

# MOGGILL CREEK CATCHMENT GROUP

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### MCCG NEWSLETTER: SPRING 2018

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**ABOVE**: Congratulations to John Liddington, who saw this platypus in a pool in upper Gold Creek during the 13<sup>th</sup> MCCG Platypus Survey. See page 6 for more.

**LEFT**: Nick & DJ Childs, helping with the Newsletter mailing (*picture: Dale Borgelt*). *To continue to receive your newsletter, renew at* **26<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2018 AGM** (*more on page 6*), and for more on our younger members *see page 7*.



LEFT: A 'weedy bad' problem for our catchment. Anzac Tree Daisy (*picture courtesy Bryan Hacker*). For more this weed, and Bryan's regular Seeds article, *turn to pages 5 & 6*.

MCCG Photography Competition Feature in the next issue. *Enter Now*: Prize pool \$1,400 ! Forms and more details on the website (http://www.moggillcreek.org/activities-

events/photography-competition-event)



**ABOVE**: Meet the mammals of Moggill Creek! Pictured, above, a Red-necked wallaby & joey (*Picture credit: Ed Frazer*). For more on the latest MCCG Website Catchment Field Guide, *turn to page 3*.

### **Chairman's Report**

I recently attended BCC's annual 'Restoration Celebration.' The event is put on each year by Brisbane City Council, to show appreciation for the many volunteer bushcare workers who give up their time to assist in protecting and improving our natural environment. This year it was held at Tennis Avenue Park in Ashgrove. Several-hundred people attended and were treated to an excellent cooked breakfast, accompanied by live music. It was a good opportunity to catch up with old friends and to make some new contacts, including Cr Vicki Howard (Central Ward), who chairs Council's Field Services Committee.



Picture (above): BCC 'Restoration Celebration.' Picture credit: Jim Pope

The proceedings were introduced by Cr David McLachlan, who is Chairperson of Council's Environment, Parks and Sustainability Committee. He pointed out that each year across the BCC region, volunteers contribute around 275,000 hours of their time to bushcare work, which is worth over \$12 million to ratepayers.

After breakfast, we heard a very interesting talk by Valerie Hagger, who is a conservation biologist/ecologist from UQ, on the benefits of bushcare work. As well as significant benefits to native flora and fauna, these include substantial benefits to both the physical and mental health of the human population, through improved air quality, lower summer temperatures and better opportunities for exercise and relaxation. This was followed by an excellent presentation from Leo Lee of 'Save Our Waterways Now' (SOWN) on creek water quality monitoring. Free native plants were also on offer and we all left with renewed enthusiasm for our ongoing endeavours to enhance the natural environment.

Jím Pope

### **Editorial**

Thank you to everyone who sent items for this issue of the MCCG Newsletter. We couldn't do it without you! The 2018 MCCG Photography Competition will be a major feature in the Summer issue, so do get your entries in. And why not send me a piece about where and why you took your photograph? Or send in items about our catchment that you-or younger members of your family-would like to share. I am sure EVERYONE has at least 100 words they could write... so email me soon with those New Year resolutions and ideas (*mccgeditor@outlook.com.au*) Cathí

Moggill Creek Catchment Group (MCCG) is a volunteer action group, aiming to conserve & improve the natural environment of our catchment on both private & public land.

Chairman: Jim Pope

Secretary: Sanja Oldridge

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The popular MCCG Photography Competition would not be possible without the generous support of our sponsors and donors. Thank you to Brookfield Produce, Cr Kate Richards (Councillor for Pullenvale Ward), Kenmore Bridge Club, Kenmore Village, Dr Christian Rowan MP (Member for Moggill), The Pet Chalet, and Pisces Enterprises.

### Meet the Mammals of Moggill Creek

#### The MCCG website goes from strength to strength—thanks to the hard work of our Website Editor, Michelle Johnston. Here's more on the latest website initiative.

We are very excited about the latest <u>MCCG website</u> field guide, "*Mammals found in the Moggill Creek Catchment.*" To our knowledge, this is the first list of its kind. It has been methodically crafted by our own local wildlife photographer, Ed Frazer. There are nearly 50 photos in the list, taken by Ed as well as other MCCG members and residents. Only one of the field guide photos was taken outside the catchment.

