

MOGGILL CREEK CATCHMENT GROUP

www.moggillcreek.org.au



Moggill Creek Catchment Group

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NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2011



◀ Bearded dragon (see p. 3)
Photo: Ulrike Zimmermann



▲ Annie and Adam (see p. 4)
Photo: Dale Borgelt



▲ Ticks (see p. 4)
Photo: Gordon Grigg



Calendar (see p. 8) ▶

Editorial

Coming to the end of another year, we try to find time to reflect on what happened. At least we maintained our rate of propagating and distributing native plants to our members, and giving advice to those who wanted help in deciding what to plant and where and how, and moreover, how to deal with the ever-advancing weeds. And we have continued – perhaps increased – our reach out to not only our members but also to the community at large, by way of talks, displays, activities and published material. Some special interest groups have formed via the Friends of Moggill Creek venture. And while we are not solely concerned with Moggill Creek as some erroneously believe (but rather its catchment), the creek itself is of special interest, and this has led to an active Creek Health Monitoring Program which should be most useful to us. The Pacey Rd. Project, referred to elsewhere, is perhaps the most ambitious on-the-ground thing we have undertaken. But perhaps the most significant thing we have done is to carry out a major review in which we asked what have we achieved and what should be our priorities looking ahead. We will have wasted our time doing this if we don't rigorously pursue the conclusions.

Another quite different observation on what has happened: We propagate plants from seed collected by our members. Some of our most reliable species, such as foam bark and red kamala failed to produce seed and hoop pine seed gave little germination. On the other hand, some species, in particular large-leaved wilkiea, which usually produce little seed did so well that we eventually had to say 'thanks but no thanks' to collectors. Likewise, we have never been offered so much brown pine seed. Then there were species flowering which rarely do so. Even exotics were unusual. Jacarandas which are almost guaranteed to be in full flower in October were delayed a month, while many schotias which reliably flower so heavily in September, failed to flower at all. These are observations without explanations, on which you can speculate.

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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Dedicated to a better Brisbane

2012 MCCG MEMBERSHIPS

When we are members of a few different groups, it is not always easy to remember which membership is due when and which ones we have paid. In the case of MCCG, all memberships become due from the AGM for the following year. The cost is \$15 per person per year. When renewing now, it is for 2012.

**** NOTE:** *If you have just joined or renewed in the past few months, you will already have been credited with 2012 membership.*

The Membership Renewal form gives payment options including direct payment into the MCCG bank account. If banking, please use your First Name as well as Surname as Reference so we have enough details to credit the right person with the Renewal on our records.

We hope that you enjoy continued membership with our volunteer group. There are mutual benefits. For example, membership entitles you to free native plants from our Nursery and when planted these help the MCCG aim to conserve and improve the natural environment of its catchment on private and public land. Coming to events or Talks at the Cottage, participating in activities or just reading the Newsletter all add to awareness of our environment, the catchment and all its biodiversity.

Enjoy 2012

Dale Borgelt

Chairman's Report - 2011

In 1997 the Moggill Creek Catchment Management Plan was published and in 1998 our Moggill Creek Catchment Group was formed. Thirteen years on, we have successfully held our Annual General Meeting and we can look back with some satisfaction at our progress. Our membership has steadily risen to nearly 500, our nursery has produced more than 100,000 plants for local land owners, we have now an established centre, The Cottage, which allows us to meet and promote environmental issues, we have continued to receive active support from BCC and our financial position is well managed and secure.

None of this could have been achieved without the dedication of countless energetic and talented volunteers. From the beginning, we have managed to recruit a management team that has allowed the organisation to set and achieve outcomes, always with the assistance of this enthusiastic, supportive volunteer base.

In the recently published Review which can be read via our web page or at The Cottage, many issues, concerns and challenges still confront us in the future. We are troubled by the erosion caused by flooding, the need for additional funding to support our restoration programs, the out of control infestation of some weeds, and the need to find ways of supporting the restoration programs of the private landowners whose land constitutes over 60% of the catchment.

