

# MOGGILL CREEK CATCHMENT GROUP

[www.moggillcreek.org.au](http://www.moggillcreek.org.au)



Print Post Approved PP 424022/2141

## NEWSLETTER

## SPRING 2010



Rose-crowned fruit-dove



Emerald doves



Beetle damage (see "A neat trick", p. 8)  
Photo: Gordon Grigg

Pigeons and Doves (see p. 6)  
Photos: Jill & Ian Brown



Peaceful dove



Opera house trap (see article, p. 7)



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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## Editorial

*It is widely believed that MCCG is committed simply to planting trees. It is true that most of our on-the-ground endeavours are centred on encouraging and assisting people to restore native vegetation (of which trees form only a part). However, our objective is the restoration of original biodiversity, which comprises both plants and animals, and animals include everything from lower life-forms such as insects up to furry things. But we don't breed animals for the purpose! The basis of all animal life is plants. We simply have to hope that by providing appropriate vegetation, we will have the animals. The article in this issue on pigeons and doves serves as an example. Photographs of three of our native, very beautiful, birds are shown (p1). These birds are here, now, only because we are providing food (via plants), shelter and nesting sites. They will remain here only as long as we do so. So, if you are thinking about removing a tree, pause and consider the consequences.*

*We have just come through a somewhat worrying three months with little useful rain and generally low soil moisture. In spite of optimistic long range forecasts of high probability of good rain and periodical prospect of possible rain, we have been waiting for actual rain. And we have now just had it; good rain. This provides an excellent opportunity for revegetators to get back to work; good soil moisture, the likelihood of low evaporative conditions for a couple of months, and thus a good chance of establishment before tougher conditions return.*

## Community based sampling in Moggill Creek -an exciting opportunity

The Moggill Creek Catchment Group has developed a creek health monitoring program to provide baseline information on the aquatic ecosystem health of Moggill Creek (fish, aquatic macroinvertebrate, habitat and water quality) against which changes over time can be assessed. This will assist in making decisions on where efforts are required in land and water management.

The proposal is to monitor 10 sites in the Moggill Creek catchment where sampling is carried out twice a year (pre- and post-wet season sampling). The intention is to seek volunteers from the community to work in five teams who will be led by people trained by professional aquatic ecologists.

Sampling will occur twice a year probably Spring and Autumn with the first sampling this year around September-November. The project will be led by Dr Tim Howell and our Creek Ranger, Stacey Hodge. Any persons interested in being part of the five monitoring teams please contact Stacey on 3407 0052 or by email at [stacey.hodge@brisbane.qld.gov.au](mailto:stacey.hodge@brisbane.qld.gov.au)

*Adrian Webb*

## Chairman's Report

As usual Moggill Catchment Group has had a busy quarter. Volunteers have worked hard to clear weeds and plant, our nursery helpers have generated more and more plants, private land owners have continued in their revegetation work, our cottage garden has continued to prosper and there have been many entertaining and educational activities.

As always there have been highlights that deserve recognition. Our Catchment Group has for the past six years taken part in Planet Ark's National Tree Day when people all over the country plant trees and shrubs. This year Kenmore State High School took part. A stretch of creek bank in the school grounds was selected and 70 students planted 600 trees. Everyone was delighted by the energy and enthusiasm of the kids. Thanks must be given to Toyota for funding the purchase of the plants, Habitat Brisbane for supplying the mulch and Michael Walker from the school and Damien Egan from MCCG for running the event.

In May Dale Borgelt and an enthusiastic committee put on a Kids Day at the Cottage. This was immensely successful with more than 200 children and parents enjoying the various shows. Education with fun is a great recipe for teaching children about our environment.

As part of our strategy to begin to use our Cottage more, each month we organise a Talk at the Cottage on some interesting aspect of our local environment. These are low key, relaxed events, with average attendance of 20 and they are enjoyed by all who attend.

Every six months we arrange a more formal talk at the Brookfield Hall. In May, Hugh Possingham gave a most interesting talk entitled "Seasonal Bird Activity at Gold Creek". Over 70 attended and everyone considered it a most interesting and thought provoking evening.

We invited members who seek to become a little more active in the affairs of MCCG to form a group which we have named Friends of Moggill Creek. Our last meeting resulted in many exciting new initiatives. We plan to run a bird watching group, to study fish in our creeks, to monitor dragonflies, platypus and frogs. Our meetings are usually every other month. If you wish to take part please let us know as everyone is very welcome.

