MOGGILL CREEK CATCHMENT GROUP

www.moggillcreek.org.au

Print Post Approved PP 100003123

NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2014

▲ Restoration (see Early Days p. 4) *Photo: Joanna Yesberg*

▲ Madeira beetle (see A Beetle eats ..., p. 6) *Photo: Bryan Hacker*

Junior website developers (see Students Display p. 6) ▶
Photo: Dale Borgelt

Peanut tree (see p. 7) *Photo: Bryan Hacker*
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▲ Lewin's rail (see sightings, p 7) *Photo: Peter Boyd*

Editorial

Looking back at the Autumn 2007 Newsletter for another reason, I noticed the following in the Chairman's Report, writing about drought: "The situation is now critical... This year we have totally missed out on our wet season... many of our trees and shrubs-both native and exotic-are turning up their toes". At the time of writing this (mid February) we have had only one useful fall and are becoming nervous. We must however recognize that droughts occur frequently and our vegetation is adapted to that. No serious consequences of the 2007 drought remain. We are in this business for the long haul.

Each issue publishes a contribution from one of our members describing experience in restoring his/her land. We hope that members at large, most of whom are not for one reason or another thus engaged, read these to give some understanding of what is involved. Then there a few who may be thinking of undertaking restoration. We hope that they realize how interesting such can be. Different landholders have different situations, each requiring a suitable plan. For many, advice is necessary and available from us.

We are concerned whether enough young people are at least familiar with, and to some extent participate in our activities. Therefore it is pleasing to have the information reported on p.6 and we hope that other youngsters read it and be inspired to understand and take part. We are impressed that it was carried out by Year 9 students.

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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Proudly supported by Brisbane City Council

Dedicated to a better Brisbane

Congratulation to Dale

Dale Borgelt is a recipient within the Lord Mayor's Australia Day Awards. The citation follows. *Dale is the key organiser of the Moggill Creek Catchment Group's (MCCG) annual event known as "Kids' Day at the Cottage", which has run annually since 2010. In May 2013, MCCG's Kids' Day attracted more than 300 residents from the local community with half of the participants being children aged from 4-12 years. The children's activities ranged from interacting with live native wildlife, potting native seedlings, holding a giant burrowing cockroach, counting camouflaged insects, talking to a snail expert, watching native bees work and crafting lungfish creations. Dale's excellent event management skills, grant writing, community networking and sourcing of new and creative children's activities makes each annual MCCG Kids' Day uniquely different from any other community event, guaranteed to arouse a child's curiosity, creativity and wonder for their natural environment.*

Those of us associated with her are aware that Kids's Day is but one only of the many things she does for us; PR, organizing our presence at numerous public gatherings, arranging Talks at the Cottage and large events at Brookfield Hall, and occasional group field trips of the Naturalist kind. Add to this, a special task at our nursery, a *de facto* "housekeeper" at The Cottage and our expert on butterflies. Busy!

Chairman's Report August 2013

This year you will see a new MCCG web site with a more user friendly presentation full of the latest information about our activities and challenges. Malcolm Frost, Deb Ford, Geoff Lawrence and Judy Ward have put considerable effort into its design and content and they and many others have been writing and editing the detail. I look forward to seeing it operating for your benefit.

One of the themes for the MCCG stand at the 2014 Brookfield Show will be weed identification, management and control. Our focus will be mainly on the very invasive species that have the potential to transform landscapes by destroying most of the native vegetation and wildlife habitat. Madeira Vine and Cat`s Claw Creeper will receive particular attention. Bryan Hacker is already busy cultivating specimens in pots that will be on display so that at the very least you get to know the enemy. You may have them on your property and not know what you are looking at, or you may recognize them but don't know what you can do about them. We will be there to answer those questions and assist you where we can.

We are currently working with the Brisbane City Council and South East Queensland Catchments to accurately map the infestations of Cat`s Claw in Moggill Creek Catchment so that we can best limit its spread and then control/eradicate infestations in high priority areas. Already through funding managed by SEQ Catchments under the Queensland Government`s Coastal Resilience program, we have been distributing the latest scientific and practical information to landholders in areas of significant infestation in the catchment. In coming years the project will move into a control and eradication phase. It is a very difficult challenge but the alternative is unthinkable.

