

MOGGILL CREEK CATCHMENT GROUP

P.O. Box 657, Kenmore. 4069

www.moggillcreek.org.au

MCCG NEWSLETTER: Spring 2019

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ABOVE: Releasing a sub-adult female platypus at Gold Creek. To read more about a day (and a night) of a platypus ecologist, *turn to page 4* for a fascinating article by Tamielle Brunt.

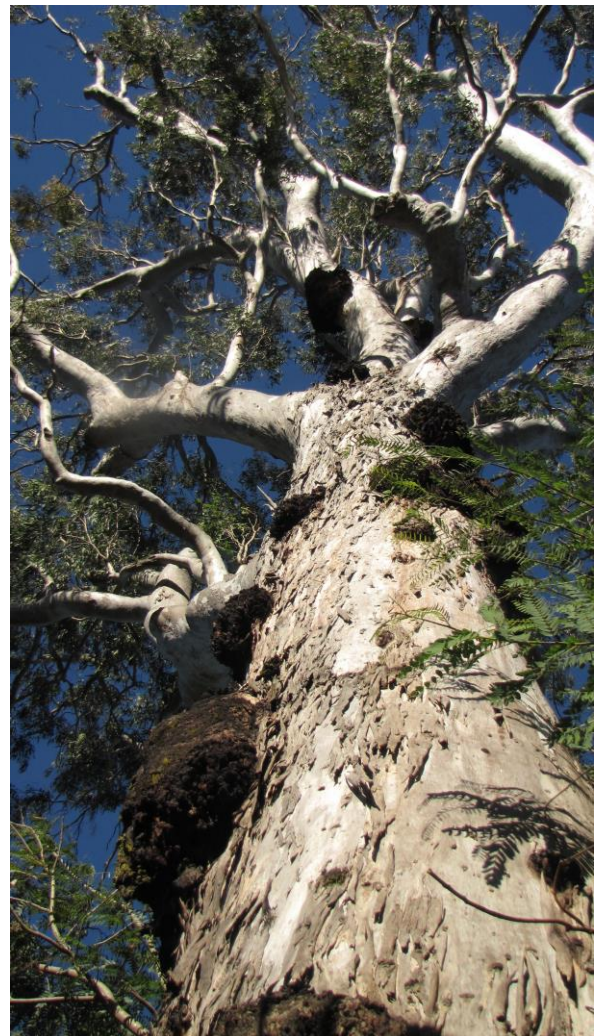


LEFT: Rebecca Bain, Photography Competition Coordinator, out and about with Tamielle Brunt during a recent platypus survey. For more about platypus surveys, *turn to page 4* (or visit our website for Rebecca's report on the experience). And for an update on the 2019 MCCG Photography Competition (including those all-important entry dates), *turn to page 7*.

RIGHT: Have you seen Tallowwood 'foam'? Bryan Hacker comments that this "often happens following a rain event, on several trees of this species" on their property. *Turn to page 3* for Ed Frazer's Tallowwood article.



FAR RIGHT: The iconic native Forest Red Gum (*E. tereticornis*). For Bryan Hacker's *Seeds and Weeds*, *turn to pages 3-4*. Both tree photos courtesy Bryan Hacker



Chairman's report

Recruiting new volunteers is an ongoing challenge for bush-care groups, and the MCCG is no exception. There are always far more tasks in urgent need of attention than we have volunteers to carry them out. Recently we have become involved in some new initiatives aimed at supplementing our 'on-ground' resources.

In a partnership with Challenge Employment and Training and Brisbane City Council (BCC), we have obtained funding from the Queensland Government to provide practical experience in bush-care work for a group of around 15 people as part of the Certificate 1 in Conservation and Land Management (CALM). They will work with us, for 20 weeks full-time, on a project aimed at removing weeds and restoring bushland around Rowena St. Park. This area, adjacent to Rafting Ground Reserve in the lower Moggill Creek Catchment, has serious weed-infestation and is subject to erosion. The participants will benefit from enhancing their qualifications and practical skills, while at the same time benefiting the environment. Once the project is completed, and with support from Habitat Brisbane, we hope to establish a new bush-care group to carry on the good work in that area.

Please contact me if you are interested in participating in such a group.

We are also exploring a possible partnership with Queensland Corrective Services, to host bush-care working bees for volunteers under Community Service Orders. We believe that this would be a way to target the removal of Cat's Claw Creeper from some areas in the upper reaches of Moggill Creek. It could provide practical experience for the participants, while achieving significant environmental outcomes.