Over the last quarter MCCG received four grants from the Federal Government Caring for Our Country for restoration work by Brookfield Store, from Brisbane City Council to assist in funding our Kids Day, from the Norman Wettenhall foundation for dung beetle research, from the Federal Voluntary Environmental and Heritage Organisation for administration assistance and from the Brisbane based company Hydrobiology for aquatic studies. We very much appreciate these additional funds, for without them our activities would be very limited.

Finally, we must thank Shelley Dunlop, our Creek Ranger for all the work she has done since she came to us in 2008. In May Shelley began a year's maternity leave and we wish her well. While she is away Stacey Hodge has joined us and we are already relying on her help more and more.

*Malcolm Frost*

## Creek Ranger's Report

Most of you would be well aware that Shelley Dunlop is taking 12 months off to go on maternity leave and I am her replacement for this time. I would like to wish her all the best with motherhood and also to personally commend her on the great work she has done for the Moggill Creek Catchment Group.

Now a little about me. I have been a Creek Ranger with Brisbane City Council for 2½ years working in the Wolston and Centenary Catchments area, just south of the Brisbane River. My work there involved drumming up community support to establish a new catchment group. So in contrast to my time spent establishing a new catchment group for WaCC, I will now be working with a well established group with a great membership base where I will be able to broaden my experience. I am very excited about my new role and getting to meet new people in the Catchment.

So far in my first month I have been involved with a number of schools by encouraging them to participate in the MCCG Photography Competition, and the year round Catchment Kids activities with a year 4 class at Brookfield State School.

By the time you read this newsletter the annual Platypus Survey on September 12 at Brookfield Hall will be close, so if you are interested in being a part of it, contact us now! Also, the Photography Competition is not far off with the display and winner announced on September 11.

Other events to look out for include our Annual General Meeting in November, and an exciting project about to commence in September/October is the Dung Beetle project. Stay tuned for upcoming information talks and ways to get involved.

Just a reminder to check the catchment group website – [www.moggillcreek.org.au](http://www.moggillcreek.org.au) – it is regularly updated with news, events and environmental information that you might find interesting!

Please note that my contact details are [Stacey.hodge@brisbane.qld.gov.au](mailto:Stacey.hodge@brisbane.qld.gov.au) and 3407 0052. I look forward to assisting the group this year.

*Stacey Hodge*

## Velcro plant

Velcro plant (*Desmodium uncinatum*) is a weed that is getting to be increasingly common in our district, generally growing in moist situations and equally happy from full sun to part-shade. Aptly named, leaves, stems and fruit stick to clothing and animal fur by means of numerous hooked hairs. As the photos on page 5 show, gloves can get well covered with fruit if one leaves weeding too late, when fruit are present.

Velcro plant is in the pea family, and was introduced from South America as a potential pasture legume. Plants in the pea family fix atmospheric nitrogen, which leads to them having high levels of protein in their leaves, even when grown on infertile soils. In a pasture, these plants are valued as they improve animal production (as in the case of clovers and lucerne in temperate areas). As a pasture plant, velcro plant was known as 'silver-leaf desmodium', on account of the silvery marking towards the centre of each leaflet. Unfortunately silver-leaf desmodium was not a particularly successful pasture plant, and it is unlikely that very much is sown nowadays. In our district, it is its weediness that is so noteworthy.

Leaves of velcro plant are easily recognised by their silvery markings and have three leaflets up to 10 cm long and 6 cm wide. Stems trail along the ground, or climb nearby plants by means of their hooked hairs. Small animals can be trapped by the 'sticky' leaves and stems. Flowering is in late autumn, with long stalks of purple pea-flowers, followed by segmented pods that break up as they approach maturity. As with many other species in the pea family, seeds are likely to be remain viable for many years in the soil. A similar related species called green-leaf desmodium (*D. intortum*) is also of South American origin and is less common in our Catchment. It lacks the silvery leaf marking. The only native species that might be confused with velcro plant is hairy trefoil (*Desmodium rhytidophyllum*) which lacks the silvery marking, is much less robust, has coarse-textured upper leaf surfaces and does not cling to the same extent. Hairy trefoil is quite common in eucalypt woodlands in our district (see photo on page 5).