We are confident however that these challenges can be overcome. There is a growing awareness and appreciation of the value of this catchment throughout the local community and in government.

With the ongoing support of the community, we can gradually restore this catchment to something of which our local community and Brisbane as a whole can be proud.

Malcolm Frost

Double act Annas - Creek Ranger's Report

Anna Greig and I embarked on the job-share role as the BCC Creek Rangers for Moggill Creek Catchment on 29th September this year. It has been both interesting and amusing introducing ourselves to everyone and being referred to as "*The Annas*" and "*Anna 1 and 2*"! Thank you for welcoming us into the beautiful Moggill Creek Catchment. Below are some highlights of our work over the last couple of months.

In October I attended the 2011 Catchment Kids Performance Finale, with students from 11 primary schools across Brisbane celebrating their Catchment Kids achievements through performance, dance and song at the Qld Conservatorium, Southbank. Emma Malty had been working with the Yr 4-7 students of Upper Brookfield State School throughout the year and they were the winners of the day! Congratulations Upper Brookfield State School, who received the Lord Mayor's Trophy and a \$1500 school environmental project grant.

The Pacey Rd Bushcare Project is gaining momentum and Anna Greig has been busy working on developing this initiative and attending several working bees with property owners in the Pacey Rd sub-catchment. This project aims to engage and educate private property owners in restoration and on-going land-care activities on their properties, fostering a model that can be spread amongst the community. Nearby, The Energex Junior Landcare Day was held in November, involving 18 Grade 2 students from Upper Brookfield State School.

Anna Greig and I were both involved in the second CHMP (Creek Health Monitoring Program) event held on 6 November. Dedicated volunteers decked in waders and gumboots were busy once again assessing stream health, including aquatic macro-invertebrates, fish and the riparian condition at 12 sites in the catchment. What a pleasure it was to find out what each team was discovering as I went around the sites conducting the water quality testing! The mini glass aquariums proved very useful in identifying fish, as well as the assistance of the ANGFA members! The results from this 2nd monitoring day will be published on the MCCG website and it will be very interesting to compare them with April's sampling overview. Many thanks to everyone who took part on the day; it would not have happened without you all.

Anna Shera

Encounter with a Dragon

It was one of the first really warm summer days and we were on our way home from something or other when we spotted a bearded dragon (*Pogona vitticeps*) sunbathing in the middle of the road. We knew this was a disaster waiting to happen, so we got out to shoo it to safer ground. But instead of retreating into the bush, it decided that Dieter's leg was the safest place for now (photo p 1). It took some convincing that this was not such a great idea, and Dieter was rather happy about the temporarily attached, "affectionate" dragon.

Bearded dragons are relatively common in our western suburbs. They can often be seen on the road or on tree trunks, where they blend with the mottle of the bark. They can be distinguished from our water dragons by their distinct "gills" around the neck and the lack of coloration often found on water dragons, particularly in the breeding season. Also bearded dragons are less dependent on water and can be found higher up the hills.

Ulrike Zimmermann

'Aerostart' for ticks

Ticks are bad this season. Neighbours talk about getting three or four, even more, after working or a walk on their properties. There are various ways to manage ticks, once attached, but a few years ago we adopted a method suggested by a doctor at Royal Brisbane Hospital and found it very easy and successful. You simply give the tick a couple of squirts with Aerostart and the tick dies within a few seconds. Very convenient! The earlier you squirt, the better, preferably without touching or poking it first because less foreign protein will then get in to cause a reaction. If it's a small one (an early stage; some people don't realise they are baby ticks), you don't need to remove it. Larger ones can be removed with fine forceps once dead (no leg waving after a gentle poke), grasping where the 'beak' enters the skin. There's no urgency to do that.

Aerostart is sold for starting recalcitrant two-stroke motors and can be purchased at SupaCheap Auto and such places. A WARNING: Aerostart is petroleum ether. It is flammable and an anaesthetic. USE IN A VENTILATED PLACE & AWAY FROM FLAME. It works very quickly because the ether dissolves the tick's waxy cuticle and permeates the tick.

