



MOGGILL CREEK CATCHMENT GROUP

P.O. Box 657, Kenmore. 4069

MCCG NEWSLETTER: Summer 2020

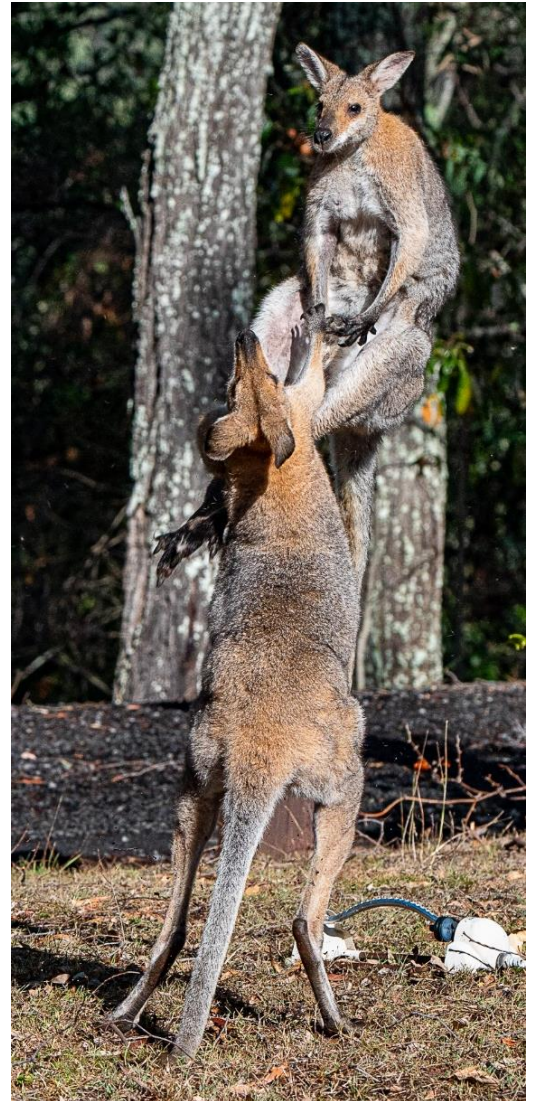
Your latest issue: *Bush Bite* (p5), Chairman's Report (p2), *Froggin' Around* (4-5), 'I always look forward to going' (p6-7), *Moggill Magic* (p8), 'Photo Comp' News (p3-4), Platypus Survey Update (p5-6), *Seeds & Weeds* (p6), *Threatened Species* (Powerful Owl—p2-3), *Training Times* (p7).



ABOVE: For more about the Creek Health Monitoring Project, and Leo's SOWN training session, turn to p7 (Picture: Jim Pope).



ABOVE: For a report on the recent first aid training (delegates pictured above), turn to p7. **RIGHT:** Congratulations to William McConaghy, who was awarded the First Prize in the Young Person's category for his striking image ('Water Dragon'). For more 'Photo Comp' News, turn to p3.



ABOVE: For more from Alan Hayter, about his image of these wallabies fighting on his lawn, turn to page 4.



Chairman's report

Since 2012, local 'birder' Jim Butler has written the 'Feather Fascination' column for *The Local Bulletin*. He has also produced the 'Know Your Wildlife' quiz, which links to the Catchment Field Guides on the MCCG Website. Unfortunately, Jim has now decided to call it quits. Producing a 300-word article every month for eight years has been a mammoth effort, and we are indebted to him for sharing his encyclopaedic knowledge of the birds of SW Brisbane with the local community.

Jim contacted me recently to ask if we could take over the column. I think we all agree that it would be difficult to find someone else with sufficient knowledge of native birds in the catchment, but it occurred to me that we might attempt to fill his shoes by broadening the topic to wildlife more generally. This would allow us to tap into the expertise of a range of people with knowledge of specific local species—including mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, invertebrates, and native plants.

A proposal has therefore been put to Barry Searle, Editor of *The Local Bulletin*, for a column entitled 'Wildlife Matters.' Each article will generally focus on a single species and its relationship to the

environment. Ideally, contributors should emphasise their personal experiences in observing the subject species and its behaviour.

The new column will commence with the January 2021 issue. We need more contributions, so if you have any suggestions for articles or topics please contact me (j.pope@qut.edu.au) as soon as possible. *Jim Pope*

Chairman's P.S. The MCCG AGM was held in Brookfield Hall on Thursday 25th November (55 members attended). Participants heard an interesting talk by Tim Howell on Fish of Moggill Creek.

