

MOGGILL CREEK CATCHMENT GROUP

www.moggillcreek.org.au



Print Post Approved PP 424022/2141

NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2012



▲ Masked owl (see p. 6)
Photo: Dale Borgelt



◀ Vegetative propagation house
(See p. 8)
Photo: Graeme Wilson



▶ Possum (see An animal saved p. 8)
Photo: Graeme Wilson



▲ Photo competition (see p. 6)
Photo: Dale Borgelt



▲ Grasses (see p. 8)
Photo: Bryan Hacker

Editorial

It doesn't seem all that long since we were bemoaning flood rains but have now been for some three months crying out for rain, with some thinking that our revegetation efforts will be severely set back. In fact, this is a reminder. We must take a long term view. What we have experienced over the last few years simply repeats what happens in this climate and it will happen again. We are attempting to restore what was there before, which was adapted to our climate. Of course, if we are undergoing climate change, there is some qualification to that but we can't predict what it will be nor know how we can change our activities. In fact, we already plant and encourage regeneration which might have been appropriate for sites, allowing it to sort itself out.

As an interesting aside to our very recent, and welcome, useful rain: The night before it began, we heard a vigorous chorus of at least four frog species. They knew that something was coming. Moreover, the scrub turkeys began, a couple of days earlier, to recondition their mounds. Don't despise these-and many other-savvy animals.

This is written before our AGM and will be read by you after it has taken place. It is our only opportunity to say, in good time, what follows. I understand that our Chairman, Malcolm Frost, will resign from that position. Our activities increase from year to year, and particularly while he has been in office not least because of his initiatives. The Chairman is committed to a heavy load of work, not at all appreciated by members at large. We thank him for his contribution. Hopefully he will remain a member of our Committee, contributing usefully to our decision-making.

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: mccgsecretary@live.com.au

This Newsletter is published quarterly, scheduled for early March, June, September and December. It is distributed to members. Articles may be cited but should not be reproduced without consent of the authors who alone are responsible for the views expressed. Illustrations are copyright and should not be reproduced without permission of the author and MCCG.

Editor: Graeme Wilson, Ph. 3374 1218

Email: zzzgrw@bigpond.com

Formatting: Margaret Hastie

Printing: John Gower

Proudly supported by Brisbane City Council



Dedicated to a better Brisbane

Moggill Creek Catchment Group Bird Project 2012 - 2017

MCCG member Jim Butler, who holds a PhD in Physics and has recently retired from the Education Department of The University of Queensland, has initiated the MCCG Bird Project 2012 to 2017. A component of the survey involves recording birdsongs in the bush using Acoustical Sensors, on loan from the Queensland University of Technology (QUT). Data from the sensors will be decoded by QUT researchers.

This 5 year project was launched in Spring 2012 and will raise the profile of birds in the catchment. It includes educational and research activities, resources for people interested in the birdlife of the catchment and opportunities to contribute towards knowledge of the catchment birds.

For more information, go to our website.

Chairman's Report

Although there have been very dry conditions during the Spring, Moggill Creek is still flowing, perhaps as a result of the release of water from Gold Creek Reservoir. Encouragingly, plantings with adequate mulching and an initial good watering during such dry periods can be successful.

Many changes occurring within the Brisbane Council's administration are having major impacts on the Moggill Creek Catchment Group. After the Brisbane Council elections, Cr Matthew Bourke was appointed as Chairman for Environment, Parks and Sustainability. Following the announcement of the Council Budget, all Catchment Groups within Brisbane were very disappointed to learn that, without any consultation, the number of Creek Rangers had been reduced from 10 to 4. MCCG had been provided with a Ranger from the very first and although there had been management issues, our Catchment Group found them to be of great value. For example, Emma Maltby and subsequently Anna Greig, initiated the Pacey Road land owners' group working with members and Land for Wild Life personnel. Anna and Stacey Hodge made significant contributions to the successful Creek Health Monitoring Program during the last 19 months. These last mentioned who now have left the employment of the Council, must be thanked for all the work they did for our Catchment Group. Now, one Creek Ranger is to support four Catchments and it remains to be seen how useful such an arrangement will be.

To some extent to counter this reduction in on ground support, Brisbane City Council has created Lord Mayor's Community Sustainability and Environmental Grants and MCCG is submitting an application for support from such a grant.

