

Print Post Approved PP 424022/2141 **NEWSLETTER**



▲ Winners (see Picturing our environment p. 4) Photo: Dale Borgelt

SUMMER 2010



Frogmouth on nest (see Addition to the family, p. 3) *Photo: Deb Ford*



▲ Musician (see From weed to music, . p 6)



• One of the 22 (see Platypus survey, p. 4) *Photo: Damian Egan*



At last, a clean-up (see View from the bridge, p. 6)
Photo: Bryan Hacker



Dedicated to a better Brisbane

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: Deb Ford Correspondence to be addressed to the Secretary at: P.O. Box 657, Kenmore 4069 E-mail: wmcvicar@gil.com.au

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Editor: Graeme Wilson, Ph. 3374 1218 *Email*: zzzgrw@bigpond.com *Formatting*: Margaret Hastie *Printing*: John Gower

Editorial

Winter, followed by Spring, of better than usual intermittent rain, kept our vegetation looking good and even continuing some growth. Never satisfied, we then began bemoaning the lack of soil moisture at depth which would help plants through the usually hot and dry period until normal Summer rain. The weather Gods have smiled on us with such good falls in October, followed by occasional up to the time of writing, that all is set for exceptional growing conditions through the next couple of months. In consequence, our members will miss a rare opportunity if they don't, without delay, roll up their sleeves, and plant as much as they can maintain while surface moisture is high and temperatures are not.

Chairman's Report

There is always something special going on within Moggill Creek Catchment Group. Everyone is busy – perhaps more so as a result of seemingly regular major flooding events which repeatedly cause severe damage to vegetation along creek banks. What's more, above the flood zones the above average rain causes the weeds to grow so fast! But somehow people find time to contribute to our activities.

One highlight of this quarter has been our Photographic Competition (see p. 4 for details). The quality of the pictures gets better each year. Special thanks must be offered to Geoff Lawrence and his team for running such a professional competition and also to all our sponsors who have made the competition possible.

The Department of Education and Training (DET) is funding revegetation work in the grounds of the Brookfield State School. Work will commence soon to clear weeds and plant appropriately from the school buildings, along the Boscombe Road boundary, down to Moggill Creek. MCCG has been advising DET on the scope of work. The school grounds are at present heavily infested with all kinds of weeds so this program will be very welcome.

We are delighted that Moggill Constructions, a local engineering company, has donated \$3,000 to MCCG. The company would be happy if MCCG decided to put this money towards a revegetation program, so we are developing a program that would include this contribution.

The Annual MCCG platypus survey was a great success. With 69 volunteers helping, 22 individual sightings were made. This is a large increase from the previous two years. Perhaps good rains and the ongoing riparian rehabilitation efforts of the catchment group have enabled the platypus to persist in our catchment and possibly breed again after 10 years of drought.

Joanna Yesberg, MCCG Treasurer

Our Catchment Group relies on a few members who quietly carry out difficult tasks with skill and competency. (Photo p. 5)

Thanks Joanna !

Malcolm Frost

Creek Ranger's Report

Well, its coming up to the end of another great year for Moggill Creek Catchment Group. We have had many successful projects take place including the Kids Day at the Cottage, the publication of "Our Place in the Country" and many great 'Cottage Talks'. Recently, Shelley left on maternity leave and I am filling her role.

Since the last newsletter, we have had a very successful Platypus survey, with many people turning up for the 4am start. We even had people come from as far away as the Sunshine Coast, to record an outstanding 22 sightings, the best year so far. Also, the Photo competition was yet again a success. I had a hand in getting schools involved. We had two schools' as well as individual children's entries We hope to have three or more schools involved next year.

Other educational activities with which I have been associated include the final performance of our Creek Ranger Catchment Kids program. Shelley and I have been working with a year 4 class from Brookfield SS for this year- round program and they will finish with a well rehearsed performance to 10 other schools over Brisbane. I have also been involved with Kenmore SHS and the Stream Savers project and have had to apply for additional grants to keep this great project going.

