

MOGGILL CREEK CATCHMENT GROUP

www.moggillcreek.org.au



Print Post Approved PP 100003123

NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2015



▲ Blue triangle (See A Bit on Butterflies, p. 7)
Photo: Dale Borgelt

Bordered rustic (See A Bit on Butterflies, p. 7)
Photo: Dale Borgelt



▲ Butterfly eggs (See A Bit on Butterflies, p. 7)
Photo: Dale Borgelt



▲ Scolopia fruit (See A Bit on Butterflies, p. 7)
Photo: Dale Borgelt



Editorial

In spite of the large amount of activity in MCCG, arising largely from the Management Committee, there are perhaps only two persons with whom most of our members have had much personal contact. They are Dale Borgelt who arranges talks, displays, Kids' Day etc, and Bryan Hacker who advises landholders on their revegetation activities. Members have communications from the Secretary and Treasurer but don't see them. What we achieve however depends on many volunteers, and it is intended in this and future newsletters to identify some of them. The first is presented in this issue. (p. 8)

Another addition is something from leaders of Bush Care groups. That links up with the regular articles from landholders engaged in rehabilitation on their properties. In both cases, the general style of articles is likely to vary greatly among authors. The purpose is not particularly to give useful information to readers so much as to give them a look at what is happening; and not least to see that workers have developed interest and enjoyment in what they are doing. We hope that this will encourage others to participate.

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.

Website: www.moggillcreek.org

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Dedicated to a better Brisbane

MCCG honoured in Lord Mayor's awards

For some years Brisbane City Council has been celebrating Australia Day by making awards to volunteers in a number of categories throughout Brisbane. This year our Moggill Creek Catchment Group was the proud recipient of the Lord Mayor's Green Heart Award – Organisation. Awards were presented at the City Hall on the evening of 22 January and Malcolm Frost received the award on behalf of MCCG. In his opening message the Lord Mayor extended his gratitude to all winners and nominees, stating *"Your tireless work and dedication is greatly appreciated and I thank you all for making Brisbane an even better place to live in for us all."*

The nomination highlighted our large membership of 530 members, the very successful Kids Day at the Cottage in which participants learn about native wildlife, our regular platypus survey, regular water testing along our creek and engaging with local property owners to advise and assist them in rehabilitating their land.

Bryan Hacker

Erratum

In the previous (Summer) issue the captions on the two photographs at the bottom of p5, Before and After, have been erroneously interchanged.

Chairman's Report

My wife and I spent a few weeks in Europe over Xmas visiting family and friends and for the first time in my life had a cold, if not a white Xmas. The short daylength and the scarcely visible sun as it described a low arc across the southern sky played havoc with my sense of direction...by about 180 degrees I have to confess. It didn't have the same effect on my wife, but that's another story.

Coming back home with a fresh perspective, I was overcome by the intensity of the day light and its strong palette of greens. It was a wonderful feeling that was quickly translated into the urgent task of mowing and weeding. I am constantly surprised, although I shouldn't be, by the rapid turnaround in the growth of the vegetation caused by some well timed rainfall.

In December, we were very surprised to receive notification that our catchment group would be awarded a Lord Mayor's Green Heart Australia Day Award for an organisation. Malcolm Frost and Bryan Hacker received the award on behalf on the MCCG at a ceremony at City Hall on 22nd January. Gordon Grigg and I also attended the Australia Day citizenship ceremony on the 26th January at City Hall where the Lord Mayor congratulated the award winners in his speech. We are none the wiser about who nominated the MCCG for this award. For all of our hard working members who do so much to improve the local natural environment, well done!

There is a busy year ahead with our usual schedule of working bees, projects and special events such as the Kid's Day at the Cottage, the Brookfield Show and the Photography competition. Come along and get involved!

Warren Hoey

Lomandras – the great survivors

Many people think *Lomandra*, matrush, is a grass, but it is in a quite different family. In *Flora of South-eastern Queensland*, published in 1989, it was considered to be in the grass-tree family. Currently, different authorities place the genus in the family Asparagaceae, Laxmanniaceae or Lomandraceae. Why can't taxonomists agree, I ask? What is quite certain, though, is Lomandras are NOT grasses!

