

MOGGILL CREEK CATCHMENT GROUP

www.moggillcreek.org.au



Print Post Approved PP 100003123

NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2014



▲ Azure kingfisher (see Platypus and Kingfisher p. 8)

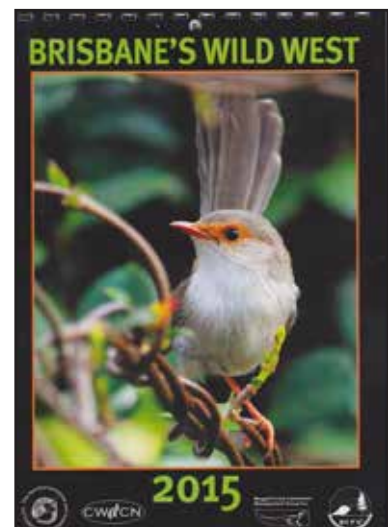


▲ Gympie Stinger (See p. 6)
Photo: Andrew Wilson



Tiny frog - much noise ▶
(See Editorial p. 2)
Photo: Andrew Wilson

Bush hen (see Invisible Rails p. 12)
Photo: Dale Borgelt



Calendar ▶
(See p. 11)

Editorial

This is a larger issue than usual, not a change of policy but partly increased need through having to discuss at some length the subject of compulsory weed eradication. Having gone beyond the usual eight pages there was then space to say more on what are interesting things or to provide some explanation to those who don't know much about MCCG and its activities.

What concerns your Editor is the extent to which we can encourage our members (and indeed anyone else who reads this) to appreciate the opportunity we have, living in this rural environment, to enjoy components of our biodiversity. We have more than a good address! What a pleasure it must have been for the person going down early to the creek to watch the platypus to discover its hunting companion. Merely giving a second glance at the bush revealed the wonderful flowering of so many plants this Spring. Anyone with a garden and some sedges growing near water would surely hear the noisy frogs. It's worth a close look. On page 1 is shown a sedge frog; a mere 25 mm (one inch) long, its extended air sac I find, on consulting an authority within our ranks, providing resonance. A beautiful little animal.

One of the many things we do is give advice to members working on restoration of their environment. Some of this is done via our few people capable of doing so, some through literature and perhaps our website which is being substantially revised. At the same time, our members engaged in field work think of or observe things which may well be useful to others. This newsletter provides the opportunity for passing it on quickly. There are a few articles along those lines here and we invite others to contribute. After all, we are in this together, learning as we go.

Moggill Creek Catchment Group is a volunteer action group aiming to conserve and improve the natural environment of its catchment on both private and public land.

Chairman: Warren Hoey
Secretary: Cathi Mortimer

Correspondence to be addressed to the Secretary at:
P.O. Box 657, Kenmore 4069
E-mail: mccgsecretary@live.com.au

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

Editor: Graeme Wilson, Ph. 3374 1218
Email: zzzgrw@bigpond.com
Formatting: Margaret Hastie
Printing: John Gower
Website: www.moggillcreek.org

Proudly supported by Brisbane City Council



Dedicated to a better Brisbane

Deer oh Deer

We are the custodians, in Pullenvale, of a magnificent forest of Chinese elms interspersed with pockets of remnant dry rainforest species. The forest with its complete canopy in summer is a great refuge for the local deer, although they can be found in the forest throughout the year. They make good use of the trunks of juvenile Chinese elms, particularly during their rutting season in autumn. Over the last year or so we have been looking at trying to tip the balance to give the remaining native plants and seedlings a better chance of survival, with the hope of eventually replacing the elms in the long term. Previous efforts at removing juvenile elms in close vicinity to the native plants resulted in deer refocussing their attentions on the native plants. In an effort to overcome this I have tried cutting the elms back above the height where deer damage is evident and poisoning plants at this cut. Although the kill rate may not be as high as nearer their roots, I think it may have prevented some unwanted attention on natives.

Catriona McElnea

Chairman's Report

Another successful Photography Competition has come and gone. Geoff Lawrence, Robyn Frost, Cathie Lawrence, Dale Borgelt, Jocelyn Henry, Margaret Whyte, Bruce Siemon and our judge, Dr Joseph McDowall have done another very professional job in putting this event together. Andrew Wilson also performed the critical task of screening all photo entries for accuracy of titles and correctness of entry to categories. My sincere thanks to all of these people.

The competition was on show at the Kenmore Village shopping centre from the 18th October until the prize presentation ceremony on the 24th. In that time almost 500 people were interested enough to vote for the people's choice. See the article on page 5.

In my last report I mentioned a little about the Rafting Ground Restoration Project being led by Malcolm Frost. This project is part of the \$2.1M Brisbane wide What's your nature? urban waterway restoration initiative, funded by SEQ Catchments through the Australian Government.