The guide includes native fauna of all shapes and sizes, furry and spiny, water-dwelling mammals — and, of course, ground-dwelling mammals like the Red-necked wallaby with her joey (*see front cover*).

Some of the photos are of nocturnal animals, taken with a camera trap at night. We also have images of feral animals, including foxes, dingos, and deer.

You'll find the list in the <u>Catchment Field Guides</u> menu on our home page. Each listing has a description of the animal, with details of the food it eats and localised information. Don't forget you can click on each thumbnail image to display a larger picture.

The result is a comprehensive list of mammals living in our catchment. Take a look! You will be familiar with many of the animals but there may be a few that you can't identify. Michelle Johnston

*PS*: We'd like to build our list. Email photos to share direct to Ed Frazer (<u>edfrazer@piscesenterprises.com</u>).

### Help Needed Now

Succession continues to be a major issue for the MCCG. Our Treasurer steps down at the November AGM, and we now also need a Secretary. This is an opportunity for YOU!!

We live in the city now, and I feel that now is the right time to move on. I have really enjoyed being able to support the MCCG by acting as the volunteer Treasurer. The Group has gone from strength-tostrength, making a big difference to the local environment and acting as a focal point for bushcare and community activity. During my time as Treasurer, I have met some really great people, and enjoyed every moment of my role (well, almost every moment). But I feel that after 12 years it is best I focus

on other voluntary activity, closer to my new home. This creates a great opportunity for a finance-minded person to join the Committee at the November AGM. The role would suit most of our Members. You just need to have a computer and know how to use internet banking. Committee meetings are currently held during a working day, so the role might suit someone who works from home, works part-time, or is retired/about to retire. You don't need to be an accountant or book-keeper, as the accounts are on an easy, cash basis. No Balance Sheet/Assets, just Income and Expenditure-and the majority of transactions are done via EFT. MCCG will provide a copy of Quicken Personal Plus to the incoming Treasurer. The main tasks are to simply enter the details of each transaction, and then print out monthly reports.

This is an ideal time to put your hand up to help out. I can arrange to give as much (or little) training and support as the incoming Treasurer might need. Please contact me by email (joanna.yesberg@gmail.com), or on 0403772866, or for more information. **This isn't a time to be modest. Your catchment group needs you!** Joanwa Yesberg

**STOP PRESS!** We are also seeking a new Secretary, as Sanja Oldridge has to stand down for personal reasons. If you can spare about half a day per week (& are familiar with using email and MS Word), please contact our Chairman, Jim Pope, ASAP via email: j.pope@qut.edu.au

### Bird Survey: MCCG Section 12

Jim Butler is well-known for his knowledge about all things ornithological—a birder *par excellence*. This report, on the Section 12 Bird Survey, is a fascinating read.

*Section* 12 of the Moggill Creek Catchment is a riparian vegetation zone, beside Gap Creek, which flows



Pictured: Our survey says.... 4%. Two Tawney Frogmouths (*picture credit: Carson Dron*).

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through Deerhurst Street Park. The Section is a significant animal corridor between the north-eastern section of Brisbane Forest Park (Mt Coot-tha) and the Catchment forests in the west. The public section is about a kilometre long-averaging 60m wide and stretching from Brookfield Road to Gap Creek Road. The entry points are from Kookaburra St. and Brookfield Rd. with plentiful walking tracks. The MCCG has been actively revegetating this Section for 15 years. In addition, adjacent to the Park, there are nine Land for Wildlife properties which are being cleared of weeds and revegetated. These properties provide additional cover and resources for birds and other wildlife. The mud map (right) shows Section 12. The star marks the centre of the 2ha survey area.

