

MOGGILL CREEK CATCHMENT GROUP

www.moggillcreek.org.au



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NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2014



◀ Snake "handling"

See Kid's Day, p. 8 *Photo: Geoff Laurence*

▼ Wombat



◀ Greater Glider
(See A Rare Find, p. 4)
Photo: Sue Cooper-White



▲ Hoop Pine (see Trees we plant, p. 4)
Photo: Andrew Wilson



◀ Attractive forest (see Restoring a property, p. 3)
Photo: Pria du Pradal

Editorial

Having little, and quite often no news as such, Newsletter is really a misnomer. It is rather a general purpose publication. With 500 or so members and no doubt others as readers, we would like to have content which appeals in part to their certainly very diverse interests. Let's look at the contents of this issue.

The bottom line of MCCG's interests is getting plants on the ground and caring for them, but there is only one "how to do it" article. There are other sources of information available. However, there is a danger that the plethora of information on our activities is such that the fact that things are happening on the ground might be lost. Therefore we have three articles on that. There are things that many people would like to know, such as regular articles on plant species. From time to time there is important information for landholders; this time about the Cat's Claw project. Then we have the large amount of information associated with PR; public displays, entertainment, meetings, special interest groups, talks etc. And finally, there is real news of matters of interest. This time it is the sighting of a greater glider, and perhaps the recollections of a cleaner Moggill Creek. Such are interesting things which do a lot for the Newsletter, but it is a cause of despair to the Editor that often, over a three month period, 500 persons between them have not seen anything likely to be of interest to others.

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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Nepenthes petiolata

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Dedicated to a better Brisbane

Revisiting Swimming Hole at Tuckett's Farm published in Autumn 2014 Newsletter

We used to love swimming at this hole and another couple further down. There was good native vegetation up and down the creek banks. But this swimming area had been kept quite open and accessible by occasional visitors, especially those game enough to use the swing rope. I used to go up frequently to watch platypus at dusk. They were relatively undisturbed, the water was always quite deep in the middle and it never dried out as far as I remember.

Also, my brothers and I used to catch good sized edible mullet in the Moggill Creek at the Rafting Ground Rd end. The swimming holes along here were also excellent-clean, clear and again with good native vegetation.

I will never forget the horror of seeing a young fellow nearly drown when he 'surf boarded' down the 1974 floodwaters and disappeared in the churning waters at the Moggill Creek Bridge. Several people helped rescue him 300m downstream.

Linda Clarke

Chairman's Report May 2014

A visible and important part of MCCG activities are conducted by the various bushcare groups that are ably lead by our Section Leaders. They do a considerable amount of hidden work in organizing the working bees, canvassing for new volunteers and planning the work schedule. Their details are published on our website with an invitation to contact them should you feel sufficiently motivated to assist.

Some groups have been in operation for many years and the results of that sustained effort are plain to see. For example, in McKay Brook, the group lead by Bryan Hacker has rehabilitated many sections of the creek such that the plantings of native species are successfully reseeding the area. A major challenge is now to maintain the revegetated areas by continually removing the encroaching weeds.

Similarly, Malcolm Frost has led a large and very successful group in the Huntington area for 16 years and has rehabilitated an extensive area of riparian vegetation along a well used section of Moggill creek. Malcolm has recently passed the baton over to Jim Pope. Thank you sincerely, Malcolm for a job well done and I extend a warm welcome to Jim. Nearby in Gap creek, Mike Humphreys is an innovator and Damien Egan who works downstream from the local produce agency, just gets on with it.

In the nether reaches of the catchment, people such as Kate McVicar, Gordon Grigg, John Crowley, Judy Petroschevsky and Richard Woodhead work away quietly and persistently, often with few resources and yet are very effective in their areas. My thanks to them all. We would be much the worse without their dedication to the practical work required to improve our local natural environment.

On a closing note, please read Adrian Webb's article on Cat's Claw (a weed) in this edition of the newsletter. The subject should be of concern to all landholders. The MCCG is working with the Brisbane City Council and South East Queensland catchments to tackle this very threatening vine weed. Good reading!