Finally, with assistance from Bryan Hacker, I recently hosted a bush-care working bee for a group of 14 QUT Environmental Science/Engineering students (*pictured below, photo taken by Andrew Wills*). The event was



organised by Andrew Wills, our BCC Creek Catchment Officer, to provide the students with practical experience of weed identification and removal, use of herbicides, planting techniques, and basic Health & Safety skills. A good time was had by all.

Jim Pope

Editorial

My aim was for this issue to focus on trees—so my particular thanks go to the contributors who rose to this challenge.

I do hope that every MCCG Member will take up the opportunity to provide something for future issues. News, articles, Bush Care Group reports, stories about your garden, letters, photographs and drawings are all *very* welcome.

Please be assured, if you send me an article you have an excellent chance of seeing it in print.

The absolute deadline for the next issue is 15 November 2019. Why not get writing **now**? I am sure EVERYONE has at least 100 words they can share ... so [email me](mailto:mccgeditor@outlook.com.au) soon.

Cathi

[\(mccgeditor@outlook.com.au\)](mailto:mccgeditor@outlook.com.au)

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: [Kathleen Walmsley](#)

P.O. Box 657, Kenmore 4069

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Newsletter Editor: Dr Catherine A. Lawrence (Cathi)

Articles of interest to Members are *always* welcome. The Editor reserves the right not to publish any item submitted. Material will be edited for clarity, style and space. The decision of the Editor is final, and no correspondence will be entered into. **Please email your ideas direct to mccgeditor@outlook.com.au.**

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Trees

Suggesting a feature on trees for this issue brought the realisation as to just quite how wide and deep (literally and metaphorically) the subject of trees can be. The BBC has a fascinating piece by Tiffany Francis-Baker about the [role of forests in the British psyche](#), while a recent fad for sticking coins in trees is causing great concern in [Scotland](#). Closer to home, in this issue, we have an item from Ed Frazer about the local history of Tallowwood, and information from Bryan Hacker about trees both as weeds and as much-loved natives. I hope that many members have been responding to Michelle Johnston's request for information on significant trees in our catchment (turn to page 6 of the Winter 2019 newsletter for more, or email the MCCG Secretary with information about the tree you wish to nominate for the MCCG Register). I look forward to future updates on the Register—and to hearing from Members in future issues about favourite trees, tree-planting, and more... **YOU can always email the Editor with your own stories for publication.** Cathi

Tallowwood

In the 1840s, early Moggill Creek Catchment timber getters were mainly harvesting softwoods (Red Cedar and Hoop Pine). Only much later was there interest in many hardwood species, such as Spotted Gum, Ironbark, and Turpentine. Tallowwood was the exception, as it was always considered to be worth their effort to harvest. So it is wonderful that there are a number of Tallowwood trees throughout NSW & QLD that are thought to be more than 400 years old. Tallowwood is a durable, even timber, with no gum bleeds and an oily characteristic—which meant it was in high demand for dance floors throughout the world. Dancing was very popular in the mid-nineteenth century, and every small settlement had a church hall that hosted regular Saturday night dances.



The dance floors were treated with “Pops”—a mixture of sawdust and kerosene which produced a slippery surface so that dancers could glide effortlessly across the honey-coloured Tallowwood floor. More recently, the wood has been used for outside decking, sleepers and

power pole crossbars, as it is termite resistant and very long-lasting.

The tree gets its name from its greasy texture when cut (which is reminiscent of tallow). It grows to about 40m, and is easily recognised by its slightly spongy, rough bark that goes all the way up the tree. A Koala food tree, it has very small gum-nuts, and the flowers produce a nectar that is highly-prized by beekeepers. Tallowwood is still quite common in the catchment (see picture, below left, by Bryan Hacker). The tree is also acknowledged in the local area with the naming of Tallowwood Close (Chapel Hill) and Tallowwood Drive [sic] (Pullenvale). Ed Frazer

Seeds: Forest red gum (*Eucalyptus tereticornis*)