In addition, Council has initiated a Community Conservation Assistance Fund, allocating \$600,000 in 2012/13 Council budget to assist community catchment groups, Habitat Brisbane groups, Wildlife Conservation Partnership Program members and not-for-profit community organisations. Unlike the grants where funding is provided directly to recipients, it is planned that in-kind support may be undertaken by Council or its contractors (or jointly with volunteers). Our Catchment Group has been invited to submit ideas for projects but it remains to be seen whether we can benefit from such an allocation. MCCG has proposed Council supported work on Lower Moggill Creek below Huntington Park and Tuckett Parks, and along Gap Creek by Deerhurst Park, together with two programs to further the eradication of Cats claw in Upper Brookfield and Gold Creek.

MCCG understands that these funds are to be directed to supporting restoration work on public land, or on land of private land owners who are members of Land for Wild Life. While MCCG acknowledges there is much to be done in restoring public land within the Catchment, over about 70% of our catchment is privately owned. We have repeatedly sought ways to work with Council to support private land owners but so far with little success. Without significant support for land owners our Catchment will remain under great environmental stress.

Malcolm Frost

Energex grant put to good use

The Energex grant received by the Moggill Creek Catchment Group has been used to remove and mulch some large weed trees at the corner of Deerhurst and Brookfield Rds. It has also been used to support two private landowners on Deerhurst Rd whose properties border the park. The photo p 5 shows just a few of the volunteers at the August working bee on one of these properties.

The August 26 working bee on private land, which was supported by the grant, was very successful with over 20 workers. It was followed by a morning tea and a talk about Land for Wildlife. The working bee was followed up by contractors who mulched the green waste produced by the working bee and who cut down and mulched additional weed trees. One or two additional working bees will be required to further remove weeds from this property. However, some planting of natives will commence as soon as the rains return. On September 30 another working bee was held on both public and private land towards the top end of Deerhurst Rd and the work goes on.

Dale Borgelt

An animal saved from the road

In contrast to the fate of the masked owl (p.6), this reports a successful rescue. Andrew saw a skittled brushtail possum on Gold Creek Rd, got out to investigate and found a killed mother with an unharmed young which he took home. He soon had it eating food which it continues to do ravenously and is growing at a great rate. It has adopted him as its mother, climbs all over him (photo p. 1) and doesn't venture far away. A most interesting animal, as are most reared as orphans, and a cause for great satisfaction to its rescuer.

Will you look to see whether you can help animals in trouble? Would you like to be left lying on the road by a passer who could not bother stopping to see if he could help?

Graeme Wilson

Some guidelines for weed control

(One of our members had been reading a publication by the Bradley sisters and picked out a sentence which she thought might be published here. It was catchy but its meaning would be lost on most of our readers not familiar with the context in which it was written; weed control. It then occurred to me that it might be useful to summarise aspects of weed control which could be useful to many of our members who are struggling with weeds.)

Note that this addresses the situations where there is at the at least some tree cover with weed invasion, which faces most of our revegetators, relying largely on natural regeneration which is inhibited by weeds..

The Bradleys were amateurs who decades ago engaged in extensive restorative work in public parks in the vicinity of Sydney, reaching important conclusions on strategies of weed control. Perhaps the outstanding one was that rather than commence with the most dense weed infestation, a start should be made on the best, i.e. less weedy vegetation, working towards the worst. The aim was to increase progressively the area of well kept vegetation.

Do not undertake work on larger areas than you can maintain; otherwise weeds will overtake it.

Blanket-spraying with herbicide should not be undertaken unless a decision to do so is made following a careful and knowledgeable examination is made of the site to determine whether the loss of weeds is more valuable than the loss of (often very small) self-sown natives. Moreover, be aware that some herbicides are persistent in the soil or damaging to its fertility. (See article in this issue on Roundup)

Not all species listed as weeds are necessarily harmful; in fact in appropriate situations they can be beneficial. For example, wild tobacco is an excellent pioneer, providing ground shade and attracting via its abundant fruit, birds which have been feeding elsewhere and thus dropping seed of other species necessary for natural regeneration. When a higher canopy of other species develops, the tobacco is shaded out.

Broad scale mulching may not be beneficial. It can suppress establishment of species whose seed is in the soil. Nor is it, until substantially rotted, favourable to germination of seed falling on it.

(Comments on the above are invited; additions which should be made or disagreements. Such could be published in the next issue.)

Graeme Wilson

Revegetation and soil

Much of the land on which we are working has been cleared with some of that now having only, at the best, a sparse tree cover. We do some planting and facilitate natural regeneration with species, which on the basis of what we know, might be appropriate to the locations. However, as a result of the clearing and especially with some management activities, serious soil erosion may have occurred, especially on sloping sites and thus plant species which may have once occurred there are not adapted to the sites now.