Bryan Hacker

## Velvet leaf (*Callicarpa pedunculata*)

People coming to our Nursery often ask for shrubby plants, but we generally only have a small range to offer. One of the more attractive is velvet leaf, *Callicarpa pedunculata*; Velvet leaf is a well-branched shrub which grows to about 2 m tall. It has softly hairy, opposite leaves up to 13 cm long and 6 cm wide. Dense clusters of tiny pinkish flowers on a common stalk are followed by bright purple, succulent fruit 2-3 mm in diameter. Velvet leaf is reported to be a rainforest species and is not common in our Catchment. In cultivation it persists at least for several years; being a rainforest species (one suspects rainforest margins) it appreciates some shade. In the wild it may be found from Port Macquarie in NSW to north Queensland.

Velvet leaf has been suggested as a replacement for lantana but is not as robust, and a mix of shrubby species would be recommended for this purpose. Its botanical name 'Callicarpa' derives from the Greek words *kalli* (beauty) and *karpos* (fruit).

Bryan Hacker

## Bush Tucker Plants

From time to time we are asked about Bush Tucker plants and in particular if we have some in our nursery. No, at least not on a deliberate basis; there may incidentally be some there simply as part of our collection of locally-native species. Nevertheless, because of the interest we decided some time ago to develop a garden of such species and with financial support from Community Gardens Grants, sponsored by ABC radio, a start was made on land behind Brookfield Produce, adjacent to the creek. A few species had been established before the Nov2008 and May 2009 floods did considerable damage. Planting is under way, limited by availability of species. Only locally native species will be used and limited to those appropriate to the site. At the time of writing, 30 of the 34 intended have been planted. Labels will then be placed and copies of what is there will be placed in the store, available for borrowing by interested persons. A Community Gardens plaque has been placed on the site.

Noosa and District Landcare Group has prepared a list of suitable species, going beyond what we will have here, *Native Species Recommended for Planting as Bush Tucker*. It can be found on the Internet.Google- Bush tucker plants- p11. The list goes beyond natives to our particular catchment but the species should be suitable to our climate.

Graeme Wilson



▲ Speaker at Cottage Talk (see p. 8)  
 Photo: Dale Borgelt



Velcro Plant



Worker's glove

◀ Velcro plant (see p. 4)  
 Photos: Bryan Hacker



Hairy trefoil leaf



◀ Velvet leaf - flowers and fruit (see p. 4)  
 Photos: Bryan Hacker

## Pigeons and Doves

There is no scientific distinction between pigeons and doves. The names are synonyms; dove comes from the Old English word *dufe* and pigeon from the Old French word *pyjon*. These birds belong to the Columbidae Family and are characteristically plump, short necked and small headed; the plumage is soft and dense. Most have bills that appear soft and often thicken towards the tip. There is nearly always a fleshy cere at the base of the bill. This contains the nostrils. They mainly eat seeds or fruits supplemented by insects and other invertebrates.

Worldwide there are 316 species, 30 living in Australia, 4 of these are introduced. 12 can be observed in Moggill Creek area. The local distribution depends on their preferred habitat. Photos of three species are on p 1.

Two species, Crested Pigeon (upright crest on head) and the introduced Spotted Turtle-dove (nape of neck spotted), are found in open, well settled areas and are commonly seen foraging on the ground along roadsides or perched on power lines.

Three other species are also ground feeders but live in dry, grassy woodland. Their plumage is mainly subdued tones of greys and browns, which provide good camouflage. The largest is the Common Bronzewing; it has a brightly coloured patch (speculum) on the wing. Peaceful Doves and Bar-shouldered Doves are more common and occur in woodland along watercourses; usually they are heard before they are seen. Peaceful Doves are small, grey-brown with barred wings and neck and a characteristic call of "doodle-doo". Bar-shouldered Doves, are larger with a copper coloured nape, the call is "hook, coo! hook, coo! hook".

The other seven pigeons occur more commonly in wet sclerophyll woodland and rainforest. Two forage on the ground. The Wonga Pigeon is large, slate grey, with a double V pattern on the breast. The Emerald Dove is small, plump reddish-brown with iridescent green wings. Both can be seen frequently, on the roadside along upper Gold Creek Road.

The remaining five are arboreal fruit eaters. The Brown Cuckoo-dove is a long brown pigeon, often found in wild tobacco. White-headed Pigeons are dumpy, black with a white head and breast. They have a wide distribution; frequently spotted over suburban Kenmore and in Rafting Ground Park; probably because they like feeding on the fruit of Camphor Laurel. Rose-crowned Fruit-doves are elegant, small, green and yellow with a pink crown. They are difficult to observe as they feed on figs and other fruit, high in the canopy. Wompoo Pigeons are large and colourful, with green back and tail, light grey head and a purple breast; they are difficult to spot in the canopy of fig trees. This bird is a periodic visitor to fruiting fig trees. The seventh species is the Top-knot Pigeon, large and grey with a grey and rufous topknot. They can be observed flying high over the catchment area as flocks of about twenty move from one feeding area to another. Their preferred food is figs and the fruit of brown pine where they can be seen when these trees are in fruit.