In South-East Queensland 11 species of *Lomandra* are recognized of which six are listed as occurring in our Catchment. By far the best known of these are *L. longifolia* and *L. hystrix*. Botanically, they are distinguished by the number of primary branches per inflorescence node – 4 in *L. hystrix*, 2 in *L. longifolia*. Particularly as seedlings, though, they may readily be distinguished by their leaf tips, sharply pointed in *L. hystrix*, blunt in *L. longifolia* (see photo on p. 5)

In our district *L. hystrix* occurs naturally only along creek beds whereas *L. longifolia* also occurs on hillsides. They grow as dense tussocks to a height of about 1.4m and are remarkably hardy, surviving unharmed after being under 2-4 m of water for a week or more. *L. longifolia* is also ideal for erosion control on steep slopes. Fortunately, they are easy to propagate, and 25.5% of the 13,800 seedlings supplied free to our members from our Nursery in 2014 were one or other of these species.

Plants of all *Lomandra* species are dioecious, that is, plants are either male or female. I have always thought that the female – seed-bearing – plants are much less frequent than the male, and this January I thought I would check this idea on plantings in the reveg area near the Brookfield Roundabout. The female plants, at best, are laden with fruit and clearly recognizable, whereas the male lack any sign of fruit (see photos on p.5). The following table shows the results:

	<i>Lomandra hystrix</i>	<i>Lomandra longifolia</i>
Total plants assessed	40	201
Number at or post flowering	32	124
%age of flowering plants female	28.1	43.5
%age of flowering plants male	71.9	56.5

The percentage of females in *L. hystrix* and *L. longifolia* of 28.1 and 43.5 was much higher than I expected. Moreover, at least half of the 43.5% in *L. longifolia* were plants with well-fruited flower-heads, with no possibility of error. Possible sources of error are that plants identified as male could have been females having shed their fruit, and that non-flowering plants might have included a different proportion of plants of one or other sex. It seems likely that in both species, males and females are approaching equal in number.

Bryan Hacker

Platypus Survey

The results of the annual platypus survey have previously been published here, that now being discontinued. They are now to be placed on our web site.

A Landholder's Experience

We came to Karana Downs two years ago, unfamiliar with Queensland's indigenous plants, and when we heard about the MCCG, jumped at the opportunity to join. Our two acres is situated on an uncompromising ridge, with thin topsoil over underlying rock. However it is redeemed by overlooking two gullies, one on either side of the house, which join below us, creating a small basin containing Singapore Daisy and Guinea grass. We also have beautiful eucalypts which tower high, providing some shade.

The visit by Bryan Hacker to identify what we had was our starting point. Poor Bryan. He kept his gentlemanly face when I said we were lucky, having some remnant bush on the property. He remained positive and encouraging despite identifying weed after weed - Siratro, leucaena, a giant climbing asparagus, Tipuana tipu, creeping lantana and tiny cacti springing up where some person had whipper-snipped the lot, aiding their spread. We laughed at my early naivety ... Remnant bush?

On the positive side, we had few horror plants such as ochra or rampant vines. Bryan gave us advice on how to tackle our weeds and a revegetation program. He recommended that we work on the leucaena first as it was starting to drop seed, then work on the others. We feel we have achieved a lot since that day. First we bagged the leucaena seeds, then cut back and poisoned the stumps. We kept their long branches to create horizontal contours across the slope, which served to trap falling leaves and mulch. The Singapore daisy was weeded and left to dry before becoming mulch. The tiny cacti were pulled out and bagged for the bin. All went well and we planted many tubes of plants from MCCG.

We loved the wildlife we saw - pheasant coucals, brush turkeys, bronze-wing pigeons, carpet pythons, tree snakes and a possum with a piggybacking baby - even blue wrens one day. The brush turkeys proved to be a problem. Some plants they dug out with their scratching, others they snipped with their beaks. As a result my planting technique was refined. When I plant tiny trees and shrubs I provide them with a 'cage' made from a length of bird wire joined by two cable-ties to make a cylinder. The 'cages' are secured by two tent pegs on either side. (photo on p5). I know it seems like over-kill, but seeing healthy little plants makes it worthwhile. One day I saw quick furtive action below our balcony. It was a rail darting through the shrubbery. Out came the bird book for identification. We were so excited. At night we sometimes hear that thrilling mournful cry of the brush curlews. We haven't seen them, or the whip bird that calls occasionally, but we know they are there. Perhaps by replacing weedy shrubs with indigenous vegetation these lovely birds will have a better quality habitat.

One of our major problems is the land's shallow layer of topsoil. It was bare soil on the ridge top when we arrived, with rock underneath. The existing shrubs struggled along, looking miserable. Mulch from the garden centre was good, but compacted and became water repellent. We prefer to recycle leaves, twigs and branches whenever we can, and the resulting leaf litter, interspersed with twigs, is very satisfactory. Moisture is retained in the ground and the roots stay cooler. Some of our half dead callistemons and melaleucas are beginning to improve. We use the weeds to work for us. Small leucaena become mulch, others are allowed to shade new plantings, with their tips pruned for mulch. We are cautious about tackling the guinea grass in the bottom of the basin. There are tunnels through it, made by coucals, turkeys, and possibly bandicoots. So far we are keeping sections of the tall grass, but I have planted in 'laneways' cut into them, using the slashed grass for mulch. As a result the new plantings have protection from excessive sun and wind, and moisture loss is minimised.

