



MOGGILL CREEK CATCHMENT GROUP

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MCCG NEWSLETTER: Winter 2020

Your Winter 2020 issue includes:

Bush Bite (p5), Chairman's Report (p2), Diary Dates (p3), *Froggin' Around* (p4), Moggill Magic (p8), New Feature (p3), Nursery Fern & Weeds (p6), Photo Comp 2020 Reminders (p6), **Website HELP STILL NEEDED** (p7).



ABOVE: Get to know your local weeds when not in flower (picture credit: Bryan Hacker). For more about balloon vine, turn to Bryan Hacker's Weeds article, page 6.



ABOVE: For more about Jezebels and Mistletoes (picture of Jezebel caterpillars on the move courtesy Ed Frazer), turn to page 5 for more pictures and information in our latest *Bush Bite*.

BELOW: Who's peeking? Turn to page 3 for more.



ABOVE (L to R): Anna Williamson, Bruce Simeon, and Joan Miller, all happy the nursery is open (Picture: Sam Bayford-Brown). **BELOW** Seeking inspiration for the 2020 'MCCG Photo Comp'? Turn to page 6 for more about the Eastern Spinebill (picture Ed Frazer), and for MCCG's photo comp' reminders.



Chairman's report

"A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity, an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty."

Winston Churchill

Covid-19 has had a dramatic impact on all our lives, and has affected the MCCG in numerous ways. Until recently, our bushcare working bees had to be suspended. We were unable to run a stall in Kenmore Village shopping centre in April, or to participate in the Brookfield Show – and we are also unlikely to be able to hold *Kid's Day at The Cottage* this year.

But, on the positive side, it has been noticeable that larger than usual numbers of people have been getting out into parklands and reserves to enjoy our wonderful natural environment. Many members have also taken the chance to do some planting on their properties, with trees and shrubs sourced free-of-charge from our native plant nursery. (Thanks to Bryan Hacker for keeping the nursery functioning, at least on a basic level). The environment has also benefited from lower levels of air pollution.

While looking forward to the gradual lifting of restrictions, we should endeavour to learn from our experiences in lockdown and carry forward some of these benefits to help create a more sustainable future for all. For example, many of us have learned new skills, such as how to use Zoom and make more effective use of the internet for communication. Hopefully, this may lead to reduced demands for fossil fuels for transport systems in the longer term. *Clean Up Australia*, who had to abandon their annual Clean Up Day this year due to coronavirus, have been promoting the idea that joggers should pick up litter on their daily runs. They have dubbed this 'Plogging.' I have also tried to encourage members of bushcare groups to do some casual weeding, while walking in the bush or along the riparian zones of our parklands. Perhaps this could be called 'Walkeeding' or perhaps 'Weedambling'? It requires an ability to distinguish the main weeds from native vegetation ([see the MCCG website for help](#)). There are benefits to the environment and the individual in this activity, since it improves cardio-fitness, muscle tone (especially with weeds that are hard to pull out!), and mental health.

Fortunately, as I write, following recent relaxations of guidelines, we are now able to run working bees with a maximum of 20 volunteers and with appropriate hygiene and social distancing restrictions. So get *weedambling*, or come along to a working bee soon!

Jim Pope

Editorial

Welcome to both Sam Bayford-Brown and Dr Manda Page; it is great to have new contributors who are sharing information through our Newsletter. It would be wonderful to have a few more new contributors (of any age!). After all, without YOU, future issues of the newsletter will be a little ...like... this....

NEWS WANTED

New authors are ALWAYS welcome. **The absolute deadline for the next issue is 1 September 2020.** I am sure EVERYONE has at least 100 words they could [email to me](#) So get writing **now**. Please.

Don't wait until the deadline is upon us! *Cathi*

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

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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:**

Newsletter Editor: Dr Catherine A. Lawrence (Cathi)

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NEW: Threatened Species Feature

MCCG Members are fortunate to live in an area that attracts so very many experts who are prepared to share some of their knowledge with us. We are looking forward to hearing more from Dr Manda Page.

You many have heard the term 'threatened species,' or other related terms, that suggest a species is endangered or vulnerable. But what does this *mean*



exactly?