Summer is with us which is a good time for activities. We have some great projects about to get underway including the Dung Beetle survey and the Creek Health Monitoring project. Please let us know if you would like to take part in these projects or any others.

Also remember to check the catchment group website – **www.moggillcreek.org.au** – which is regularly updated with news, events and environmental information that you might find interesting! My contact details are **Stacey.hodge@brisbane.qld.gov.au** and **3407 0052** if you have any questions.

Stacey Hodge

Addition to the family

We had been watching the frogmouths' nest (see photo p1) since mid-September, which is when I first noticed it about 12m to 13m above the ground in an ironbark. As you can see, it's not much of a nest: a few twigs laid across a horizontal fork in a high branch. Amazing how the parents have managed with this year's rain, late cold snap, and wind.

I saw a chick for the first time and then four days later, we had a fleeting glimpse of a second chick. According to the birdbook incubation is around 30 days with the male incubating by day and the female at night. We have not witnessed the 'baton-change' when the parents swap duties. As they are nocturnal hunters, presumably the male, once relieved from his day job, finds food and feeds the female? And the chicks as well, once hatched. We have searched unsuccessfully for the female during the day, assuming that she wouldn't be far away.

Deb Ford

The land adjacent to The Cottage at Gold Creek Dam is steeped in history!

Thomas Taylor arrived in Moreton Bay on 10 May 1850 aboard the ship Bangalor. He was a convict transported to Australia from Ireland for stealing cheese. This was during the years of the dire Potato famine. Thomas was given a Ticket of Leave and was able to select land to lease for cultivation. He chose selection 172 of portion 264 which is close to Gold Creek Dam. After certain requirements had been met, he was given a Deed of Grant and was able to purchase the land. Here, with his wife Mary, he raised his children James, Thomas, Mary (died just six days old), Margaret, Sarah, William, John and Edward.

I met Frank O'Donoghue (photo p1), a retired Police Superintendent, at The Cottage on Wednesday 6 October. Thomas Taylor was his great grandfather. Margaret, Thomas's daughter, was Frank's grandmother. She married Matthew O'Donoghue and lived at Priors Pocket, Moggill for many years.

It was wonderful to listen to Frank's history. Some recollections were sad, such as the man who was found in Thomas's paddock, poisoned with potassium cyanide. An arrest warrant had been issued for him in connection with the charge of forgery. These were hard times!

So when you are next walking around Gold Creek dam, spare a thought for Thomas Taylor and the struggles he must have faced on a daily basis bringing up his family in the 1850s.

Annual platypus survey

The Annual Moggill Creek Catchment Group platypus survey was a great success. 22 individual platypus sightings were made by the team of 69 volunteers led by Liz Snow. This is many more than in the previous two years. The photo on p1 shows one travelling full steam ahead.

Platypus were seen along upper Moggill Creek in Upper Brookfield and in lower Moggill Creek from the Brookfield Showgrounds to Moggill Road. Gold Creek also fared well with six platypus.

Concerns remain that again no platypus were seen in the upper reaches of Gold Creek. Of further concern in Gold Creek is the absence of any sightings in a previous platypus 'hotspot' this year. Volunteers reported that this section of creek appeared to have become highly degraded, with a murky, algal appearance. Interestingly, the bushland track leading to this creek section has recently been concreted, exacerbating runoff during rain events and hence transporting pollution into this fragile waterway. There was also evidence of horses continuing to being ridden through this creek section, causing additional pollution and damage. On the bright side, platypus that in 2009 appeared to have abandoned some degraded and flood-damaged sites were again seen. Perhaps good rains over the past three years and the ongoing riparian rehabilitation efforts of the catchment group have enabled the platypus to persist in our catchment, and possibly breed again after 10 years of drought.

Picturing Our Environment: MCCG Competition Success!