We can only manage these sites by way of establishing a heavy plant cover which in time (quite long) creates improved surface layers more kind to vegetation replacement. Fast growing, hardy and more widely adapted species are preferable. Weeds which invade can be accepted; e.g. lantana and wild tobacco but perhaps anything except the smothering climbers.

Graeme Wilson

Thanks for advice and plants

In 2005 we cut back and burnt a huge area of a gully that had been infested with lantana, blackberries, guinea grass and guavas, leading down to the Brisbane River at Moggill. Veils of glycine, climbing asparagus and balloon vine were also trailing over the vegetation of the sides and centre of this gully. We then carpeted the area with old, heavy rolls and covered it with mulch. Thanks to MCCG for advice and free native plants from their nursery which we planted through the cover.

The plants prospered in their natural environment, even during the drought. Most of the plants were completely covered with water during the flood of January 2011 but when the water receded, the top two thirds of the gully had withstood the swirling waters and the planting had helped prevent worse erosion. The photos on p 5 show the initial work and (from a slightly different angle) the repaired site, giving a view through to the river.

The bush is now quite tall and thick in this entire area and the number of birds singing in and around the gully is proof that the native plants are very much appreciated. You can visit our website to see more of our work to bring back the bush at moggillhaven.com.

Janet and Ian Sampson



▲ Cats claw (see Weed p. 4)
Photo: Jutta Goodwin

Removing weed trees (see Energex grant, p. 3)
Photo: Dale Borgelt



Stingless bees (see p. 8) Photos: Dale Borgelt



Watching a demo



Inside the hive

Restoration (see p. 4) Photos: Janet Sampson



Masked Owl (*Tyto novahollandiae*) in Moggill Catchment

In mid September I got a call from a friend who lives off Moons Lane, Brookfield. An owl (Masked Owl) (photo p. 1) was sitting on the ground under a eucalypt in a garden bed near the house. It made no attempt to flee when I approached to investigate further and I easily picked it up and placed it in a box. Although it was very docile, talons clasped and appeared drowsy, it was in reasonable condition (no physical damage and not emaciated). It was taken to the St Lucia University of Queensland 24hr veterinary surgery. The following day we were informed that it did not survive and no autopsy was to be conducted. In my opinion, it is possible the bird was poisoned (poison baits) or it was struck by a vehicle (Rafting Ground Road would be about 500m).

While the outcome was not what one would have hoped for, it is still exciting to know that this species is in the western suburbs. A national birding website (for bird reports) has only three other records for this species in SEQ since 2008 and these are from the Jimna and Maleny area. I recall hearing a possible Masked Owl a few years ago in Mt Coot-tha Forest (back of Chapel Hill). Masked Owls (especially the pale form) (33-55cm) are similar in appearance to the 'more common' Barn Owl (30-40cm). Key identifying features to separate the two species include a 'rounder facial disk', more definite dark facial outline and heavier talons with fully feathered legs. Both Barn and Masked Owls have a piercing screeching call and forage in similar country, including forests, riparian vegetation, woodlands and grasslands. Masked Owls are dependent on hollow-bearing trees for roosting and nesting, while Barn Owls are also comfortable using old buildings. Barn Owls appear to have adapted to human habitation whereas Masked Owls less so, being considered scarce even though they are reasonably widely distributed. Other owl species encountered in the western suburbs on a more regular basis, include the Powerful Owl *Ninox strenua* (>60cm) and Boobook *Ninox novaeseelandiae* (25-35cm).

The western suburbs, especially the Moggill Catchment supports good habitat for a variety of species and we can be encouraged by sightings such as this. Vegetation retention and rehabilitation to ensure the conservation of resources for species like the Masked Owl can only be encouraged. Unfortunately the bushland setting and roadways ensure an increase in potential for collisions between vehicles and wildlife. With this in mind it is worth stopping to check next time something on the side of the road, it may well be a new species for the Catchment and if it is only injured it could be rehabilitated.

Justin Watson

Another Double Century for the Photography Competition

The 2012 photography competition attracted over two hundred individual entries — the second year it has attracted such large numbers. The competition is a great way for the MCCG to publicise its activity, and we are particularly delighted that a number of new members have joined us following a visit to the display of the photographs at Kenmore Shopping Village in early September. The competition takes place not only thanks to our sponsors, but also thanks to the hard work of: the volunteer committee (Dale Borgelt, Robyn Frost, Geoff Lawrence, Bruce Siemon, Margaret Whyte); the members who staff the display stand; Graeme and Andrew Wilson who check the photograph captions; and Dr Joseph McDowall, the main judge for the competition.