There have been a number of pleasant surprises. We have several native grasses. The stony ridge has lovely clumps of kangaroo grass, and we have found barbed-wire grass and black spear grass elsewhere. Also appearing are small herb-like plants, including Eremophila debilis, native glycine and desmodium, Lomandra multiflora, Chrysocephalum, and Hybanthus stellaroides ... All very exciting for us beginners when something new is spotted. The book "Mangroves to Mountains" has proved fantastic, helping with identification.

Our venture is small compared to other members' experiences, but it gives us much joy and satisfaction to see our plants growing and our 'habitat' becoming vastly more pleasant. We love that our environment has become better for us and the creatures who share it with us. We hope that perhaps people walking past might be inspired to grow indigenous plants and find beauty in local vegetation rather than fancy exotics. We are so grateful for the MCCG and the plants the volunteers grow for us. What a wonderful selection of plants to choose from, and what a great organisation the MCCG is. We now have a bamboo construction supporting butterfly vines, inspired by Dale. Last year we attended the 'Night Creatures' talk at the Brookfield Hall. We love going to the nursery and meeting Bryan, whose cheerful and enthusiastic help with plant selection is always a pleasure. We can't wait to see what the years ahead will bring and to watch our plantings grow. The photo on p5 shows promising vegetation.

Judy Dyson

A relevant quotation from the Book of Isaiah

Even around 700 BC urban/suburban development and land clearing seems to have been causing concerns! I came across this quotation from Isaiah Chapter 5, Verse 8 a while back – and thought it is still relevant to what many of us are trying to do in our Catchment!

*Woe unto them that join house to house,
that lay field to field
till there be no place, that they may be placed alone
in the midst of the earth!*

Bryan Hacker



▲ Bush hen nest (See A Special Nest, p. 7)
 Photo: David Edwards

▼ Plant guards, (See A Landholder's Experience, see p. 4)
 Photo: Judy Dyson



▲ Promising progress (See Landholders experience p. 4)
 Photo: Judy Dyson



L. Longifolia - female



L. Longifolia - male



Leaftips

Lomandras (see Lomandras - the great survivors, p 3)
 Photos: Bryan Hacker

Bushcare Section 2

Section 2 is just past Kenmore High School, taking in the area where the sewerage pumping station is. There is also a small park with a children's playground. The area is very flood prone and at times of heavy rain, fast flowing water rushes across it causing much erosion and damage to the vegetation. We have worked to plant this area to reduce this damage and enhance the park-like environment.

Our Section was able to secure some funding from BCC. In consultation with Cath Cleary – our Habitat worker – we decided to put down some matting so that we could plant an area near the creek. We hoped the matting would reduce the weed growth while the plants became established. When I went to check the work, the matting covered only half the area stipulated in the contract. Cath then organised for the work to be completed. This time, jute mesh matting was used and placed over a thick layer of mulch. While we had not planned for the different matting we decided that it would be interesting to see which type best suited our area.

We let the area settle for a while waiting for the rainy season. In planting out both areas, we found the jute matting was much easier to plant in than the jute mesh. This was because the layer of mulch under the mesh was far too deep to work with and we are now having to borrow an auger from BCC to dig holes for the plants. I noticed that the jute matting also had much less weeds growing through it. In the next month we should have both sections planted out so monitoring the progress of both areas will be done.

What we have learnt from this is the need to supervise what contractors are doing when working in our area. We have observed that they have on another project also put far too much mulch down before matting over the top. This makes it almost impossible to dig through the mulch and matting to plant effectively.

Judy Petroschovsky

Community Conservation Assistance in Moggill Creek Catchment

Brisbane City Council's Community Conservation Assistance Program (CCA) provides support and assistance to enable private landholders, individuals and community groups to play an important role in protecting and enhancing the biodiversity of Brisbane City.

CCA enables groups and individuals within Council's Community Conservation Partnerships program (CCPP) to undertake environmental restoration or rehabilitation work that deliver weed management outcomes. This includes the Habitat Brisbane Program, Catchment Groups and private landholders who are members of the Wildlife Conservation Partnerships Program (Land for Wildlife). The intent is to allow Council and community environment groups to collaboratively deliver projects within priority biodiversity areas that would otherwise be difficult for groups or individuals to undertake.