#### Section 12: Deerhurst Street Park and Gap Creek Bird List (common names)

100%: Lewin's Honeyeater. 96%: Rainbow Lorikeet. 81%: Grey Shrike-thrush. 77%: Torresian Crow. 73%: Eastern Whipbird. 69%: Bar-shouldered Dove, Australian Magpie. 65%: Australian Brush-turkey, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Australasian Figbird. 61%: Olive-backed Oriole, Pied Butcherbird, Grey Butcherbird. 58%: Laughing Kookaburra, Noisy Friarbird, Striated Pardalote, White-browed Scrubwren. 54%: White-throated Treecreeper, Golden Whistler. 50%: Peaceful Dove, Scarlet Honeyeater, Eastern Yellow Robin. 46%: Brown Thornbill, Cicadabird, Pied Currawong. 42%: Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Sacred Kingfisher, Noisy Miner, Red-browed Finch. 38%: Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove, Australian King-Parrot, Spangled Drongo. 35%: Wonga Pigeon, Brown Honeyeater, Grey Fantail. 31%: Fan-tailed Cuckoo. 27%: Silvereye. 23%: Little Lorikeet, Yellowfaced Honeyeater, Pheasant Coucal. 19%: Eastern Koel, Pale-headed Rosella, White-throated Honeyeater, Large-billed Scrubwren. 15%: Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Variegated Fairy-wren, Little Friarbird, Rufous Fantail, Magpie-lark, Black-faced Monarch. 12%: Brush Cuckoo, Rainbow Bee-eater, Welcome Swallow. 8%: White-headed Pigeon, Wompoo Fruit-Dove, Channel-billed Cuckoo, Little Corella, Blue-faced Honeyeater, Black-faced Cuckooshrike, Little Shrike-thrush, Russet-tailed Thrush. 4%: Brown-capped Emerald-Dove, Superb Fruit-Dove, Tawny Frogmouth, Masked Lapwing, Cattle Egret, Australian White Ibis, White-throated Gerygone, Varied Sittella, Rufous Whistler, Willie Wagtail, Spectacled Monarch, Rose Robin, Mistletoebird.

*Note*: % figure is the reporting rate.

The Bird Survey design complied with the BirdLife Australia preferred method: while walking a 2-hectare bush plot for 20 minutes, a species list (and number of each species) is compiled. The survey is then later submitted to **BirdLife Australia** for collation and future analysis. This method allows BirdLife Australia to measure bird species population and occurrence Trend values within our Catchment. 18 surveys were conducted at monthly intervals between November 2016 and April 2018. GAP CREEK RD

In total, the Bird Survey recorded 75 bird species in the Park (see the BROOKE Bird List, left). If you want to know more about any of these birds, consult the **Digital Field Guides** on the MCCG website. There you will find photos, field notes, and descriptions of every bird ever recorded in the Catchment. MOGGILL RD

BROOKFIELD

This survey was requested by Michael Humphrey, the Leader of Section 12, to assist with funding proposals. If the Leader of any other Section believes that a similar bird survey would be of benefit I would welcome a request. I would appreciate survey help from other birders (and am happy to help you also). I would like to commend and thank those birders who contributed to this project: Ian Muirhead, Kay McLennan, and Chris Read. Jim Butler



### **Fantastic Facebook Feat**

The MCCG celebrated another milestone in August 2018—our 500<sup>th</sup> follower on Facebook. This would not have been possible without the hard work of Janine Nicklin, our Facebook Editor (and of course also thanks to all of the contributors to our Facebook page). This is a great way for Members to share information about our local environment with the wider community (and between us). If you haven't yet 'followed' the MCCG, why not have a look? Visit https://www.facebook.com/moggillcreek/.

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### **Our Native Moreton Bay Fig**

Michelle Johnston, with the support of many of our fellow MCCG Members, continues to provide a great wealth of information on the MCCG website. Perhaps, like me, you are an avid reader of the MCCG Bush Bites? Thanks to Michelle for providing this latest piece for the Newsletter—this time from Ed Frazer.

Our native Moreton Bay Fig (*Ficus macrophylla*) makes a wonderful habitat and is one of the best food resources for many birds, insects, and flying foxes. We have several, but one, deep in an area of native bush, has not been touched since it was logged for Red Cedar about 100 years ago. It is a beauty, producing a huge crop of fruit in February and in winter. This tree started life as a seed deposited by a bird on a tree the



Pictures: Barred Cuckoo-shrike (above) and Olive-backed Oriole (below, feeding on a Moreton Bay Fig). *Ed Fraser* 

loggers probably didn't want. The seedling grew, strangling the now-dead Eucalyptus (the dead tree, base, about 80cm diameter, is still visible). The Moreton Bay Fig now has a massive buttress (at chest height, more than a metre through), and in total the tree is over 30m tall. With a huge canopy it stands clear of other trees.