2010 was the 13th year for the MCCG's Photography Competition. Yet again we had a record number of entries: 175 photographs, including over 60 from the younger members of the community. All were displayed for a week at Kenmore Shopping Village, culminating in the presentation of over \$1,600 in prizes to the 20 winners at the centre on 11th September 2010. Dr Joseph McDowell, the competition judge, congratulated the entrants on the high standards seen in the competition, and Malcolm Frost, MCCG Chairman, also thanked all of the competition sponsors. This year the competition saw the introduction of a new category, sponsored by Steve Parish Publishing, resulting in some very creative responses to the challenge of portraying 'Patterns in Nature'. The 'People's Choice' voting was a popular feature of the display during the week with nearly 450 votes cast. The People's Choice was announced as the picture of a platypus in Moggill Creek taken by Karen Lawson, with two pictures of spiders voted second and third. Congratulations also went to Kenmore South State School students and staff who were presented by our Chairman with the Lord Mayor's Perpetual Schools Shield (picture on p1, L-R Jade Bowser, Lucy Johnston and Jaime Kirkpatrick who took the photos), as well as \$100 toward school library resources, by Dr Bruce Flegg MP. Brookfield State School was presented with a Highly Commended Certificate for their entry in this category. Special thanks go to The Local Bulletin and to all 2010 sponsors of the Competition: 4 MBS Classic FM, Breeze Photos, Brookfield Produce & Pet Pavilion, Centenary Hire, Haemen Mendis Jewellers, The Print Shoppe, Judy Mackay Hair Design, Little Muchkins Toy Hire, Steve Parish Publishing, The Pet Chalet, Water Solutions, Cr Margaret de Wit, and Workout Indooroopilly. Thanks also go to the Brisbane City Council, the Lord Mayor, Cr Margaret de Wit, and Dr Bruce Flegg for their support of the Schools Competition.

Geoff Lawrence

Brisbane's WaterSmart Strategy is Now Available

Water is central to our identity as Brisbane, the river city, and is vital for our health, industry and to support the liveability of Brisbane. Brisbane City Council has redeveloped its Water*Smart* Strategy which will guide the future management and use of Brisbane's water.

Some of the suggested ways the general community can contribute to the achievement of the WaterSmart Strategy vision include:

- create a 'rain garden' in your back yard
- install a greywater system
- be prepared for potential flooding
- avoid using fertilisers on your garden and lawn
- install permeable groundcover to allow water to seep naturally into the ground, and avoid large paved areas and awnings
- harvest your stormwater
- care for your local waterway
- contact your local catchment group for ideas on projects you can support.

Download the WaterSmart Strategy and find out more about how you can contribute to Brisbane's water future at www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/watersmartcity.





◄ Joanna Yesberg (see Article p. 2) Photo: Malcolm Frost



▲ Frank O'Donoghue (see The land adjacent to the Cottage p. 3) *Photo: Karen Lawson*

From weed to music

We are frequently asked for help in many ways, but this request was most unusual. Someone wanted to locate a particular weed to make a musical instrument. *Arundo donax*, the Giant Reed, is a plant originating in the Middle East but now spread world-wide for use as an ornamental, having meanwhile become a weed; in some environments a serious pest. We have it here, without yet being a particular problem. It is a tall grass with strong stems similar to those of bamboo (that also being a grass). The hollow stems are used to make the Nay, a flute-like instrument known to have been in use in Egypt, Turkey and Middle Eastern countries for 5000 years. The picture on p1 shows a musician playing the Nay.

The enquiry came from Drew Salem, born of Egyptian parents in England and now living here. In his early teens he visited Egypt for the first time and has vivid memories of standing in the street in Alexandrina, listening to the "beautiful, haunting, melodic sounds coming from the Nay player, beside his mini-cart of Nays for sale". He says that he knew that one day he'd play that instrument. And so he does, playing on bought instruments. But now, having learned that the Giant Reed grows here, he decided to make one; and thus the appeal to us.

