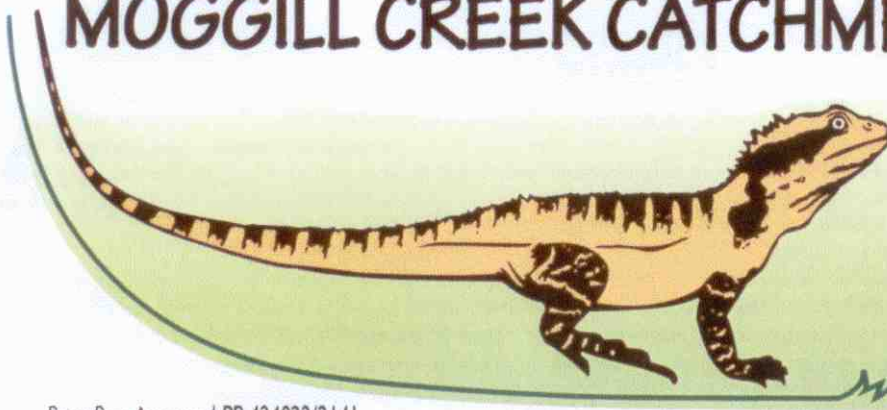


# MOGGILL CREEK CATCHMENT GROUP

www.moggillcreek.org.au



Print Post Approved PP 424022/2141

## NEWSLETTER

## WINTER 2013



▲ Approaching potting seedlings (see Kids' Day, p. 8)

Photo: Dale Borgelt



▲ Touching the turtle (see Kids' Day, p. 8)

Photo: Dale Borgelt



▲ Smith's Scrub (see p. 7)

Photo: Warren Hoey



▲ Lichens (see p. 8)

Photo: Dale Borgelt



◀ Display at Show (see p. 2)

Photo: Dale Borgelt

## Editorial

*The Chairman's report takes an honest look at our problems which demand serious attention. But we must not forget the good news which is mainly about getting vegetation under way and successful public relations activities. Over the last few months we have given out far more plants than average, and landholders are asking for and getting more advice than we had been able to give. Surely the numbers and extent of native species are going ahead.*

*As for public relations, we have a wide range of activities which lead to an ongoing increase in membership and fairly certainly a wider general community awareness and understanding of what we are on about. A striking example of this is Kid's Day at the Cottage, a brief report on this appearing elsewhere here. There is an attendance beyond our members, and particularly important are the children who, soon enough, will be the adults who determine what happens. Among the many activities on the day is the display of native animals which are discussed in relation to their environmental requirements, which connects directly with our program of restoring our environment. We don't breed and distribute animals!*

*It is difficult for us not to admire the current luxuriant vegetation on both private and public land. Let us enjoy it as it is, knowing full well what can happen following weather change. We who are involved in management of vegetation are less impressed than those who are not, because weeds are contributors to the lush growth.*

*We depend on volunteers in what we do. Most of them are conspicuous but just a few are not. There are two very important people involved in the production of our newsletter. The process reminds me of the ugly duckling fable. The editor manages to scratch together material which might be useful if subsequently processed well enough. This goes to Margaret Hastie who formats it and then on to the printer, John Gower. What you receive in your mailbox is something of which we are very proud. Our thanks to them.*

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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## Our Bigger Space at the Brookfield Show

We doubled the size of our tent space at the Brookfield Show this year and it was better all round- better for display, better for interested visitors, better for volunteers. (Photo p1)

Displays featured recent years' Newsletter front pages and articles, and the ongoing projects at Pacey Road and Smith's Scrub. Attention was also drawn to Kids' Day at the Cottage and our Annual Photography Competition which is to be held in October this year. And there was still room for the popular native plants from our Nursery. Many visitors appreciated our display over the three days.

*Dale Borgelt*

## Chairman's Report

The second period of heavy flow in our creeks in March did more damage to recent plantings and established vegetation. Extreme flows will remove even the most stubborn and flexible plants and we seem to have had a fair dose of these events in recent times. I overheard a comment that our creeks were becoming more like drains rather than waterways.

Since my childhood in this area, the upper reaches of McKay Brook have gone from a series of water holes interconnected by a small stream bed to one resembling a deep channel. The heavy flows carve out the easiest path removing tonnes of rocks and soil and any attached vegetation. What is happening? There are certainly more impervious surfaces as new houses and roads have been built thus redirecting water that would otherwise penetrate the soil. Whatever the causes, I am unable to regard our waterways as simply drains, although that is one function of a waterway. Perhaps with higher flows we need to get a bit smarter with our plantings.