It's only the female tick that sucks your blood. The males have a smaller rostrum ('beak') and you may find them crawling over you looking for a female with which to mate, or to feed on it..

The life cycle varies a bit between years but, in general, tiny larvae (pinhead size, with 6 legs) hatch from eggs in late summer/autumn. After their first feed they moult to a nymph (8 legs) and moult again after a second feed to become an adult. Fully fed females fall off a host in summer as a sac full of hundreds of eggs. If you are unlucky enough to sit where these eggs have hatched, e.g. in long grass, you may collect many dozens of tiny dark tick larvae, all having their first feed. Aerostart is then magic; spray the affected area and kill the lot.

To avoid getting a tick in the first place, 'Rid' seems to be the best repellent.

The Queensland Museum has a downloadable Fact Sheet which can be found easily on their website (but it advises killing ticks with an insecticide, which is very slow!).

The photo (p 1) shows a collection of ticks. Most are on their backs. The males are on the right, and their smaller 'beaks' can be seen.

Gordon Grigg

Photo comp

For the first time in its fourteen year history our ever-growing photography competition attracted over two hundred individual entries, making the job of our judge, Dr Joseph McDowell, even harder this year. Thanks to the generous support of local businesses, 22 individual prizes were presented at the presentation ceremony, with a total prize pool valued at over \$2,000 (over \$600 in cash).

Prizes were presented at Kenmore Shopping Village (long-time supporters of the event) in early September after a week-long display of all of the entries. We were delighted with the support of our sponsors, including 4 MBS Classic FM, The Print Shoppe, Judy Mackay Hair Design, and in particular The Local Bulletin who publicised the MCCG and the competition during the year. Open-all-ages categories included Native Plants and Animals (sponsor Workout Indooroopilly), The Flood and the Recovery (sponsor Water Solutions), People in their Catchment (sponsor Moggill Constructions, Colours in Nature (sponsor Steve Parish Publishing). There were also two age-specific categories for younger people, both inviting entries in response to the theme My Catchment (sponsors Cr Margaret de Wit, and Brookfield Produce & Pet Pavilion). In addition all photographs were eligible for the People's Choice (sponsor The Pet Chalet), Supreme Exhibit (sponsor Breeze Photos), and the new award of the Chairman's Choice (sponsor Brisbane College of Photography & Art) prizes.

The Lord Mayor's Perpetual Shield, together with and \$100 to the school toward library resources, was presented by Cr Margaret de Wit to Kenmore South State School as winners for the second year running of the MCCG School's Photography Competition (prize supported by Cr Margaret de Wit and Dr Bruce Flegg MP) (photo p. 5). Kenmore State School and Chapel Hill State School were also commended for their entries, and we hope in 2012 to encourage even more of our local schools to plan to enter in the schools competition (which is open to schools in the Kenmore, Bruujookfield, Pullenvale, and Moggill areas).

The competition would not take place without the support and hard work of all those MCCG volunteers who manned the stand during display week, Graeme Wilson (who plays an important role in the judging process), and our treasurer Joanna Yesberg. Thanks also to our tireless photography committee: Robyn Frost, Margaret Whyte, Dale Borgelt, Bruce Simeon, and of course Malcolm Frost. To see some of the winning pictures visit <http://www.moggillcreek.org/>.

The two photos on p1 capture something of the interest shown by young people at the display. Annie Scrooby is with her mother, trying to decide which entry will get her People's Choice vote, while Adam takes a fancy to one of the many children's entries.

The photos of the frog and fungi on p. 5 are examples of both the high quality of those on display and the sort of things MCCG is about.

Geoff Lawrence



▲ *Dodonaea viscosa cuneata* (See A very pretty bush, p. 6)
 Photo: Bryan Hacker



Frog and Fungi (see Photo comp, p. 4) Carolyn Parsons



▲ Billygoat weed (top), Mist Flower (bottom)
 (See Two similar weeks, p. 7) Photo: Bryan Hacker



◀ Kenmore South State School Group (p. 4)
 Photo: Dale Borgelt

Annual Platypus Survey, 4th September, 2011

This year's survey again did not disappoint, with 40 enthusiastic volunteer observers out of bed before dawn to take up their positions at 33 sites along Gold Creek, Upper and Lower Moggill Creek and the Gold Creek Dam.