At the presentation Joseph praised the increasing quality of the photographs, and welcomed the many new entrants. Thanks to the generous support of local businesses, 24 individual prizes were presented at the ceremony (sponsors *Workout Indooroopilly*, *Water Solutions*, *Moggill Constructions*, *Cr Margaret de Wit*, *Brookfield Produce & Pet Pavilion*, *Steve Parrish*, and *Brisbane College of Photography & Art*). This also included the new "Novice's Prize" of a \$100 voucher to spend at *Ingredients Deli*, presented to an entrant who had not previously won a major prize in the competition. Many hundreds of votes were cast during the week by visitors to the display, with People's Choice Prizes (sponsor *The Pet Chalet*) presented for the pictures "Scarlet Honeyeater" (by Adrian Wellington), "Backyard Pest Control" (by Daniella Barnes), and "Frogs Legs For Dinner" (by Mike Ford). Adrian Wellington also was the winner of the Supreme Exhibit prize (sponsor *Breeze Photos*), and Kenmore South State School managed the very impressive triple, winning the Lord Mayor's Shield for the school's competition for the third successive year (prize supported by *Cr Margaret de Wit* and *Dr Bruce Flegg MP*). The photo on p1 shows Douglas Pollock indicating his winning entry.

Some of the photographers have kindly agreed to their photographs appearing on our website so visit <http://www.moggillcreek.org.au> Watch this space (and the website) for details of the 2013 competition!!

Geoff Lawrence

Erratum

Please note that on page 5 of the last issue, Spring 2012, the captions to photographs on the foot of the page have been reversed. The photograph on the left should have the caption *P. edulis*, that on the right, *P. subpeltata*. We apologise for this error.

Glyphosate – is it totally safe?

Glyphosate, the active ingredient of Roundup, is undoubtedly one of the World's most popular herbicides. Varieties of some crops have been developed which are tolerant of Roundup, allowing its use to control Roundup-sensitive weeds in the fields. In Brisbane it is the herbicide-of-choice for Habitat Brisbane Bushcare Groups. But is it totally safe?

In our Autumn 2007 issue we published an article by Andrew Wilson expressing concern over the widespread use of Roundup. It is generally accepted that glyphosate is rapidly broken down by soil bacteria, but what if there are insufficient numbers of those bacteria, or soil mycorrhizae (a symbiotic fungus that helps many plant species take up nutrients) take it up? A separate concern is that plants in the Proteaceae family (*Grevillea*, *Banksia* etc.), which have specialized roots near the soil surface, are especially susceptible.

Recent evidence from the Mid-West of the USA indicates that detectable levels of glyphosate are evident in soils after 16 years cropping and using glyphosate for weed control (Weeds News, 2012 September 25). This article points out that several different bacteria are required to break down glyphosate and that in orchards where alleyways are treated with glyphosate "as that [weed] vegetation dies, the glyphosate releases from the plants and it may remain in the soil and it can be transferred to the living roots of the orchard crops." In another recent study (*Environmental Monitoring and Assessment*, 2012 Jul 22) on the effect of low concentrations of glyphosate on a fish species, a high rate of DNA damage was evident in fish exposed to Roundup for all treatment times, both for blood and hepatic (liver) cells.

A search of the internet comes up with hundreds of papers about Roundup and its constituent, glyphosate. It is generally accepted that the surfactant used in Roundup is more toxic than glyphosate, and so the 'Biactive' product, lacking the surfactant, is preferred. As far as we are concerned, the advice would be to use glyphosate sparingly (cut-stump, stem scrape etc.), avoid getting it on your skin, and to avoid blanket spraying as far as possible. Also, never spray into water and be careful not to spray where there are exposed roots of valued natives.

Bryan Hacker

(with thanks to Deb Ford for suggesting this article and providing references)

New Weeds of National Significance

The inaugural list of 19 species of Weeds of National Significance (WoNS) was announced in June 1999 and included just two species of concern in the Moggill Creek Catchment, these being lantana (*Lantana camara*) and salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*). Quoting the WoNS website "An independent review in 2007 concluded that a nationally strategic approach had been highly successful, leveraging consistent multi-jurisdictional activity on high priority species." I am not aware of the criteria that went into the review, but at the very least, the broader public became much more aware of the threat posed by some of our more invasive environmental weeds.