I recently moved into the local area, and I have joined the MCCG. In my professional role, I work for the Queensland Government in the protection and recovery of threatened species. I am planning to write a short article, about threatened species, in each issue of our newsletter. In the next

issue I will start by explaining what a threatened species is. Sadly, we have many locally threatened species, which means I will be able to follow that first article with information about their biggest threats and what you can do to help. **Dr Manda Page**

Night Camera Images

A motion-sensor camera set up during last month, on Kenmore State High School grounds, near McKay Brook, produced a number of interesting photographs.

Great to hear that although there was not a huge variety of species, there was a lot of activity during most of the nights that the camera was available. Photographs showed a couple of possums (one being a short-eared possum), bandicoots, and of course at least one Brush Turkey.

Sadly, the photographs also included images of a fox



(*below left*), which Bruce Dymock describes as "disappointing," as it was only a few weeks before that attempts to trap any feral animals in the same area had been unsuccessful." On a more positive note, Bruce also comments that he was "a little surprised that we did not get a photo of an echidna as there are clear signs of activity by one of these in this area."

Richmond Birdwing Butterfly Vines

The MCCG Nursery team would love to see a few more Richmond Birdwing Butterfly Vines planted in our local area.

Members will remember that these vines are only available for sale, but at \$8 each they are great value for what has been described as a rare native plant. The picture, *below right*, of one of the plants for sale, was recently posted on the [Moggill Creek Catchment Group Facebook page](#).

The vines work particularly well if planted in a group, and are great climbing against a fence or trellis (just avoid areas that get afternoon sun). Not only do they look good, but they are particularly beneficial for *Bringing the Birdwing Butterfly Back to Brisbane* (more information [online](#)). Bryan Hacker is delighted



to be point of contact for purchasers. So rush down to the Nursery (or contact Bryan) to buy now!!

Sam Bayford-Brown

MCCG DIARY DATES

All dates are understandably subject to change, but the current plan includes the following public events:

July: Brookfield Market Stall (18th)

September: Platypus Survey (6th TBC), Public Meeting at Brookfield Hall (24th TBC)

October: Brisbane Garden & Plant Expo (2nd-4th, TBC), MCCG Photo Comp Entries due (17th), MCCG Kenmore Village Photo Comp display (19th-24th), MCCG Photo Comp Prizegiving (24th)

November: MCCG AGM & Talk, Brookfield Hall (26th)

Why not 'like' our Facebook page to ensure you always have the latest updates?

Froggin' Around: What can YOU see?

A survey of frog species, conducted a few years ago around the dam and creek at home, recorded ten species. This indicated good biodiversity, as there are 17 known frog species found in the catchment. Some species are hard to find, and inhabit specific niches. This year, coming out of a difficult summer, we had only six frog species recorded—including three species in the dam, which are now calling (Striped marsh frogs, eastern sedge frogs and clicking froglets). Sadly, there was also an explosion of cane toads. On reeds and citrus trees, near to the dam, numerous eastern sedge frogs were spotted (*below*), but no emerald spotted frogs or tusked frogs.



Above: A green frog gathering (Eastern sedge frogs, picture credit Phil Bird).

Around the house, during the rains, green tree frogs have been seen, and graceful tree frogs could be heard calling. Stony creek frogs also bred in the creek, but great barred frogs haven't been heard by me for some years now.

There have also been two local reports of bleating tree frogs (*Litoria dentata*). This frog has a distinctive call; a very loud and penetrating bleat, from the ground or low vegetation within a metre of breeding sites (a bit like a one second burst of a dentist's drill). Bleating tree frogs call during and after heavy spring and summer rains. The frogs are medium size (32-45mm), producing floating single eggs or small jelly clumps attached to vegetation in temporary pools. Pale brown, the frogs have an obvious three-lobed dark central stripe, and a dark stripe from nostril to eye that continues (wider and paler) down flank. These frogs

hide in cracks and hollows in trees (frequently in a colony), and as they are not high climbers, they are also found under rocks and peeling tree bark.

Bleating tree frogs are not common, but good populations do exist in areas of its range.