In late 2013, SEQ Water conducted public consultations on the possible future uses of water impoundments, dams, reservoirs and lakes under their control, including the Gold Creek Reservoir. MCCG responded to a discussion paper and was represented at workshops aimed at providing feedback on various options. Naturally we were very keen to preserve and restore the environmental value of the area above the dam. We look forward to the response from SEQ Water.

Warren Hoey

Vines

Were Vineforest Plant Atlas for South-East Queensland (1991) written now, it would be titled Dry Rainforests etc. A conspicuous feature of these forests had been the vines The vegetation in question has largely been unrecognisably varied by European occupation. Firstly, timber was removed, either for use in Brisbane or on the grounds of being useless. These being better soils, farming and grazing took over with the vines being substantially lost.

MCCG is engaged in the conservation and restoration of our original biodiversity which included nearly 100 species of vines. Whatever prejudices we had against them must be dismissed. Currently, we have widespread prejudice against vines following the arrival of some severely destructive exotic species.

Factors to be addressed in the addition of vines to our plantings include whether the species must climb, does not or is indifferent. Also, it is desirable that some walking access be provided and therefore more or less impenetrable vegetation (which can occur) be avoided; in particular, thorny species should be placed carefully.

We have not made a deliberate attempt to remedy this by growing a wide range of species at the nursery, urging their use and offering advice on their management (There is a problem in the nursery. Seedlings start climbing early and thus tangle in the propagation trays and between pots. But that is for us to handle.)

There is a general rule which covers all types of vegetation but is worth reiterating when dealing with vines because of the prejudices referred to above. When weeding, remove only plants which you know as weeds. Do not treat as weeds, plants you do not know as native.

Graeme Wilson

Swimming hole at Tuckett's Farm

Moggill Creek means different things to different people. In the past a swimming hole by Tuckett's Farm was a popular spot for young swimmers. I was delighted to be contacted by MCCG member Jenny Larkin who wanted to show me her painting of this swimming hole, painted in 1976 (see photo, p. 5) Some reports suggest this swimming hole has by now largely filled in. If any reader has any information on this, please let us know!

The painting is by Colin Merrill, who is still around and told me he was very happy for a photo of his painting to be published in our newsletter.

Bryan Hacker

Early Days

We have lived at this old, well established property of 1 hectare on Rafting Ground Rd for two years. The land used to be open dry eucalypt forest, hilly with no creek, sloping away to a dry gully joining with neighbouring acreage land to make a wildlife corridor down to Moggill Creek. The topsoil is thin and rocky, very dry and well drained, with the steep section damaged from previous horse activity.

Unlike many MCCG members undertaking bush regeneration on their property, there are no large weed infestations to deal with. Small weeds are controlled by hand pulling or cut & spray – Ochna, Billy Goat weed, Cobblers Pegs, Mother of Millions, etc. Many weedy exotics commonly planted in the 80's – privet, tipuana, *Koelreuteria* (golden rain tree), easter cassia and jacaranda - are also controlled by vigilance. There are no large weed vines such as Madiera or Cat's Claw, only a small patch of Glycine and Mile-a-Minute, some seedling wild Passionfruit and Asparagus Fern.

But there are many large spotted gums (*Corymbia citrodora*), acacias, macadamias and a beautiful rock fig, surrounded by mown grass areas. Patches of barbed wire grass and kangaroo grass have persisted, along with herbaceous goodenia and blue murdannia. Considering our proximity to busy roads some unusual native wildlife has been seen - a large lace monitor and an echidna plus regular appearances from wallabies, flying foxes to the fig, large stick insects and many butterflies. Unfortunately the birdlife is dominated by ferociously territorial bands of noisy miners, along with currawongs, magpies, crows and kookaburras, which discourage the small birds.

So with this base, I want to put back an understorey of bushes, grasses and vines to encourage wildlife and floral diversity. First thing was to distinguish garden areas from what had been mown areas, discontinuing such mowing to allow for natural regeneration. We let dead trees stand and keep large fallen timber for terracing slopes to retain top soil and moisture, and provide habitat for insects and reptiles. Also making use of a soak from a septic rubble drain to plant species that like more water has been very successful.

