

MOGGILL CREEK CATCHMENT GROUP

www.moggillcreek.org.au



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NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2016



◀ White-bellied sea eagle juvenile chased by magpie
(see Raptors of Moggill Creek Catchment p. 6)
Photo: Ed Frazer



▲ Green Army Launch (see p. 3)
Photo: Kylie Nielsen



◀ Wonga vine (see A Landholder's Newfound Respect for Vines p. 7)
Photo: Tony Watts



▲ Young cane toad (see An answer to the Cane toad problem p. 8)
Photo: Bryan Hacker



▲ It's a cockroach (see Kids' Day p. 7)
Photo: Dale Borgelt

Editorial

*At days off 99 years old, our wonderful Editor since 2003 Graham Wilson will be handing on the baton. This Spring 2016 Issue of the Newsletter has been compiled following his pattern and recognizing his wish to always have a diverse mix of articles which are not too long or highly technical, but especially to make known how members, landholders and the community are, and can be, involved in taking care of our catchment environment.
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MCCG AGM Monday 28th November 2016 in Brookfield Hall

Hoping to see you there
7.30pm Monday 28th November 2016 in Brookfield Hall

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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Chairman's Report

Winter seems to have come and gone so quickly and surreptitiously leaving only a slight impact. I'm writing this in July and many indigenous plants have been flowering for some weeks and birds have been gathering nesting material from our dog's beds. While the soil moisture holds up, we'll be in for a bounteous Spring for the 'good' and 'bad' plants alike.

A new Catchment community group "The Upper Brookfield Working Group" has been established in Upper Brookfield to tackle some serious weed infestations. Phil Bird, the coordinator has been encouraged by the efforts of the Pacey Rd group and will work under the umbrella of MCCG. Phil's article about what the group hopes to achieve appears on this page.

Malcolm Frost has also been working hard to attract community interest in his Rowena Park project that aims to provide a wider belt of riparian plantings along sections of the waterway prone to collapse. The first working bee attracted several local families who got down to business quickly. You can see a photo on our Facebook page. We want to see this group recognised as a Bushcare group in forthcoming years.

We hope to finalise our new strategic plan in September. We have been gathering information through interviews and responses from members and stakeholders and are drawing this together to help develop the plan. We are also updating our Review document, last published in 2011 to ensure we record our achievements and challenges.

We've said "goodbye" to our Brisbane City Council Creek Catchment Officer, Emma Maltby who's off overseas furthering her career. We wish her the very best for her future. She provided outstanding support to our Group. While on that topic, I would like to pay tribute to the other BCC officers who are very active in the district, Wildlife Conservation Partnership officers Catherine Madden and Cody Hochen, and Cath Cleary from Habitat Brisbane. We greatly value the partnership we have with them. We'd also like to extend a very warm welcome our new Creek Catchment Officer, Leah Hattendorff.

Warren Hoey

MCCG Green Army Launch

It's still officially winter, but there was a decided spring in the step of Federal MP Jane Prentice as she declared the official commencement of the MCCG Green Army Project 2016-2017 along the banks of Moggill Creek. The Green Army is a team of inspired young locals who revere the indigenous history of the land and are committed to its environmental preservation. (see photo p. 1)

Cat's claw, Madeira vine, glycine and green panic are all being strategically targeted for controlled eradication by the Green Army around Upper Brookfield, Smith's Rainforest Nature Refuge and along Moggill Creek areas.

Councillor Kate Richards and her team and the Ward Office are members of MCCG and advocate to the wider Council on issues that support the conservation of our beautiful natural corridors. Congratulations to the MCCG for your tireless contribution!

Kylie Nielsen

Upper Brookfield Working Group

Local residents have come together on the last Sunday morning of the month to retain and restore the riparian bushland of the upper reaches of Moggill Creek, in the vicinity of Galvin Rd. It is an ambitious project that covers a number of properties along the creek and includes road margins. The project will take some time as the weeds have been there for a while and you have to make a start sometime. Our activities are followed by morning tea to view the morning's work and catch up. (see photo p.5)

Our priorities are to protect the existing bushland by controlling weedy vines such as cats claw creeper, madeira, glycine; asparagus fern which are smothering native canopy species. Also to manage the grasses such as elephant and emu grass which are covering the banks, small shrubs and trees such as lomandra, cheese tree; red flowering bottle brush, river she-oaks, plus others, all regenerated at the site. As well we are mindful of local wildlife that use the creeks when we clear, such as the birds (banded rails), fish, turtles, frogs and platypus have been sighted in this area. We will also create a trail to allow safe access to the sites. For further information please contact Phil on frogphil@gmail.com.