Including 100% definite positive sightings, 13 individual were observed, this including two pairs. This number is conservative, because we also had a very likely sighting at the Gold Creek Dam (verified a couple of days later by the same observer) and a couple of other possible pairs that were counted as individuals. There are also other sites where platypus are anecdotally being observed but not positively on the day.

It is encouraging to have positive sightings at most of the strongholds such as Huntington Estate in Brookfield, Branton and Fortrose Streets in Kenmore, various sites along Upper Brookfield Road, Gold Creek and on various private properties. Unfortunately, Upper Gold Creek closer to the dam again did not yield any sightings.

We have been conducting this annual survey since 2005. The number of individuals seen has varied from six in the first (an extreme drought period), to 20 following two years of good creek-flow. Clearly, we must keep our creeks healthy by continuing riparian rehabilitation work, and minimising litter, chemical and animal pollution and water extraction.

Thanks to all those who assisted in various ways, not only the observers.

Christine Hosking

Birds of Gap Creek, Brookfield 2011

(This list was sent to us by someone not resident hereabouts, but who visits occasionally and enjoys a birdwatching walk along Gap Creek. We don't publish it as a definitive list of birds there, but simply as an example of the natural environment interests which can be pursued because of the environment which MCCG seeks to preserve and enhance. Ed.)

Bronzewing common	Fig bird	Monarch black-faced
Butcherbird grey	Finch double-barred	Owl boobook
Butcherbird pied	Finch red-browed	Pardalote striated
Catbird green	Friarbird little	Parrot king
Cockatoo sulphur crested	Galah	Pheasant coucal
Crow Torresian	Heron white-faced	Pigeon crested
Cuckoo channel billed	Honeyeater blue-faced	Pigeon wonga
Cuckoo brush	Honeyeater brown	Robin red-capped
Currawong pied	Honeyeater Lewin's	Robin eastern yellow
Dove bar-shouldered	Honeyeater scarlet	Rosella pale-headed
Dove brown cuckoo	Kingfisher azure	Scrubwren white-browed
Dove fruit	Kingfisher sacred	Shrike-thrush little
Drongo spangled	Kookaburra laughing	Shrike-thrush grey
Fairywren red-backed	Lapwing masked	Turkey brush
Fairywren superb	Lorikeet rainbow	Whipbird eastern
Fairywren variegated	Magpie Australian	Willy Wagtail
Fantail grey	Magpie-lark	
Fantail rufus	Noisy miner	

A very pretty hop bush – *Dodonaea viscosa* subsp. *cuneata*

All those who looked round our Cottage Garden over late winter were impressed by a couple of small bushes densely covered with bright orange-red fruit. This bush – which lacks a common name – is *Dodonaea viscosa* subsp. *cuneata*. It is one of several species known as hop bush and this one deserves a place in any garden.

It is a well-branched shrub to 2 m tall, with narrowly triangular blunt-ended alternate leaves up to 25 mm long and 2-3 times as long as wide. Flowers are in clusters, with male and female flowers reportedly on separate plants. The 3-winged fruit are evident in late winter and are up to 13 mm long, and pink to reddish in colour (see photo on page 5).

Most plants just have a genus and a species name, but this one has a subspecies name, - *cuneata*, (meaning wedge-shaped) – too. Quite often subspecies within a species differ markedly, and this is the case with *Dodonaea viscosa*, in which other subspecies within the species are strikingly different, with much longer leaves, up to 12 cm long, in shape more like those of a gum tree. Although this is a very obvious characteristic, it is seen to be relatively minor by taxonomists, and perhaps controlled by just a small number of genes. The species name *viscosa* means sticky, but this attribute is not very obvious in plants I have growing. Most species of *Dodonaea* are endemic to (occur naturally only in) Australia.