To start, we had a site visit from Bryan Hacker to identify the existing plants and I have since obtained hundreds of plants from the MCCG nursery. Bryan's advice was to tackle small areas at a time. We also received helpful information from the MCCG newsletters and books such as '*Putting Back the Forest*', '*Wild Plants of Greater Brisbane*' and '*Fragments of Green*'. I have attended many interesting monthly Cottage talks on a wide range of topics (figs, soil, beetles, plant ID) – and following one of these am now happily hosting three native stingless bee hives.

However, in trying to achieve more plant diversity I tried too many rainforest species with soft leaves that couldn't cope with the harsh conditions. So I made a decision to give them two years of watering and then transplant to a different position. In the hot dry areas I found that plants with small or tough leaves such as acacias, hoveas, dodonaeas, or tea trees do better. Other problems have been the usual damage from animals, in particular hares, wallabies, deer (ring barking & trampling) and free range chickens. We can't put guards around everything and in some cases guards seem to encourage insect attack (scale and sap sucking insects) as birds and other predators can't get in easily.

So early days as yet, come back in 10 years!

Joanna Yesberg

(The photo on p.1 was supplied by the author. It shows, in the background, original degraded ground yet to be treated. In the foreground, heavy mulching accompanied by some planting is one approach to restoration of fertility, while behind it native grasses should push things in the same direction.)

The importance of remnant ecosystems

I recently visited an all too small and rare patch of remnant vegetation on private land .This and adjoining properties were very steep, on volcanic soils and had been intensively farmed during the last century. At the highest point of the property, approx.3- 4ha remained largely uncleared due to large outcropping of rock with resultant scree slopes below and more recently the protection offered by the current land owner.

While some of the surrounding land has advanced stages of assisted and natural regrowth thanks to some highly dedicated individuals, immediately upon entering the property the age and diversity of species (140 approx) sets it apart. Five species previously not listed in our catchment were identified, three of which are unusual based on records of their known distribution. One of these, *Solanum mentiens* (Photo p. 5), is listed as endangered (IUCN.2001) and is known from only three locations in the Boonah and Beenleigh districts! It is a low growing plant adapted to growing on rocky ground by layering itself on top of or between the rocks in low light. There appears to be only a few small colonies remaining, each group may in fact being one multi-layered individual, surviving only in the most intact area and occupying perhaps as little as 1% of the remnant area.

And now for the bad news. Cats claw surrounds on at least three sides. Some preliminary work has already been done to keep the *Solanum* safe and options to control the cats-claw are currently being looked at so as to save this unique ecosystem.

Andrew Wilson

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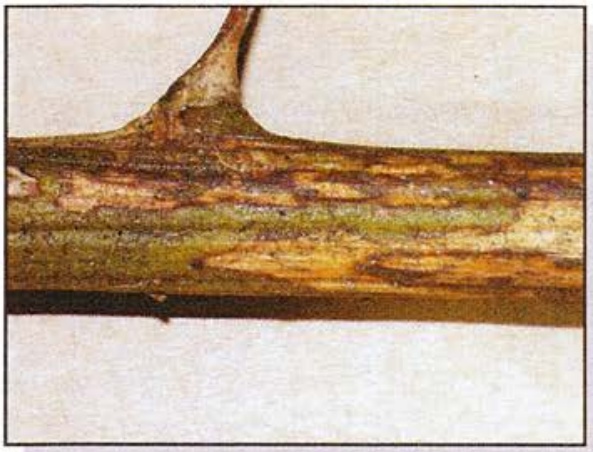
Solanum mentiens (see The Importance, p.... 4)
Photo: Andrew Wilson