Phil Bird

The Moreton Bay Fig

Figs, genus *Ficus*, are well represented in our catchment. These may broadly be divided into sandpaper figs, and those which do not have sandpapery leaves. In the latter group there are deciduous figs, which lose their leaves in winter, and those which are evergreen.

Three species of sandpaper fig occur, *Ficus coronata*, *F. fraseri* and *F. opposita*. Local species which do not have sandpapery leaves are *F. macrophylla* (Moreton Bay fig), *F. rubiginosa* (rock fig) and *F. watkinsiana* (strangler fig). There are two local species which retain their leaves in winter, these being *F. superba* (deciduous fig) and *F. virens* (white fig).

As if we haven't enough figs of our own, we have also introduced the Indian rubber tree, *Ficus elastica*, which is listed by Council as a weed and is reputed to be sparingly naturalised in coastal districts of south-eastern and northern Queensland. This species is quite similar to our Moreton Bay fig, but its leaves differ in that they are smooth on the under-surface, lacking the prominent veins of the Moreton Bay fig (see photo on p. 5). Also, mature trees of the latter species are generally rusty-brown beneath, an attribute clearly visible from a distance.

Moreton Bay figs grow to a considerable height, sometimes exceeding 50m (photo, p. 5). They are magnificent trees but, having extremely invasive roots, should not be planted close to septic, water pipes and so forth. They generally start off life as epiphytes, presumably through birds wiping their beaks on branches. The seedling shown in the photo on p. 5 started growth some 4m up a river oak by Moggill Creek close to the Show Ground. Despite being only about 60 cm long, it has already produced a root extending down to ground level. In time the fig will 'strangle' the river oak, which gave it support in its early days.

Bryan Hacker

Kenmore State High School does its bit for the environment

We were happy to hear of two recent environmental activities by Kenmore State High School.

1. On National Tree Planting Day in July, 132 students from grades 9,10,11,12 participated in planting 1000 *Lomandra hystrix* plants along the three tennis court border paths of the lower Moggill Creek site. As in past years, O Toyota sponsored the student 'T' Shirts, gloves, and the ten trays of plants. (photo p.5)

National Tree Planting Day at KSHS is now into its 16th year, having begun in the year 2000 and, according to the 40 exchange students from Germany who participated, this will not be its last!!

2. Planting with German, Japanese and International Students from Kenmore High School

In August, a total of 34 students from exchange schools in Kassel, Germany and Kakamihara, Japan together with international KSHS students, joined teachers, groundsman and ~~member of the~~ Environment Sub-committee of the P&C to revegetate the creek zone. Native trees, sedges and grasses were planted in newly cleared areas bordering Moggill Creek. The 48 plants were supplied by Brisbane City Council under the Land for Wildlife Program and arranged by BCC Officer Cody Hochen.

The students were split into small groups to undertake the planting, watering and mulching of the plants; this gave them an opportunity to socialise. The German students from Engelsburg Gymnasium attend KSHS for six weeks and the Japanese students for one week under the annual exchange programs operating for over 20 years. The visiting exchange students have participated in similar plantings at the School for the last five years.

Included in the planting were three Eucalypts (*E. propinqua* and *E. tereticornis*) so the opportunity was taken to emphasise the link between such trees as a source of food and shelter for koalas. Students also affixed signs from the Australian Koala Foundation (AKF) to three nearby large Eucalypts denoting their importance for koalas. At the end of the session, students were given a "No tree, no me" sticker from the AKF as a reminder of their efforts and to promote the AKF internationally. (photo p.5)

Bruce Dymock



▲ *Ficus elastica* Left and *F macrophylla* (see Moreton Bay Fig p.4)
Photo: Bryan Hacker



▲ *Ficus elastica* Left and *F macrophylla* (see Moreton Bay Fig p.4)
Photo: Bryan Hacker



▲ Upper Brookfield Working Group Site (see p. 3)
Photo: Phil Bird



▲ *Ficus macrophylla* seedling (see Moreton Bay Fig p.4)
Photo: Bryan Hacker



▲ KSHS students on National Tree Planting Day (see p.4)
Photo: Damien Egan



International Students with Koala Tree Sign (see KSHS p.7) ►
Photo: Maria Miller

Raptors of Moggill Creek Catchment

There are two things to understand about birds of prey, the first is that they are notoriously difficult to identify and it takes years of practice to be competent. The other is that they are “apex” predators occupying the top of the food chain; consequently they form a very small percentage of the total population of the birds of a region. Obviously if they were too numerous they would soon eliminate their food source, like humans overfishing the oceans. However, although Raptors provide a challenge to bird watchers, they are some of the most exciting birds to watch, soaring high above. Often we are alerted to their presence by the shrill alarm calls given out by the various species that they prey on, especially Noisy Miners.