Bryan Hacker

Two similar weeds in the daisy family

Two quite similar weeds are blue billygoat weed and mist flower, both in the daisy family, Asteraceae (photo p5). They even have similar generic names – *Ageratum* and *Ageratina*. In full, their names are *Ageratum houstonianum* (blue billygoat weed) and *Ageratina riparia* (mist flower, previously known as *Eupatorium riparium*). Both species are native to Central America and, with little doubt, both were purposefully introduced as ornamentals.

Blue billygoat weed is a softly hairy annual or short-lived perennial growing to a height of about 1m, the lower stems trailing and rooting copiously along the soil surface. Leaf blades are up to 10 cm long, 6 cm wide, more or less hairy, the lower opposite, the upper sometimes alternate. Flowers are in 5-7 mm wide heads and are blue in colour, and are evident pretty well all through the year. This species is probably more readily recognized than most local weeds. As well as being an aggressive weed, it is reported to be toxic to grazing animals as well as toxic to insects. It is widespread in riparian areas and elsewhere where there has been disturbance. Control is best by hand, although even a small portion of stem left in the ground soon produces a new plant.

Mist flower is a more or less erect to spreading annual herb up to 1 m tall and rooting at the nodes. Leaves are opposite, up to 12 cm long and 3 cm wide, hairless to slightly hairy on the veins, the petiole to 1.5 cm long. The flowers are in 5-6 mm wide heads and are white in colour, appearing in late winter to spring. It is common along water courses and other damp areas and is a declared noxious weed. In common with most annual weeds it is readily pulled out of the ground by hand.

Back to the generic names, *Ageratum* and *Ageratina*. According to reliable sources, both are derived from the Greek ‘a’ meaning ‘not’ and ‘geras’ meaning ‘old’, referring to the flowers retaining their colour for a long time. While this may apply to blue billygoat weed, it is difficult to see how it applies to mist flower, but perhaps other species in this genus (which includes some 250 species) have this characteristic.

Bryan Hacker

Gap Creek Road Roadkill Survey: A Joint MCCG/THECA/REPA Activity

During the months before the Gap Creek Road upgrade went ahead, Brisbane City Council engineers met with interested citizens concerned at perceived disadvantages associated with the upgrade. One such was that the upgrade would increase the numbers of road-killed animals by virtue of (a) the increased traffic density and speed and (b) the reduction in dust in the adjacent bushland which would encourage animals to live nearer the road, thus exacerbating the toll. Council engineers were persuaded by this gloomy forecast and agreed, at considerable cost, to include traffic calming devices in the Forest section of the road. These would act to slow the traffic even if the numbers of vehicles increased. It is, clearly, of some interest to see whether the traffic calming has had any positive effects. Accordingly, members of four households agreed to drive the road on four days of the week to record the roadkill numbers. These amateurs have been supported and advised by Professor Darryl Jones of Griffith University who has been involved with other environmental aspects of the upgrade. The survey lasted for six months before the upgrade started (July to December 2009) and has continued since its completion in July 2010, and we have now done nearly 400 trips and recorded some 170 corpses (not including cane toads).

The data show that, since the upgrade, there have been about 3 times the numbers of roadkill compared with before the upgrade. However, the increase through the forest section is “only” about double, whereas through the residential sections at each end it is more than four times. Traffic counts commissioned by the Council show that (a) the volume of traffic has nearly doubled since the upgrade, and (b) while speeds through the residential sections have increased, speeds through the forest have decreased so that the speed platforms and chicanes installed through the forest section have been successful.

There is only one such device in the residential sections, a little north of Kookaburra Street. It may be significant that between it and the Forest Park there is a particularly large number of roadkills, suggesting that traffic slows only near the chicane but soon speeds up again.

More definite conclusions depend on a proper statistical analysis by our friends at Griffith University and a full report on the findings will, we hope, be available by the middle of next year.

John Griffiths, with acknowledgements to Rachel Griffiths, Bryan and Jenny Hacker, Don Webster Joan Everingham and Darryl Jones.