ABOVE: Bleating tree frog 'in the veggie garden' (picture credit: Aleta Nall)

Do **you** have a list of frog species found on your property? Are they breeding at your site? Do you know where to find different species? Please [email me](#) with any information, and in particular with your list—preferably including information on the location or GPS coordinates. *Phil Bird*

National Parks for Life

The Queensland Conservation Council (QCC) is running a campaign to double the area of protected land in Queensland from 8% to 17%. This doubling is a commitment which was made by the Queensland Government in 2016. There are sound reasons for making such a commitment. For example:

- National parks and nature reserves provide the best protection for endangered wildlife; *and*
- Visitors to national parks are estimated to generate \$2.6 billion p.a. in revenue and support 17,000 jobs.

A commitment to *double* protected land sounds very impressive, **BUT**:

- Only 5% of land which is currently 'protected' is in national parks; the remainder is open to mining and other commercial activities; *and*
- Sadly, very little has changed since this commitment was first announced.

QCC is urging people to support this campaign by signing an [online petition](#) to the State Government.

Follow the [link](#) to sign, or find out more:

Jim Pope

Bush Bites: Jezebels & Mistletoes

Michelle Johnston's *Bush Bites* initiative attracts some wonderful stories to our website—including this latest item from Ed Frazer. Ed is certainly the most prolific contributor of stories, but if YOU have a story to share, do email the newsletter editor, or contact the incoming website manager.

The mistletoes growing on our bottlebrushes have been a terrific source of interest in the wildlife they support. There are three previous articles in *Bush Bites* that deal with the comings and goings of the Mistletoebirds on the mistletoes. Most mistletoes are at the top of tall trees, so we are extremely fortunate to have a number of more easily accessible specimens—in particular because the mistletoes are the favourite food plant of the caterpillars of the beautiful Scarlet Jezebel butterflies (see Ed Frazer's picture, top right).

The Jezebels are unusual in a number of ways—including being practically the only butterflies that seem to be active in the colder months of the year. 2020 has been a particularly good year for many species of butterflies, and the Scarlet Jezebels have been around in large numbers. Consequently there have been lots of eggs laid on the mistletoes, which have also had a great growing season. So much so, that they are really crowding out the bottlebrushes on which they are a semi-parasite. Some experts say mistletoes don't damage their hosts but, as a horticulturalist, I beg to differ; there is no doubt that they are severely depressing the growth of my bottlebrushes. But, as I find them so interesting, I'm

happy to leave them alone.

The Jezebels lay their eggs in a compact grouping rather than singly like most other butterflies (see photographs below, and front cover, all courtesy Ed Frazer). When the caterpillars hatch, they feed in a group at night, regrouping during the day on a leaf. Even when they pupate, they do it together. Whether this gives them a better chance of survival from attacks by parasites I don't know, but they are certainly protected by the toxic compounds they get from eating mistletoes. Studies in Singapore have shown that the combination of yellow and red on the wings when the Jezebels are at rest are strong advertisements of the unpalatability (there are many different species of Jezebels, but they all have yellow and red markings on their wings).

Jezebel is a biblical name, and in the past, it has often been used to refer to a woman of dubious character who uses her beauty to get what she wants. I believe, however, that as the 'original' Jezebel was known for painting her face to enhance her beauty, it was for that reason that her name was bestowed on the butterflies (rather than her dubious character).

I am looking forward to seeing how the pupae will progress, as I expect that some will overwinter on the mistletoes to provide a starting population next season.

Ed Frazer



The Eastern Spinebill: MCCG 'Photo Comp' Reminder

Did you love Ed Frazer's front cover photograph of the Eastern Spinebill as much as we do?

Make sure you take your camera with you when spending time in the catchment, and see what you can 'capture.' If you are looking for the Eastern Spinebill, Ed notes that "The Eastern Spinebill is around in good numbers at this time of the year. It is one of the Honeyeaters with a perfectly adapted bill to access the nectar of the tubular flowers of the Mistletoes, which are having a big flowering this winter."

Sounds as if it's a good time to get out and about to take the winning photos! As a reminder, the key dates for the 2020 competition are:

- **Open entries:** Submit Saturday 17th October.
- **Digital Young Persons entries:** Submit any time from 28th September until 16th October.
- **Kenmore Village Exhibition:** Opens on Monday 19th October.
- **Prizes presented:** Saturday 24th October.

Keep a lookout for any Photo Competition updates on the MCCG Facebook and Instagram pages.

Don't forget, you have to be 'in it to win it.' Winning images receive awards and are displayed at Kenmore Shopping Village. For inspiration, why not check out some of the previous winning pictures, which are on the MCCG [website](#).