Michelle Johnston received a special presentation, and our thanks, for help in migrating our website to WordPress. The Chairman expressed thanks to all the volunteers who have supported us during a difficult year. Congratulations and best wishes to the incoming Committee.

Editorial

Seasonal good wishes to all readers. New Year's resolutions by all to write something for the MCCG Newsletter?? **The absolute deadline for the next issue is 10 March 2021.** I am sure EVERYONE has at least 100 words they could email to me Get writing **now**. Don't wait until the deadline! *Cathi*

Threatened Species: The Powerful Owl (*Ninox strenua*)

Early one morning, some months ago, we found some cleanly picked bones under a large forest red gum. As our find included a skull, we set about determining what it was from and how it got there. With the help of some of my colleagues, it was determined to be a flying fox skull (probably a little red flying fox).

So, what hunts flying foxes and leaves evidence like this under the tree? A large bird of prey that operates at night-time. Like all owls, Powerful Owls (*Ninox strenua*) regurgitate the indigestible remains of their prey, so that bundles of hair, animal jaws and other bones can often be found on the ground. Coupled with further evidence of some nocturnal bird calls, we have established that we have a local Powerful Owl.

The Powerful Owl is a threatened species in Queensland (Vulnerable under the *Nature Conservation Act* [1992]). The largest of Australia's 11 owl species, they occur from SE Queensland to South Australia.

Species like this are yet another reason to protect and retain our local remnant bushland. Their biggest threat is loss of habitat—specifically, the loss of the large tree hollows that they need to breed in. Such hollows are also important to support arboreal species, like

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.

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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 news direct to mccgeditor@outlook.com.au.**

Newsletter Editor: Dr Catherine A. Lawrence (Cathi)

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possums, which comprise the majority of the owl's diet. It takes hundreds of years for such hollows to form, so the trees I am currently planting are unlikely to contribute in my lifetime (but may help future generations). Nest boxes may be an interim solution for a loss of tree hollows for some species, but the Powerful Owl needs to have large boxes installed high in the tree canopy (I found only one report of a nest box being successfully used by a Powerful Owl for breeding).

Other ways you can help support Powerful Owls include: leaving old dead trees to form hollows (don't cut them down), being a responsible cat owner, and avoiding the use of poisons to control mice and rats. It was only fairly recently that the impact of rodenticides (readily available mice and rat poisons) on birds of prey was realised. A PhD study in southwest Western Australia found that Boobook Owls were dying in urban areas from secondary poisoning (by eating the rats and mice that had ingested baits). Household mouse and rat poisons have been banned for general public use in some countries, and are under review in Australia. Recently we found another carcass under a nearby tree (this was a small possum). It seems that we definitely have a successful hunter operating around here. Though I am yet to spot it, I have heard their distinctive "whoo-hoo" call in the early hours of the morning. I feel privileged to be sharing this space with a majestic and powerful predator. Maybe not so great for the flying foxes and possums though!

There are also some great citizen science projects for powerful owls in urban areas, where you can get involved by reporting sightings. For more, visit:

<https://www.moggillcreek.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Feather-Fascination-May-2020.pdf>; <https://birdlife.org.au/projects/urban-birds/powerful-owl-project-pow>; <https://www.actforbirds.org/ratpoison>

Dr Manda Page

Butterfly Vines

Thanks to Amy, for providing this update on behalf of the Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary.

The team at Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary recently partnered with the MCCG, receiving and planting birdwing butterfly vines throughout the sanctuary grounds (pictured, right [L to R], Kurt Walker, Tim Phelps, and Bryan Hacker. *Photo: Tamara Cantwell*).

As the sanctuary is part of a wildlife corridor, the Lone Pine team recognise the importance of maintaining and creating habitat for native species—whether it be for birds, mammals, reptiles, or insects (just to name a



few!). With a noticeable decline in the number of Richmond birdwing butterflies in SEQ, it was a 'no-brainer' for the team to try to create a safe-haven for these beautiful creatures, while also creating an opportunity to educate the local community about protecting our native species and how easy it can be. While the MCCG crew were onsite at Lone Pine, they were also given hundreds of lomandra, lovingly propagated and grown by the Lone Pine team themselves. These plants will be used locally.

Amy Swinn

2020 MCCG Photo Comp

Did you manage to see the display at Kenmore Village in late October? What a magnificent collection of photos! A *very* big thank you to everyone involved in a successful photo competition, including our photo competition committee, the volunteers who manned the display during display week, the photographers who entered photos, this year's judge Anne Russell and all of our generous sponsors.