The initial work has now commenced. In the lead up to the project, Malcolm has researched earlier botanical surveys to ensure that species indigenous to the area will be retained. Andrew Wilson and Bryan Hacker have also provided invaluable assistance in this regard.

He also took advice from Roger Jaensch, an ornithologist who is an expert on waterbirds and has been studying a community of rails in the area. These secretive birds inhabit riparian zones and require a low and dense cover in their territory. Pairs of birds appear to remain in the same territory from one year to the next. Therefore retaining habitat while removing exotic weeds requires a careful approach.

In October the contractors began the work of selective weeding in the first section immediately downstream from the footbridge. Over the next few months, weeding will continue. Replanting with native species will be delayed until we have had some rain. The contractors are also treating a small but dangerous infestation of Cat's Claw (*Dolichandra unguis-cati*) and removing some of the Chinese elm (*Celtis sinensis*). This is a long term project (aren't they all?) and one objective is to get the local community involved, perhaps even forming a Bushcare group at some future point.

Warren Hoey

A native that looks like Rhodes grass

In our autumn issue of 2010 we published an article on Rhodes grass, *Chloris gayana*, a valued pasture species from Africa but also an invasive grass that can be a problem in our revegetation work.

Many of our native grass species are members of genera that have a distribution through much of the Old-World tropics, and this is true of *Chloris*. Six species of this genus are native to southern Queensland, the commonest of which in our Catchment is tall chloris, *C. ventricosa*. *Chloris* species are readily recognized by their flower heads which have a number of spikes arising from the top of the flowering stem (culm). These spikes have closely arranged spikelets on the underside, each with a short awn (bristle) at the tip of each floret (see drawing of tall chloris and Rhodes grass spikelets on p. 9). Common genera which lack these short awns are *Digitaria* (e.g. summer grass, blue couch) and *Cynodon* (e.g. green couch).

Tall chloris is a more delicate grass than Rhodes grass, with narrower leaf blades and limp flower head spikes, as shown below and in the photo on p. 9. For comparison, the flower head of Rhodes grass is shown on the same page. There are also small differences in the spikelets, as shown in the two spikelet drawings and the table below.

	Tall chloris	Rhodes grass
Stolons	Slender, tending to be short	Robust, often extended
Leaf blade width (mm)	2-3	5-10
Fertile lemma	Embracing second floret	Not embracing second floret
Hairs on margin of lower lemma	Absent	Present
Flower head spikes	2-15, limp	6-15, stiff

Tall chloris occurs naturally on my ridge-top property and is extremely well adapted to poor soils in eucalypt woodlands. Given a chance to flower and seed, it spreads naturally in the understorey providing there is not too much competition from exotic grasses. It establishes readily with minimal care when planted from tubestock unless conditions are very dry. However, care should be taken to reduce impact of exotic grasses such as signal grass and green panic.

We usually have plants of tall chloris at our Nursery, so if your property has infertile soils, it is worth giving it a go.

Bryan Hacker

Photography Competition: Can you help?

Our annual photography competition has had another successful year: over 200 entries (including a pleasing number of new entries from older students), 13 new members joined at the display stand, many hundreds of votes were cast for the People's Choice category, and we had an entry from a school new to the competition (Kenmore State School). The quality of the pictures was again very high and the pictures enthralling –particularly the large number taken by the younger members of the catchment.

The prize presentation was very well-attended. Cr Margaret De Wit and Dr Bruce Flegg MP both spoke in praise of the work of the catchment group, and joined with other sponsors to present over \$1,500 in cash prizes. Warren Hoey, MCCG Chairman, congratulated all of the winners and thanked the many local sponsors: Halfway Tree Photography, Brookfield Produce & Pet Pavilion, Dr Bruce Flegg MP, Ingredients Deli, Kenmore Shopping Village, The Local Bulletin, Moggill Constructions, The Pet Chalet, Water Solutions, Steve Parish, Cr Margaret de Wit, Westside Printing, and Workout Indooroopilly.

The photography committee is putting an early call out for help for the 2015 competition. We are looking in particular for:

- **Parents & teachers:** The Schools competition has great prizes—a chance to win the Lord Mayor's Perpetual Shield and a cash prize for library resources (local schools won \$350 this year). We would love to hear from members who might be able to act as our 'contact' for individual schools in the area—perhaps grandparents or parents who would be happy to promote the competition to 'their' school?
- **New category sponsors:** We have had some very long-standing sponsors but have ideas for two sections which may need sponsorship from 2015. We would love to hear from any local businesses that would like to be involved.
- **Committee support:** Succession planning is always important in volunteer groups. We'd love to hear from members who might like to learn more about the organising process and join the committee with a view to taking on more responsibility in future years.