Raptors hunt other living organisms for food: small mammals, birds, reptiles, frogs and insects. They are characterised by being very efficient at flying, have very keen eyesight, powerful talons and strong, hooked beaks. Raptors need to stay in flight for some time to find their prey so have developed techniques for efficient flying, soaring effortlessly in thermals but also able to fly with great speed in diving for the kill. This hunting requires exceptional eyesight and raptors are believed to have the best eyesight in nature. The eyes are comparatively large with some binocular vision, colour perception and eye muscles designed for rapid focus. Their powerful talons have evolved to catch, hold and carry prey and the beaks are sharp and hooked to tear the food apart.

MCCG’s current bird list includes 15 species of raptor, several of them marked as common and others as rare visitors. As I noted above, no raptor can be regarded as common, Noisy Miners and Rainbow Lorikeets are common; not birds of prey. I will highlight the raptors that are most frequently seen.

Pacific Baza (*Aviceda subcristata*) is probably the most frequently seen and is readily identified by the black crest on its grey head; and strongly barred breast, wings and tail. Their “ee-choo, ee-choo” call is very distinctive. They are found throughout the catchment from urban areas to rainforest. Feeding mainly on stick insects, they also take other insects, small invertebrates, tree frogs, nestlings, small birds, lizards and fruit.

Wedge-tailed Eagles (*Aquila audax*) are often and widely reported in the catchment, recognised by their large size, wedge shaped tail and upswept wings when soaring. They are carnivorous eating carrion and catching live prey of small mammals, birds and lizards. MCCG Bird List records them as common but they require a large foraging area so it has been estimated that two or three pairs would be the total population.

White-bellied Sea-eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*) is another raptor described as common. One is occasionally recorded from Gold Creek Reservoir. It is recognised by its large size, distinctive white head and belly, upswept wings and shortish tail compared to a Wedgie. In spite of its name, besides fish, it eats birds, reptiles, mammals, crustaceans and carrion. (see photo p.1)

Three related species of intermediate sized raptors, **Collared Sparrowhawk** (*Accipiter cirrocephalus*), **Brown Goshawk** (*A. fasciatus*) and **Grey Goshawk** (*A. novaehollandiae*) are probably the next most commonly seen after the Baza. The **Grey Goshawk** is quite distinctive, white or grey in colour with bright yellow legs and cere (area at base of upper bill containing the nostrils). They prefer forested areas in high rainfall areas and the riparian zone. Their food is mostly mammals also birds, reptiles, frogs and insects. They’ve been seen around Gold Creek Road.

The **Brown Goshawk** and **Collared Sparrowhawk** are very difficult to separate; both are medium sized with the goshawk is slightly larger than the sparrowhawk. They are both grey-brown above with underparts finely barred rufous and white, the eye, cere and legs are yellow. Juvenile plumage is more coarsely barred. In flight the goshawk has a roundish tail and the sparrowhawk a square shaped one. When perched, a marked eyebrow can be seen on the Goshawk and if you are lucky you might observe a long middle toe on the Sparrowhawk. Both species live in forests, scrublands, farmlands, parks and gardens throughout the catchment. They prey on birds, mammals, reptiles, frogs and insects.

Most bird field guides give a comprehensive coverage of raptors. I prefer to use Graham Pizzey & Frank Knight or Simpson & Day. Both are well illustrated; show the underside patterning and the position of wings in flight. Pay particular attention to illustrations of juveniles. Good luck with your Raptor observations.

I would like to thank Greg Czechura of Queensland Museum for his helpful discussion on population densities of Brisbane’s raptors.

Dawn Beck

MCCG Kids' Day at the Cottage 2016 was Fun

Once again Kids' Day at the Cottage was a popular attraction. Some 300 came to the Moggill Creek Catchment Group Cottage on the Gold Creek Dam Reserve at the very end of Gold Creek Road, Brookfield. At least 140 of them were kids who were actively engaged in the environmentally themed activities and displays.

Inside the Cottage, they made ladybird fridge magnets guided by Carolyn Parsons who devises a different craft activity every year. They coloured in butterfly cutouts while surrounded by posters about local butterflies and their food plants. They coloured in drawings of jewel beetles, and looked at the display of real dung beetles found in our area.