Here's a few snapshots (ok, details—but I was trying to do a job on words):

- 📷 \$1400 prize money awarded;
- 📷 22 local photographers (88 entries between them);
- 📷 The *Native Animals (excl. birds)* category featured 7 mammals, 9 reptiles, 2 frogs, 14 insects and 4 spiders!
- 📷 Tawny Frogmouths were the stars/most prolific of the 21 species featured in the *Native Birds* category;
- 📷 391 people voted in the People's Choice category;
- 📷 16 new Members signed up during display week

We can't wait to do it all again in 2021!

Rebecca Bain

Behind the Pictures

Congratulations again to the photographers who entered the 2020 MCGG 'Photo Comp.' Two of these talented photojournalists kindly shared some background for us to enjoy.

"I hope she was worth it" (see Alan's front cover image, one of his three related pictures entered into the competition): Heading off to the September Brookfield Farmers Market, I was delighted to see two red necked wallabies who were having a spectacular duel on our front lawn. Lasting more than ten minutes, the wallabies were so focused that I had time to get my SLR camera and stand close by to take many images. This gave me the chance to share with you something you do not commonly see. **Alan Hayter**



Mission Accomplished: Flowers are usually shown at the peak of perfection, but in my image (above) I showed something that is old and decaying. It's no less interesting than a portrait of an old human being. In its lifetime this *Grevillea* inflorescence attracted pollinators, rewarded them with nectar, daubed them with its pollen and thereby contributed to the survival of future generations. Mission accomplished!

Tony Thulborn

More Than Colour: The vivid colours of lorikeets can be overwhelming—even to the point where viewers see nothing *but* colour. Here (see image, below) I've used plain black and white to reveal the



wonderfully intricate pattern of structure that lies beneath that distracting blaze of colour.

Tony Thulborn

Froggin' Around: At Home

The rains came and went. At my own property, over 50mm fell, followed by a lovely chorus from the dam of sedge (*Litoria fallax*), striped marsh (*Limnodynastes peronei*), a few tusk frogs (*Adelotus brevis*), and a sole emerald spotted tree frog (*Litoria peronii*). In the canopy, graceful tree frogs (*Litoria gracilentia*) were heard. Only a few cane toads (*Rhinella marina*) were spotted, and none calling. Afterwards, the dam was alive with sedge frogs sitting on reeds and lily pads (and, later, their tadpoles were found in the dam). The creek didn't flow, but pools filled.



During the Dry—while doing my creek bank restoration work, and trying to save a few native fish left in the drying pools—I found a number of stony creek frogs (*Litoria wilcoxii*) leaping around. The resulting tadpoles are now seen in these pools. Easy to distinguish from those of cane toads, they are lighter coloured, with longer (flowing) tails, and appear as individuals, unlike the black and schooling behaviour of cane toad tadpoles (*Tadpoles of South-eastern Australia* by Marion Anstis, 2002). Hopefully, you can see this difference in my picture, above, of the tadpoles of *Litoria wilcoxii* (pale) and *Rhinella marina* (black)?

A juvenile green tree frog (*Litoria caerulea*) was also found in a water tank—which is pleasing as they breed in temporary or ephemeral pools. Another common sighting round the creek at this time of year are the juvenile water dragons (*Intellagama lesueurii*), hatching out and scampering on the rocks. Frogs are their favourite food. As a beautiful example of nature's food chain, the dragons are often watched carefully by the Pacific Baza (*Aviceda subcristata*) that visit this time of year.

With the coming of the Wet season, be on the lookout for cane toads and their tadpoles. Removing both will reduce their populations. A new acoustic device to

attract and capture adult cane toads is being trialled. More to follow. In the meantime, if you are unsure of any frog calls, why not download the Australian Museum *FrogID* app (<https://portal.frogid.net.au/get-involved>).

Phil Bird

Bush Bites: Collared Colin

For Ed's full *Bush Bite* story about 'Colin,' visit the MCCG website.

Late one afternoon my grandson arrived at the door with a noisy bundle of feathers. The bird, a Collared Sparrowhawk, was found on the road that is adjacent to our properties. After some warming up overnight, in a heated Lizard Terrarium, it began to screech for food. Only two hours after being pushed out of its nest it was taking enormous amounts of food. I had heard the parents calling and had ideas of releasing the chick near them in the hope that they would continue to care for it, but I couldn't get near enough to them as the Mickey Birds (Noisy Miners) were seeking us out and making screeching runs on the parents.