Nursery News: The Binung Fern

Bryan Hacker's much-loved *Seeds and Weeds* feature has a slightly different 'look' this issue. As ferns don't reproduce by seed, this article profiles a plant that is available at the Nursery.

Most readers will remember recent emails sent to MCCG members, listing out species then available at the Nursery in some quantity. There was an enthusiastic response, with many members keen to obtain plants (and perhaps with more time on their hands for planting?).

One plant which proved to be popular was the Binung fern, *Christella dentata*. This attractive tussock-forming native fern, with fronds to c.1m long, enjoys the continuously moist to wet conditions of our Nursery (see above, right). As with other ferns, it reproduces by producing single celled spores released from the lower-leaf surface. These are carried in the air—often settling in our Nursery tubestock with other plants, as a minor weed. It is only recently that we have been potting them up for distribution.



Many MCCG members have been keen to take home plants of this species. In the wild it grows along shaded stream banks and rainforest margins. Hopefully, those who took plants home will be aware that it needs shade and moisture. *Bryan Hacker*

Weeds: Balloon Vine

There are several vines which are major threats in our catchment, the foremost being cat's claw creeper, glycine, and Madeira vine. Not far behind, is balloon vine, *Cardiospermum grandiflorum*, which seems to be becoming increasingly abundant. We published an article on this species in spring 2004. At time of writing (May 2020) balloon vine plants are in flower, and it is reported that flowering may occur throughout the year. Flowers are small and white, each with four petals, and are born in clusters in leaf axils (see picture, below).



Picture, above: Balloon vine in flower (*Bryan Hacker*).

As with other weeds, it is good to remove plants *before* flowering, so it is important to recognise balloon vine in its vegetative state. Balloon vine has compound leaves c5-c15cm long and wide, and with nine leaflets arranged in three groups of three. Often there is a produced from a leaf axil (see front cover picture).

Balloon vine is readily recognised when it is in fruit—the fruit being 45-65mm long and balloon-like in

appearance, containing three seeds which are generally wind-blown. Originally from South America, balloon vine is now pan-tropical. Research on biocontrol agents has identified a fungus which is specific to the genus. The fungus was released in the Cook Islands in December 2017, causing significant damage to this weed. **Bryan Hacker**

HELP NEEDED: Website Coordinator

Can you take on this important role for the MCCG? Some familiarity with website administration, especially using WordPress, is highly desirable. Please contact Jim Pope (j.pope@qut.edu.au) for more information. THANK YOU!!

Getting to Know You

Our new PR Officer has already been busy on our behalf, and recently made time to say hello in this piece for the newsletter. Welcome, Sam!

Local Brookfield resident Sam Bayford-Brown has enjoyed taking on responsibility as the newly-appointed MCCG PR Officer, working to promote our activities and achievements around the local and broader Moggill Creek Catchment community.

“I’m really pleased to be part of this group, getting to know everyone and working to help nurture connections within our community to promote the valuable environmental work we do,” she said.

Despite the impact of coronavirus changing the group’s 2020 calendar of events, Sam has already had an impact—working with MCCG committee members to ensure our activities, workshops, meetings, and presentations, as well as volunteer comfort (for members attending the nursery), are continuing to progress.

In particular, Sam is really pleased with the positive community support and engagement at the MCCG stall at the Brookfield Markets held on the weekend of 6 June (see picture, right). “The market was a fabulous success in connecting and reconnecting with people from all around our local community. We also had a chance to engage directly with people about the important work we do to restore, protect, and promote our native environment. We hope to continue activities like this in the future to attract new members and give existing members the opportunity to connect with each other and share their knowledge.”

As an energetic people-person, Sam took advantage of a lull in her MCCG PR responsibilities during the coronavirus lockdown, helping to identify and

address the needs of the volunteers at the nursery to ensure their wellbeing, comfort, and enjoyment. In response to feedback, a new fan and bench seats have been installed at the nursery. Requests to extend the working area, as well as having a first aid training course run to ensure the safety of members, are also now being addressed.

“As a newer member of the Brookfield community, I’ve greatly valued the chance to connect with like-minded people and learn about caring for our local environment. I’m looking forward to using these experiences, in turn, to build strong connections between experienced, new, and future members.”