Well, we have told him where plants occur, but it is not plain sailing from here on. Special knowledge, which he is gathering, is required to make a good instrument. Further, particular dimensions of the stems are necessary and he is not yet sure that they are to be found in the variety occurring here or perhaps their growth in this environment. We are helping in the search.

We wish him well and hope that one day he may be able to play to us.

Graeme Wilson

The View from the Bridge

The area around Brookfield Roundabout must surely be the focal point of our Catchment. Here Moggill Creek is crossed by the bridge leading to Upper Brookfield. Until recently, the view north from the bridge was a sea of Chinese elms, liberally garlanded with Madeira vine and balloon vine.

Thanks to a Community Action Grant from the Commonwealth Government, with support from BCC Habitat Brisbane, this area is now being transformed, as the photo on page 1 shows. Smaller Chinese elms have all gone, with larger ones soon to follow. Great care was taken not to damage the few sandpaper figs and black beans still in the river bed. Care was also taken to protect seedling regrowth, particularly three-veined cryptocaryas, sedges and kangaroo apples. Limited planting will soon be carried out, to increase biodiversity and stabilise the bed of the creek.

Follow-up plans include planting to the south of the bridge. Already the Chinese elms have been taken out on the east side of the creek and the weed grasses treated preparatory to planting.

Bryan Hacker

Rust never sleeps

A new fungal disease known as Myrtle Rust has been found in Australia, and it has the potential to devastate Australian ecosystems. Myrtle Rust is known to infect the young shoots and growing tips of plants in the family Myrtaceae, which comprises many familiar Australian native species, including eucalypts, bottlebrushes and willow myrtles.

So called because of its masses of orange or yellow powdery spores, Myrtle Rust is native to South America, and it is not known how this disease entered Australia. Its microscopic spores can become attached to clothing or other objects, or may even be carried on the wind, and containment of this disease may rely on the vigilance of the public.

Myrtle Rust was first discovered on a property in the central coast of New South Wales in late April 2010, and the Gosford and Wyong Local Government Areas have now been declared Quarantine Areas, with restricted movement of susceptible plants and related material. Currently the disease is mainly contained within the nursery industry, and all host material on intensely infected properties is being destroyed, and surrounding vegetation is being treated with fungicide. Fortunately Myrtle Rust has not been reported in native bush yet.

What you can do: If you think you have seen Myrtle Rust, contact the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881. If birding within the quarantine zone, or visiting plant nurseries, change your clothes and wash your car to reduce the chance of carrying spores. Practice good hygiene if planting Myrtaceae plants. Check for symptoms regularly. Head to the NSW Department of Primary industry website for more information.

(From 'Birds Australia' e-News, October 2010)

Some weeds and natives in the genus Solanum

In past newsletter issues, I have provided separate articles on local weeds and natives. Just for a change, in this issue there is just a single article, with weeds and natives in the same genus.

Solanum is one of the larger plant genera, with about 1700 species extending from temperate regions to the tropics. The name *Solanum* is believed to derive from the Latin *solamen*, quieting, and to allude to the sedative properties of some species. Many species contain the toxic compound solanine. The genus includes shrubs and trees as well as herbaceous plants and climbers. Best known is the potato – *Solanum tuberosum* – which originated in the Andes Mountains of South America. In South-east Queensland there are 45 species of *Solanum*, 19 exotic and 26 native.

As a genus, *Solanum* is relatively easy to identify, mostly with 5-petalled flowers which are quite distinctive, but identifying individual species can be difficult. (Photos of the four species discussed here are shown on p. 5)

Weedy Solanum species

In our Catchment the commonest of the 19 weedy *Solanum* species noted for South-east Queensland are wild tree tobacco and the devil's figs. Six other weedy species have also been locally recorded.