Warren Hoey

Restoring a property on Gap Creek Road

Perhaps it is 18 years ago that I fell in love with a 7.5 acre property on Gap Creek Road. Driving up the long driveway the property suddenly opens into an amphitheatre of bush. The house and what was then a manicured garden on an incline with the land sloping down through about 3 acres of protected trees and lawns – the rest is bush. Well actually it was mostly Lantana and Ochna. Back then I didn't mind too much. It reminded me of Africa and provided shelter for the many wallabies, monitors, lizards, possums and so on. I even added to the African flavour by stealing some grass seed growing near the dam. You know that tall grass that once again has a wonderful perfume. Scattered the seeds and for a few years I was happy.

Then we got a visit from a very nice man from BCC who pointed out that as land holders it was our duty to get rid of all the Mother of Millions, the Singapore Daisy and Purple Succulent which had created such an excellent ground cover along the driveway. That is when the challenge began.

Several years have passed and I believe I have those three nasties under control –but it never ceases to amaze how with just a spot of rain they find a way of returning! My approach has been to attack one section at a time and just recently I was feeling reasonably happy with the back section. Then the spring rain came and I noticed all this new growth. Were these plants good or bad I wondered. Only one thing for it. Contact Bryan Hacker for his advice.

Imagine how thrilled I was when he said I would score 9 out of 10 for the back section! Then with immense patience he pointed out what I should be trying to get rid of; some vines that give off white sap, that African grass and some large areas of asparagus ferns. When I suggested spraying the area, he looked at me in dismay and "Oh no, Pia! Then you will kill all those good plants underneath!"

Well, you should have seen me the next day pulling out the asparagus ferns with a hoe. Each plant had a root system creating a carpet about 5cm thick and stretching about a meter in radius. I thought that I had to remove all the roots because I thought that each of those nodules could become a new plant! Stupid me! I later learnt that I could just have turned the plants upside down and let them rot in situ. Instead I removed about 8 fully laden wheel barrow loads! At least I know that is what to do with the asparagus ferns.

There is something immensely thrilling in seeing the native vegetation return and with it the wildlife. There is so much to do ...but I love doing it! (Photo on p1 shows part of the restored area)

Pria du Pradal

What's in a Name? *Commersonia*

Plants are given botanical names for a reason and often there is a story behind the name. A quite common tree in our catchment, the brown kurrajong, pictured on p.5, is one such plant. Its botanical name is *Commersonia bartramia*.

I was recently lent a book, *The Discovery of Jeanne Baret*, by Glynis Ridley, that detailed a fascinating story. The book is essentially about a French woman, an herbalist from a country background, who became the first woman to sail round the world. Her name was Jeanne Baret. With her herbalist's knowledge of plants, she became an invaluable support to Philibert Commerson, official naturalist to the first French circumnavigation of the world. The expedition was led by Louis-Antoine de Bougainville and the small fleet of two ships comprised the *Boudeuse* and *Etoile*. Together with Commerson, Jeanne, dressed as a man, sailed on the *Etoile* and departed Aix in France on 1 February 1767. After many adventures, Commerson died in Mauritius on 13 March 1773 and in due course, Jeanne returned to France. The expedition passed through the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia), without sighting Australia.

Checking in the *Flora of South-eastern Queensland Vol 2*, the names J. R. & G. Forster appear after the genus name *Commersonia*. This is an abbreviation of Johann Reinhold and Georg Forster, who were naturalists on James Cook's second Pacific voyage (1772-75). The plan had been for Joseph Banks to accompany Cook as naturalist on this voyage (as he had on the first), but he withdrew at the last moment and Forster and his son were appointed to fill the vacant position. The Forsters dedicated the genus to Commerson and named it after him. According to the same Flora, the genus *Commersonia* comprises about 14 species from SE Asia, Australia and the Pacific Islands.

And now to our brown kurrajong, *Commersonia bartramia* (initially described in 1759 by Linnaeus, the father of taxonomic botany, as *Muntingia bartramia*). It is a shrub or tree growing to a height of 20 m on margins of drier rainforests and along water courses. Brown kurrajong shows strong apical dominance, commonly with a single vertical trunk and spreading branches, these bearing alternate hairy leaves up to 14 cm long. At flowering, as shown in the photograph on p.5, the spreading branches are densely covered with small white flowers, these to be followed by bristly seed capsules. In our experience it is a rapidly growing species and deserves a place in revegetation projects along our creeks.

According to an internet site, "the name Kurrajong came from the Aboriginal word for the beautiful tree, *Brachychiton populneus* (sic)". Both the brown kurrajong and the kurrajong (*Brachychiton populneus*) are in the family Sterculiaceae. Both occur naturally in our catchment and, although they are very different in appearance, they are both beautiful trees.