Outside, the new arrangement of small marquees gave better access to the different activities. Kids made neckwear from handmade beads of bamboo with Deborah Craig, admired the random curiosities collected by Gordon Grigg, looked for camouflaged stick insects and handled friendly giant cockroaches with Geoff Monteith, used a key to ID leaf shapes or a battery operated circuit to match rainforest fruit with its name guided by Jan Blok, talked to Snail Whisperer John Stanisc, saw one of Tony Goodrich's native bee hives working, played games devised by the Girl Guides and with the help of Andrew Wilson, potted a seedling to take home.

The large circus style tent on the upside of the Cottage suited Martin Fingland's three Geckoes Wildlife sessions and gave kids close up contact with some of our leathery, furry, or feathery native creatures.

There was so much for kids to make and do and enjoy, and it was FREE thanks especially to volunteers and expert presenters, supported this year by the Lord Mayor's Suburban Initiative fund and the Pullenvale Ward Councillor, the BCC Creek Catchment Program and staff at SEQWater.

Dale Borgelt

A Land-holder's Newfound Respect for Vines

Keepers of any piece of land are often suspicious of vines, those opportunistic intruders that make use of honest, self-supporting plants to reach for greater heights. Of course some introduced vine weeds smother the local flora and deserve censure.

Observation over the past thirty years of vines on our steep open woodland in Upper Brookfield has led me to believe that indigenous vines occupy a niche, giving as much as they take and enriching the biodiversity of the land they occupy.

Quite common on our block is *Pandorea pandorana*, the local Wonga Vine (see photo p.1). Seedlings have proliferated over the past decade or so. If they find water the vine climbs into the sparse forest canopy where it spreads and flowers. It seems that the increase in the density of the forest foliage is full recompense for the sharing of a structure and of root space.

Other species, such as *Stephania*, *Smilax* and Water Vine similarly increase foliage density at lower levels in the forest. This seems quite a good system; for diverse members of the plant community to co-exist for the benefit of the whole.

Margaret Watts

Note from Dale:

Our MCCG volunteer run Nursery at the end of Gold Creek Road has both *Pandorea pandorana* and *P. jasminoides* at the moment. We also have the delightful small twiner *Eustrephus latifolius*, the Wombat Berry. Like all our locally native tube stock they are free to members, but we also have the Richmond Birdwing Butterfly Vine, *Pararistolochia praevenosa*, at a cost of \$8.

The Nursery is open for working bees on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of each month 9am – 12noon.

An Answer to the Cane Toad Problem?

As we all know, cane toads are a major problem for native wildlife (see photo of a young cane toad on p. 1). According to a website article, a team from the University of Queensland Institute for Molecular Bioscience is on the way to find an answer.

Cane toad tadpoles will feed upon unhatched eggs. Cane toads produce a toxin and when this has been collected and coated on 'airstones' for controlled release, then placed in traps in waterholes where cane toads are breeding, tadpoles are attracted and get trapped in a plastic trap. The technique is considered to be harmless to native frogs.

This technique has proved to be very successful in the Adelaide River floodplain, and also in other areas where cane toads breed. The researchers are keen to expand trials, and this is where you might be able to help, especially if you have a dam on your property where cane toads breed. To find out more and to collaborate in these trials, visit <http://www.imb.uq.edu.au/canetoadchallenge>.

Bryan Hacker

CANE TOAD CHALLENGE TALK AT THE COTTAGE

10am Thursday 15th September

Prof Rob Capon leads the UQ research group rolling out a new cane toad control technology. (He is IMB Group Leader & Director Postgraduate Studies, Institute for Molecular Bioscience at the University of Queensland.)

This will be a popular talk for people interested in an environmentally friendly way of reducing the cane toad population. Book your place by contacting dale-borgelt@gmail.com or ph 0408 741 035.

Dale Borgelt

MCCG ANNUAL PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION 2016

Really look at the environment. Get that great shot. It is perfect timing.

It's time for MCCG's Annual Photography Competition with over \$1500 in cash prizes!

Entry is open to all members of the public, young and not-so-young. There are 3 Categories: Open, Young Persons, and School. Entry forms, including info and rules, are available on our website

<http://www.moggillcreek.org.au/activities-events/photography-competition-2016>

Our Photography Competition aims to:

- raise awareness of local environmental issues especially with children
- encourage people to enjoy the variety of flora and fauna in our beautiful catchment
- promote awareness of the Brisbane catchment groups
- encourage membership and participation.

Get your entry in between 10am - 2pm on Saturday 22nd October at The Trustees Room, Brookfield Showgrounds.

Entries are displayed in Kenmore Village Centre Court Monday 24th – Saturday 29th October.

Any questions or for more information email: MCCGPhoto@gmail.com