There are engineering solutions for drains that run the risk of downplaying the ecological role of a waterway in a peri-urban environment. Unfortunately we hear of too many examples where creeks are treated as if they were just drains in removing unwanted liquid refuse. One of the distinguishing features of the Moggill Creek Catchment is the relatively sound state of many of our waterways albeit with many challenges to the riparian ecosystem. It is our collective business to identify and deal with those challenges.

As many would know, vine weeds are a particularly serious problem in parts of the catchment and a serious threat to a much greater area. Your committee has spent some time planning how best to address the problem at a catchment level. Considerable work has been done and is still being done at various sites. However, without a catchment perspective, we risk not using our resources to best effect. This requires that we work as closely as possible with all levels of Government and the BCC in particular. After initial discussions with them, at this point with a significant emphasis on Cat's Claw, we have identified a number of sites in Gold Creek and have secured funding from both State and Local Government to treat the infestations independently of whether they occur on public or private land. Gordon Grigg is leading this effort and working in conjunction with South East Qld Catchments and the BCC's Wildlife Conservation Partnerships program. This is a great example of working across an entire sub-catchment, identifying and treating the sites in a logical manner.

Since the last Newsletter, the Brisbane City Council has funded a number of projects under the Community Conservation Initiatives program. Two Habitat Brisbane Bushcare groups and more than 30 private landholders were successful. BCC has moved quickly to get the projects underway. This is a first for this model of funding and I look forward to seeing how effective it is.

*Warren Hoey*

## Bats - Best Pest Control Kept in Dark

In the fading light of dusk, you may occasionally notice tiny "birds" darting purposefully across the sky, while the flying foxes are dispersing from their roosts. These are not birds, but "microbats", tiny winged mammals and expert aerial interceptors.

Like the Night-Fighters of old, these microbats carry inbuilt "radar" known as echolocation. A microbat forms an exceptionally clear image of its environment by emitting high frequency noises and reading the echoes from objects with its superbly tuned ears. Using this "sound image", a microbat can track and capture an insect as small as a mosquito during high-speed flight. Just how much microbats contribute to the control of pest insects has only recently become appreciated. In the space of one hour, a single microbat can consume up to 1200 insects, including disease-carrying mosquitoes and agricultural pests such as fruit flies.

As the night glides on, the flying foxes have not descended in apocalyptic hordes onto defenseless orchards, but rather have dispersed into groups of less than a dozen to feed on native fruits and blossoms as far as 50km from their roost. In the process, they have dispersed seeds from remnant rainforests further than any bird, and carried the pollen of our Eucalypts and vital Mangroves further than any bee dreamed possible. It is estimated that a single flying fox can disperse up to 60,000 seeds in one night, a staggering contribution to the regeneration of our beleaguered hardwood forests and rainforests, and increasing the availability of desperately needed habitat for our native fauna.

Now consider the Eucalypt: it has not invested precious energy in colourful flowers to lure birds and insects. No, instead it produces an abundance of near-white flowers, perfectly adapted beacons to catch the keen eye of the flying fox overhead. Indeed, on its delicate wings the flying fox carries the burden of securing an air-bridge between tracts of fragmented forest. Carrying pollen, tiny packets of genetic information, flying foxes provide Eucalypts with a means to maintaining the genetic diversity so essential for resilience in an ever-changing climate.

This happy mailman may be the only one bringing our beloved koalas any good news.

Surely our irrational fears and lack of understanding has gotten old, and better news is long overdue for our under-appreciated bats. So as you relax on the patio of an evening, with the microbats ardently keeping the mosquitoes at bay, take the time to consider the humble flying fox, and the little rays of sunshine it will spread on the darkest night.

*Neil Murphy*

*(This article was originally published in The Western Echo and used here with their and the author's permission.)*

## Learning as we go

At the entrance to our property in Herron Road, Pullenvale, is a medium sized Pandanus planted soon after we moved here over 40 years ago. It illustrates the fact that though we were interested in growing Australian native plants we were ignorant about planting species appropriate to the soil and climate. Owing to its hardiness we still can enjoy its presence unlike the many other natives we have planted from other areas of Australia and which have died. Once we understood the logic of planting low maintenance species native to the catchment area, the process of regeneration has become much easier, rewarding and enjoyable.