Brookfield Markets Success



Great to hear that the stall at the recent Brookfield Market attracted a visit from **Dr Christian Rowan MP** (pictured, above, with Kathleen and Alan Walmsley), and that a number of new members joined the MCCG on the day. Welcome, everyone!

An Amazing Structure

Were you intrigued by the ‘tent’ (overleaf)?

Earlier this year I spotted a spider’s web in a small courtyard adjoining our house (see page 8). On closer inspection I saw it was in the form of an umbrella about 30cm across, with intricate webbing resulting in gaps (c 3mm x 3mm). A spider, body c 2cm long, with an egg-sac above, was in the centre. Thanks to the Queensland Museum, I now know this is a female tent web spider, *Cyrtophora moluccensis*—described as quite common in Brisbane in summer, and as good to have around, as they catch and eat numerous insect pests. The web with its spider remained intact for several weeks. Unfortunately, it was disturbed due to house-painting. But the female spider has continued to mind her egg-sac in her seriously-damaged web. Still no spiderlings yet (mid-June), but she is certainly a conscientious mum! **Bryan Hacker**

Moggill Magic: Andrew Wilson

Revegetating an acreage property can be a daunting task. It requires a lot of hard physical work, and can be very costly. Andrew Wilson has not only been revegetating his own family property for the past 50 years, but also does it as his business. Over the years he has evolved his own methods, which he describes as “Assisted Natural Regeneration.”

Andrew’s parents, Graeme and Joy Wilson, bought their Savages Road property in the early 1950s—being among the first of many University of Queensland Professors to migrate ‘out’ to Brookfield’s lifestyle blocks. The 7-plus hectares were previously used as a pineapple farm, and in 1952 Graeme built a new house on the ridge top with a 360 degree view over what was then a bare property. Graeme and Joy were committed gardeners, planting ornamentals and Hoop Pines around the house; but the key feature of the garden is a huge Moreton Bay Fig Tree.

Andrew started working in the nursery industry in the 1970s, and attended Gatton College to study for a Horticulture Diploma. He was soon interested in native plants, and started attacking undeveloped areas—clearing Lantana, and planting natives. There were also some areas of bush, down towards Wonga Creek, that he improved.

Andrew’s philosophy is that “you never finish developing a property, so you must enjoy the trip.” Gradually he developed a sophisticated technique of “assisted natural regeneration,” to get the maximum results for his effort and expenditure.

How does it work? Andrew notes that most land that has previously been used for cropping, or dairy farming, has a large seed bank of native and exotic seed. A large number of useful native seedlings emerge each year, which are mostly smothered by weeds or eaten by hares, deer, and other livestock.

Andrew finds these seedlings and marks them with coloured tape (or with tree guards if there is a problem with deer). The bulk of the regrowth is of weed species, which he controls by using herbicides, or



ABOVE: Andrew Wilson, finding a two-leaf seedling of a Foam Bark to keep, among a patch of weeds (credit: Ed Frazer).

through brush-cutting. Sometimes beneficial weeds are retained for wildlife habitat, until the selected seedlings have developed replacement habitat. In addition, some planting is usually done to augment the regeneration—usually of tree species that will develop horizontal branches and provide fruit, both of which will attract birds that then bring in additional seeds. Ficus species are a particular favourite to plant.

In Andrew’s view, the naturally grown seedlings outperform nursery-grown seedlings in every way: their root system is better, and they survive droughts better. In addition, naturally-grown seeds eliminate the hard work of regeneration—with no holes to be dug and no watering required—and provide a much more diverse range of plants than could otherwise be attained. Andrew also notes this approach results in the growth of many understory species that are often left out or under-represented in most restoration projects because of the number needed. As understory species are essential to providing good fauna habitat, this approach is much more effective than ‘tree only’ plantings (which don’t establish much of an eco-system other than for Butcherbirds, Magpies, and Noisy Miners).

Andrew often finds up to 600 seedlings to an acre, which would be very costly to plant, and require a huge effort to replicate if using nursery seedlings, many of which would not survive. Andrew finds he can now identify almost all the plants and weeds that occur in the Catchment at even a minute two-leaf stage. But he observes that the more inexperienced can also follow this technique—as little harm is done if a few weeds are selected, and you work out what to save!

Ed Frazer

PS: Whose Tent? See p7 for more

