MOGGILL CREEK CATCHMENT GROUP

www.moggillcreek.org.au

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NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2016

Robucks and Brush Tail Possum
(see p. 7 for details and credits)

Red Kamala leaves and seeds See p. 6)
Photo: Bryan Hacker

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Cassia Brewsterii in full flower
Photo: Dale Borgelt

Editorial

Those of you who know more of Greek mythology than I will be aware of the importance, range of responsibilities, capabilities and activities of the god Jupiter. Not least, he was associated with storms and rain. In Australia we have the saying "Send 'er down, Hughie", an idiomatic response to the onset of rain.

Unable to avoid making reference to our obsession with drought, I grasped my electronic pen with a view to chiding Jupiter for his failure to meet our wet season expectations . Immediately there was a flash of lightning followed by a clap of thunder and down she came! In our catchment there have been sporadic useful falls but to me nothing like the 89mm I got (which is three and a half inches in the old money). That of course is little to meet our long term needs but we live another day.

The subject matter content of this newsletter is greatly determined by standard things; botany and zoology, explanation of some activities occurring, how to do it for vegetation enhancement and weed control, and the necessary information provided by the PR officer. It all comes from our regular contributors. Nothing has come to us "out of the blue". For years we have been urging other members to tell us about interesting things they have seen or thought or done but with rare success. Such would add valuable character. Come on!

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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Chairman's Report

A few of us attended a SEQ Catchments "Canopy Killer" workshop held in Beenleigh recently to discuss ways to manage the serious vine weeds such as Cat`s Claw Creeper and Madiera vine, amongst others. We heard speakers from Landcare and Catchment groups from the Gold Coast to the Sunshine Coast and west to the ranges outline their programs to tackle these weeds. Adrian Webb gave a very professional presentation on the work we are undertaking in the Moggill Creek catchment and an article on p. 4 of this issue covers his contribution. We picked up some useful tips along the way.

The scale of the vine weed problem could be overwhelming if it were not for the considerable commitment by these groups to do something practical about it, often with very limited resources. Successful partnerships with both government and other non government organizations can make a considerable difference to the rate of progress of this essential work.

And of course, such threats are only a part of the overall challenge we face in protecting and enhancing our biodiversity. There is little point on removing a weed only to have it replaced by another or unnecessarily exposing bare soil to erosion. Long term rehabilitation of our landscapes must take account of a range of such factors. Fortunately, our Catchment group has many of the skills required for this worthwhile task.

Warren Hoey

Beware; Another Sleeper Weed is Awakening

Anzac Daisy, (*Montanoa hibiscifolia*) is already scattered throughout the Moggill Creek Catchment area in most habitats and is increasing in extent. Unless controlled it could become another serious weed forming a dense forest up to 6m high that smothers most understory plants It is regarded as an environmental weed in Queensland and is a problem in both north coastal areas of Queensland and NSW. It originated in Central America including Mexico. It has become naturalized in East and South Africa where it is declared a noxious plant. And so be warned as this sleeping giant is awakening !

The first sign of its presence is when it produces massive clusters of daisy-like white flowers in April - hence the common name Anzac Daisy (Others are Tree Daisy or Anzac Flower) Perhaps the most descriptive should be Anzac Tree Daisy.

Flowers are multiple globular clusters of daisy-like white petalled flowers (40mm) each with a central yellow disc typical of its family Asteraceae. Seeds are reddish brown encased in light papery old flower heads that can readily be spread by wind. Anzac Daisy is a perennial shrub with few stems. When young they are soft and pithy but soon harden on maturity and form tree like stems 6m tall and 10 cm diameter. Three photos are shown on p 5 and best related here to the text. One shows a thicket which is apparently exclusive of other species. Most of the thin tall plants are easily hand pulled. Seed heads can be seen The few large plants will be cut to near the base and poisoned as those are shown in another photo.The remaining photo shows the large hibiscus like leaf.

Control:
The observant landholder will recognize young plants which can be hand pulled, or if extensive, sprayed with Glyphosate. Prevent seeding at all costs at the first sign of those conspicuous white flower clusters One plant can produce thousands (millions ?) of seeds. It is unknown how long seeds remain viable but the size of seed and the family indicate that they could last at least until the next season. If hard stems have formed most plants are too high to safely spray and cutting individuals with a sturdy saw or tree lopper is required with immediate chemical swabbing of the cut stumps. Just cutting does not kill the plant but encourages multiple shoots that form an even denser canopy and can seed later in the same season. Many landholders are unaware of Anzac Daisy or regard it as a pretty addition to the bush. Those familiar with Anzac Daisy and its weed potential are urged to inform all landholders of its presence and control methods as there is a good chance of eliminating the plant from the catchment or at least preventing further spread.