The Fig attracts masses of flying foxes that come in at dusk and feed noisily right through the night. During the day the birds take over. The range is impressive. Most interesting to me, and to my birder friends, is a pair of the rarely-seen Barred Cuckoo-shrikes which comes in to feed on the fruit. First, they quickly feed on several of the orange fruit. Then they move to a horizontal branch, on a nearby tree, where they sit quietly while they digest their meal. After about 25 minutes, they return to the fig to feed.

The Barred Cuckoo-shrikes (*left*) are joined by many Figbirds, Orioles (*below*), Rose-crowned Fruit Doves, Currawongs and Lewin's Honeyeaters. Sometimes a flock of Topknot Pigeons comes in, and also the odd Bowerbird. Underneath the fig, Emerald Doves,



Wonga Pigeons and Brush Turkeys pick up the figs dropped by the birds above them. Even when the Fig is not fruiting it provides a safe habitat for a lot of small birds (including Superb Fairy-wrens, Spectacled Monarchs and Willie Wagtails) and Possums play in its branches. The figs have an interesting pollination method involving Fig Wasps and there are a few moth caterpillars and a Longhorn Beetle found on the foliage. Ed Frazer

# Seeds: Large-leaved Wilkiea (Wilkiea macrophylla)

Large-leaved wilkiea is a shrub growing to a height of about 4 m. It is commonly found as an understorey plant in rainforests, including Smith's Rainforest Nature Refuge in Upper Brookfield. Leaves are opposite, up to 20cm long and 7cm wide, very stiff and usually with a few teeth along the margins (*see Bryans' picture, below*). Leaves are extraordinarily longlived. A 1986 study by R. W. Rogers and A. Barnes,



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"Leaf demography of the rainforest shrub Wilkiea macrophylla and its implications for the ecology of foliicolous lichens, showed that most leaves survive for three years (and they estimated that the leaf mean half-life was 6.8 years).

Plants are dioecious, having separate male and female plants. Female flowers are 4-5mm in diameter, the male flowers 2-3mm. The fruit is black, up to 1.8cm long (*see picture, page 5*). Plants are very slow growing. My single plant is probably 15 years old and is about 2.5m tall. It has fruited twice, despite my not being aware of any male plants within about 100m.

Large-leaved wilkiea is a food plant for the Regent Skipper butterfly, reportedly locally common in areas of coastal northern NSW and southern Queensland. According to Don Sands, this butterfly occurred in the Moggill Conservation Park and Chapel Hill at least until the 1990s. It has not been recorded in the Moggill Creek catchment, although it would probably have been there before rainforest clearing. The MCCG is working with Cody Hochen, *Land for Wildlife* officer, to encourage planting of large-leaved wilkiea with the aim of bringing back this butterfly.

The genus Wilkiea includes about six species endemic to Australia (with three in SE Queensland. Largeleaved wilkiea occurs naturally from Cooktown south to the Richmond River in NSW. Bryan Hacker

# Weeds: Anzac Tree Daisy (Montanoa hibiscifolia)

Anzac tree daisy is a weedy shrub, growing to a height of about 5m, that is causing increasing concern in our catchment. In May and June this year it was particularly evident in parts of Upper Brookfield and Brookfield, with large heads of white and yellow daisy-flowers being very obvious (see picture, front cover). At other times of the year it may easily be mistaken for the more common Japanese sunflower (*Tithonia diversifolia*), which is also a weed.

Leaves of Anzac tree daisy are softly hairy and deeply lobed, and can be as large as 25cm by 25cm (*see front cover picture*). Flowers are typical daisy-type flowerclusters about 40mm across, occurring in large heads, and appear in autumn. Like a majority of our environmental weeds, it would almost certainly have been introduced as an ornamental.

This species is a native of Mexico and Central America. In Australia, it has been recorded from the NSW border north to about Cairns. Despite its weedy nature it is not a state declared weed. In Brisbane it is listed as <u>Class E – early detection and eradication</u>.