I have never experienced a bird eating so vigorously, or so much, for its size. A week later, Colin was nearly ready for flying. I made a nest out of a used packing case with shade cloth, and the bird took to it almost too quickly. After only one night in the bush Colin took off, leaving me worried he wouldn't have enough time to adapt to the wild.

But Colin (could have been a Coleen, but I took to Michelle Johnston's naming suggestion) came back. Colin would cry from a high point until I came out to throw some food. He quickly got better at swooping in to grasp a half-grown quail before it hit the ground (see Ed's picture, above). Gradually he visited less, as he was clearly finding his own food, and after day 42 he didn't come back for a long time.

Almost a year after Colin released himself I heard the unmistakable call from the Wattle clump, near the tray

on which I used to feed him. Unfortunately the Mickies chased him away. I strongly feel that by removing understory, and by keeping grass mowed or grazed under trees, we are encouraging such aggressive birds. I was aware of the impact of Mickies on smaller birds, such as finches and wrens, but I hadn't realised the extent of their impact on larger birds. Small acts like mine in saving this Sparrowhawk—or larger programmes of removing weedy habitat and planting mainly trees—can affect the fauna of our catchment. It is rather humbling to be involved, but it is clear that we have to be careful. We are not in control of the consequences of our participation.

Ed Frazer

KEEPING IN TOUCH: Meeting and event dates are understandably subject to change, so why not 'like' our Facebook page to ensure you always have the latest updates?

2020 Platypus Survey Update

We are fortunate to have so many specialists in our local area, including UQ's Dr Christine Hosking, who organises our annual platypus survey. For a copy of Chris' full report, and a link to videos from the survey, visit www.moggillcreek.org.au/news/11-platypus-sighted-in-the-annual-mccg-platypus-survey/.

Due to Covid 19 restrictions, this year's snapshot **Platypus survey** (13th September) was a scaled-down version, with no post-survey breakfast. But we were delighted to have around 55 volunteer observers participating in our 15th annual Platypus Survey. It was also wonderful that we had 11 definite sightings, plus several 'possible' observations.

In this year's survey, Gold Creek again stood out as the platypus 'hotspot.' On the survey morning, five platypus were seen further downstream. A platypus was also seen in a substantial pool in Upper Brookfield—which is good news, because they have not been observed there in several years. The Kenmore High School area, a previous stronghold, was negative for sightings this year, but platypus reappeared in the Tuckett St Park area (after several years, which is good news). Two platypus were also observed in a large pool in the Huntington Estate (Boyd Park) and this is reassuring because they have never failed to appear in this riparian strip on survey mornings, despite being in an urban area of high recreational use.

The number of platypus seen is similar to the last couple of years, but lower than some earlier surveys.

This may be due more to a lack of rain, rather than to a declining population (platypus can be less mobile, remaining in pools). We also may miss some animals because they simply do not appear on the survey morning!

Christine Hosking

Seeds: Lomandras

Two large species of *Lomandra* (*L. hystrix* and *L. longifolia*) are undoubtedly the most popular plant species sourced from our Nursery. Both are excellent for erosion control. *L. hystrix* is particularly well-adapted to creek situations, holding banks during flood events and emerging unscathed after many days immersed under flood water. Approaching summer, and with the forecast of good rains, now is a good time to be aware of the importance of *L. hystrix* (pictured, below) in erosion control along our creeks.



Lomandras are not grasses (family Poaceae) but are currently included in the plant family Laxmanniaceae. The Mount Coot-tha Forest Management Plan dated 2003 and the Flora of SEQ 1989 includes them in the family Xanthorrhoeaceae. According to the Flora, 12 species of *Lomandra* occur in SEQ. The Mount Coot-tha Forest Management Plan lists five species (including the widespread Many Flowered Matrush, *L. multiflora*) but, surprisingly, it does not include *L. hystrix*, although this species is abundant along Moggill Creek. All local *Lomandra* species are locally native and all deserve protection, including the smaller species often abundant in eucalypt woodlands. *L. hystrix* propagates naturally along our creeks, but invasive species (such as the grass Embu panic and dyschoriste) can envelope seedlings and careful weeding is necessary to improve seedling survival.