Bryan Hacker

(I would like to thank MCCG member Dawn Beck for lending me the interesting book which led me on this trail of discovery)

A rare find in Upper Brookfield

The Greater Glider (*Petauroides volans*) has been presumed extinct in the western part of Brisbane – however recent photo evidence indicates something completely different. A Land for Wildlife member in Upper Brookfield reported seeing two pterodactyl-like shapes flying over her house at night. She thought her mind was playing tricks on her, because what could be that big? One morning she heard a strange noise of screeching and screaming from a tree less than 10 meters away from the house. The noise was coming from a mammal that looked like a koala, but bigger and with a really fluffy tail. The penny dropped – it was a Greater Glider! (Photo p 1) This one was defending its hollow for the day from a Lace Monitor. Discoveries like this on Land for Wildlife properties are a good indication that protecting habitat and raising community awareness are valuable investments in retaining Brisbane's unique biodiversity.

Catherine Madden

Trees we plant do grow

When I purchased this property in 1950, much of the land was completely bare of woody species; just a low-growing herbaceous cover. I decided to plant a tree or two on the higher land so dug up three hoop pine seedlings on a friend's property and planted them. The photo on p.1 shows one of them now. Its height matches its girth. It is in a small patch of forest with a good vegetational cover, the result of some later planting and much self-regeneration thanks largely to bird-perching provided by the trees which became available.

The message is simply this: Plant the right species in the right place, provide ongoing maintenance and you are likely to get good results.

Graeme Wilson



▲ MCGG at Brookfield Show (see p. 8)
 Photo: Bryan Hacker

▼ *Commersonia* (see What's in a name p. 4)
 Photo: Bryan Hacker



▲ *Lobelia purpurascens* (See CCIA, p.6) *Agave* sp. ▶



◀ Multiple planting
 (See Two for the price of one, p. 6)
 Photos: Andrew Wilson ▶



Two for the price of one

When considering a planting project we often view the plant as being the major cost. This may well be true when purchasing advanced stock from a retail nursery, but for most of our revegetation projects this is not the case. The true cost is our investment of time and labour in each hole that we dig. By the time our plant may have become established we have dug the hole, watered repeatedly, protected it from a variety of potential threats, and often staked, mulched and fertilized it.

Unfortunately, attention to all of the above does not guarantee a successful outcome for each hole and losses are not uncommon. With a view to improving my chances on a successful establishment for each hole dug, some years ago I started planting two or more plants together thus increasing my chances.

Given that fast growing, and often short lived species should be a part of any planting they make ideal companions for some of the slower growing large rainforest trees. Suitable genera may include *Dodonea*, *Hibiscus*, *Hovea*, *Indigofera*, *Trema* and smaller *Acacia* species to name a few.

Holes need not be significantly larger than usual, but attention should still be given to ensuring that each root ball has good soil contact around it. Spacings between holes may be increased a little and some vigorous species, eucalypts etc may still be planted individually if you choose. If planting a third species I often choose a small understory shrub or native grass, further diversifying the planted area.

Given that one of the key elements for long term success in planting is to quickly obtain a canopy and dominate the site with native species, it is hoped that multiplanting may help to facilitate this. Other possible benefits include early protection from exposure for the rainforest species, nitrogen from *Acacia* species, unknown symbiotic fungal relationships and of course companionship!

It is essential that we improve the efficiency of current revegetation methods so while my suggestions may challenge the more conservative minded planters out there, we need to constantly review our approach and try new things. Experiment yourself and remember that we're creating an ecosystem, not a forest farm.

The two photos on p.5 are examples. One, c. 10 years after planting, shows a pair (*Acacia* and *Streblus*), while the other is a recent planting of a trio (*Deeringea*, *Breynia* and *Elaeodendron*).

Andrew Wilson

A CCIA-funded project on private land

We live off Gap Creek Road. Last year two neighbours and ourselves, all Land for Wildlife members and all enthusiastic members of MCCG, were successful in obtaining support through the Council's CCIA scheme. Although the properties are comparatively small, each only c.1 ha, together they make a significant contribution to preserving biodiversity and this would have contributed to our success in obtaining Council support. The project has just been completed and we are all delighted with the outcome.