Twelve further species (or species groups) were added in April 2012, of which seven are of concern to us. These include sagittaria (*Sagittaria platyphylla*), asparagus weeds (including *Asparagus aethiopicus* and *A. africanus* in our Catchment), cat's claw creeper (*Dolichandra unguis-cati*, previously *Macfadyens unguis-cati*), fireweed (*Senecio madagascariensis*), Madeira vine (*Anredera cordifolia*), Opuntoid cacti (*Opuntia* spp.) and water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*).

WoNS are chosen based on a range of attributes, including invasiveness, impacts, potential for spread and socioeconomic and environmental values. Further details are available at <http://www.weeds.org.au/docs/WoNS/>. A 3-phase approach is taken to management and control of WoNS in the interest of 'cost-effective use of limited national coordination resources available from public funds'.

With three of our most invasive and destructive weeds on the new list – Madeira vine, climbing asparagus and cat's claw (photo p 5) – perhaps there will be opportunities for us to obtain funds to fight these species?? Watch this space.....

Bryan Hacker

Platypus Alive and Well in Moggill and Gold Creeks

In the chilly pre-dawn of Sunday, 9 September, a group of enthusiastic volunteers took up their positions at sites along Gold Creek, Moggill Creek and the Gold Creek Dam. They were participating in Moggill Creek Catchment Group's (MCCG) annual Platypus Survey.

After collating the results and only including **100% definite positive sightings**, 17 individual Platypus were observed between 5.15 am and 7 am, following which volunteers were rewarded with a BBQ breakfast at the Brookfield Pony Club Clubhouse in the Brookfield Showgrounds.

MCCG has been conducting the annual snapshot survey of these shy, elusive little animals since 2005, through years of drought and flood. Sightings vary from year to year with the 2012 tally being amongst the highest number recorded.

To give our Platypus the environment they need, we must keep our catchment's creeks healthy by minimising water extraction, litter, chemical and animal pollution, and not clearing native riparian vegetation.

Deb Ford

Do you want to identify grasses?

About ten years ago, with the help of Greening Australia, I produced a cd as an aid to identifying grasses. Entitled Common Grasses of Moreton and Wide Bay(see photo p1), it included 100 of the 400 species in that region, together with an easy to use key, photographs, drawings and descriptions. Both native and exotic grasses are included. The cd was quite popular until the advent of Windows 2007, when people purchasing it grumbled that they could not open it. Recently a new member (with IT skills that I lack) has shown how the cd can be opened on more recent operating systems, and, further, a friend has shown how it can be opened on Macintosh systems too.

So, if you would like a copy (\$20, profits to MCCG), complete with updated instructions to open it, please contact me at jbhacker@powerup.com.au.

Bryan Hacker

A very popular Native Stingless Bees talk at the Cottage

The Third Thursday Talk at the Cottage in November was a popular attraction for members interested in keeping Native Stingless Bees. Tony Goodrich was happy to share knowledge he had gained through his 30 year interest in these tiny creatures. To start with, Tony pointed out the differences between the honey bee and the native bee hives. At the end and to everyone's great interest he demonstrated splitting a working native stingless bee hive. (See photos p. 5)

Dale Borgelt

Plant ID Talk at the Cottage in February 2013

Thursday morning 10am – noon 21st February is going to be very special for members interested in finding out, for example, what native tree is that?

As co-author of *Fragments of Green: An Identification Field Guide to Rainforest Plants of the Greater Brisbane Region to the Border Ranges*, Jan Blok will be giving a very practical demonstration of plant ID using a leaf key. How good is that?

Booking is essential, so book early by Email daleborgelt@gmail.com or ph 3374 1035

Dale Borgelt

Vegetative propagation house

Construction and equipping of the vegetation house is near completion (photo p 1), Hopefully we will soon be able to supply plants of many species which we have been unable to produce from seed, thereby enhancing biodiversity, not just as plant species but also the animals dependent on them.

Dale Borgelt

Jude and I were being 'toffy', eating cake and drinking coffee,
Sitting by the river in the warming winter sun.
No billy tea and damper like some common Aussie camper,
We have to keep our standards up, when all is said and done.

We'd been in the bush since dawning, taking photos all morning
And decided that the time was right to have a little fun,
When a magpie bird approached us and proceeded to reproach us
For displaying airs and graces, 'In the bush this wasn't done!'

He cocked his head and eyed us and then began to chide us.
With a gentle throaty warble, in a firm but friendly way,
He told us of the proper bushland customs to be followed.
And why we should be careful of the things we do and say.

With this sage advice imparted, he suddenly departed
Cutting short his kindly lecture and our precious time together.
But his farewell carolling call, echoing loudly over all.
Is a magic sound to linger in our memories for ever.

By John Bean.