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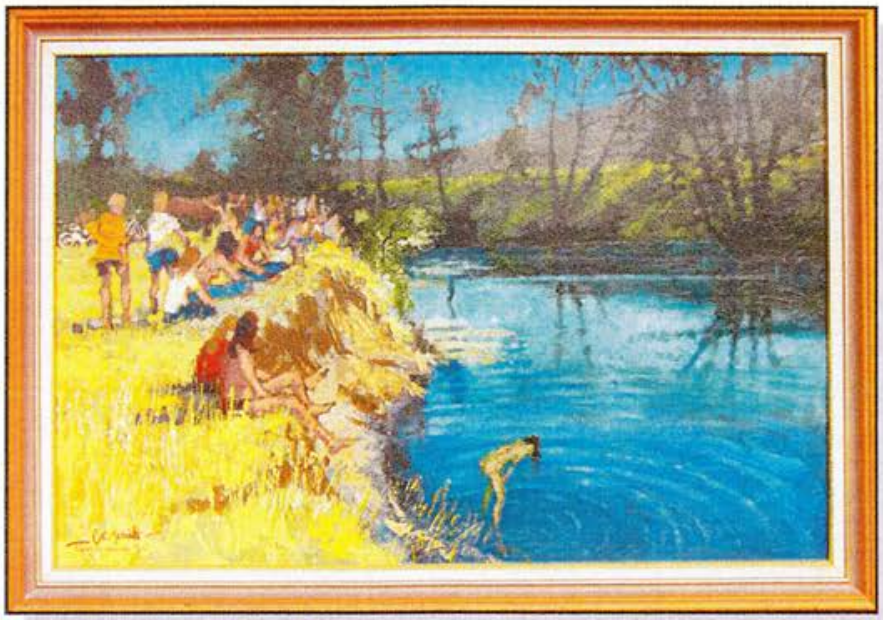
Asparagus stem (see Hopes for Asparagus, p . 8) *Photo: Andrew Wilson*



Tucketts Farm (see p. 3) ▶
Photo: Bryan Hocker

Nest box animals (see Animal boxes, p. 8)

◀▼

Students display interest in the environment

In December 2013 there was an impressive display of environmentally interesting projects by Kenmore High School students in Year 9 Information Communication Education classes which focus on technology in the real world.

Moggill Creek Catchment is very much part of that real world, and Smith Farm gave students plenty to think about. Stella Jahnke and Josephine Hong (photo p.1) based their project on Smith Farm and Stella has written a description of that project for our Newsletter, an edited version of which follows.

Having the opportunity to visit, study and interact with Smith Farm has been both an inspiration and source of enjoyment from not only learning about its significant environmental and historical features, but also developing a sense of understanding and appreciation for the biodiversity within Smith Farm. My project co-partner, Josephine Hong, and I produced a website with the aim to inform the community of the historical and environmental features of Smith Farm, supporting the need for its protection and conservation for the future.

Our Smith Farm Information website addresses and develops Environmental, Historical, Futuristic, Recreational and General aspects of the Smith Farm property:

General Information/About Tab gives the Size and Location of Smith Farm and clarifies the current owners, visiting hours and consent of public trust.

An Historical Feature is the filmed interview with John and Edith Smith. The interview transcript and pictorial Smith Family Timeline is presented to give the community a glimpse of Smith Farm's significant historical past.

Environmental Feature Two pages depicting species of flora and fauna which inhabit the area are portrayed through images, facts and descriptions of at least 10 plants and animals.

Future Only the natural rainforest section of Smith Farm is officially protected and this motivated us to address the future position of Smith Farm and its vulnerability to issues such as development. Numerous other possible future scenarios are listed and explained, showing the negative impacts such disasters would have.
Recreation

We have produced a Nature Trail open to the community which portrays some of the key checkpoints with both Environmental and Historical Significance. Checkpoints consisting of a Lookout, Banana Plantation, Orchids, 1914 Victorian House and Smith Farm Creek are accompanied by images and description.

Josephine and I have immensely enjoyed our involvement in the Smith Farm project, developing inspiration and personal interest in this significant wildlife haven, and also a great admiration for John and Edith Smith and their lifetime of dedication to this project.

To view our Smith Farm website please go to: *http://josephineghi.wix.com/smith-farm*. Please let your friends and neighbours in Brisbane west know about the importance of this "treasure" in our local community and its ongoing need for recognition, community awareness and support, and conservation for future generations.

Stella Jahnke,
Year 9 Kenmore State High school ICX student

A beetle that eats Madeira vine

In mid- December I had the opportunity with others to visit the Ecosciences Precinct at Boggo Road, where Queensland Government researchers have been working on biocontrol methods for cat's claw and Madeira vine. Researchers include MCCG member Liz Snow, who showed us something of her work.