If you are looking for a significant or iconic tree, in our area there is a good chance that a forest red gum (also known as the Queensland blue gum) or one of the fig species will be your choice. The front-cover photo is of a particularly magnificent forest red gum located to the east side of Moggill Road (where it crosses Moggill Creek, about 2km south west of Kenmore Village). I estimate it to be about 40m high, with a trunk diameter at breast height (DBH) of about 2m. It must surely be well over 200 years old, and probably over 300 years old. It is apparently in good health, and could look forward to another century or two of life. Forest red gum occurs naturally from southern Papua New Guinea to south-eastern Victoria. In our catchment it would be the eucalypt of choice for growing in riparian situations. It also grows naturally in upland areas in our catchment—together with various other eucalypt species—where it is unlikely to stand out as being significantly larger than other species. It may readily be distinguished from other eucalypts in our catchment in that it has a smooth trunk (generally irregularly white to grey in colour), with the bark shedding in irregular sheets, and the base of the tree often rough or scaly. The forest red gum is a favoured koala food tree particularly along the banks of the Brisbane River. Bryan Hacker

Weeds: Tipuana (*Tipuana tipu*)

When considering weeds, many readers would think of smaller plants, such as cobbler's pegs or perhaps lantana. Indeed, the word 'weed' is identified in my dictionary as a 'wild herb growing where it is not wanted.' However, in much of Australia and probably elsewhere too, 'weed' has come to include any plant

growing where it is not wanted, including trees. Tree species may take several decades from first being introduced to an area to becoming a serious threat to native ecosystems.

The best known weed tree in our catchment is Chinese celtis, *Celtis sinensis*. However, the tipuana (*Tipuana tipu*), family Fabaceae, originating in South America, is becoming a weed tree of increasing concern, and is frequently found along roadsides. Tipuana has often been planted in gardens, where it develops into a handsome shade tree, with spreading branches and attractive yellow flowers (see photo, below).



Tipuana has many of the necessary attributes for becoming a weed, including producing large numbers of winged fruit (technically samaras) containing 1-3 seeds, the wing providing a ready means for dispersal, competitive ability with nearby flora, a lack of obvious predators and apparently a tolerance of comparatively infertile conditions. It is also listed as fixing atmospheric nitrogen, in common with other members of the Fabaceae family. This species was listed in 2000 on the 'National Environmental Alert List,' and continues to be a threat.

Bryan Hacker

A Day/Night in the Life of a Platypus Ecologist

Did you help with the 8th September Platypus Survey? Drop the Editor a note with your reflections and reports about the experience – and photos (15 November 2019 deadline). And now, for more things platypus, here is a fascinating *photo essay* from Tamielle Brunt, about just one 'day' at work.

For a platypus ecologist the excitement of the day starts at night, as platypuses are mostly active at night – foraging, and moving within waterways under the cover of darkness. With the ute full of specialized

fyke nets (pictured, below) and other equipment, our first step is to head out in the afternoon to set up multiple sites. Then we wait for darkness, for the action to begin.

Fyke nets have wings spanning the width of the creek, and a windsock with one-way baffles to capture a platypus safely. Anchoring nets to the bank with stakes secures the windsock end, enabling the platypus to surface safely while waiting to be released.



After dinner, the anticipation builds as we head out for the first check of the night (each net is checked multiple times throughout the night for platypuses). As you approach the nets from the creek bank, by headtorch light we may see the nets moving from capturing something. Turtle? Eel? Fish? Or a platypus? With the waders back on, I slip into the ever-cooling water to investigate further. We lean in and get close to look into the net to check for the culprit (see picture, below, of a volunteer – Pip – helping to check the nets throughout the night).



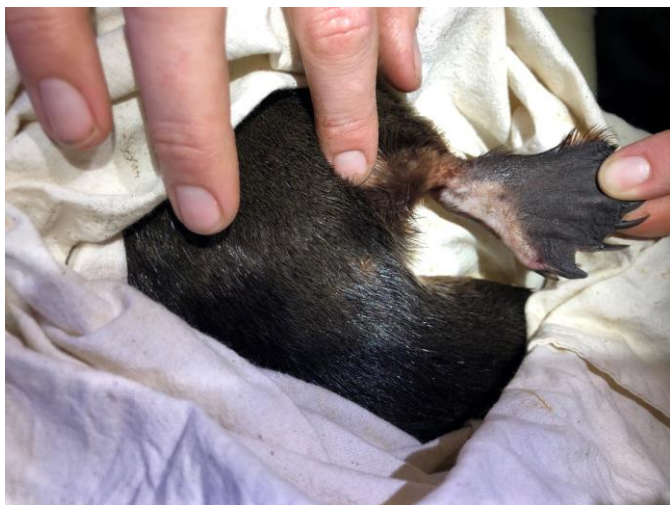
This first check on this particular night in Gold Creek resulted in the first female of the season being captured. Seeing the sleek brown fur shimmering in the light always makes me smile. Undoing the 'cod' end of the windsock and readying the calico bag, I manoeuvre the platypus out of the net by grasping the tail, and then place it into the bag. Non-target species

(fish, turtles, eels) are released straight back, and their presence recorded.