Geoff Lawrence (photography competition chairman) on behalf of the wonderful committee members (Bruce, Dale, Jocelyn, Margaret, and Robyn).

Competition results

WINNERS in OPEN CATEGORIES:

OP1 Native Plants *Sponsored by Indooroopilly Workout*

1st **Tony Watts** - Dianella 2nd **John May** - King Orchid 3rd **Anthony Robinson** - A new beginning

OP2 Native Wildlife *Sponsored by Water Solutions*

1st **Tony Watts** - Green Tree Snake 2nd **Roz Zito** - Noisy Miners Rule OK 3rd **Anthony Robinson** - Majestic moment

OP3 People In Their Catchment *Sponsored by Moggill Construction*

1st **Anne Russell** - Walking Gold Creek Environment 2nd **Rosemary Pollock** - Take a look at this
3rd **John May** - Afternoon Stroll

PC People's Choice *Sponsored by The Pet Chalet* as voted by the public

1st **Brian Krieger** - Joey 2nd **Prue Cooper-White** -Tawny Frogmouth 3rd **Thomas Magree** Frog on a lily pad

SCHOOLS COMPETITION LORD MAYOR'S SHIELD WINNER: Kenmore South State School

Photos on the facing page show the winners (first place) in all categories; the Chairman (Warren Hoey) congratulating Brian Krieger, winner of the popular choice with Joey, the obvious one in the previous; and numerous entries from high school students, a pleasing change from previous Competitions when entries in that category were few.

Ticks

Yes, they're still here. It's almost impossible to go into the bush without picking up some. We keep receiving instructions for their removal, which almost invariably are inconvenient and leave unpleasant consequences.

This is to remind you of an article in our Summer 2011 issue, "Aerostart for ticks", the use of which reliably avoids problems. Past Newsletters are on our website.

PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION



◀ Winning entries

▼ High School Entries



◀ A Presentation

Bushcare (See MCG Section 7 Bushcare p. 12)



Bushcare after



Bushcare before

Another revegetator

I found a tree that looked strange to me. Unusual. One that I had not noticed before. It was about 3-4 metres high with a wide spread of branches, very few leaves and small round fruit. I found out later, after taking a cutting to a neighbour to be identified, that it was a female *Ficus opposita*. I was told “we need more local trees like this, we must get the fruit for seed.” I realised that I had not been at this spot, at this time of the year, and with so few leaves and so much fruit showing it stood out and so caught my attention.

I have been a member of Moggill Creek Catchment for a number of years. They got me started. A display at the Brookfield Show or at Kenmore Village. I can not quite remember. They have supplied me with plants, advice and friendship. I have not given them much in return. To be able to supply them with some seeds to germinate is a pleasure.

To make a new discovery gives an incentive to go on. To do a bit more. To clear more grass (Green Panic; *Panicum maximum*) from around the young naturally regenerated trees. To give them a chance, to see them grow straight and tall. When the Green Panic dries off, the weight of the dry grass smothers or even bends the small trees that have managed to germinate. It is bane of my life. In a previous life our block was a horse paddock, sown with Green Panic for fodder. The block has done well with natural regeneration since the horses were removed in 2010, but not enough diversity said Land ForWildlife. Quite true. I would say 80% of the regeneration is *Mallotus* (Kamala); a small percentage of woody weeds such as Guava and more Guava; Chinese Elm; Lantana etc. The usual suspects. So hence the total clearing of Panic in “rooms’ and the planting of over 100 species suitable for this site, including many pioneers.

I “won” a grant from LFW, 1000 plants to diversify the trees on the property. Some help with whipper snipping to clear the “room” of Green Panic, spray the cut grass, and I asked for the contractor to use an auger to bore 300 holes at a time for the first lot of plants. I said that I would plant. Sounds easy. I got 300 tube stock at a time. I then repotted the 300 tubes into 125mm plastic pots and waited for them to develop more substantial roots and to sun harden. No. No. I hear you say. Tubes do best. Maybe lower down the hill, but water is the problem here. I have been planting in a haphazard way on our block for many years with tube stock, without a lot of success. Many trials and a lot of errors. The problem is the site. On Haven Rd., top of the ridge. Good chocolate soil but very steep slopes. No water table here. The only water they get is what I give them.

So I have developed my own way of planting, The augered holes need to be cleaned out before planting. The soil falls back into the hole when it is first dug. It may be some time before I get around to using that hole. When I am clearing it out I get a chance to score the sides. I end up with a hole about 30cm deep. I plant deep and am left with a “lip’ of about 15cm. I then fertilize and fill the remaining space in the hole with sugar cane mulch. I am planting into a” bucket”. I get the plant well down below the soil level into cooler subsoil and am able to give the tree a good water that I know will go down to its roots and not just drain away down the slope it is planted on. I have found that they do well and I do not have to water so often. My next problem as they grow, young and fresh, is to keep them from being eaten by our newly discovered Eastern Grey Kangaroos. We can only persist and hope for the best. To keep trying to bring back the bush.

