nursery, etc.

In the last few months I have been particularly involved with some of the schools in the Catchment. It always surprises me how much the students already know about environmental issues! When potting up Black Bean seeds with some Grade students from Brookfield State School recently, I was amazed by their in-depth knowledge on the importance of forests and trees – from giving us oxygen and providing shade to acting as habitat and food for animals.

Thanks to a grant from the Equity Trustees, I have been working with Kenmore State High School on the 'Student Streamsavers' project, where Year 9 students are responsible for the clearing and revegetation of their own patch of creekbank. At the end of the project, the stretch of creek has been transformed and the students have an acute appreciation of the amount of effort that goes into bushcare work!

Finally, the Years 3-7 class from Upper Brookfield State School took part in the annual Catchment Kids event at City Hall in October, where they performed part of a radio play, 'Bugs of Brisbane', to demonstrate the importance of arthropods in our environment. With 450 students watching them, they did an amazing job! It was poignant to see so many students from around Brisbane performing songs, plays and musicals about caring for our waterways, on the same day as the Healthy Waterways report card was released. The kids obviously know what's going on!

Many thanks to all the Catchment group volunteers for your amazing efforts throughout the year. I hope you all have a relaxing Christmas and I look forward to seeing you in the New Year!

Shelley Dunlop

Cascabella thevetia – yellow oleander

This shrubby plant with pretty yellow flowers apparently was thought – until recently – to be a native. According to an article in The Courier Mail (3 July 2009, p. 21) it has been known as the Captain Cook tree, as it was collected by members of his expedition when Captain Cook beached the *Endeavour* for repairs at Cooktown in 1770. It is now believed the species was introduced to Australia before Captain Cook's voyage, perhaps from the Pacific Islands or South America (prior to its re-naming, it was known as *Thevetia peruviana*).

The yellow oleander was commonly grown in older Brisbane gardens and is occasionally found as a weed along Brisbane water courses. It is a shrub to about 3 m tall, with spreading branches and bright green leaves up to 16 cm long, 10-15 mm wide. Flowers are trumpet-shaped and yellow or peach-coloured (photo p. 5). Every part of the plant is poisonous, containing cardiac glycosides, especially the fruit. According to the Courier Mail article, even fumes from burning it could be dangerous. This species is listed as a Class 3 weed and should be eliminated both in gardens and natural areas.

Bryan Hacker

Dollar Bird

The Dollar Bird, *Eurystomus orientalis* is a summer visitor to our catchment. It arrives in September/October and departs northward March/April. They breed while they are here. No nest is made, the eggs are laid on detritus in a tree hollow. The preferred height for the hollows is above 30m and they may be used over several years. Three to four eggs are usually laid. The winter months are spent in New Guinea and the eastern islands of Indonesia.

Dollar Birds are of medium size (a bit smaller than a Magpie but stouter), stocky, with a large rounded head, short neck and tail and have an upright stance. The bright red bill is short and broad. The legs and feet are also red. The head and neck are dark brown, the wings are blue and the rest of the body is dull green (photo p.1). In flight, conspicuous pale blue/white spots are seen on each wing. This is where the name Dollar Bird comes from as these look like coins. Their stocky profile is quite characteristic.

Dollar Birds tend to perch on high, often dead branches or power/telephone lines. Food is mainly insects, particularly beetles, wasps, ants, cicadas and grasshoppers which they hawk for with spectacular swooping, diving and rolling flight. This is when the "dollar" spots are most obvious. The loud, raucous call kak....kak....kak....kakakakakakakakak is often the first indication that the birds are present.

Dawn Beck

Correction

In the Spring issue, the photographs accompanying the article on bats, were credited to the author instead of Bruce Thomson.



