

# MOGGILL CREEK CATCHMENT GROUP

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



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## NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2013



▲ Creek restoration (page 4) Photo: Chris Read



▲ Yogi receiving award (see Photographic Competition page 8) Photo: Geoff Lawrence



▲ Surprise (see Editorial, page 2) Photo: Andrew Wilson



▲ Cockatoo damage (page 8) Photo: Bryan Hacker



◀ Calender (see page 7)



## Editorial

*Fortunate are those of us who appreciate our natural environment, are able to live in it and are willing to restore it from unsuitable land management and conserve it. It is interesting to observe changes which occur, either as a result of our efforts or environmental influences, particularly the latter. This has been a rollercoaster year with unusually persistent rain in the earlier half, to be followed by exceptionally dry conditions for a few months. Anyone with some familiarity with our vegetation can scarcely not have seen some unusual plant behavior in flowering. Simply as an example, there is in my bush a brush coral tree at least 30 years old which we have never observed flowering. It became densely covered in flowers (photo p 1). It is the nature of some of us to ask why things happen, often not knowing why, as in this case. But observing and wondering about things is a fine way to occupy our minds.*

*This leads to a necessary recognition, in our revegetation work, that what will happen in the short term is not predictable, and thus we should not be disappointed when things don't immediately turn out as we hoped or planned. We are in this business for the long haul, knowing that if we persist with an appropriate plan, we'll get there.*

*And so, it is a pleasure to have someone provide for each issue of this newsletter an account of experiences. Clearly each is a work in progress, gains having been so far made, much still to be done, with the landholders enjoying it and we all appreciative of the contribution to our objectives.*

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.

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

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## 2013 ANNUAL PLATYPUS SURVEY

Each year in September a group of volunteer 'platy-watchers' gathers before sunrise at the Brookfield Showgrounds prior to heading off to observation posts on Moggill and Gold Creeks. The Annual Platypus Survey began in 2005, since when sightings have varied from 6 in the first year to 20 in 2010.

The numbers seem to have some relationship to rainfall. The overall situation may be this: Platypus move according to conditions in the creeks which at times is running water, sometimes floods and at other times dry when the platypus must move to waterholes. But the chosen waterholes may vary following floods or be avoided because of human activity. The populations probably vary little from year to year but their distribution is. The observers go to the same locations every year which means they don't see the same numbers. In addition to this, watchers may not see what is there on the day because on others, soon before or after, they are seen.

Notwithstanding all this, there must be far more platypus in our creeks than the maximum recorded in surveys, which is most pleasing to us.

For information contact Chris Hosking: [c.hosking@uq.edu.au](mailto:c.hosking@uq.edu.au)



## Chairman's Report August 2013

We have seen a very successful 2013 MCCG Photography Competition come to an end with the awarding of prizes at the Kenmore Village on the 26th October. I was asked to make a "Chairman's" choice in 2 categories, Open and Young Persons. It was not easy. The more I looked at the individual photos, the more I became immersed in the stories they told me, or the particular point of interest. Clearly one of the skills necessary in a photographer is to be observant, to notice things we often see but do not register, and to make a permanent record for the eye to enjoy at leisure.

I am one of many with a basic digital camera; point and shoot, fool-proof and requiring only that I cover the required view. Refinements of focal length, shutter speed and adjustments for light do not concern me. However, I do enjoy looking at good photographs and appreciating the work and patience that have gone in to making a pleasing result. I no longer believe the explanation of the more modest photographers that the outcome was a fortunate accident. If that were true, then why haven't any of the thousand shots I have taken ever produced a gem?

There were many good photographs taken by people of all ages that captured some of the interesting features and wildlife of our catchment. Local community interest in the display was high with more than 600 votes cast in the People's Choice category. Congratulations to Geoff Lawrence and his team for managing this excellent event.

The MCCG has had another busy year full of activities and projects aimed at improving and conserving our local natural environment. Yet much remains to be done. The people who volunteer in practical ways to further our cause are very much needed and appreciated, no matter how much time can be given. I extend my appreciation to all of you. I also want to thank the members of the MCCG management committee who do the community a great service without recognition being sought. My very best wishes to you all for a safe and happy festive season.

*Warren Hoey*

## New development with the MCCG Cat's Claw Management Plan

Thanks to the efforts of SEQCatchments, substantial funding has become available for control of the cat's claw vine (see photo on p5) on private and public land in five Catchments, including those of Moggill and Pullen Pullen Creeks. This funding is to be over a three year period and has been made available through the State Government Coastal Resilience Fund.