Merrilee Ziolkowski

The Stingers

Three species of *Dendrocnide*, the stingers, are known to us. They have hairs which penetrate our skin and if broken, release irritating liquid. One, *D.photinophylla*, the shiny-leaved stinger, a medium sized tree, is common in our catchment. There is one close to the entrance gate to the nursery compound. It is the least irritating of the three although unpleasant enough if contact is made.

The giant stinger, *D.excelsa*, widely known but erroneously as the Gympie stinger, is a large tree common in wet rainforest and therefore can be found in the north west of our catchment where we meet Mt. Nebo.

The third, the real Gympie stinger, *D.morodies*, is not recorded by us as belonging in our catchment’s vegetation but is listed elsewhere as occurring from northern NSW up the coast to north Qld. One of our landholders has a specimen which he grew from seed given to him by someone who can’t recall where he got it. It is possible that it occurs here but so rarely that it has not been seen by someone who would recognize it or collect a specimen for identification. This is an important matter because it is regarded as the world’s most severe stinging plant. (This is an honour Australians can add to having the most venomous snake and several spiders.) Unlike the two previous, it is a shrub, less than 2m high. The photograph on p.1 shows the fruit of the one growing here. (Actually what you see is the swollen fruit stalk, carrying at its tip the tiny single-seeded dry fruit.) The abundant stinging hairs are seen along the stalks. The fruit look so succulent that someone seeing them would be tempted to taste one. If he touched them, he may suffer for months.

If you see one which you think is it, please tell us.

Graeme Wilson

Tipping the Balance

Following on from previous articles regarding how we might approach the management of weeds, mention should be made of the benefits of simply cutting off stems. No doubt we all do this from time to time which as a strategy lends itself to bushland areas already containing some canopy and understory of local plants.

I am of the belief that healthy undisturbed vegetation appropriate to the site is reasonably resistant to being infiltrated by many weeds, its weakness being predominately on the edges where light and disturbance give them the upper hand.

Weeds within an area of established vegetation are simply occupying available space which might have been occupied by native species and while they are aggressively competitive they are also contributing beneficially in the same way native plants would be; adding to the biodiversity, providing food and habitat, producing organic matter, protecting and improving the soil through cover and root systems and helping to moderate soil temperature, to name a few.

The problem of competition is dealt with the instant you cut the stem of your target plant. It is no longer extracting significant amounts of water and nutrient from the soil, the foliage quickly falls providing valuable organic matter, light may return to the canopy and you may have eliminated the production of seed for up to twelve months. Admittedly this is only a short term solution but it requires little more than a casual walk in the bush and a pair of secateurs. At the same time the desirable aspects of having a living plant occupy that space are retained and there are no undesirable side effects, eg. herbicidal or disturbance.

While it is highly unlikely that repeated cutting would ever kill a woody weed its vigour will be reduced. All plants rely on photosynthesis to grow and store energy, a process they find difficult without leaves. Their ability to regrow after being cut is due largely to reserves stored in their roots and stems. If a plant is repeatedly forced to call on these reserves with little opportunity for renewed photosynthesis, it will be significantly weakened over time. Climbing asparagus for example, after being cut, relies almost entirely on energy reserves to push its spears high into the canopy before producing leaves. Regular cutting with attention to timing may be quite effective; i.e. cutting at a point of maximum drain on reserves and minimal allowance for photosynthesis to occur. Combine this with a good drought (not hard to arrange) and hopefully the increased size and dominance of our existing native vegetation we may well begin to show a change in balance.

It is intended here that consideration be given to this as an option when appropriate, often in combination with other methods and as might be compatible with your personal situation. The simplicity of this approach along with little or no negative impacts should ensure that it at least plays a minor role.

Species not compatible with this approach include Cats Claw, Madeira vine, those that grow readily from leaves or stems and prostrate plants rooting regularly from the stems.

Andrew Wilson

It is Time to Renew

2015 MCCG memberships are now due. It 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.

Note it includes *private* land. Members working on their own bit of land make a valuable contribution to the catchment environment - especially if they are using the membership advantages of **FREE** advice, information, and tube stock native plants relevant to the area. In this year alone, members received 12,000 of these free plants from our volunteer Nursery.

Members are offered 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. Space limits these popular Talks at the Cottage to members only.

We do have many events and activities that are not limited to members. For example: *Kids' Day at the Cottage* in May, *Annual Photography Competition* in October, *Creek Health Monitoring Program*, *Platypus Survey* and *public meetings* in Brookfield Hall. The advantage of membership is that you know about these events and activities and are invited to participate.