Do you know

... that if you are handpulling weeds (which you should be doing where practicable rather than wildly spraying with Roundup) there is a method which can give a more satisfactory result? It is tempting when there is some difficulty in extracting the weed, to jerk it. Such can result in breaking off at ground level, whence regrowth occurs. Try grasping the weed low down, then pulling steadily with increasing force. It often comes out. Success depends on species, age and soil moisture. If you need to know why, talk to a soil physicist.

Graeme Wilson

Feral deer

If your property hasn't been visited by feral deer, consider yourself lucky. When first I saw a small family group of fallow deer wander through the garden at dawn, with a small, dappled 'Bambi' in tow, I was enchanted. That was six or seven years ago and I had not yet started to revegetate parts of my property. Now I curse them for the damage they inflict on new plantings of native shrubs and trees. They nip off tender shoots and ring-bark saplings, stunting growth or killing their chosen food plant. It's not their fault – it's what deer do – but they shouldn't be roaming the countryside. Unless all sightings are reported, Council will be unaware of the extent of the problem in our catchment.

Feral deer are classed as a pest animal in Brisbane. Landowners are required to keep their land free of feral deer and other pest animals.

Three species are currently found throughout Brisbane:

Rusa deer (*Cervus timorensis*) Feral rusa deer are declared a Class 2 pest animal under the *Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002*. Landowners and managers are obliged by law to take reasonable steps to keep their land free of Class 2 pests.

Fallow deer (*Dama dama*)

Red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) Both feral fallow deer and feral red deer are declared Class 3 pest animals under the *Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002*. Landowners and managers are obliged by law to take reasonable steps to keep their land free of Class 3 pests, if the land is, or is adjacent to, an environmentally significant area.

For feral deer control to be successful in Brisbane, call and report sightings to Council on 07 3403 8888

Additional information, including descriptions of the three types of deer, and the environmental, social and economic impacts of feral deer are available from the Council web site: <http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au> From the Home Page select Environment & Waste → Wildlife, → Pest Animals → Deer.

Deb Ford

Cottage Garden Standouts

We plant in the Cottage Garden miscellaneous, generally small-statured, native species which occur naturally in various types of vegetation, to see what they look like in a garden situation where they are relatively free from severe competition from other species, both natives and weeds. Not surprisingly, their performance is varied. Some have grown poorly or even died, most likely because they are intolerant of the environment in which we have placed them. On the other hand, some have prospered greatly. Just a few such are mentioned here. In doing so, botanical names are used because our Guide to the Garden listing what is there and where, does so.

One is a species of *Dodonaea* which happens to be described in an article elsewhere in this issue (p 6). The showy part of it is the longlasting fruit. *Ozothamnus diosmofolius* also had a long period of fresh, followed by dry, flowers. It too is a tall plant but there are some low-growing (near ground-cover) species with attractive flowers (and a long flowering period) for those who care to look closely; such as *Trachymene procubens*, *Geranium solanderii* and *Goodenia rotundifolia*. Many species have quite brief flowering periods but provide a pleasant surprise when they suddenly burst in to flower; e.g. *Hardenbergia violacea* and *Sophora fraserii*.

Conspicuous flowering is not however the only requirement for interest; attractive foliage is another feature. Amongst various grasses, sedges and suchlike, *Lomandra filiformis* has made a good show.

And for those with a special interest in our plants, we have two species which were some while back rare, perhaps on the point of extinction; *Corchorus cunninghamii* and *Notelaea lloydii*.

Members are encouraged to take a look around the Garden. When the Cottage is open, get a list of the species which shows where they are to be found.

Graeme Wilson

Brisbane's Wild West Calendar 2012

This beautiful calendar (photo p. 1) published by local environmental groups and featuring nature pictures taken by local photographers, is a must for a Christmas gift.

Price \$12.50 (plus postage – within Australia – 1 calendar, \$2.80; 2-3 calendars, \$4.00).

To obtain your copies, phone Bryan Hacker on 3374 1468, or email jbhacker@powerup.com.au. *Stocks limited*