Initial activities are likely to be distributing information on identification and control followed by developing a program for on-ground control. Priority areas for targeting are likely to be west of Upper Brookfield up to and including Gillies Road and infestations towards the end of Savages and Gold Creek Roads. Planning is still at an early stage, but we anticipate that on-ground work will not start until 2014-15.

Cat's claw is now listed as a Weed of National Significance and in our district is a major threat to native ecosystems. Many landholders need all the help they can get to control this aggressively invasive South American vine.

*Bryan Hacker*

## The Pacey Rd Roving Working Bee The Upper Brookfield State School

On Saturday 26th October, the Pacey Rd Group and the Upper Brookfield State School Parents and Citizens Group held the first planting activity at the school. The Pacey Rd group is supported by an Everyone's Environment grant from the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection. Twenty parents, working bee members plus a big group of enthusiastic kids arrived at the school at 8.30am ready to put in 60 or so plants supplied by the MCCG Nursery. Two weeks earlier, we had cleared up the weeds and readied the site, removing eight council wheelie bins of weeds dominated by Madiera Vine.

The parents, kids and Pacey Rd group got started and were finished in two hours. The photo on p 5 shows the working party. Although not the best time to plant, the school and the kids are so keen they have organised watering parties during the week with the Pacey Rd crew supporting the trees over the weekend. Let's hope that the wet season kicks in soon.

To make these projects work, people have to commit time and enthusiasm to the task. Thanks to Ailsa Bell, the school principal for committing to the day and supporting the work, and Warren Hoey for his support of the Pacey Rd group.

*Brian Krieger*



## Restoration on a Landholder's Property

It was mid-2009 when my wife Meg rang very excited to tell me about the three acres of bush for sale that she had just visited in Brookfield. "You will love it" she said "it is so natural with birds everywhere" and it was from that conversation that our family's next adventure began....

Our block is centred on a small rocky feeder creek between Brisbane Forest Park and Moggill Creek (photo p1) The vegetation is dominated by Riparian and Dry Rainforest and surrounded by rolling hills covered in Open Eucalyptus forest. Being so amazingly green, quiet and peaceful, it is hard to believe that we are only 13km from Brisbane's city centre.

We soon after joined the Land For Wildlife program and proudly put our bright green sign on our letter box. At that time we decided our objective was to restore the local ecosystem to achieve a healthy, sustainable and natural environment along our waterway. I thought one year of hard work in our spare time and we would be done...

One of the first people invited to visit our block was Bryan Hacker from MCCG. He was recommended by many and his advice and encouragement were amazing and much appreciated, especially in helping to identify the strengths in our eco-system.

The first weed target was lantana, an obvious weed that we knew from elsewhere. Although I didn't realise it at the time, that was the easy weed to get rid of by pulling out when the ground was wet, with occasional help of a pinch bar for the really big roots. Within a month or so were nearly done or so I thought.... Bryan then visited again and I soon learnt what the two types of Privet were; and soon after Camphor Laurel, a renewed surprise how much more there was to do .... so we got stuck in with even more determined vigour, killing even the biggest weed trees to create space and light for the extensive natural regrowth and planted tubestock. For such a quiet and peaceful place, the chainsaw and drill were going regularly for awhile...

The satisfaction that we achieved after a hard day's work knowing that we were so much closer to recreating a natural environment was extremely rewarding and there was never a need to go the gym.

A year or more in, during another visit by Bryan I had a horrible realisation that much of the beautiful thick understorey that I had been admiring on our block was actually thousands of "Ochna plants" (now a swear word in our house!!!) Horror - please no more weeds !!! I'm almost scared to invite Bryan around anymore lest he find another weed !!

After a many weekends with shears and a spray bottle full of glysophate, we needed a break from revegetation for awhile. During this time our family went on to build two frog ponds which have been amazingly successful (so long as you collect and destroy the Cane Toads in the area reasonably regularly), build and install sixty glider, possum and bat boxes that are in constant use by many different species and build rock lined paths to minimise erosion and create access throughout the block for weeding, planting and protection of most of the bush. Protection is especially needed when our adventurous kids are playing "flag tag" and similar games or when spotlighting at night ( but more effective was the three metre King Brown Snake that hung around for a week or so, as magnificent as it was, it's large marble like black eyes helped to make us all extremely careful when walking through the bush, I don't think any of the newly planted trees got trodden on at that time...).