Since the program's launch in 2012, CCA has supported three rounds of funding and distributed up to \$600,000 each year to successful applicants across the three programs. In the first two years of funding sixty-five CCA projects were successfully completed in the Moggill Creek Catchment. In the current round, thirty-three CCA projects will be rolled out across the catchment.

This year MCCG was successful in attracting CCA funding and will be collaborating with Council's Conservation Partnerships Program to deliver a project to undertake weed control of Cat's Claw Creeper and other invasive weed species on the road verges of Upper Brookfield and Gillies Roads, Upper Brookfield. The project extends for approximately 7km along Upper Brookfield Road from the intersection of Haven Road to the end of both roads. The project is strategically located at the top of the catchment in an area of high biodiversity value, and complements and protects the significant investments of numerous adjacent LFW properties that are actively working to manage Cat's Claw Creeper.

Importantly, this CCA project is part of a community-driven catchment-wide strategy to control the spread of Cat's Claw Creeper in Moggill Creek Catchment. MCCG, Council and SEQ Catchments, as well as many committed private land holders, are working together with a common vision to tackle this particularly challenging weed species in the Moggill Creek Catchment.

For more information on the Upper Brookfield Road Cat's Claw Creeper Control CCA Project, please contact Council's Community Conservation Partnerships Program: ccofficers@brisbane.qld.gov.au. We are keen to provide property owners along Upper Brookfield and Gillies Roads information about the project and answer any questions that you may have. Information on the project will also be letter-box dropped in the local area and core-flute signage promoting the project erected along Upper Brookfield Road.

*Amanda Maggs
Creek Catchment Officer
Brisbane City Council*

Restoring our landscape, bit by bit

An early morning walk along McKay Brook and adjoining Moggill Creek reaffirmed how lucky we are to live amongst this unique and beautiful habitat. As a child I would play around Cubberla Creek but returning to Brisbane five years ago to live next to McKay Brook in Kenmore Hills sparked our interest in creek restoration.

Bryan and Jenny Hacker lead the McKay Brook bushcare group in "putting back the forest" and the results are nothing short of extraordinary. Beginning many years ago with land infested with lantana, Chinese elm and exotic pot plants dumped around the creek, the group has transformed the landscape, restoring it with native trees and shrubs and providing a habitat and sustainable food source for our unique wildlife. I am regularly astounded at what an enormous difference our several pairs of hands can make after two hours. At times it's a case of not seeing the forest for the weeds!

Rewards will be unexpected- spying a pheasant coucal, a turtle plopping into the water, a pink flowering native hibiscus or a bright orange sterculia seed pod. It's a chance to "play" in the creek once again and a Saturday afternoon beer or Sunday morning cuppa never tasted so good!

We are so pleased to be part of MCCG, which is working so well in a myriad of ways to care for and celebrate this green heart of Brisbane. But there remains much more to be done on both public and private lands and the need for active bushcare volunteers is ongoing. To participate in habitat restoration, the group leader's contact details closest to you can be found here: <http://www.moggillcreek.org/activities-events/monthly-working-bees-on-public-waterways>

Letitia Norton

A Bit on Butterflies

In these early months of 2015, a wonderful lot of butterflies are adding colour and movement to our gardens, backyards or bit of bush. Many of you have seen the migratory Blue Tiger (*Tirumala hamata*), particularly noticeable when a number of them at a time enjoyed a rest stop for a few days - perhaps on a *Parsonsia* vine loading up on chemicals to make it less attractive to birds, but more attractive to mates. Even more noticeable now are our local butterflies flying their colours, so bright as they newly emerge from pupa after using local host plants: Blue Triangles, Yellow Migrants and Bordered Rustics to mention a few.

The photo on p.1 is of one such local beauty, the Blue Triangle (*Graphium sarpedon*). Its host plants are the native laurels *Cryptocarya triplinervis* is a good local tree to grow. Talking of good local butterfly host plants to grow, if you have been planting *Senna acclinis* I hope you have enjoyed seeing the Yellow Migrant Butterfly (*Catopsilia gorgophone*) showing flashes of gold and white as it flies.

I particularly enjoy seeing all the Bordered Rustic butterflies (*Cupha prosope*) at our place. This very distinctive butterfly, orange bordered in brown (see photo p1), has a host plant local to our area - but scarce. That host plant is *Scolopia braunii*, commonly called Flintwood, and we have planted many over the years. This year has been notable for *Scolopia* in that for the first time in many, many years it has fruited and we will be able to grow from seed. See photo p.5 for fruit.