Members receive our popular quarterly Newsletter, with its nice mix of news and technical info. We hope that you think it is worth renewing your annual \$20 per person membership for 2015.

A Membership Renewal form is enclosed with this Newsletter for current members.

(People wishing to join for the first time need to obtain and fill out a New Member application form and send to: The Secretary, MCCG, PO Box 657, Kenmore, QLD 4069. Application forms can be downloaded from our website www.moggillcreek.org)

Dale Borgelt PR Officer

The Platypus and the Azure Kingfisher

On 31st August at 05.45 I was sitting by a pool on Moggill Creek watching a Platypus when I noticed I wasn't the only one observing it. The brilliant colours of an Azure Kingfisher *Alcedo azurea* (photo p 1) appeared on a low branch just above the Platypus. The Platypus dived and emerged a few metres downstream and the Kingfisher followed, perching on a branch directly above it. This shadowing of the Platypus continued for about 15 minutes. I did not see the Kingfisher dive into the water but it was obvious it was waiting for the Platypus to disturb something in the water that it could catch for food.

This behaviour has been reported twice before. In 1991, at Eungella National Park, a pair of Azure Kingfishers was watched, following a foraging Platypus for 50 minutes. A year later Scott Burnett reported seeing a Platypus foraging along Rifle Creek, Mt Molloy and a kingfisher perched above it. Small shrimps were jumping out of the water in front of the foraging Platypus. The kingfisher swooped into the water after them but it did not appear to catch anything. He observed this contact for about 15 minutes.

Contact between platypuses and other bird species have also been described. In July 1998, Ian McMahon and Andrew Thelander reported interaction between a Dusky Moorhen (*Gallinula tenebrosa*) and two Platypuses on Three Moon Creek near Cania Gorge. One Platypus was feeding by making short, vigorous dives in quick succession, and in rapidly changing directions. The Moorhen followed the feeding Platypus closely for five minutes, even occasionally brushing against it, and was seen to peck at matter which came to the surface of the disturbed water.

In April 2011, at Sharp Park near Canungra, a Platypus and a Little-black Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*) were seen feeding together. When on the surface, they were side by side, with their bodies touching. The cormorant gently pecked the platypus on the tail and repeatedly ducked its head under the water next to the Platypus's head as if encouraging the Platypus to dive. They dived under water together and when they were on the surface at the same time, the Cormorant immediately swam to the Platypus, never the other way around. Both animals were feeding successfully as they always had food in their mouths. Other sightings of Platypuses and Cormorants have been reported from Eungella National Park and at Running Creek, near Rathdowney. Always, the same relationship is described, of the Cormorant actively "encouraging" the Platypus to dive.

In all these cases of birds interacting with Platypuses, it is obviously beneficial to the birds and very unlikely that the Platypus gains anything except a pecked tail. This is known as commensal feeding when the activity is beneficial to one participant and is neither beneficial nor detrimental to the other.

Dawn Beck

What is a Weed?

"What is a weed? A plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered". Ralph Waldo Emerson, late 1800s

Emerson was closer to something truthful than anyone could have understood on the basis of biological knowledge at that time. However I am not concerned here with predictions but facts of the past and present. A widespread understanding is that a weed is a plant growing where it is not wanted. Some confusion arises from many species being legally defined as weeds irrespective of where they occur. Over and above this, many landholders regard various species as weeds which should be removed for reasons which do not necessarily fit in with our (MCCG's) objectives. I write here as a MCCG landholder with plenty of weed species, having to decide what action to take, and discuss two species.

Most of us are working on land which had been substantially cleared in timber felling, followed by cultivation or grazing. Something over 50 years ago these activities ceased and in many cases the land was quickly overtaken by lantana. That is a species to which (nation-wide) a huge amount of expenditure, survey, labour, research, publication and search for a bio control were directed. Whatever that did for the country, it didn't do anything for us here. Meanwhile, the lantana was working wonders for us. Its extensive root systems, contribution of litter and hindrance to water runoff and thus surface erosion, improved fertility greatly. (Into the bargain it reduced the incursion of new exotic weeds and provided a habitat for much wildlife. And as a bonus, when we did want to clear some in the course of replacement by natives, that was easy.)

My other example is signal grass (*Urochloa decumbens*) which had been introduced far more recently as a grazing species. Like lantana, it is widely adapted to sites and has established quickly on open areas. We have here dense, pure stands of it, excluding entry of other species and forming a deep layer of dead and decaying leaf. Again, it has been highly beneficial in recovery of soil fertility. The last thing we would think of would be removal just because it is there, and are intruding into it only as we extend our area of manageable native vegetation.

The moral of all this is that if you have something known as a weed, do not think first of your spray can of herbicide or phoning someone advertising that he "clears rubbish". Rather, discuss it with someone familiar with our objectives and methods.