Wouldn't it be nice to say just for once that we have eliminated an environmental weed from our catchment.

Gordon Wilkinson

Cats Claw Battle

MCCG has developed a close working relationship with SEQ Catchments and BCC over the last 4 to 5 years in developing a common strategy to manage the exotic canopy killer vines in our catchment. This strategy is based on:

- Identifying and accessing sources of funding for CC management projects to assist landholders.
- The involvement of experienced landholders to help inform ourselves and other landholders about ways of managing the threats posed to remnant forests and the nearby conservation parks.
- sharing of information about where CC has been found across the catchment, and the most appropriate methods of weed management for various situations.
- Identifying priority areas to focus our assistance to landholders.
- Evaluating current projects and planning new ones

As a result, there has been a considerable amount of vine weed management in areas of remnant forests in Upper Brookfield, upper Savages road and Kittani street, Gold Creek below the reservoir, lower Gap Creek, and Mackay Brook. Many in Upper Brookfield would have noticed the weed removal on road verges along Upper Brookfield road from Haven Road to the end of Upper Brookfield road. Landholders in these areas generally have major infestations of CC often associated with Asparagus, Madeira or other canopy killing vines.

Much of the work has been funded through the BCC Community Conservation Assistance (CCA) program, BCC Habitat Brisbane program, and State Government and Commonwealth Government funds sourced through SEQ Catchments. Examples are Queensland Coastal Resilience Program and Caring for Country. A key part of our MCCG strategy has been to co-locate projects we manage in agreed priority areas.

On-ground achievements over the last 4 years include:

- 153 LFWL properties and 20Km of road verge received BCC CCA funding
- A further 9 properties received Qld Govt, or Commonwealth funding for exotic vine weed management.
- Several Tingid bug and Jewel beetle populations monitored for the last few years.
- Green Army projects have been approved for weed management in 3 areas over the 2016-17 year.

Add to this the weed management work carried out by many landholders and the result is significant. But there is much still to do.

MCCG approach is to minimise the spread of infestations across all tenures; Our priority is to prevent vines flowering and seeding in the canopies.

A counter attack on Freckle Face

When freckle face (*Hypoestes phyllostachys*) first appeared in our bushland we took little notice (A mistake most of us have learned to avoid with newly arriving weeds). It seeds early with prolific crops spreading readily. Thus in short time we had extensive areas of it outcompeting and eliminating species of similar stature, and suppressing natural occupation by desirable natives. We are opposed to spraying herbicides in this particular area.

Careful observation of the growth of individual plants can often pay dividends. Brushcutting of freckle face leads to rapid regrowth and seed production but if covered with material cutting out light, the plants soon die. Moreover, remaining seeds soon germinate and the seedlings die. We had observed a weakness which we could exploit.

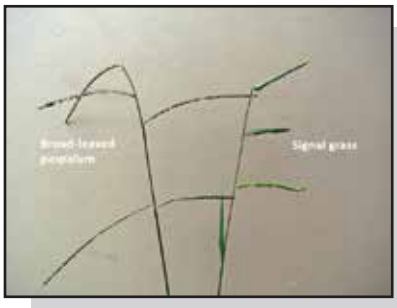
Fortunately, we have access to large quantities of cardboard being discarded from industrial activities. Pieces are largely about 2 square metres. These are placed on infestations and weighted down with available material. From our experience, the life of the cardboard is sufficient to have killed all of the infestation before beginning to break up. The treated area should then be planted as required and a watch kept out as usual for weeds. This work should not be wasted on sparse infestation, dealing with that by hand weeding. There may be various alternatives to cardboard, such as old carpets which could be reused.

There are other weeds which might be dealt with in the same way. We haven't tried them. It is useless if they have long- life vegetative material or seeds.

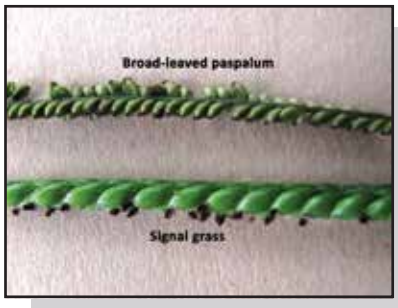
Andrew Wilson

Anzac Tree Daisy (see p. 3 for details)
Photos: Gordon Wilkinson

◀ Spoonbill
Photo: Ed Frazer



Flower heads



Branches of flower heads

Growing together

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Signal Grass and Broad Leafed Paspalum (see p. 6)
Photos: Bryan Hacker

Two seriously invasive weed grasses

Exotic grasses are amongst our most serious environmental weeds. Most were purposefully introduced as potential pasture grasses, and we should not forget that some of these have contributed substantially to agricultural production.