Solanum mauritianum (wild tobacco tree)

The wild tobacco tree is well known, growing to a height of 4 m or more, with spreading branches and large grey-green, densely hairy leaves to 40 cm long and 15 cm wide. Flowers are in dense clusters on erect, branched inflorescences; they are violet-coloured and c. 1.5 mm across. All parts of the plant are poisonous. Flowers are followed by soft, yellow, globular fruit which are relished by brown pigeons and king parrots.

Wild tobacco originates from South America and is common in our area on lower slopes and along water courses. Although it has been declared noxious to livestock it is often left (in small numbers) in revegetation projects as it provides shade to new plantings, it is easily removed, and it provides some protection from frosts. If there are fruiting natives in the area, it also provides the possibility for local dispersal of native rainforest species.

Solanum chrysotrichum (giant devil's fig)

The giant devil's fig is a thoroughly nasty plant. Sparse prickles on stems make it very uncomfortable to handle. It grows to a height of 4 m. Leaves are up to 35 cm long and 30 cm wide and are strongly lobed. Flowers are in dense clusters of 50 or more and are white, 3-4.5 cm in diameter. They are followed by yellow, globular fruit.

Giant devil's fig originates from Central America and, like the wild tobacco tree, has been declared noxious. It is common in our area along creek banks and is relatively easy to control – but do wear gloves when cutting it down! Its less-robust relation, the devil's fig (*S. torvum*), is also in our district and is similarly weedy.

Both species are most readily controlled by cutting close to the base and treating (within 15 seconds) with 50% glyphosate solution from a spray bottle.

Native Solanum species

As mentioned earlier, there are 26 native *Solanum species* in South-east Queensland, six recorded as occurring in our Catchment.

Solanum aviculare (kangaroo apple)

Kangaroo apple is a soft-wooded and attractive shrub with spreading branches, sometimes growing to a height of 4m, and lacking thorns. It is reported to be native to areas as far south as Tasmania and also to New Zealand, where it is known as 'poroporo'. Leaves are hairless and bright green, up to 40 cm long and 25 cm wide and are generally strongly lobed. The inflorescences comprise up to ten violet-coloured flowers which are 3-4 cm in diameter. These are followed by orange-red succulent fruit 2cm long and a little narrower than long.

All green parts of the plant, including unripe fruit, are poisonous. Nevertheless, kangaroo apple is recognized as a 'bush tucker' plant, the ripe fruit being edible, but described as 'sickly sweet'. We have found it establishing naturally in the riverbed of Moggill Creek (see article in this issue "The view from the Bridge") and it also appears to be hardy on upper hillslopes, although apparently short-lived.

Solanum stelligerum (devil's needles, star nightshade)

The shrub known as devil's needles grows to a height of 2 m and occurs naturally on rainforest margins and better favoured eucalypt woodlands, on loams or basaltic soils. It has scattered prickles on stems and the dark green leaves, which are not lobed and are up to 14 cm long and 5 cm wide. The inflorescence includes up to ten flowers which are pale lilac to almost white and about 2 cm in diameter. Fruit are globular, bright red and succulent, and 5-10 mm in diameter. The fruit were eaten by Aboriginal people, but in small quantities

Both kangaroo apple and devil's needles are easy to grow and come to flower within a year of planting. We generally have stocks of both species at our nursery, free to MCCG members. The latter species has been noted as a potential 'lantana replacement' species.