Graeme Wilson

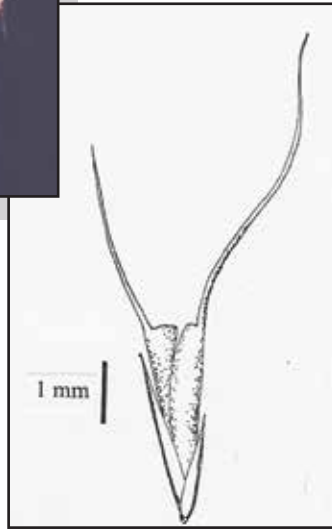


▲ Flower head Tall Chloris grass

► Flower head Rhodes grass

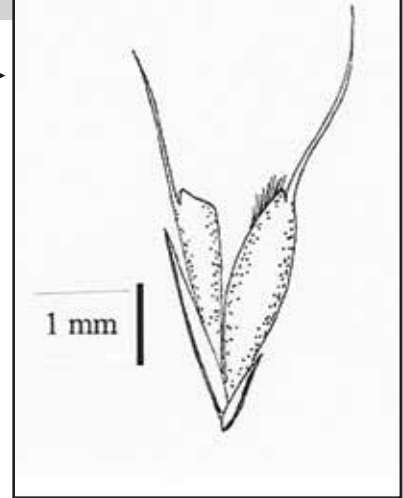


► Spikelet Rhodes grass



► Spikelet Tall Chloris grass

(see p. 3)
Photos: Bryan Hacker



▲ *Flindersia australis* (See p. 11 Looked in the bush)
Photo: Andrew Wilson



▲ *Flindersia australis* (See p. 11 Looked in the bush) Photo: Andrew Wilson



► BCC programs started here (see p. 11)

Weed Eradication Notices

Over the years, some of us would have received an Eradication Notice to remove certain weeds that Brisbane City Council (BCC) weed/pest inspectors had identified on our property. You may have wondered how this came about. In the end you either got on with the job of removing the weeds yourself or employed a professional to do the task on your behalf. If you are a member of a catchment group, you may have called on their professional advice. However, not everyone is necessarily able to respond in this manner, some are intimidated and occasionally avoidable problems crop up.

The Eradication Notices are very detailed, legalistic and set out short timelines and penalties for non-compliance. We think there is a case to approach the issue of weed control and eradication in a more constructive way.

The Queensland Government's Land Protection Act (2002) (the Act) and the BCC's own Natural Assets Local Law (2003) provides the legal framework to manage the presence of defined pest species of plants and animals. Local governments are accountable to the State for performing their responsibilities under the Act.

The Act prescribes the mandatory responsibilities of landowners if they have declared weeds on their properties. You can read more at www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/.../brisbane-invasive-species-management-plan.

Recently, we had occasion to write to Cr de Wit and Cr Bourke (Chair of the BCC Environment, Parks and Sustainability Committee) regarding an unfortunate instance with a landowner. Our files demonstrate that we have raised similar issues in the past. We were subsequently invited to a meeting with officers from BCC's Compliance and Regulatory Services to discuss these issues.

Even though BCC has modified the written notices in recent years to be less confrontational and more helpful, we believe improvements can still be made so that the entire message is less threatening and can be easily understood by everyone. The notice should stress the willingness of Inspectors to come out and walk through the property with the landowner and discuss ways to meet the goal of controlling the weeds.

We were advised that while inspectors have the legal power to enter a property without the owner's permission, it is their current practice to attempt to contact each landowner before conducting an inspection. This is a step in the right direction but we think that more can be done to contact the landowner should the initial attempts fail.

Within BCC there are groups /programs such as Habitat Brisbane, Creek Catchment Officers, Wipe out Weeds, Land for Wildlife and Voluntary Conservation Agreements that are held in high regard because they work with the community to improve the environment. In contrast, the actions of Compliance and Regulatory staff can be counter-productive in achieving interest by landholders in long-term weed management.

An aggravating factor is the often unfettered growth of declared weeds on BCC land while adjacent landowners are issued eradication notices.

We were pleased to note that Compliance and Regulatory Services will take up Cr de Wit's offer to assist in the identification of potential hardship cases based on her local knowledge that might require assistance prior to the implementation of any future pest plant inspections.

In the meantime landowners should be aware that in our opinion someday they will be required to have a program to control a wide range of weeds on their property. Bulldozing and widespread spraying are not options as Council requires native species to be preserved. The best way to prepare for this is to start implementing a plan for weed control. One strategy that has proved very successful is for neighbours to band together to work on each others properties. Working together is more fun than working by yourself and the group can bring more knowledge and skills to bear on the problem. There is also the possibility that the group can gain grant support to help with weed removal and revegetation. The Moggill Creek Catchment Group would be interested in helping anybody who was interested in forming such a group.