Our property was part of a dairy farm, so as much vegetation as possible had been cleared for grazing. Luckily some areas were not suitable. Stands of eucalypt have been left on the slopes, and the steeper western part is so rocky and covered with large boulders that little attempt had been made to clear it. With the absence of cows, lantana had free reign and covered much of the block along with huge climbing asparagus, Chinese elm and ochona among other weeds. We helped with the dispersal of weeds by planting Tipuana and Yellow Techoma!

Mown areas were established at the front of the block and around the house which is situated in the middle of the 2 hectares. Around it we planted the usual exotic species loved by Queenslanders. Jacarandas were planted along the driveway. In the adjacent lower lying area, Tipuana seedlings had established themselves. After 20 years both species had grown into large trees. These, we thought, provided a perfect canopy to start a rainforest garden. In this area, over the next 15 years, we planted native rainforest species. Again, we did not realize the importance of sourcing local species for the prosperity of the plants especially as it coincided with a period of drought.

In 2006 we heard of Land for Wildlife and became members. By 2010 we had also become members of MCCG. Getting on in life we realized if we didn't do something drastic about regenerating the rest of the property we would soon be too old to do so. We needed help and this came in the form of Damien Egan who has been invaluable. Our first plants from MCCG, LFW and those propagated ourselves are now well established. By planting the right plants in the right areas and initial TLC these plants have grown spectacularly in 2 to 3 years.

First we needed to get rid of the weeds which we did one area at a time by the recommended methods. We then planted a batch of 20 to 30 plants with similar requirements and different growing habits to gain the layered effect. We still regularly weed each area. Our method of planting is to fill the hole with water, let it drain, and after planting, give each plant a small dose of slow release fertilizer, a shower of soil wetting agent and seaweed mix, and then water the plant in well. Last year, Cody Hochen from LFW suggested adding water crystals to the hole before planting. This has been beneficial. Provided planting is done in the wetter months no further watering is required.

At the back of the property we cleared too much lantana at a time and as a result have a crop of cobbler's pegs a farmer would be proud of. Andrew Wilson has enthusiastically helped reduce their number and in the process has identified many local species of trees, herbs, grasses and vines. These could have been destroyed had we sprayed the area with herbicide. We should have continued the practice of weeding and establishing small planted areas at a time. However, we have had success in providing a quick canopy of native plants by broadcasting, in cleared areas, seeds stripped from plants such as Poison Peach and Kangaroo Apple. Another quick method of establishing plants is by collecting seed from Womat Berry, Scrambling Lily and the various Dianella species, placing them in a tooth pick dispensing container and dropping one or two seeds in the disturbed soil next to newly planted tube stock.

We are now confident that the regeneration process is on target and the maintenance of our property will provide enjoyment for the rest of our lives.

Carol Cox

## Some very similar twining species

There is no doubt that hand-weeding is the best way to go, although I do acknowledge that on larger areas it is not always a practical proposition. Having lived on my property for 48 years, imagine my surprise on finding a species that I had never seen before whilst hand-weeding. After looking around, I found several more plants of this strange plant, *Aristolochia meridionalis*, family Aristolochiaceae (see photo on p.5).

This species, when not in flower, is very similar to slender bindweed, *Polymeria calycina* (see photo on p.5), which is quite common on my area of eucalypt woodland. *Polymeria calycina* is a member of the family Convolvulaceae. Stems are prostrate, creeping or somewhat twining and leaves are alternate, 1-8 cm long, with a cordate base (strongly indented). Flowers are about 15 mm wide and are broadly bell-shaped with five pink or white petals. To add to my confusion, I had always thought this species was the native *Ipomoea plebeia*, bellvine, which has similarly shaped leaves and flowers, although the latter are white (see photo on p.5).

Coming back to my *Aristolochia meridionalis*, it also twines, and also has cordate alternate leaves up to 9 cm long and 5 cm wide, so perhaps I can be forgiven for not noticing it until it flowered, producing slender brownish, tubular flowers about 20 mm long. Evidently this species is also favoured by larvae of the Clearwing Swallowtail butterfly, spotted on one of my plants (see photo on p.5, thank you Dale for the ID).

Bryan Hacker



*Aristolochia meridionalis* (see Similar twining species p. 4)



▲ *Polymeria* (see A nice taxonomic distinction, p. 6)



▲ *Ipomoea* (see A nice taxonomic distinction, p. 6)



◀ Comparison of stigma (see A nice taxonomic distinction, p. 6)

Photos: Bryan Hacker