▲ Yellow oleander (see p. 4) Photo: Bryan Hacker



▲ Strangled fig (see p. 6) Photo: Graeme Wilson

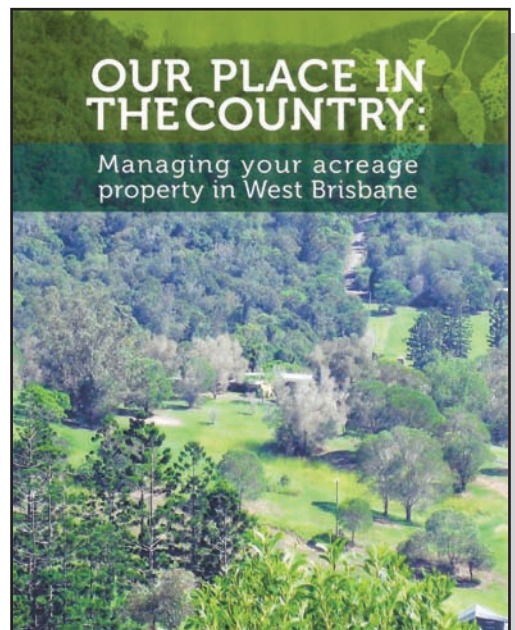


◀ Antechinus (see p. 8) Photo: Robert Norris



▼ Organic water (see p. 6) Photo: Bryan Hacker

**1.5ltr Organic Water
\$3.50 or TWO for \$5.50**



▲ Management booklet (see p. 7) Photo: Bryan Hacker

Strangler strangled

Many species of fig start life epiphytically, that is, seed is deposited on the rough bark or in crevices of other trees, where it germinates. These seedlings send down roots to the ground, continuing to do so until the host tree's trunk is often substantially enclosed. Such figs are referred to as stranglers.

The Moreton Bay fig (*Ficus macrophylla*, a strangler) in the photo (p.5) was pot-grown before being planted at ground level in the bush, and thus strangled nothing. However, a plant of the vine *Pleogyne australis* growing nearby took the opportunity of using the fig as support in order to climb, doing a good job of strangling it.

Where this will end I will never know. The fig will continue to increase in girth. Perhaps the vine will die for some reason and be shed, or it will become enclosed in the tree. I have seen a specimen of sawn timber with enclosed wood of a climber.

Graeme Wilson

The Cottage Garden

The last issue of the Newsletter gave a brief account of the Cottage Garden project and an initial planting. It needs to be understood that for some time ahead the purpose is to test a wide range of smaller statured native species for suitability for use in gardens. With time, the content will comprise seemingly useful species and so be more of a garden, which visitors can view and so decide if they might incorporate some in their own gardens.

The initial planting has been maintained -mainly watering- by a couple of members, and there have been few losses. A number have already flowered, a photo of one shown on p.1. Such are not going to displace roses, petunias etc. in gardens but should appeal to persons with a particular interest in plants, especially those like that shown, which have little chance of survival in the wild under the land-management practices of the majority of land holders. A better watering system has just been installed, comprising pressured water on demand, coming via the nursery system. We are now moving towards the planting of another large bed with some of the many other species we have not used. This will involve a fair amount of work in preparation, then planting and much increased maintenance. It requires more Cottage Gardeners than presently involved, so we look forward to several more people putting up their hands as volunteers.

Because many (most?) of the species we keep will not be available in commercial nurseries, we will have to decide how to have them available for our members. Whatever the answer, someone will be required to do it. No, it is not something the existing nursery can add! Its facilities could be available but not its volunteers.

Graeme Wilson

MCCG's annual platypus survey 2009

This year's platypus survey was a bumper; in terms of volunteers if not platypus. On Sunday morning the 13th of September, fifty enthusiastic observers monitored the catchment's Upper and Lower Moggill and Gold Creeks. All were in position by dawn on what transpired to be the last cold morning of the year!

Results were disappointing, with only seven platypus observed (photo of one on p.1), a couple of which were not with 100% confidence. These results are similar to our survey observations during the drought years of 2005-2007. Conversely, 15 were seen at last year's survey which followed sustained rainfalls and plentiful water in the creeks; but not a severe flooding event.

This year's March floods caused significant reconfiguration, erosion and sedimentation of the creeks. Did some platypus perish through 'misadventure' during the flood? Or are they perhaps seeking refuge in remaining large deep pools with vegetated banks as they appear to have done during the drought years? Next year's survey will be extremely important. Hopefully the number of observations will return to those of 2008.

It was of concern that for the first time, platypus were not observed at previous 'strongholds' such as lower Moggill Creek in the Huntington Estate and below Kenmore High School in the Kilkivan Rd area. It was also concerning to observe a great deal of water extraction from the creeks via pumps. This is a direct threat to platypus. On a positive note, a pair was observed swimming together in Gold Creek and overall the lower half of Gold Creek appears to still be supporting platypus, as are parts of Upper Moggill Creek.