The MCCG can assist members to identify the declared weeds on their property and to plan for their control. For particularly hard to control weeds such as Cats Claw we have been successfully applying for grants to control the weed on private properties even when the properties are not Land for Wildlife properties. Some of the bushcare groups that are jointly run by Habitat Brisbane and us have also been working with private landowners in their sections of the catchment to clear weeds. In the future we may work with the regulatory authorities or with other council sections to provide training in weed control and the safe use of herbicides.

In an ideal world it would be nice to coordinate our activities with the activities of the regulatory authorities. In this ideal world weed eradication notices would only be sent out after attempts to gain the cooperation of landowners had failed. In addition the very few that would be sent out would be in those areas where the other landowners are doing their best to control the weeds on their properties and where we are able to offer help either through our grant getting efforts or by the provision of labour in hardship cases. Currently we are far removed from this ideal world and before we contemplate any further cooperation with the regulatory authorities we would like to hear from our members about this issue.

Warren Hoey and Mike Humphreys

MCCG Programs

The great majority of our members do not understand the activities with which we are concerned. It would be helpful to us and of value of some members who are not at present associated with what we do, to understand things. This is written to that end.

First, a distinction is made between Programs and Projects. I am concerned here only with Programs which are arrangements with Brisbane City Council (BCC). They are open-ended, i.e. with no stated termination dates. Projects are, on the other hand, limited term activities, usually funded from external sources, designed to achieve particular results. There are many of them on the go at any one time, and often conspicuous, but please see them for what they are, and though valuable contributions to MCCG's objectives they are not our Programs. I identify four Programs.

Two of these are agreements between BCC and individual landholders. Voluntary Conservation Agreements (VCA) followed from a Council approach in 1986 to five landholders in Greater Brisbane who were, as private initiatives, engaged in restoration, and appeared to have sufficient knowledge and resources to be able to continue usefully. While it did not appear to be stated at the time, the understanding by the participants was that they were aiming at the restoration of biodiversity, not simply the improvement of native vegetation. There are now 56 VCAs in Brisbane. The other is Land For Wildlife (LFW) which started in Victoria about 25 years ago, has moved around Australia and is implemented here by BCC. It is a less exacting version of VCA. Council enters in to agreements with approved landholders to carry out significant improvement of native vegetation such as will enhance habitat value for some animals. It does not aim at biodiversity although there is probably some encouragement to participants to think along those lines. Council has a number of LFW officers who interact strongly with participants, providing advice and plants. There are two categories of LFW. The first are those where sufficient approved vegetation exists, the other where work is being undertaken towards that end; in total, 636 members.

The Program Bushcare addresses not private but public land. It did not originally operate under this name as is described in an associated article. MCCG divided our catchment in to 13 Sections, each to form a group of residents, both MCCG members and anyone else who cares to join. Each would have a leader who would normally be from MCCG with some knowledge of the task. Unfortunately, this is not so for all sites, but groups at some others are very active. Rather than describe activity here, I arranged with the leader of one to write elsewhere in this issue about his group; see Group 7 Bushcare, p 12

I regard MCCG as one of the four Programs. It was formed after VCA but before Bushcare and LFW. Its stated objective is the conservation and improvement of the natural environment of our catchment on both public and private land. Clearly this overlaps the activities of the three discussed and it does cooperate with them in any ways it can. In the long term, private land is the main target because it can give us the large area of restored land which is necessary to justify our area overall being suitable for setting aside in perpetuity as approximately original biodiversity. It interacts strongly with the other three Programs which fall within its objectives. Our main hands-on activity is independent of the other three, dealing directly with the landholders, giving them free plants from our nursery and advice. It is publicly conspicuous through substantial PR activity and arrangement of talks, displays etc. It has a headquarters building, The Cottage, at the top of Gold Creek Rd. You are invited to go to our website www.moggillcreek.org.au for a comprehensive account of who we are, what we do, etc.

Graeme Wilson

Looked in the bush lately?

Our plant species are not consistent in flowering; in time of year, and whether one plant flowers well, sparsely or not at all in any year. Just now (early October) some of the flindersias are putting on a spectacular show, especially *F. australis* and *F. collina*. There are photos of each on p 9. Other species too, including silky oak (*Grevillea robusta*) and *Eucalyptus torrelliana* have been flowering in a way we have never seen before. Why? To have seen these displays in the field was a nice alternative to watching TV, with fresh air thrown in!

Brisbane's Wild West Calendar

Brisbane's Wild West Calendars are now available (see cover photo on p. 1). They have been produced jointly by THECA (The Hut Environmental and Community Association Inc.), Cubberla - Witton Catchments Group Inc, MCCG and Rural Environment Planning Association. There are some great pictures (at least one taken by an MCCG member) which we hope you will enjoy. A perfect Christmas gift especially for those living away from our district.