Despite the total area only being about 3 ha, it is extremely variable. Two of the houses are on the crest of a rocky ridge, with areas of lawn, but otherwise the area is well forested and we believe has never been totally cleared. The land slopes to the west to a minor drainage line which we planted with local rainforest species about ten years ago – the canopy is now at a height of c. 10 m. The slopes and ridge (except around the two houses) are well forested with eight species of eucalypt and (surprisingly) swamp box.

And now for the sad bit. Over time Madeira vine and cat's claw had invaded the lower areas around the drainage line; a little further up the slope a species of *Agave* had become dominant over quite a large area. Also, the dreaded Ochna in some areas was almost impenetrable. Although we had been doing well over much of our land, we just did not have the capacity to tackle these problems.

Thanks to CCIA, these problems are now under control – at least temporarily. Two visits by the contract team at c. 6 month intervals and the ochnas (at least in the short term) are no more. Some small cat's claw plants are appearing and continued vigilance will be necessary. The *Agave* is mostly dead (but needs a little encouragement in that direction), although large numbers of seedlings have appeared from nowhere (see photo on p.5). There are now shade tolerant grasses and native white root (*Lobelia purpurascens*) where ochna used to be (see p.5). The exotic signal grass will need to be kept in check, to allow the native grasses to take over. We have also done a little planting, particularly towards the drainage line where there is reasonable soil.

So, it has been a good experience and we could not have achieved it without CCIA help.

Bryan Hacker

Cat's Claw Creeper Project

The Weed

Many landholders in the Moggill Creek catchment are already aware of the threats from cat's claw creeper to remnant forests and riparian zones. The vine climbs into the tree canopy, slowly smothering it and killing the trees. In the understorey, shrubs and smaller native plants are also smothered and killed, and a dense carpet often covers the ground surface. Some landholders have been battling this aggressive exotic vine from South America for several years, and have learned how difficult it is to remove or control. The MCCG Committee has been working with the SEQ Catchments, Brisbane City Council and officers of Biosecurity Queensland to bring together information on the ecological threats from this transformer weed; in addition they are collaborating in efforts to support landholders to control its spread particularly in our remnant forests. A comprehensive fact sheet compiled by Kym Johnston of Biosecurity Queensland outlines much of what is known about this vine and the current recommended control methods. It is available through the national weeds web site at <http://www.weeds.org.au/WoNS/catsclawcreeper/>.

Cat's claw creeper is distributed across many areas of remnant vegetation in Moggill Creek Catchment and some infestations are known to have been there for 20 years or more. The most severe infestations are in the moister lower slopes and drainage lines where the denser vegetation occurs. A recent tour of three cat's claw infested properties in the catchment was funded by SEQ Catchments through the State Government Coastal Resilience Fund. The aims were to show concerned landholders what a devastatingly destructive plant it is, and to discuss ways in which infestations can be reduced or controlled. About 24 people took advantage of the offer which was held on 12 April. On the tour landholders shared their experiences with other participants and this led to several useful discussions on control methods and issues associated with them.

Although a number of the exotic transformer vines are known to be degrading ecosystems in the Moggill Creek Catchment, specific attention is being given to cat's claw creeper because it is not only one of the worst threats it is also regarded as one of the most difficult to control and eradicate.

Information on cat's claw creeper and live examples of the plant were on display at the Brookfield Show this year. Also on show were other weed vines; Madeira vine, glycine and climbing asparagus.

How do we respond?

The general strategy being followed is to identify outlier sites and then try to direct control efforts into limiting further spread into important remnant vegetation; the next challenge is to focus on major infestations. Where it is possible, treating the weed across neighbouring properties has some benefits in reducing the level of further infestation in an area. We are particularly aware of this in those areas where infestations are on properties adjacent to or close to major conservation areas such as the Mt Coot-tha Forest and the adjoining D'Aguilar National Park.

These regions include several identified conservation corridors supported by Brisbane City Council collaborative conservation agreements. Approximately 50 per cent of eligible properties (greater than half a hectare) in Moggill Creek Catchment are part of BCC's Wildlife Conservation Partnerships Program including a number of properties that have signed Voluntary Conservation Agreements or Voluntary Conservation Covenants. By focussing on those parts of the catchment where community engagement is already well advanced, significant environmental benefits can be achieved more efficiently in aspects such as more effective weed management, habitat enhancement and restoration of corridors.