Thanks to all volunteers and the wonderful 'breakfast team' of Gaynor, Richard, Dot and the Girl Guides and finally John, Jesse, Dawn, Shelley and Gretchen for their invaluable logistical support.

Christine Hosking

I'm confused!

Names change their meaning, I do understand. But – 'Organic Water'? No, I'm not dreaming – see the photo on p.5 taken in a roadside 'take-away'. (Manufacturer's name removed to avoid nasty repercussions.)

As a student the word 'organic' to me had a clear meaning – a substance containing the element carbon and associated with living organisms. More recently, the term is used to refer to foods (and other substances) produced without the input of inorganic fertilizers, hormones, drugs and suchlike. In what sense, then, is the water being advertised as 'organic'? Does it contain some high percentage of algae or bacteria, or chemical compounds containing carbon? Perhaps I should have contacted the manufacturer to find out!

Bryan Hacker

Congratulations all round at the MCCG Photographic Competition

2009 was the 11th year for the MCCG's Photography Competition – and yet again we were pleased to have a record number of entries. We were able to display all 150 entries for a week at Kenmore Shopping Village – giving an opportunity to profile the work of the group, and to sign up some new members thanks to the enthusiastic team of volunteers who kept the stand manned. The display included over 50 entries from the younger members of the community, many of whom made sure their friends came to see their photographs of Brisbane's environment (mainly of flora and fauna in our catchment).

On 5th September 2009 over \$1,700 in prizes was presented to the 24 winners at the centre in a ceremony attended by Cr Margaret de Wit and Dr Bruce Flegg, MP. Malcolm Frost, MCCG Chairman, thanked all of the competition sponsors for their support of this local event, a number of whom were able to attend in person to present the awards – including Cr Margaret de Wit, Workout Indooroopilly, Brookfield Produce and Pet Pavillion, Sugarwood Grove, Centenary Hire, Orrum Jewellers, Little Munchkins Toy Hire, Water Solutions, Pet Health Products, Kenmore Veterinary Surgery, Judy Mackay Hair Design, The Print Shoppe, and The Pet Chalet. Thanks to the support of the sponsors, the competition this year included *three* people's choice prizes, with a popular winner being the striking photograph by Mike Ford of the *Predatory Shield Bug* (photo p.1). We also congratulate our chairman, Malcolm Frost, who after many years of entering the competition without success was the winner of the supreme exhibit award for his photograph *Ducks at Sunrise*, which Dr Joseph McDowell, the competition judge, praised as being "romantic". Persistence clearly paid off for Malcolm, who hopes this will encourage other members to enter next year.

Dr McDowell congratulated all entrants on the high standards, and particularly Upper Brookfield State School on winning the inaugural Lord Mayor's Perpetual Schools Shield. The Shield will be presented at the school at a later date, but Cr Margaret de Wit and Dr Bruce Flegg MP were able to congratulate representatives from the school on their win, when Dr Flegg presented Mrs Meredith Stanfield with \$100 toward school library resources as part of their prize.

Robyn Frost was thanked for having run the competition for a number of years. It is hoped that she will continue to be a part of the subcommittee which worked so hard on organizing the event. Thanks go also to Dale Borgelt, Jocelyn Henry, Bruce Siemon, Margaret Whyte (and to Malcolm and Shelly as frequent co-optees!!).

Geoff Lawrence

A new Property Management Booklet for residents of the Moggill Creek and Pullen Pullen Creek Catchments area

"Our Place in the Country: Managing your Acreage Property in West Brisbane" is a free 46 page booklet written particularly for owners of acreage properties in our area of Brisbane. Released in November 2009, it includes a wide range of information of value to local landholders and was written by members of the two local Catchment Groups, with contributions by Creek Rangers Jenny Mulchrone and Mandy Maggs. Much of the information is presented in a 'question and answer' format, the questions being based on ones we have responded to at our nursery and site visits.

After chapters on the history, geography and flora and fauna of the district there are chapters on property management, controlling weeds and pest animals, and managing wildlife and domestic stock. A selection of useful references is included, and appendices detailing wildlife and conservation organisations and Wildlife Conservation Partnerships. Unfortunately space did not allow for the inclusion of a listing of declared weeds to be found within our district, together with their status as threats, but this list is now included on our website, www.moggillcreek.org.au.