Two of the more significant weed grasses in our Catchment are signal grass (*Urochloa decumbens*), originally from East Africa, and broad-leaved paspalum (*Paspalum mandiocanum*), from South America. They are seen growing alongside each other in the photo on p. 5. Both have broad leaf blades and flowering stems to 1m or more tall. Signal grass was so named as the flower head tends to be one sided, like an old-fashioned railway signal (photo, p. 5). Broad-leaved paspalum is quite tolerant of partial shade, where it can be a threat to new plantings. Although signal grass is an important pasture grass in tropical areas, broad-leaved paspalum, although tested for potential as a forage species, never made the grade and so was not formally 'released'.

A close look at the racemes, the 'branches' of the flower head (photo, p. 5) clearly shows a substantial difference between the two species. In broad-leaved paspalum the spikelets (attached to the raceme) are 2-2.4mm long whereas in signal grass they are 4-6mm long. Don't worry too much if you can't distinguish them apart – both are environmental weeds and should be controlled in environmental areas. That also goes for any somewhat similar species such as those with two racemes (P. *notatum, P. conjugatum*) and those with several racemes (*P. dilatatum, P. urvillei)*. You are unlikely to come across a closely similar native grass species.

Bryan Hacker

Red Kamala (*Mallotus philippensis*)

On looking for a plant to discuss in our current newsletter issue, I was quite surprised to find that I have not already written about red kamala, *Mallotus philippensis*. Apart from the eucalypts, red kamala is one of the commonest native trees in our Catchment, and is frequently to be seen as a pioneer tree on previously cleared land in the Brookfield – Upper Brookfield area. It is also a species which regenerates readily, and seedlings often appear in eucalypt woodland and bushcare sites, the seed presumably carried by birds.

Red kamala is a medium-sized tree up to 25 m tall in the Euphorbia family. It occurs naturally in Australia north from central NSW and in Malesia, southern Asia and the Pacific islands, including the Philippines.

When grown in the open red kamala is dense and so makes a good species to grow as a screen, along with other similarly dense species, such as tulipwood. Leaves are alternate, each up to 12 cm long, 7 cm wide and are born on a petiole (leaf stalk) up to 7 cm long. This species is readily identified by its leaves, which have a long petiole (leaf stalk) and are prominently 3-veined from the base (see photo p 1).

As with many of our native trees, plants may be male or female, only the female trees bearing fruit. Trees flower in winter-spring in Queensland, fruit maturing in summer. Flowers are small and yellow-brown, born on racemes up to 6 cm long. The fruit are spherical, 6-9 mm broad, dark red and powdery when ripe, when they open to show three black seeds (see photo p 1). The fruit are covered in a red powdery substance which is used for dying textiles in India.

Bryan Hacker

Northern Bobucks

Has everyone caught up with a common name change for one of the two species of brushtail possum found in our catchment? Mountain Brushtail is now deemed to be inappropriate. Read on…….

There are two species of brushtail possum in the Moggill Creek catchment, and we have both on our Gold Creek property, calling them by their familiar common names of Common Brushtail (*Trichosurus vulpecula*) and Mountain Brushtail or Bobuck (*Trichosurus caninus*). The scientific names are still the same, but the advocated common name for our local 'bobuck' is now Short-eared Brushtail. This is because two species of 'Mountain Brushtail' are now recognised. Until 2002 'Mountain Brushtails' from Gladstone to the Victorian Alps and Gippsland were all regarded as one species. But mammalogists had noted differences between northern and southern populations, and a close analysis by David Lindenmayer and colleagues, including some genetic comparisons, led to the conclusion that there are two separate species. They named the one from about Newcastle south, *Trichosurus cunninghami*, and advocated that the common name Mountain Brushtail should be retained for that one, with the northern *T. caninus* being called Short-eared Brushtail. However, Debbie Hynes and Mike Cleeland proposed in 2010 that more appropriate common names for them would be Northern Bobuck and Southern Bobuck. Their proposal is based on their survey work in Gippsland, which showed that the 'Mountain' Bobucks are widely distributed in lowland areas, so the 'mountain' appellation is misleading. Nor is *T. caninus*, the northern species, associated particularly with mountainous country, so I too had wondered about that name. So I agree with the Hynes and Cleeland suggestion. Besides, Northern Bobuck is a more appealing name than Short-eared Brushtail, and it is also a reminder that it has southern cousins.