Platypuses are handled by their thick tail; it doesn't hurt them, and saves you from the possible venomous spur that a male can embed into you.



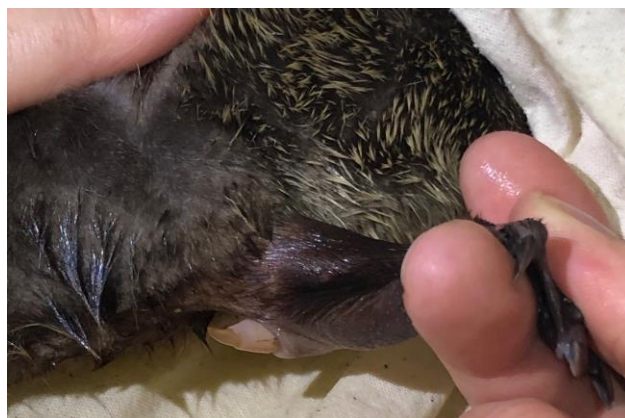
Once in the calico bag, the platypus is quietly placed on a foam pad to process its details: age, weight, sex, as well as measuring length and bill—see photo, above, of bill measurement using digital calipers—and microchip (just like a cat and dog). A small tissue sample is also taken from the webbing of their hind foot. The DNA from tissue samples is analysed, to determine the individual genetic relationship with other platypuses in the area, and helps determine their 'genetic fitness'. It is possible to score the body condition of a platypus using their tail fat (the Tail Fat Index). The more solid and ridged the tail, the fatter the tail and the 'better' the condition of the platypus. All of this information helps scientists identify the overall health of the population—and to research specific population data, such as relative abundance.



Picture: Female platypuses don't have a spur on their hind foot (ALL pictures credit Tamielle Brunt).

The whole process lasts about 20 minutes, before the animal is then returned to the water. The calico bag is placed at the water's edge and the platypus waddles out and slides back into the water (see the picture on the front cover of the newsletter—and then head to MCCG website for the video).

On this particular night, the second check of the night was successful too. What excitement! This time a sub-adult female at 730g. Two to three platypuses captured within a night is a great result. However, sometimes one or none will be captured. Repeat surveying is always required, to increase the chances or capturing other individuals and building the data. The final check of the nets gets me out of bed before dawn. A quick coffee to wake me up and I'm back to the sites, eagerly awaiting a final platypus (on this occasion, unfortunately, not 3/3 for the night). The nets are then packed up, ready for another survey.



Pictured: Sub-adult (9 – 12months) male spur, Moggill Creek (picture: Tamielle Brunt).

I also surveyed four sites in mid and lower Moggill, and a sub-adult male was captured. The age of a male can be determined by the growth of their spur class (they have a sheath that wears away as they get older). Platypuses don't become sexually active until two years of age, so it is great to see that there are surviving younger platypuses in the system that will hopefully contribute to a growing, healthy population. This research method, in conjunction with the annual MCCG platypus survey, allows detailed information to be collected on the species in the area. This data enables specific management strategies to be developed to conserve this iconic Australian into the future. Protecting platypus habitats will also enhance the biodiversity of freshwater ecosystems.

The survey season finishes up mid-September, as the females make their nest and incubate their young. So I am now looking forward to doing it all again next year!

Tamielle Brunt

BCC Catchment Tour



Andrew Wilson is pictured, above (image supplied by Jim Pope), talking about the operation of the MCCG Native Plant Nursery at the June 2019 BCC-organised Moggill Creek Catchment tour. For more on the tour, attended by around 30 bushcare volunteers from around Brisbane (and by representatives from BCC's Habitat Brisbane and Land for Wildlife programs), visit our website (<http://www.moggillcreek.org/news-1/moggill-creek-catchment-tour-2019>).