The booklet is illustrated with a range of relevant photographs, mostly taken within the two catchment areas by local photographers. Particularly for those new to the area and without experience in managing land, especially for conservation purposes, this booklet is a 'must have'.

Bryan Hacker

Approaches to controlling weeds – new information on our website

A group of members and friends put their heads together at "The Cottage" on 24 October to discuss approaches to controlling weeds – trees, shrubs and understorey plants too. Some new ideas emerged particularly regarding control of some of our more serious weeds, such as Chinese elm and Madeira vine.

The outcome from this forum has been put together as a document on our website, www.moggillcreek.org.au. It is important to realise that the methods detailed are not recommendations – they are just methods that some of us have found to be effective.

Bryan Hacker

Monitoring Wildlife along Gap Creek Road

With the sealing of Gap Creek Road (which crosses Mt Coot-tha Forest Park) soon to be started, the Council has arranged with Darryl Jones and his team from Griffith University to survey wildlife along the current road. Despite the area being shrouded in dust except after very recent rain, Darryl has stated that the area is extremely rich in native wildlife.

Several of us have had the opportunity on a few occasions to join Darryl's team, examining traps laid out and baited the previous night. Details vary, but recently, for three days in a week 40 traps were put out along two transects parallel and fairly close to the road, one along the dirt section and the other along the currently sealed section. Smaller traps (Elliott traps) are designed for smaller species, larger ones for possums. Of course, all captured animals are released promptly, the natives after being measured and their ears dabbed with a dye as evidence if they are re-captured. Results from a single week's trapping are shown below. Perhaps surprisingly, more animals were captured along the dirt section than the sealed section, but it is too early to jump to any conclusions.

	<i>Antechinus flavipes</i> Yellow-footed Antechinus	<i>Rattus fuscipes</i> Bush rat	<i>Trichosurus vulpecula</i> Common Brushtail Possum	* <i>Rattus rattus</i> Ship Rat	* <i>Mus musculus</i> House Mouse	Totals
Site 2 (dirt)	0	2	5	0	5	12
Site 5 (bitumen)	2	2	0	2	0	6
Total	2	4	5	2	5	18

Information courtesy of Amy Bond, Griffith University. Reproduced with permission.

* introduced species

The photographs (p.5) show a female antechinus with her brood of 'jelly beans' attached to her underside (she was held briefly in a polythene bag to enable measurement), and again at the moment of release (note the pale eye ring). This shy, nocturnal animal appears to be quite common on Mt Coot-tha. Two of the possums noted in the table were in fact a mother and her offspring, caught in separate but nearby traps. There were a few anxious moments as we tried to re-unite the pair, but all went well and, with her baby on her back, she scampered up a nearby tree.

Bryan Hacker

Talks at the Cottage

Seeing a baby squirrel glider being handled and fed by carer Jean Goodwin was a special delight for MCCG members at the November Cottage Talk. (Photo on p.1). With 60 years experience caring for native animals, Jean was able to give an entertaining and very informative talk that was enjoyed by all.

The next Talk at the Cottage will be 10am-noon Thursday 18th February 2010 when Peter Shilton will give a travel talk with pretty pictures on the Natural Areas of Queensland. There will be plenty to interest and inform anyone eager to find out more about our National parks, and perhaps travel to such places as Porcupine Gorge, or Wooroonooran National Park.

"Let the (right) grass grow under your feet" will be Bryan Hacker's topic for the March 18 Cottage Talk.

Bookings essential by email daleborgelt@gmail.com or phone 3374 1035.

Bell's phase of the Lace Monitor (*Veranus varius*)

Last February we were puzzled to see a c. 1.5 m monitor lizard on our Gap Creek Road property that was clearly very different from either of the two pictured in "Wildlife of Greater Brisbane". Further enquiries revealed that it was the Bell's phase of the lace monitor (*Veranus varius*). Seven months later, and to our delight, he/she turned up again and allowed us to take some photographs (see p.1). According to the Queensland Museum, this form of the reptile is 'noteworthy' in Brisbane. A brief search of the internet suggested that it is not uncommon elsewhere.

Over the last couple of years on our property we have seen at least two individuals of the more common phase (pictured in "Wildlife of Greater Brisbane"). One wonders whether they interbreed. It is to be hoped that fine animals such as the one pictured will continue to live in the area while and after Gap Creek Road is 'upgraded'.

Bryan Hacker