The Madeira vine project, completed over six years, built on earlier studies undertaken in South Africa and Argentina and following extensive testing, a leaf-eating beetle, *Plectonycha correntina*, was released from May 2011 onwards. Both the beetle and its larvae eat Madeira vine leaves. Several of the release sites were in the Brookfield area. In a report to the Eighteenth Australasian Weeds Conference in 2012, Liz and co-authors found that about half the released populations survived over winter, which was promising.. Damage to Madeira vine was low, but perhaps this was because the populations had not yet built up.

The photograph of the beetle on p.1 was taken in the Ecosciences Precinct laboratory. It would be great if members could keep an eye open for this beetle (which would be likely to be associated with Madeira vine) and report back to me if they spot any, preferably with a photograph.

Bryan Hacker

Errata – Winter Issue 2013, Page 5
The photograph labelled Ipomeria (see a nice taxonomic distinction p. 6) should be labelled *Polymeria calycina*
The photograph labelled Polymeria (see a nice taxonomic distinction p. 6) should be labelled *Ipomoea plebeia*

The peanut tree (*Sterculia quadrifida*)

People often like to grow plants for their pretty flowers, but with the peanut tree (*Sterculia quadrifida*) it is the fruit that are spectacular – see photo on p.1. The fruit when ripe is like a bright red pendulous tulip, the 'pods' spreading and revealing the large black seeds, up to eight in number.

In the *Flora of South-eastern Queensland* (Vol 2, updated 2002), the peanut tree is included in the family Sterculiaceae (which also includes *Brachychiton, Commersonia* and other well-known local natives), but times have changed and it has now been placed in the much larger family Malvaceae. Why is the genus named *Sterculia*? According to an apparently reputable internet site, the genus is named after the Roman god of dung heaps and privies, on account of the bad smell of flowers of some species (n.b. I have not noticed this feature with our peanut tree!).

The peanut tree is a semi-deciduous tree growing to 10 m or more and occurs in light rainforests from northern NSW to north Queensland, NT, WA and PNG. Leaves are simple and alternate, up to 23 cm long and 14 cm wide. Flowers are in clusters, and are bell-shaped, about 7mm long. The tree is moderately quick-growing and flowers and fruits when only a few years old. We usually have stocks of this species at our Nursery.

This species had a number of uses for the Aboriginal people. Seeds are edible and are reputed to taste like raw peanuts, hence the common name. Aborigines in northern Queensland crushed leaves and applied them to wounds and an infusion of the bark was used to treat ailments of the eyes. The bark was also used for weaving into baskets and for making rope or fishing nets.

Bryan Hacker

Sightings of Lewin's Rail near MCCG's nursery

This summer, Moggill Creek, from the footbridge below Gold Creek Reservoir downstream for about 50m, has been one of the most visited birding sites in Brisbane. In November a local birder posted a sighting of a Lewin's Rail, *Lewinia pectoralis*, on Eremaea, a popular internet birding site. (photo p.1) This engendered a flurry of excitement and activity, with birdwatchers from all over the south east corner of the state vying for a position to hopefully view the bird. Some were successful and two adults with three fluffy chicks were spotted. Unfortunately a later sighting showed only two chicks. A snake had been seen in the area. Another highly sought after species, the pale-vented bush-hen, was also observed in the creek.

Lewin's rails are secretive and skulk in covering vegetation so are difficult to observe; consequently they are probably under-reported and are far more numerous than people realise. Four other sites where the rail was seen in the Kenmore area were posted on Eremaea from December 9th to January 13th. This indicates that this bird is probably not a rarity, just not noticed. The species has an extensive range, Flores in Indonesia, the island of New Guinea and the states of Queensland, NSW, Victoria and Tasmania, so it is unlikely to become extinct; however local populations may be endangered due to drainage of wetlands and clearing of vegetation. The genus *Lewinia* contains two other species, *L.mirifica* from the Philippines and *L.muelleri* from the Auckland Islands 300km south of New Zealand.

The buff-banded rail, *Gallirallus philippensis*, also occurs in the catchment and is frequently observed in wetlands. This species has an even wider distribution than *Lewinia pectoralis*, occurring in Malaysia, Indonesia, PNG, Philippines, Australia and NZ.