On our journey so far, regular trips to MCCG's Gold Creek nursery have been a feature for great advice and access to unlimited free native tube stock plants. The first hundred plants took me hours to plant; now having planted a few thousand plants, we have gotten a lot quicker. Even our young kids got really interested in native plants (for about 3 weeks a year) when they learnt about the delights of Native Raspberry Bushes.

The regular prize discoveries of new birds, animals or plants is a great buzz that keeps us going on our wonderful hobby... and one day when the native trees reclose the canopy, all will be back to where it is meant to be. Since 2009, we have seen 132 species of birds including Rose Crowned Fruit Dove, Grey Goshawk, resident Owlet Nightjar and breeding Painted Button Quail; 16 species of native animals including Echidna, three types of Gliders, Yellow Footed Antechinus, Red Necked and Swamp Wallabies, Native Water Rat and Fawn Footed Melomys; and 12 species of frog including Tusked Frog. Observing them is incredible, but even more awesome is the knowledge that we, like many others are making a sustainable difference in providing better quality habitat.

It was also fantastic to discover that our neighbours share similar loves for the area and the environment and we have had great success working together on several projects. It was amazing to learn that some of them have been passionately and successfully working on weeding and natural regeneration on their blocks for over 10 years. We have just been informed that our application to Brisbane City Council for Community Conservation Initiative Assistance (CCIA) has been granted for our adjoining four properties, so watch out Ochna. We are back and you are right in the firing line!!!

*Chris Read*





▲ Cats Claw smothering Eucalypt (see page 3)  
Photo: Bryan Hacker



▲ Viewing photographs (see Photographic Competition, page 8)  
Photo: Dale Borgelt



◀ Two grasses (see Speargrass, page 7)  
Photo: Bryan Hacker

Pacey Road working party (see page 3)  
Photo: Warren Hoey





## More on Planning Ecological Restoration

This follows an article "Considerations in planning ecological restoration" in the Spring 2013 Newsletter. Here, some of the restoration strategies which might be implemented are discussed, together with something about soil and its management.

It should be said that these concepts are not new and have been discussed by others. My thoughts are a product of observation in nature and of making mistakes in how I approached a task, and are therefore constantly open to change.

In the previous newsletter, I referred to soil degradation and weed infestation. Caring for the soil should be a primary focus for all our activities in ecological restoration and if attention is given to this detail, many of our more long term goals will be achievable. Knowing how to care for the soil is certainly not instinctive to us as history has shown. A few factors requiring consideration are these: soil needs protection from erosion, caused by run off and rain drops (which destroy soil structure), insulation from heat and cold, structure (healthy soil looks more like bread crumbs than putty or flour), which in turn allows oxygen and water to infiltrate, and with added organic matter the all-important and poorly understood soil organisms begin to return. Plants play an important role in facilitating all this, along with their roots contributing to the weathering of subsurface clay and rock both physically and chemically.

This then brings us to the subject of weeds. Undesirable though they may be weeds are still plants and capable of contributing short term to our soil care. As much as possible when taking on a new site consideration should be given to managing existing weed infestation to the benefit of the eco system rather than eradication. Most weeds are already providing most of the requirements conducive to good soil care and perhaps more rapidly due to their vigour. In addition, fauna may have become temporarily dependent on a local area, while there is an opportunity to create micro-climates within an area, assisting establishment of newly planted trees (protection from wind, higher humidity and lower temperatures).

Encouraging natural regeneration should be a high priority. In order to achieve this an area must remain attractive to birds and animals for seed to be distributed. Over enthusiastic use of herbicides or machinery is not conducive to this

Weed species physically removed can be used to create contour banks together with fallen logs and woody species which have been removed. This will assist in reducing soil erosion, increasing water infiltration and is often conducive to the germination of native seedlings.

The above considerations and how they are implemented will depend as usual on the individual site and your ability to manage it. Weeds such as cats claw and madiera vine have great destructive potential and demand a more aggressive approach. It is preferable that no organic matter be removed from the site. Madiera tubers can be composted under black plastic or placed in bins and as for removing seed from the site, many times that is already present in the soil. Given the choice I would much rather begin a project on a hillside colonised by weeds than one kept bare for ten or more years.

It should be remembered that any existing natives large or small are invaluable and that the real success of any project will be apparent after many years, not months.

*Andrew Wilson*

## Tree Planting by German Exchange Students

On a beautiful Brisbane day in late July, 25 German Exchange students together with their two teachers and three students from the host school, Kenmore State High School, gathered in the School grounds to assist with planting 30 Australian native seedlings as part of the School's program to revegetate the School's frontage to McKay Brook and Moggill Creek, the latter being over one kilometre in length.