Bryan Hacker

Weeds: Taro (*Colocasia esculenta*)

Taro (*Colocasia esculenta*), sometimes referred to as 'elephant ears,' is an invasive weed which is common along Moggill Creek. Growing in normally shallow water, and along lower banks, it is strongly rhizomatous, producing underground stems that also

develop tubers. Leaf blades are the shape of an arrowhead, and are purplish in colour (see my picture, below). Leaves can be up to 70cm long, and are commonly on a long stalk (petiole) which is attached to the back of the leaf (i.e. the leaf is peltate). Flowers



are produced on a thickened flower spike (spadix) which can be up to 20cm long, and are initially enclosed by a large bract (spathe). As the species name *esculenta* indicates, taro is edible—cultivated for its 'starchy sweet tuber,' although the foliage is also edible.

BCC lists taro as Class R ("reduce population"). However, it is necessary to be cautious when removing infestations; leaving flood-prone riparian area without vegetation can lead to serious erosion during the wet season. What is needed instead is *Lomandra hystrix* (see left). The related, and somewhat similar locally native species cunjevoi (*Alocasia brisbanensis*) may also have underground stems. It differs from taro as it has petioles attached at the margin of the leaf blade (and cunjevoi leaf blades are dark green, and up to 1m long).

Bryan Hacker

I Always Look Forward to Going

Having spent most of my life in Cairns and Mackay, I decided I should move closer to my children after the death of my husband and mother. My husband, Jim, and I had five children and they are scattered around the world (Brisbane, Perth, and London). Our eldest son and his family, and my oldest daughter and her family live in Brisbane. So when I wanted to relocate, I thought that Brisbane would be my best option. When I moved to Brisbane in 2018 I stayed with my daughter and we looked at many houses around the western suburbs. Eventually I ended up buying a villa in a village at Bellbowrie for people over the age of 55. My daughter is a member of the MCCG. Knowing my keen interest in gardening and native plants, and my need to meet new people in my area, she suggested that I become a member. I joined in 2018, and soon learnt that MCCG own and operate a native plant nursery, and a community cottage, at the end of Gold Creek Road. For over twenty years now people have

volunteered at the nursery, so I decided to join this group of volunteers. I now pot seedlings, and weed established potted plants, at the nursery twice a month. I love to help and the time flies; I always look forward to going. I work alongside about 15 other volunteers at the nursery. They are always very welcoming and friendly. and there is also delicious smoko! It feels good to know these potted native trees are given to MCCG members free of charge to revegetate their blocks of land. I also help in the monthly MCCG Tuckett Park and Huntington working bees, to revegetate the land along Moggill Creek.



Picture: Yvonne Quinlan (Picture credit: Janine Nicklin)

If you have time on your hands, and want to meet like-minded people, I urge you to become a member of MCCG and volunteer in their activities. We are always looking for more help! *Yvonne Quinlan*

First Aid Training

Twelve volunteers recently attended a First Aid training course run specifically for MCCG by St John's Ambulance and held in Brookfield Hall (see front cover picture). The BCC-funded training—organised by Sam Bayford-Brown—included Cardio-pulmonary Resuscitation and Automated External Defibrillator training, as well as basic first aid. Trainees included MCCG Nursery and bushcare volunteers, several Habitat Brisbane group leaders, and also some MCCG Committee Members. John, the trainer from St John's Ambulance, did an excellent job under somewhat trying conditions. It was a hot day (and there is no air-conditioning in Brookfield Hall), and John also had to compete with an afternoon thunderstorm. There were also numerous police and ambulance sirens, which made the experience somewhat surreal—but emphasised that accidents can occur at any time, and that it is best to be prepared!

Many thanks to Sam for cajoling so many of us into updating our first aid training, and to Donna Edwards

and Simon Fox from BCC Community Conservation Partnerships/Habitat Brisbane for supporting the initiative.

Training: Creek Health Monitoring

Recently the MCCG obtained funding from the State Government under the Queensland Citizen Science Grants for a program to re-activate our Creek Health Monitoring Program (CHMP), with a particular emphasis on community involvement.

This latest CHMP project is led by Adrian Webb and Lewis Peach, and aims to survey at least six primary sites in the Moggill Creek catchment over a period of three years. Surveys will be carried out twice a year at each site, and will comprise four elements: water quality monitoring; fish surveys; macro-invertebrate surveys; and an assessment of structure and composition of the creek bed, bank, and riparian zone at each site (including invasive weeds).

The first major event of the program was a 15th November *Fish Survey* training session, led by Leo Lee from 'Save Our Waterways Now' (SOWN). Leo is an expert on native fish in the greater Brisbane area. The training was held at Gold Creek, just inside the Gold Creek Dam site, and was attended by 18 enthusiastic volunteers (see picture, front cover).