NEWS FROM THE COTTAGE

Talks at the Cottage continue to be popular, especially attracting members who are interested in finding out more about the biodiversity of our catchment. After virtually trialling the third Thursday morning Cottage Talks for 2 years, it seems they are well worth continuing, plus throwing in some Saturdays. Now I'd really like to hear suggestions of topics that would particularly interest you. These could be new or further extension of topics already visited. I eagerly await your suggestion to **daleborgelt@gmail.com**

In our first year, 2009, popular topics included local butterflies, micro-bats, gliders, frogs, figs and creek water quality. See below 2010 topics:

February	Natural Areas of Queensland	Peter Shilton
February	Richmond Birdwing Butterflies	Dale Borgelt
March	Native grasses	Bryan Hacker
April	Botanical Artists of SE QLD	Margaret Hastie
May	Photographing the Catchment	Joseph McDowall
June	Reproduction in Plants	Graeme Wilson
July	Qld Parks and Wildlife ranger in the	Ian Witheyman
-	D'Aguilar National Park	-
September	Dung Beetle Survey intro	Richard Woodhead
October	Birds of Gold Creek	Dawn Muir
October	Dung Beetles	Geoff Monteith
November	A tour of our Cottage Garden	Andrew Wilson

An early one in 2011 will be a talk on local Eucalypts by Bryan Hacker who has planted a demonstration selection near the Cottage. Another highlight will be that Dawn Muir of Birds Queensland has offered to take us on a bird walk round the Cottage and reserve. On your calendar, you can quite safely note that there will be a talk at the Cottage on the third Thursday morning of the months from February to November, but I would really like to add your input to the ideas we already have.

Dale Borgelt

A STRING OF SPECIAL SATURDAYS

From the last Saturday in September till the last Saturday in October MCCG members were offered a wide variety of events which in turn attracted a more diverse attendance.

Saturday September 25: About 30 people enjoyed perfect weather for the tour of Rafting Ground Reserve with Andrew Wilson as a guide. Graeme Wilson gave a brief historical rundown beforehand, and afterwards we helped him celebrate his last day of being 92.

Saturday October 2: Stargazing after Sunset with the help of SEQ Astronomical Society had to be postponed when the weather gave us no sky visibility whatsoever. See Saturday October 30.

Saturday October 16: Dragonflies were the focus of Sandy Pollock and the Friends of Moggill Creek Catchment. Sandy is interested in us finding out what dragonflies we have in our catchment and as a start has suggested inviting members and especially children to send in photos of ones they see. Our Chairman, Malcolm Frost, has put this into action by sending a message to members inviting them to send photos to **mr.frost@bigpond.net.au**

Saturday October 23: Two sessions with Geoff Monteith and honours student Tania Kenyon gave valuable information about Dung Beetles followed by a practical demonstration of trapping and survey techniques. Survey starts November.

Saturday October 30: Some 40 pairs of eyes peered through the 4 huge scopes set up on the Brookfield State School oval by 4 members of SEQAS (including our Brookfield member Mike Ford who arranged it). The night was fine and black as it needed to be, but as I found out later when I tried to retrace my steps from the school entrance to the oval after dark, it made for a somewhat daunting/perilous trip for late comers. Something I did not realise when I happily directed them, after covering their tiny torches with red cellophane. Luckily, all made it without mishap to be rewarded with seeing Alpha Centauri, Altair, Achernar, double stars, the butterfly cluster and fuzzy ducks as well as Jupiter. A favourite with both adults and children was Albireo, a beautiful double star with contrasting colours of orange and blue. Lovely.

Dale Borgelt

Planting in the bush

Most people are confident that they can plant, an opinion probably based on some success in their garden where soil has usually been worked to some depth, is reasonably friable, watering is easily carried out, and with horticultural species which are adapted to the damage occurring to roots in the course of planting. But planting our native species in the bush is an entirely different matter. A lot more is needed than getting the roots more or less out of sight!

Clear the site of litter to reach the soil surface. Break up soil thoroughly to more than the depth of the root-ball of your plant. Remove soil to that depth, keeping it so that it can be replaced without rubbish, suspend the plant in the hole (don't attempt to push it in to the soil), replace soil carefully, working it around the roots. Finish with the root-ball surface level with or slightly below original soil surface, shape a ridge around and some distance from the plant to prevent runoff of water, water slowly and heavily (not with a sprinkler or jet) to settle soil in to contact with roots, replace litter and add mulch if available.