How to tell a Northern Bobuck from a Common Brushtail? (See Photos p 1) The specific name, *caninus*, gives a clue; its face is more dog-like. But they are also darker in colour (black rather than grey), and the ears are rounded rather than pointed. They are also much more cryptic. We see one rarely, and never near the house, but when I set up a camera trap at least three or four came to the peanut butter, right by the deck, including a mother and young. Common Brushtails on the other hand are quite urbanised and habituate well to people, so they are commonly seen at night foraging close to houses.

References:

Lindenmayer, DB, Dubach J and KL Viggers (2002). "Geographic dimorphism in the mountain brushtail possum T. caninus: the case for a new species". *Australian Journal of Zoology* **50** (4): 369–393.

Hynes, D and Cleeland, M. (2010) Extended Range of Bobucks '*Trichosurus cunninghami*' in South-West Gippsland, Victoria. *Victorian Naturalist* **127**(1):15-19.

Photos are shown on p 1. They comprise a colour photo of a Northern Bobuck (photo Gordon Grigg), B&W photo at a camera trap, colour photo of Common Brushtail (photo Brisbane City Council).

Gordon Grigg

Land For Wildlife

Ever wondered what the green signs are at the entrances of many properties throughout the Moggill Creek Catchment? This and other similar signs indicate that the property owners have volunteered to be a Land for Wildlife member through the Wildlife Conservation Partnerships Program run by the Brisbane City Council.

Beginning almost 20 years ago, Land for Wildlife supports landholders to manage their properties for their conservation values. In Brisbane alone, more than half of the wildlife habitat is located on privately-owned land. Conserving it is critical to the survival of our native wildlife. Land for Wildlife is a tool to help encourage, link together and inspire landholders to look after their land for our native wildlife.

Brisbane City Council currently has 657 properties volunteering to restore and rehabilitate their properties through Land for Wildlife. This equates to over 2100 hectares of ecologically important land being preserved.

There are many benefits to this voluntary program. Some of these include free trees, exotic and native plant identification, expert bushland restoration advice and an opportunities to meet like-minded people. If you are interested and have more than 0.5ha of existing bushland or a similar size area you would like to rehabilitate please contact a friendly Land for Wildlife officer through the Brisbane City Council call centre on **3403 8888Wildlife.**

TALKS AT THE COTTAGE

Bats change from March to April. Birds feature in March Booking essential: Contact daleborgelt@gmail.com or ph 3374 1035

March 17th

Thursday 10am will be a presentation of the wonderful bird photos he has taken in the Brookfield area by Ed Frazer.

April 21st

Thursday 5pm. Flying Fur. Secrets in the life of bats will be revealed by Dr. Roger Coles from the School of Earth, Environmental and Biological Sciences, at QUT. Their life is cryptic and shrouded in mystery. They are the only mammals capable of true flight - a shared ability that has evolved completely differently from birds. He will explain the prowess of 'microbats' at flying, navigating and catching prey in the dark using a precision, radar-like method called echolocation. He will demonstrate how the local forest bats do it, and in real time, by tuning in to bats flying around the MCCG Cottage during the talk with the use of fancy electronics and colourful computer screens. As we cannot normally see or hear these small creatures hunting in the dark, some of their secrets can be revealed by using electronic 'bat detectors' and night vision scopes to make their sensory world audible and visible to us. Methods used to catch bats will be demonstrated as well.

KIDS' DAY AT THE COTTAGE 2016

Sunday 26th May 10 am -1pm

This popular event has plenty to enjoy. Children make and do, find out more, watch and wonder – all for **FREE**.

MCCG is able to offer this free community event thanks particularly to a wonderful band of volunteers and expert presenters, proudly supported by the Lord Mayor's Suburban Initiative fund and the Pullenvale Ward Councillor. We are also grateful to the BCC via Community Conservation Partnerships for their contribution of marquees to host the various presentations and activities.

Mark it on your calendar: Sunday 26th May 10 am -1pm

Dale Borgelt

LOCAL WILDLIFE ON SHOW

Monday 25 July At 7pm In Brookfield Hall

Martin Fingland will feature local wildlife in a special presentation for our public meeting in Brookfield Hall. This popular presentation will start early at 7pm and finish around 8.30pm with no supper afterwards.
This is a wonderful opportunity to see the wide variety of local wildlife not always seen, let alone seen up close.

Don't miss this LOCAL WILDLIFE ON SHOW
7pm Mon 25th July Brookfield Hall