In 2012-14, approximately 100 landholders mainly in Kenmore Hills, upper Gold Creek, Savages Road and Upper Brookfield received funding assistance from the BCC or SEQ Catchments to fund work by contractors to spray cat's claw creeper and other exotic vines. This assistance was aimed at helping landholders get a level of control of cat's claw creeper so they can manage it themselves in future years.

Current aims of the MCCG are:

- **Provide good information on the skills and other resources needed to manage the infestations in the catchment.** SEQ Catchments, BCC and Biosecurity Queensland are supporting communication and training activities for landholders seeking support on cat's claw management practices.
- **Share information about new infestations** with SEQ Catchments, BCC and landholders to help identify priority areas for assistance in control efforts. Although we have already quite a bit of information on infestations in the catchment, the MCCG Committee wants to make contact with all landholders in the catchment who have cat's claw infestations. The better the information we have the better the chance of getting on-ground support to battle this tree destroyer.
- **Support landholders in gaining funds for on-ground treatment of Cat's claw creeper.**

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Adrian Webb

MCCG at the Brookfield Show (see photo p. 5)

It was a strange sight, a couple of our worst vine weeds carefully cultivated and beautifully displayed in pots – by our hero Landcare Adviser/ weed fighter/Bryan Hacker. But, it was all in a good, environmental, cause.... to show Cat's Claw Creeper and Madeira Vine, in real life, to visitors to the MCCG stand at the Brookfield Show. The display also featured live examples of the current biological control insect for each of these two major problem weeds. The 'good' native plants from our nursery also got attention - and they gave us the opportunity to tell people about one of the big advantages of MCCG membership at only \$15 per year – unlimited free locally native plants from our volunteer Nursery.

Dale Borgelt

Happy Kids' Day At The Cottage 2014

Another successful Kids' Day at the Cottage was enjoyed by an attendance of around 300. This included equally interested adults who came with enthusiastic youngsters. Many a mum was seen carefully following Carolyn Parson's directions for making a dragonfly to help a youngster when there were so many eager fingers trying to make one to take home. The platypus papering had plenty of parent help too. The very popular jewellery making activity had Dale's daughters, Deborah Craig and Julie Borgelt, and granddaughter, Rebecca Craig, always busy helping more than 100 children make creations to proudly wear home. At the very busiest times there was even a dad or two seen helping their child thread a bead, a seed, or a disc of leather.

There was plenty to see, do, and talk about in the marquees on the hill, too. This was where kids could meet living examples of nature's wonderful biodiversity. The Snail Whisperer had added live snails. Geoff Monteith had wonderfully camouflaged insects on eucalypt branches, and the much more obvious giant burrowing cockroach to hold. Tony Goodrich had a working hive of native stingless bees (that turned out to be a bit more active than polite at one stage).

Potting a seedling was another popular activity. Children happily took home some 300 native plants which they had potted with guidance from Andrew Wilson. I know that one little boy, Angus, was so enthusiastic he spent the afternoon planting and working in their own garden when he got home. The hope is that all the young visitors took home something special, be it knowledge, experience, or just happy memories, so that they take an interest in their environment and the natural world.

Kids' Day at the Cottage would not be complete without the Wildlife Show. The photo on p.1 shows children admiring a python. The highlight of highlights was when Martin Finland brought out Bumpy the beautiful 5 year old female wombat at the end of his wonderful Geckoes Wildlife Presentation. Our 96 year-old oldest kid, Graeme Wilson, loved it. (see photo p.1) So did Cr Margaret de Wit, also in the photo, who is a supporter of Kids' Day especially via the Lord Mayor's Suburban Initiatives Fund in the Pullenvale Ward. MCCG is very grateful for this support which helps us make Kids' Day at the Cottage a FREE event for children.

Dale Borgelt

A RARE NIGHT OUT WITH NIGHT CREATURES Monday Night, 28th July, Brookfield Hall

This will really be a rare treat. So many of our native species are creatures of the night, often only heard, sometimes glimpsed. As a very special favour, Martin Finland will be bringing native creatures of the night to our public meeting at Brookfield Hall on Monday 28th July for a RARE NIGHT OUT WITH NIGHT CREATURES.

John Stanisic will also be bringing native creatures active at night – important detritivores -snails.

If you have an interest in native wildlife that is most active when we are snug in our beds, this is an evening not to be missed. Mark it in your calendar now.

JULY 28 2014 7pm BROOKFIELD HALL "A RARE NIGHT OUT WITH NIGHT CREATURES"

For more information contact: daleborgelt@gmail.com