Froggin' Around: Vulnerable Frogs

Did you know that 7th September, 2019, was Threatened Species Day? While some of our tree frogs are not listed as *threatened*, many are now *vulnerable*. Of the 17 species of frogs listed in our catchment, a number are considered common, but others are listed as *vulnerable*. While we can see and hear them, frogs can live for quite a few years, some up to 20—but this does not mean they are breeding.

Present common frog species (some of which are



Picture: Graceful tree frog (*Litoria gracielienta*).
Picture credit: QFS.

abundant) are the terrestrial and permanent water breeders. Tree frogs are temporary water breeders, listed as present but questionably common.

The eastern sedge frog (*Litoria fallax*) is one of the very common frogs around dams, as it breeds in permanent water. The Graceful tree frog (*Litoria gracielienta*) is the Queensland Faunal emblem—the green and gold of our frog world. Graceful tree frogs use temporary water to breed, requiring 4-6 weeks of water for eggs to development as young metamorphs.



The common green tree frog (*Litoria caerulea*)—pictured above, picture credit: Ric Natrass—is present, but not common. In the '80s, Martin and Hillary Boscott (of St Lucia) ran a "Restore the green tree frog project," aiming to have a green tree frog in every Brisbane letterbox. In 1981, they collected 50 tadpoles from their swimming pool. Reared on boiled lettuce, the young metamorphs were then released in their garden, and eventually the returning adults bred in their pool. They gave out tadpoles to folks turning up with buckets. By 1984, 5,000 people had collected tadpoles. By the end of their project, estimates suggested over two million frogs had been released to many suburbs in Brisbane (and into surrounding areas of Southeast Queensland).

So why are the green tree frogs not so prevalent now? One reason is breeding. The Boscott's also distributed striped marsh frog tadpoles, which have had great success because they are generalist, terrestrial breeders (breeding most of the year in permanent water).

Another more vulnerable frog in our catchment is the red-eyed tree frog (*Litoria chloris*). All temporary water frogs—that is, those that breed in drains, swales and soaks that fill after heavy rain—are vulnerable. They require follow-up rain and sites protected from development and fragmentation. Looking ahead, the current changes in our rainfall patterns can only have a significant impact on our local frogs. **Phil Bird**

Bush Bites: Triangulating Powerful Owls

Michelle Johnston's marvellous *Bush Bites* initiative continues to attract some wonderful stories to our website. If you haven't yet had the opportunity to read Ian Muirhead and Jim Butler's "Locating



powerful owls by triangulation" then I'd suggest you visit <http://www.moggillcreek.org/bush-bites/locating-powerful-owls-by-triangulation-jim-butler>. It's a fascinating article, illustrated with this captivating photo (above) by Chris Read.

If you have a story to share, do [email the newsletter editor](#), or [contact Michelle](#).

Opting to receive this newsletter as 'email only' saves valuable MCCG funds, is quicker, and saves paper! Put 'newsletter by email only' in the subject line, and confirm your name and postal address to mccgsecretary@live.com.au.

Kids Day 2020



The Kenmore Girl Guide Brownies so enjoy our annual MCCG Kids' Day at the Cottage that they generously have donated \$50 towards the 2020 event (pictured with Kids' Day organiser, Dale Borgelt).

MCCG Photography Competition

Were you inspired to take some pictures of local wildlife, following the excellent 19th September public talk by Ed Frazer? Our 'Photo Comp' has over \$1,300 in cash prizes, thanks to generous local sponsors (The Pet Chalet, Cafe Fiori, Kenmore Bridge Club, Kenmore Village, Pisces Enterprises, Dr Christian Rowan MP, Cr Kate Richards, & Amcal Chemist Kenmore).

Entry is open to all members of the public, the young and the not-so-young. 2019 has two firsts: a *Digital Young Persons* category (yes, digital) for which there is no entry fee (yes, that's right, no entry fee).

Key dates for your diary: Open entries: Submissions due on Saturday 19 October, 10am-2pm ONLY (submit your entries, together with your form and \$5 per photo fee, at The Trustees' Room, rear of Brookfield Hall, Brookfield Showgrounds). Digital Young Persons: Entries can be submitted 1-18 October (NB: This is only open to a Young Person—Grades 1-6 only). Forms and more information are available at <http://www.moggillcreek.org/activities-events/photography-competition-general>.

Entries will be displayed at Kenmore Village from Monday 21 Oct (prizes presented 2pm Sat 26 Oct).

PS: A Letter to the Editor!