Our Catchment Group, appreciating the threat posed by this species, has been successful in obtaining a Community Sustainability Action grant, exceeding \$14,000, to help prevent its further spread. This money is being directed towards attacking an infestation in Upper Wonga Creek. Hopefully landholders in other areas where this species is invading will also take steps to control it, before it's too late. Bryan Hacker

### **Renewal Reminder**

Having 500 MCCG members is wonderful, but please don't forget that your membership has to be renewed each year. Memberships for 2019 become due in November, which means that every member is due to pay their \$20 renewal fee. *Please note* that this does not apply to members who have joined us very recently.

Fees can be paid at our Brookfield Hall AGM (Monday 26<sup>th</sup> November, 2018).

Belonging to a volunteer group aiming to conserve and restore the natural environment on private and public land may bring its own rewards, but many members appreciate the special advantages of membership we offer. These include: this quarterly Newsletter, free locally native plants from our volunteer Nursery, advice from our Landcare Advisor, and interesting talks at the Cottage (and at public meetings). **Please don't forget to renew**.

Dale Borgelt

### Platypus Performance: Lucky 13th?

## Our MCCG Platypus Survey Coordinator reports on another successful survey.

It was a damp and misty pre-dawn morning, on 9<sup>th</sup> September, when 47 volunteers looked for the elusive platypus at their assigned sites.

Each year the same observation points are monitored, incorporating Gold Creek and Moggill Creek (upper and lower). The annual MCCG platypus survey has now been running for 13 years and we have never *not* seen a platypus! The numbers have ranged from <10 to >20 platypus observed. As in all years, the 2018 survey results are likely to be conservative.

This year, seven platypus were seen, including one on private land, pictured on the front cover (congratulations to the landowner for their optimal platypus habitat, and to John for the great photograph). This is not bad news because: (1) The seven sightings spanned the catchment—from upper Gold Creek (just below the dam) to Upper Brookfield and downstream to lower Brookfield/Kenmore—indicating that platypus are

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persisting across the catchment and their overall range is not contracting; (2) At two sites there was a strong suspicion that two platypus, not one, were seen; (3) At three further sites, the observers strongly suspected they saw a platypus, but were not confident to report the sighting as a positive; (4) At numerous sites that yielded a negative result for this year's survey, platypus have recently been seen by local residents. In addition to being an educational and enjoyable annual activity for the local community, the MCCG snapshot survey results feed into Wildlife Queensland's *PlatypusWatch* program (for more, visit <u>http://wildlife.org.au/platypuswatch/</u>). They are also currently informing a University of Queensland platypus PhD project.

If we want to protect this shy and unique animal in our catchment, the take-home messages remain the same. The key threats to platypus survival are: **Pollution** into creeks from chemical runoff, horses and cattle; **Water extraction** from creeks (pumping); **Yabby traps** set in creeks; **Loss of habitat**, such as creekside vegetation clearing; **Erosion**, caused by bare creek banks; *and* **Disturbance** in creeks, from human/pet recreational activities.

Thank you to our survey leaders (Tamielle, Judy, Leonie and Damien) for again doing an excellent job leading volunteers to their sites in the dark. Thanks also to volunteer cooks Jimmy, Alan and Sonja for a delicious post-survey breakfast, and to the Brookfield Pony Club for kindly providing their kitchen facilities. Finally, thanks to the platypus observers, without whom the survey would not have been possible! Christine Hosking

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### Froggin' Around: Spring Thoughts

### Phil Bird shares some more froggin' thoughts, with particular reference to the impact of cane toads.

Has spring come early in 2018? I am just starting to hear tusked frogs and eastern sedge frogs (see picture, back cover, overleaf) calling from the dam. Most properties with dams or adjoining a creek would have a number of species. We have a sizeable number of the sixteen frog species known to be in our catchment.

Frogs regularly heard from our dam include tusked frogs, eastern sedge frogs, emerald spotted tree frogs and clicking froglets. During the summer rains, there are green tree frogs, graceful tree frogs and southern orange-eyed tree frogs. Around the creek are stoney creek frogs, broad-palmed rocket frogs and great barred frogs. Sadly, there are also cane toads, which are regularly removed from the property, but are now part of the local environment.