Brothers Brian and Mick Leahy were quite blasé about the excitement caused by the rails as they often used to see them from the footbridge 50 to 60 years ago. Also they were part of the group that first found the bush-hens in 1968.

One bad aspect to this exciting episode is that some impatient and unethical bird watchers used sound recordings to lure the birds into view instead of waiting for them to appear. This activity can cause great anxiety to birds, in some cases causing them to abandon nests and leave the site.

Dawn Beck

Brookfield Birds

There is a treat for visitors to our Cottage Library. *Brookfield Birds – Book 1 and Book 2. Ed Frazer* has kindly donated his wonderful *Brookfield Birds* books which are collections of photographs taken on the Frazer properties on Adavale Street and Gold Creek Road, Brookfield. These are very popular additions to our Library of locally relevant books.
The Cottage is open every Thursday morning, but the best time to visit the Library is 10am-12noon on the 1st and 2nd Thursday of each month. Drop in. See for yourself.

Dale Borgelt

Third Thursday Talks at the Cottage

There is a Talk at the Cottage (at the end of Gold Creek Road on Gold Creek Dam Reserve) 10am - 12noon on the third Thursday of the month from February to November.

Third Thursday Talks at the Cottage are limited to members because of space, and booking is usually necessary because they are proving a popular way of finding out more about the biodiversity of our backyard, our catchment, our environment.

(There is no cost, but members who have the time and inclination can "bring a plate" to add to the cuppa and sandwich lunch we enjoy at the end of a Talk.)

Third Thursday Talks at the Cottage to note in your calendar:

10am – 12noon

Thursday 20 February 2014	Plant ID with Jan Blok co-author of Fragments of Green
Thursday 20 March 2014	Curator of Brookfield District Museum, Joy Stacy
Thursday 17 April 2014	Fungi with Jutta Godwin
Thursday 15 May 2014	Beetles with Geoff Monteith
Thursday 19 June 2014	Cats Claw control

Members wishing to attend a particular talk should reserve a place by contacting
Dale: *daleborgelt@gmail.com* or ph 3374 1035

Animal Boxes

Generally, we are strongly focused on restoration of vegetation and if we think about it at all, suppose that given an adequate range of plant species, the appropriate animals will occupy the area. Well they will, but only up to a point.

Plants will supply food, directly or indirectly, this latter via those animals which depend on plants but become food for other animals, e.g. in sequence, insects and birds. However, animals require shelter and breeding places, these very often provided by hollows in old or dead trees and logs. Unfortunately these are commonly removed by landholders, while there are in any case few very old trees. Early clearing means that regrowth is now largely by trees not yet old enough to provide the requirements. It is most helpful to provide artificial replacement, usually by installing nesting boxes.

The previous Newsletter described by one landholder his experience in biodiversity restoration. He has put out a large number of boxes now occupied by many and varied animals at his site, a mere half kilometre (in a straight line) from the Brookfield roundabout. Of a number of photographs he provided, two are shown on p.5. A family group of squirrel gliders rests in their box, while a pair of feather-tail gliders have their own home.

Some may say that this does not provide for all animal species, but then neither does our planting. Landholders are urged to contribute as this person has done.

Graeme Wilson

Hope for Asparagus growers ?

While talk of a possible new disease in asparagus might strike fear into the hearts of commercial growers, I and no doubt many others have been hoping desperately for many years for a failure of our particular crops.

To the best of my knowledge, no biological controls have been released for the climbing *Asparagus africanus*, so I was surprised but not optimistic in observing a thinning out of the thick green curtains often smothering an unfortunate tree. Symptoms had been observed as far back as 2010 but no significant impact was apparent . My observation is that the spread of the unknown (disease ?) has accelerated over the last 6 months on our property in Brookfield and similar symptoms occur in parts of Pullenvale

It would be interesting to hear if others have any similar observations .Symptoms include irregular dark markings on the stem (see photo p.5), slight yellowing of otherwise healthy foliage and partial or complete die-back of stems. Unfortunately, I have not seen any dead plants as yet.

Andrew Wilson

"A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in."
Greek Proverb