Over the next hour or so, the students were given a brief address on the environment of the School grounds including information on the flora and fauna, then instructions on how to plant before proceeding to plant thirty seedlings of a wide range of species from Hoop pines, to Eucalypts, to understory plants and grasses. The students participated enthusiastically in digging holes, planting, watering and mulching, enjoying the experience and their opportunity to both beautify the environment and make it more fauna friendly while contributing to efforts to address climate change.

The German students are part of a group of 40 students aged 15-16 years from Engelsburg Grammar in Kassel on an annual exchange with students from Kenmore State High School. They spend six weeks in Australia, including four weeks attending normal classes at Kenmore High School at the start of Term 3. In early August, they returned home via Cairns and Sydney. This is the 21st year that this annual exchange has been operating between the two schools.

*Bruce Dymock  
(KSHS P & C Association)*



## Black speargrass and the Yellow Grass-skipper

Several of our members have recently been expressing interest in black speargrass, *Heteropogon contortus*. This grass is not particularly common in our district but is much more common to the west of the Dividing Range, in open eucalypt woodlands, where it can be the dominant grass. It is so much a feature of those landscapes that a substantial area of that region is known by graziers as 'speargrass country' due to the prevalence of black speargrass.

*Heteropogon* is a small genus with just two species in Australia. *H. contortus* occurs in northern NSW, extending to north Queensland, the NT and WA. The same species also occurs in tropical Asia and Africa as well of parts of the Americas. *H. triticeus* is a much more robust plant, growing to a height of 3m. It is rare in SE Queensland, much commoner further north, and extends into tropical Asia.

Black speargrass flower heads are readily recognised, being a single raceme (axis with shortly stalked spikelets) with overlapping pairs of spikelets, the lower one of each bearing a stout awn ('bristle') several centimetres long, this being twisted below a 'knee' less than half way along its length (see photos p 5). This twisted awn, adapted to twist and untwist depending on humidity, is an adaptation to bury the 'seed' after it matures, and is a feature of a number of grass species. However, this also can result in burying the 'seed' in the flesh of sheep, causing abscesses which become infected, and even death. So, in the speargrass country, black speargrass became very unpopular with sheep farmers, leading to a change to cattle grazing around 150 years ago.

But there are good arguments for growing black speargrass in our district. *Heteropogon* is cited as the required food plant for larvae of the Yellow Grass-skipper butterfly (*Neohesperilla xanthomera*) in North Queensland and – according to entomologist Don Sands – this butterfly has disappeared from Mt Coot-tha over the last 40 years, along with a marked decrease in black speargrass, perhaps associated with incursion of exotic signal grass and increased burning. Our Nursery is currently growing plants of black speargrass for distribution to members, in the hope of bringing back this butterfly to our district.

There has apparently been some local confusion between black speargrass and Chilean needle grass, a Weed of National Significance naturalised in southern states, including NSW, and extending onto the Darling Downs – see photo on p. 5, (Queensland Herbarium collection). This species is not known to occur in our area and is very different in appearance, having a flower head with spreading branches.

Bryan Hacker

## Dealing with injured birds

Recently I saw a magpie chick on Brookfield Road, opposite the Gap Creek Road entrance. It seemed to be injured and could not get off the road, although its parent was in attendance and was trying to encourage it to move. I picked it up and took it to the side of the road. Its legs buckled and it could not stand or move when I put it down. I took it home and the Brisbane City Council sent a representative of the animal ambulance out. Meanwhile the chick seemed to revive, and was standing upright (it could not fly - according to the ambulance officer, it was a couple of days short of flying). The ambulance officer also said that I should have left the chick by the road as there was nothing wrong with it. He said however that it was too late in the afternoon to take it back to where I had found it, as it would spend the night on the ground and thus be vulnerable. I kept it in my bathroom overnight and took it back at around 5 am the following morning. The parent magpie was there and immediately fed it a large insect, much to my relief. But what should we do in these circumstances? I thought the chick may have broken a leg, so felt it would be irresponsible to leave it. I would be interested in others' opinions about what should have been done to help it.

Margaret Palmer

## 2014 Calendar "Brisbane's Wild West"

As in past years MCGG has joined forces with neighbouring groups to produce the 2014 Brisbane's Wild West Calendar (see cover photo on p. 1). Several of the photographs were contributed by Catchment Group members; the calendar makes a great Christmas gift, particularly for overseas friends and relations.

Price just \$12.50, (plus postage)

To order your copy, email [jbhacker@powerup.com.au](mailto:jbhacker@powerup.com.au) or phone 3374 1468  
A special thanks to THECA Inc. for coordinating the production of this lovely calendar.