I was delighted to receive a note from Joan Wilkinson, one of our avid readers (and active Members). It sounds as if Joan has been too busy working hard in our Catchment to have time to write an article (one day perhaps, Joan?). But it was lovely to hear that Joan particularly enjoyed hearing about Jim Pope's idea of 'nature pills' (*Winter Newsletter*).

I enjoy volunteering at the MCCG Nursery, which is a source of widely varied local species. My own bushcare site is in Chapel Hill at Greenhill Reservoir, and benefits from the knowledge gained from fellow nursery members. As I am a member of CWCN and SOWN as well as MCCG, I am using the opportunity provided by these groups to restore what I believe to be species once found on the hillsides at the disturbed hilltop in the southern reaches of Mt Coot-tha National Park. The site is one of the headwaters of Witton Creek. Habitat Brisbane (and grants they have made available) has given me years of valuable support.

I particularly enjoyed Jim Pope's (*Winter Newsletter*) report and mention of the 'nature pill.' It should be considered by all as a means of de-stressing our busy lifestyles.

Joan Wilkinson

Moggill Magic: Brian Leahy

Thanks again to Ed Frazer—not only for the idea behind this new newsletter feature, but also for providing another fascinating item about one of the many key people who make the Moggill Catchment so very special.

A visit to Brian Leahy's in the 1980's was a popular outing for me, and for my 10-year-old son Andrew. Not only did Brian know how to make a fish trap and how to find gold by panning in Gold Creek, but also his mother made the best tea and scones in Brookfield.

Brian's father Tom Leahy worked at the Water Board, and in 1940 was appointed as Manager of the Gold Creek Reservoir. Brian, who was two at the time, shared the house (now the MCCG headquarters) with his older sister Ellen and his brothers Tom and Mick.

In the 1940s, during WW2, the reservoir was a strategic site—fitted-out with a search light, it was the base for an anti-aircraft unit. The water was a seldom-used back-up, via a tunnel through to the Enoggera reservoir, as the Mt Crosby Weir had taken over as Brisbane's main water supply. The army used to drive through the hills to Enoggera, which meant it was quite a lively place for Brian and his brothers.

Brian is a great source of history about the Reservoir, and will quash any romantic notions about the dam's construction: *"Dam made of convict bricks? No, it was made on site with local clay."*

In 1942 a bush fire threatened the area. Brian's father was satisfied it could burn itself out, since there were no homes in its path. But a sizeable team of servicemen was despatched to put it out. Their explanation seemed improbable: *"If it gets through to Mt. Coot-tha, Brisbane will blow up!"* But, as Mt Coot-tha was an ammunitions dump at that time, it is perhaps understandable.

Brian's father Tom retired in 1959, when Brian's brother Mick took over as manager at the reservoir. At that time, there were eight dairy farms along Gold Creek Road, and Brian worked on various properties in Brookfield. He bought a tractor and started contract mowing which he continued for the next 45 years (until 2006)—which means there is hardly a property in Brookfield that Brian hasn't worked on!

Consequently, Brian has a great knowledge of the wildlife in the district and the changes that have taken place over the 80 years his family have resided here:

"The area was cleared to a much greater extent in the mid-1900s, with dairy farms up Gold Creek valley and fruit growing in Upper Brookfield. A lot of birds, such as

Babblers, Jacky Winters and Weebills were common then but are not around now," he said.

Sadly, the rare Black-breasted Button Quails are gone now, although they were never common. However, Brian's 5-acre property on Gold Creek Rd is a birder's delight, with Wompoo Fruit Doves, King Parrots, Wonga Pigeons, Emerald Doves, Robins, Double-barred and Red-browed finches, and Scrub-wrens around the house all the time. It is also one of the few places in the district that Pretty-faced Wallabies are still seen.

Brian has a great collection of old photographs of historical importance, depicting activities in early Brookfield. These include photos of the wood-getting industry that opened up Brookfield from the mid-1800s until the last operations by Mick Simpson in 1943. On Brian's front lawn there is a magnificent 50-year-old Kauri tree that deserves a place in our Iconic Tree register.



It is always enlightening to have a chat with Brian. His knowledge of our local area is amazing.

Want to know where the old gold mines were or where to find the Green Nodding-hood orchids? Brian Leahy (pictured, above, picture credit: Ed Frazer) is definitely the go-to man for anything about Brookfield, past or present!

Ed Frazer