The Bordered Rustic butterfly is quite remarkable in that it deposits its eggs on spider webs on the *Scolopia* rather than on its leaves. See photo p.1. These particular eggs were on a spider web which was on one of the very few branches with a sprout of young leaves, on a 3m tree. Furthermore this young sprig of leaves had not already suffered beetle attack. The pattern of laying eggs on spider webs is used by the Bordered Rustics on all our *Scolopia*. Their caterpillars seem to have no problem negotiating the web to get to the food/young leaf.

Enjoy seeing the many butterflies adding colour and movement to our gardens at the moment. Delight in seeing how many of your local native plantings are being eaten by them and plant more.

Dale Borgelt

A special nest in our Mirbelia Street Bushcare area

Our Bushcare Group meets regularly twice each month to work on the 900m length of McKay Brook that we have revegetated over the past 15 years. Our main task is weeding.

Our target on 3 January was a weed-infested area around a retention basin. We had planted this with lomandras and appropriate small trees about eight years ago and returned every year or two to control the worst of the weeds. Working only ten metres from a minor road, and 15 from a couple of houses, Jenny Hacker was surprised to find a beautiful, carefully constructed nest complete with seven eggs, nestled in the foliage and only about 1 m above ground level (see photo on p.1). Eggs were about 30 mm long or more; we did not disturb them. In appearance they resembled those of the Bush hen and another in our team, David Edwards (who took the photograph), later heard a bird call which he recognized as that of a Bush hen and has also seen them in the neighbourhood. Further enquiries supported the identification as probably having been correct.

Looking at the photograph, you can see the problem many of us have. On the right are lomandra leaves, our plantings having been very successful. However, on the left are stems of the invasive weed *Dyschoriste depressa*, a target weed (along with glycine and Rhodes grass) on this working bee. We moved away from the nest and left the weeds untouched. We do not know whether the mother bird returned to her nest - hopefully she did!

Bryan Hacker

THECA'S Bushcare Forum coming up

Please note that THECA's 13th Bushcare Forum *Conservation Conundrums: Exploring Apparent Conflicts in Wildlife Management* will be held on Saturday 2 May at the Queensland Centre for Advanced Technologies, Pullenvale.

The keynote speaker, Professor Carla Catterall, will be addressing the topic '*Weeds and wildlife: emerging dilemmas for conservation in the 21st century*'. Other speakers, from universities, non-government organisations, and environmental consultancies, will address topics such as flying foxes, ibis, noisy miners, veteran trees, community attitudes and achievements, urban development and legal considerations. As in previous years, both Brisbane City Council and SEQ Catchments Inc will be sponsoring a number of free places.

For more information and to register, visit THECA's website www.theca.asn.au, or phone 3878 5088.

Newsflash: Change of date for KIDS' DAY AT THE COTTAGE

This year **KIDS' DAY AT THE COTTAGE** is on the first Sunday in June:

Sunday 7th June 2015

Mark it on your calendar, because all our popular FREE favourite activities and attractions will be there for kids to enjoy. Arts and Crafts, Potting a seedling, Snail Whisperer and more, plus a wonderful Wildlife Show.

Remember KIDS' DAY AT THE COTTAGE on Sunday 7th June 2015

For further details contact daleborgelt@gmail.com or ph 3374 1035

Fire Ant Talk at the Cottage

Thursday 19th March at 10am

Biosecurity Queensland is conducting a 'Beyond the Edge' campaign which aims to confirm the **absence** of Fire Ants in areas like ours which are now outside the current boundary.

On Thursday 19th March a Biosecurity Officer, Riki Fulton, will give a very informative presentation about the campaign and give an overview of Fire Ants, their behaviour, what their nests look like, their impacts, and show attendees some live fire ants.

Book your place for this important Fire Ant Talk at the Cottage on Thursday 19th March by contacting daleborgelt@gmail.com or 3374 1035

Low profile workers

Probably the most important part of our activities is the growing of native plants which we give to Members for use in their restoration activities. This is carried out at our nursery by volunteers, most of whom sit at a bench potting up seedlings which we have raised from seed we collect. There are however a number of jobs surrounding that, carried out by others; for example by Jan Grigg.

She is first there on working days, opening the buildings, bringing out from their building trays of seedlings as they are required at the bench. That in itself requires knowledge of what is there and what is suitable, for various reasons. Living close by the nursery, we depend on her making occasional checks and carrying out small tasks which arise. She has a reasonably good knowledge of the native vegetation, including where local individuals of species may be found, that leading to her collecting seeds we particularly want. Going beyond these things of immediate value to us, she is active in restoration work on her property and as a member of the local outstandingly successful Bush Care group.

Graeme Wilson