It was a hot day, so we were all delighted to get into the creek (although care was taken to disturb the water and the creek bed as little as possible). During the session we learned how to catch fish—both with box net fish traps, and with dip nets—and how to identify some of the more common native and introduced species. Be reassured that any native fish caught during the session were returned to the creek. We learned that while almost all native fish are egg-layers, many exotic species such as Swordtails (*Xiphophorus hellerii*) retain the eggs inside their bodies, giving birth to live young. This can provide them with a competitive advantage. Swordtails are also distinguished by the fact that they exhibit [sequential hermaphroditism](#), meaning that they can spontaneously change sex. It's amazing.

Our session ended with a number of interesting video clips, provided by Leo, which reinforced information shared during the practical training.

Leo is a mine of information and anecdotes about the fish of Moggill and surrounding creeks, so an interesting and entertaining time was had by all.

More information about the Creek Health Monitoring Program can be found on our [website](#). If you would like to become involved in the CHMP, please contact me (j.pope@qut.edu.au).

Jim Pope

Moggill Magic: A Walk in the Park with Malcolm Frost

Recently I had a fascinating walk with Malcolm Frost in Rowena Park (*Malcolm is pictured at the bottom of this column. Picture credit Ed Frazer*). The extensive park is accessed from Rafting Ground Reserve by using a bridge over Moggill Creek, from where you can watch fish in the tidal flow from the nearby Brisbane River.

The Rowena project began in 2014. A \$190,000 City Council grant funded staged weed removal, and a native planting programme—enabling the MCCG to contract Brisbane Bushcare Pty Ltd to assist in removing weeds, and to establish thousands of native plants. This was a major change. Prior to Malcolm's involvement, the Council's maintenance of Rowena Park was basically once-a-year mass weed-spraying combined with regular grass mowing. Aside from a planting of exotics and North Queensland natives (by a local resident, some years before), the Park was what Malcolm describes as "pretty barren." Indeed, huge clumps of Giant Golden Bamboo, which are a significant feature along the creek bank, have doubled in area since Malcolm has been involved (at present, the Council will not sanction their removal).

Before the work in the Park began, Andrew Wilson undertook a survey of the plants and weeds present. There were plenty of birds at that time but, as there wasn't a corresponding wildlife survey (to document the presence of birds and other animals), the effects of the weed removal and the new plantings have not



been formally assessed on the development of habitat. The impact of floods has been a dominant factor Malcolm has had to deal with, and he has valuable first-hand knowledge of the devastation they caused to the Project. He is a champion of the use of *Lomandra* in erosion control, but is worried about the further loss of creek bank on the outside bends of the creek. At one section there is an eroded 8m vertical drop to the creek, where more trees will be lost in the next flood. It is a problem that would be very costly to stabilise, but it has produced a dangerous drop in a public park.

The project has been a co-operative arrangement with the Council, the MCCG and *Challenge Employment and Training*. At the conclusion of the Council-funded project the MCCG had successfully applied to *Challenge* for further assistance. During our walk we met a number of people. We talked with a group of environmental trainees, who are working in the park for several months as part of *Challenge's* "Skilling Queenslanders for Work" (the second of *Challenge's* Rowena Park project). We also met an operator from another section of the Council, undertaking some broad area spraying—which is an issue of concern to Malcolm, and to the *Challenge* Supervisor.

There is a long way to go in establishing good habitat for birds and animals in the Rowena Park; there is minimal planting of understory, and it will be difficult to establish shrubs under the closely-planted trees. But, as a public park where one can go for a walk with the dog off the leash, it is one of Brisbane's best.

I was impressed by Malcolm's knowledge and experience, gained from managing MCCG's restoration project at Rowena Park (and, earlier, at Tuckett and Huntington Parks). So I was pleased to hear we are having conference on *Public and Private Land Restoration* in early 2021, where members of MCCG can benefit from the bank of knowledge possessed by Malcolm and others.

Malcolm is very keen that we pool the experience we have within the MCCG, and involve new people in restoration projects—hence organising the 2021 conference. In addition, the MCCG is organising a letterbox 'drop,' to homes adjacent to the park, in December. The aim is to establish a group of about 12-18 locals to manage the MCCG's activities in the park. Malcolm will help in an advisory capacity, to ensure continuity and knowledge-transfer.

Experience gained on such public parks can be useful for landholders in the Catchment. Much can be gained from visiting projects such as Malcolm Frost's Rowena Park, Michael Humphries' Deerhurst St Park, and Jim Pope's Huntington—as well as the other ten projects sponsored by the MCCG. *Ed Frazer*