Varied habitats in the catchment area provide us with a striking assortment of pigeons and doves, though unfortunately some have definitely declined in number over recent years.

Thanks to Jill and Ian Brown for photos, Doug Dow for comments on this article and to Brian Leahy for discussions on the distribution of pigeons and doves.

*Dawn Beck*

## An interesting read

*Veronica Strang: Gardening the World. Agency, Identity, and the Ownership of Water*

This book is now in our library. The main title is perplexing; the subtitle gets nearer the mark. The subject is the worldwide increasing demand for fresh water, a finite and already limiting resource. The book is based on a study of two river systems in a country (Australia) where these two things-supply and demand- are widening severely ; the Brisbane and Mitchell (Cape York) River catchments.

You probably don't want to read the 300+ pages but two parts are interesting for us. The Introduction details the history of the two catchments, to one of which we belong.

The last deals particularly with the environmental groups, of which we are one. We get a mention and there is a photograph of a MCCG group engaged in planting.

## Cottage Garden

Another large bed has been added (facing the Car Park) and planted up, with a bias towards larger species than have been used so far; this to provide something of a backdrop and windbreak. Overall, growth from earlier planting has been satisfactory with few losses. You are reminded that the project is not about finding, from among our natives, new pretty flowers for gardens but having a collection of interesting smaller plants. For example, there are two species which are on the official *endangered species* list, that is, in danger of being lost because of destructive European land management practices.

It is encouraging to find that the few visitors so far are indeed interested in the plants, and this has led to a future Talks at the Cottage being a guided tour of the Garden.

With another large bed to be planted later this year, maintenance is going to require a couple more persons on the Cottage Gardeners list. It means being prepared to come along from time to time to lend a hand. As with most other parts of MCCG activity, we can't ask the few who do all the work, to do a bit more.

*Graeme Wilson*

## Danger in the Opera House... Platypus Death Traps

Catching yabbies in muddy creeks and farm dams is a cherished memory of many Australian childhoods. Opera house traps (photo p1) are the quickest, easiest and cheapest way to catch large numbers of yabbies. While cheap to buy, the environmental cost of using these traps is far too high.

Opera house and other enclosed yabby traps are inadvertently killing platypuses, as well as other native species such as turtles, Australian water-rats and water birds. Platypuses are known to locate their prey by sensing movements generated by prey species (especially large food items such as yabbies) making them particularly vulnerable to being lured into traps that have already captured yabbies. Once lured into a yabby trap, a platypus may drown in less than three minutes.

While legal in Queensland, these deadly traps are banned in all public waters of Tasmania, Victoria, the ACT and east of the Newell Highway in New South Wales due to the threat they pose to wildlife.

Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland (Wildlife Queensland) is campaigning for an immediate ban of opera house traps and other enclosed yabby traps in all Queensland public waters.

### How you can help

- Sign one of Wildlife Queensland's postcards to the Premier or send an electronic postcard to the Premier via their website [www.wildlife.org.au](http://www.wildlife.org.au) or write to the Premier asking her to ban opera house traps in all Queensland public waters.
- When yabbing, use wildlife friendlier alternatives such as dilly nets or baited lines with no hooks.
- Report dead wildlife found in yabby traps to Wildlife Queensland.

*Fiona Maxwell, Community Conservation Officer,  
Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland*

## Please rescue injured wildlife

Again and again I find native wildlife, dead or badly injured, on our roads: Bats, possums, kangaroos, snakes, frogs, goannas, the list goes on. The other day it was a Dusky Moorhen. I was on my way home from work on a Friday afternoon, keen to settle into my weekend, and the injured bird was sitting on the side of Haven Road, near the creek.

The Moorhen was badly limping, with its left wing drooping. It looked at me wanting to be rescued. If you have ever assisted an animal in need, you will know what I mean, and you will recognise that look. The poor bird would have been hit by a car or chased and bitten by a dog nearby (or both), because in its state it couldn't have gone far. I took it to Marshall Lane vet, but there was no hope for this one, it had to be put down. Several hours into my weekend I reflect on how many more dead and injured animals have to appear on the roadside before we all slow down and lock up our dogs?