Cost \$12.50. Enquiries Bryan Hacker, 3374 1468, jbhacker@powerup.com.au.

MCCG Section 7, Bushcare

During 1998, shortly after the MCCG got going in 1997, it was decided to divide the catchment into 'manageable' sections and seek volunteers to recruit residents to form groups that would meet regularly to carry out clearance of weeds, planting of native species and ongoing maintenance. We have been functional now for 17 years and, like some other MCCG Sections, subsequently became one of BCC's Habitat Brisbane Bushcare Groups, so we are now an MCCG Section supported by Habitat Brisbane as the Upper Gold Creek Bushcare Group. HB can provide support only for work on public land, but that was not a disadvantage initially, because our early focus was on the land adjoining Gold Creek Road and the creek crossings. More recently our focus has shifted to work on private land, particularly on infestations of Cats Claw vine, in support of the MCCG push to control CC in our catchment. Interestingly, BCC too has started to fund work on private land through their Land for Wildlife programme, recognising that weed infestations have to be attacked where they are, regardless of land tenure.

That all sounds pretty boring doesn't it. But Gold Creek Road and its creek crossings look very different now from how it all looked in 1998. There is no sea of lantana, no trees are struggling under smothering vines, and there are hundreds of additional native trees and shrubs. Photos on p5 are before and after at one site. (The ironbark at the left positions the photos.)

We typically get 8-10 people to working bees, on the third Sunday morning every month except December (Xmas party) and January (too hot mate). We work for two hours and then have morning tea. These are held at someone's house or at the MCCG Cottage and they usually last as long as the working bee, sometimes longer; there's always a lot of news to catch up on and discuss.

Sometimes on the morning of a working bee I think 'oh no, not another one', and I suspect I am not the only one. But of course I load up some tools and the big CWA-style aluminium teapot, Jan is buttering a date loaf for morning tea, Des will have loaded tools and herbicide bottles into his ute, and another working bee is soon underway.

Gordon Grigg

Editor's note: Every section leader tells me that they would like more people, and volunteers from outside the catchment will always be welcomed. Perhaps you'd like a tree change without moving? The MCCG website has a list of sections and their leaders.

Invisible Rails

At the August *Talk at the Cottage*, Kenmore-based ornithologist, Roger Jaensch, addressed MCCG members on the intriguing topic: "Tree-less weedy creeks have life". While considering our waterways and their birdlife in general, Roger's main focus was on 'invisible' crakes and other small rails and how to retain these biodiversity assets.

Through descriptions of habitat, and photos and videos of birds, the secret lives of the Pale-vented Bush-hen (photo p 1), Buff-banded Rail, Lewin's Rail and Spotless Crake were revealed. In the MCCG area, these four bird species often occur in the same creek-side sites.

Vocalisations seem especially important to these birds because typically they are hidden from each other, and us, in dense vegetation. Roger played their amazing range of calls, from the cacophony of the bush-hen to the half-dozen strange sounds, one like a galloping horse, made by Lewin's Rail.

In semi-natural sites such as tidal parts of Moggill Creek, the invisible rails inhabit dense beds of sedge or bulrush, with some river-lilies and mangrove seedlings. But for management purposes, stakeholders should be aware that rails commonly exist along waterways lacking tree cover and dominated by weeds. Dense, continuous, waist-high grass and associated weeds, covering moist soil or periodically inundated, seems to provide excellent habitat for rails, as well as a suite of other native birds.

As advocated in the BBC *Conservation Action Statement on Crakes and Rail^{oo}*, urban park managers, utilities providers and catchment groups should be aware of rail sites and factor this into their revegetation or development plans. Lewin's Rail is of special significance because it is listed as Near Threatened under the Nature Conservation Act 1992.

Through suggestions raised by Roger and discussion among members, some strategies for managing rail habitat were identified during the meeting. Raising awareness of this subject, and consultation and survey to ascertain the presence of rails before works are planned, are primary actions. Where weeds are to be removed and replaced with native plants, undertaking that in stages and retaining some core habitat that is weedy may prove effective. While waterway sites suited to Lewin's Rail might ideally be at least 50 m long and 20 m wide, totally under dense cover and close to similar habitat in order to optimise connectivity, smaller sites can be used by the rails if buffered by native vegetation. Dense and wide cover presumably helps rails survive predators, which are assumed to include cats and foxes.

The recommended guidelines have now been applied in MCCG's project at Rowena Park, Kenmore. Roger has met with the project coordinator and contractor and known rail sites are being quarantined from removal of cover. Further suggestions on how to sustain and enhance rail habitat in this catchment are most welcome!

Reference: http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/environment_and_waste_crakesandrails_new_d6.pdf