Bryan Hacker



## Renewing Membership

Renewing membership for 2014 is a good time to think about the advantages of being part of a volunteer group that aims to conserve and improve the natural environment of our catchment on both private and public land.

Especially note it includes private land. Members working on their own piece of property make an enormous contribution to the whole. Membership gives free access to information, advice and tube stock native plants relevant to the area. Using these advantages can greatly increase the value of the contribution to the environment.

There is plenty to entertain as well as inform. Third Thursday Talks at the Cottage have featured presentations by experts on locally relevant biodiversity such as beetles, bees, birds, butterflies, eucalypts, figs, frogs, micro-bats, native flora and plant ID ..... These Talks at the Cottage are limited to MCGG members just because of space.

We do have many events and activities that are not limited to members, such as Kids' Day at the Cottage in May and Annual Photography Competition in October, public and Friends of Moggill Creek meetings, Creek Health Monitoring Program and Platypus Survey. The advantage of membership is that you know about them, before and after. As well as any direct contact, our four times a year Newsletter, with its nice mix of news and technical info, is posted to members.

We hope that you think it is worth renewing your annual \$15 per person membership for 2014. A Renewal form is enclosed for existing members who are offered an option to pay via direct deposit.

*(People wishing to join for the first time must fill out a New Member application form and send to: The Secretary, MCGG, PO Box 657, Kenmore, Qld 4069.)*

*Dale Borgelt*

## Another Striking Display of Entries: Photography Competition Report

The MCGG photography committee had a wonderful problem this year—quite how to fit all of the 230 entries onto the display boards! We were particularly delighted with the large number of entries from the younger members of the catchment, and also the high quality of a large number of the photographs. We congratulate Kenmore South State School but it was disappointing that this was the only entry for the Lord Mayor's Perpetual Shield. This is an early callout for any parents of children at local schools who might help to encourage participation by more of our local schools (please email MCGGPhotoSchools@gmail.com for more information). The aim of the competition is to promote the work of the MCGG, and demonstrate the beauty of the local area. The display at Kenmore Shopping Village attracted a large number of visitors, with almost 700 people casting a vote for the People's Choice category. Thanks again to the volunteers who staffed the stand—and congratulations to them for signing up a large number of new members. Congratulations also to Adrian Wellington on the award of the Supreme exhibit prize for "Arrival of Light," and the People's Choice prize for "Living Rainbows" (Karen Lawson's picture "Watching You" was second and Yogi's "Barking Owl" was third in the People's Choice category). Yogi is pictured on p.1 receiving his 1st prize in the category "People in their catchment" from category sponsor Moggill Construction's Business Development Manager, John Rutherford (note that Yogi is holding his certificate and plant from the MCGG nursery). My thanks to the photography committee—Robyn Frost, Margaret Whyte, Jocelyn Henry, Dale Borgelt, Cathi Lawrence and Bruce Siemon. We continue to be grateful to our judge (Dr Joseph McDowall), and also to Andrew and Graeme Wilson (who review all of the entries to check they are correctly captioned). Finally, and most importantly, our thanks to our wonderful sponsors and supporters, without whom the photography competition cannot take place: 4 MBS Classic FM, Breeze Photos, Brisbane College of Photography & Art, Brookfield Produce & Pet Pavilion, Westside Printing, Ingredients Deli, Moggill Construction, The Pet Chalet, Water Solutions, Kenmore Village, Cr Margaret de Wit, Dr Bruce Flegg MP, Kenmore Shopping Village, and Workout Indoorsopilly.

*Geoff Lawrence*

*(The photographs on p5 show Edie Smith and Karen Lawson looking at the prize-winning photo of John Smith, and the Editor admiring a group which includes the overall champion of the competition; the pelican. Both photos by Dale Borgelt.)*

## Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos

I used to very much enjoy the distinctive call of the Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo. A much more euphonious call than that of their raucous sulphur-crested brothers and sisters. But now I am not so sure.

A few weeks ago I was delighted to see several of them just across the track from our house, apparently busy in a poison peach shrub. Later, I saw what they had been up to. My poison peach, along with several others, two species of Acacia and also some Allocasuarina plants, had been extensively damaged. Plants as tall as 4m had been felled! (p.1)

In an article which appeared in the Summer 2008 issue of this News Letter, the Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos were seeking the larvae of the Cosset Moth in a eucalypt. Apparently they can actually hear larvae within the stem or trunk.

I know we are growing native plants for local wildlife, but .....

*Bryan Hacker*