I am often asked what impact cane toads have on our native frogs. Gordon Grigg, and co-workers, showed that during a ten-year monitoring study of calls at the Roper River in the Northern Territory almost all frogs detected initially were still there, 10 years after the invasion of cane toads (Taylor et al 2016). The impact on predatory animals such as the varanids lizard and quolls maybe more significant. We have laced monitors wandering around the property, but quolls are locally extinct. However, it appears that, on this one property, the impact on native frogs and lacemonitors by cane toads seems minimal.

Does this happen throughout our catchment? What would the impact be on our native frogs and predators if we trap cane toad tadpoles and remove adults? We will soon hold a Cane Toad Challenge (CTC) workshop on trapping cane toad tadpoles (in November—watch the Facebook page for details). We then hope to develop a project with MCCG community members, to determine the effect of removal of cane toads. Phíl Bírd

### **Future Environmental Carers**

In May, we welcomed the MCCG's youngest member when 10-year-old Liam Kelly-Crawford joined us. Liam is already actively-involved with the MCCG. Liam helped where he could, and fully-participated in the *Kids' Day at the Cottage*. In July, Liam gave the vote of thanks to Martin Fingland, following Martin's

excellent mid-year talk, "What carnivores tell us about the health of our environment" (see Dale's picture right, of Liam and Martin).

Liam has joined many youngsters who are actively interested in our local environment (and in trying to help). *Kids' Day at the Cottage* has quite a few regular enthusiasts, and we are also grateful for the



help of DJ and Nicky Childs who assist with newsletter packaging (for members who choose paper copies—*pictured page one*). Many young people enjoy finding pictures of friends—or of themselves when even younger—on our posters. Hopefully they will also enjoy and value the natural world, and be future environmental carers. Date Borgelt

### Removing Chinese Elms (*Celtis* sinensis) from the Riparian Zones of Moggill Creek

On the basis of the evidence of tree rings, elms invaded Moggill Creek about 30 years ago. In response to Brisbane's favourable climate, they grew rapidly along the creek banks. The trees are rarely more than 20-30m high, but with a root system well able to withstand flash floods, they quickly destroy native vegetation.



**Picture: Berries of the elm** (*Elm pictures this page all courtesy Malcolm Frost*).

Moreover, mature trees produce thousands of small pink berries (see picture, above) which are spread down the creek banks by birds, sometimes to fall 20m to 30m around the tree trunks. Dense arrays of saplings (see picture, below) then develop, preventing the growth of native vegetation.



Picture: An example of how Celtis sinensis develops a dense array of saplings.

If maintenance continues over a wide area for a few years, *Celtis sinensis* can be eradicated from a creek bank (in contrast to, for example, Glycine, Cats Claw or Madeira vine, which probably never can be completely eradicated). However, when large trees are removed, care must be taken to protect banks from erosion until the native plants become established. If a large elm close by the creek is cut down, its roots will remain strong for many years and this will allow native plants to grow around the cut trunk (see picture, below). There are many native trees which are as effective in protecting creek banks, but they are usually slower growing.

Now that many of these elms are mature, some argue that they should be left because mature trees contain higher levels of carbon. But, through the wide spread of saplings, these trees have an extensive footprint—in contrast to eucalypts and other natives which can grow close together, taller, and more quickly. See for example the six huge *E. teritercornis* on the eastern edge of Rowena Park. In less than 15 years, restoration of creek banks, freed from elms, could sequester carbon in amounts far exceeding that captured by old elms *and* would at the same time contain a diverse selection of native flora.



Picture: Surviving even when felled.

This *Celtis sinensis* (above), adjacent to Moggill Creek, was felled by Brisbane City Council in early 2013. Note that, in spite of pruning, it is still growing vigorously. Since the tree was felled, the creek has been subjected to severe flash flooding which has not affected the tree or its roots. The stump can therefore be used to protect bank erosion while native plants are maturing. Of equal importance, the tree is no longer producing any seeds. *Malcolw Frost* 

### Froggin' Around....

See page 7, inside, for more of Phil's Froggin' (pictured, right, an eastern sedge frog (*Litoria falax*)