PLEASE slow down, PLEASE control your dog, and PLEASE take injured wildlife to a vet (Marshall Lane vets are very kindly examining native wildlife and passing them on to wildlife carers) or contact Australian Zoo Animal Hospital which has a 24 hour service which will advise you on what you can do. Its phone number is 1300 369 652. Don't ignore the animal's plight; they feel pain too. To be prepared, it is best to carry a removal or similar cardboard box in your car as well as an old towel or two. Cover the animal with the towel and scoop it up, making sure the eyes are covered. This will calm the animal down. Put it into the box and call the number below.

**Australian Zoo Animal Hospital 1300 369 652**

*Ulrike Zimmermann*

(The author provided a large list of possible enquiries re injured and orphaned animals; too large to include here. We are looking at means whereby we can get it out separately.)

## A neat trick to feed her young.

Longicorn beetles are common 'borer' pests of trees and shrubs. There are hundreds of species, but one we see a lot locally has a neat trick for provisioning her young and they often damage young trees in our revegetation plots. Typically, the first sign is a yellowing of leaves from part way along a branch, or above some point on the main stem and a close inspection shows that the stem or branch has been ring barked (see photo p1). The mother beetle chews through the bark, encircling the stem, often making several annular cuts close together. She then lays an egg under the bark above the highest cut. Because the bark has been removed around the trunk, the flow of sap is blocked and accumulates above the top cut, swelling the stem. The legless grub (a larva) hatches and feeds on the sugar-rich plant sap. The grub chews a home for itself in the stem, weakening it. The grub pupates and eventually emerges as an adult longicorn. The stem above the cut dies. The plant usually survives by sending up a shoot from below the damage, but its growth has been compromised. Different species of longicorn cause different types of damage. Some have grubs so large that they are sought by predators such as black cockatoos.

*Jan and Gordon Grigg*

## Talks At The Cottage

The July Talk was about the work done by Park Rangers in looking after the South D'Aguilar National Forest (formerly Brisbane Forest Park). The presentation by Ian Witheyman, Acting Ranger in Charge (see photo p1), showed us that their care of the park includes care of the Gold Creek Catchment in terms of:

- Weeds
- Horse trails
- Gates
- Fire
- Pest animals
- Permitting events
- Road works
- Compliance
- Coordinated conservation area

We were especially shocked to find out about weeds that are becoming a problem along horse trails. One in particular is *Macrotyloma axillare* (perennial horse gram) which is a legume that climbs and smothers like Glycine.

Make a note of upcoming Talks at the Cottage 10am-noon on the 3rd Thursday of each month:

**16 Sep** – Richard Woodhead re **Planned Summer Dung Beetle Survey**  
**21 Oct** – Dawn Muir presentation on **The Bird Walk around Gold Creek Reservoir June 2010**

**Tell us if you'd like to come. Contact Dale by email [daleborgelt@bigpond.com](mailto:daleborgelt@bigpond.com)**

## Rafting Ground visit

**You are invited to join us in a visit to the Rafting Ground on Saturday 25 September.**

There will be a brief account of the history of place which was so important to Brookfield up to about 1900. Following half a century of neglect a community project was started in 1959 to give a conspicuous face to the Reserve, followed by an undertaking by BCC to develop it as a public place, which it continues to do. In the course of that, REPA carried out a substantial planting of native vegetation 19 years ago, and we will look at that as something highly relevant to MCCG's interests. Finally, there are many old trees, remnant of original vegetation, which will be pointed out in the course of a walk around.; an opportunity to contemplate what some of our forests might have looked like before European arrival.

A further notice with relevant details will be circulated at a later date.

## 74 Attend Possingham Talk

Our MCCG public meeting in June at Brookfield Hall attracted 74 people to hear Professor Hugh Possingham's presentation on "Seasonal changes in bird abundance at Gold Creek reservoir (and elsewhere in Brisbane)". Hugh explained that he always walked the same route around Gold Creek Dam to do his monthly surveys over some 8 years. He shared with us his interest in finding out about changes through time, both seasonal and longer-term. He stressed the importance of gathering and recording bird-watching data in this regular way.

Everyone in the audience enjoyed this interesting talk by an enthusiastic "bird-watching addict".

*Dale Borgelt*

Note: Another bird watcher - Dawn Muir, of Birds Qld - will give a presentation at The Cottage in October on A Bird Walk round Gold Creek Reservoir in June 2010.