

Wildlife Matters

MOGGILL CREEK CATCHMENT GROUP

COUNTING BUTTERFLIES

WELCOME to the new 'Wildlife Matters' column, which replaces Jim Butler's 'Feather Fascination'. We are greatly indebted to Jim for promoting a love of birds (and of wildlife more generally) to the local community over the last 8 years - a hard act to follow!

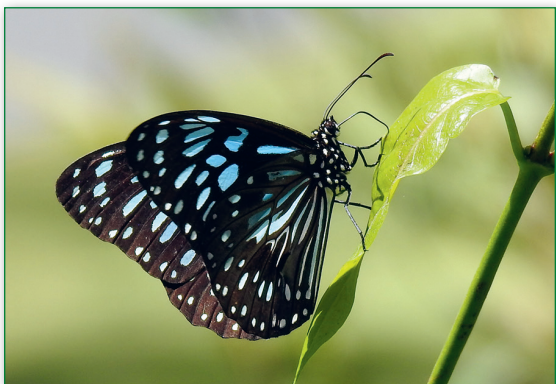
In these articles we propose highlighting some of the amazing wildlife that surrounds us in the western suburbs of Brisbane. Our plan is to broaden the scope of the column to embrace all forms of local wildlife: birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates, native plants and fungi and even invasive species. We are very fortunate to live in an environment that supports a diversity of wildlife, but that wildlife is increasingly under threat from urban development, feral animals (especially cats and foxes), invasive weeds and climate change. Fortunately, we can all play a role in protecting it. A couple of hours a month spent working with a local bushcare group or supporting one of our 'citizen science' projects can make an enormous difference.

Brisbane's Big Butterfly Count commenced in October last year with the aim of monitoring and recording butterflies throughout the greater Brisbane area. Butterfly numbers are a marker for the health of the environment, so it is important to have a record of numbers and trends over time. Populations of some species can fluctuate wildly, depending on weather conditions and the availability of food plants. Species such as the Blue Tiger (*Tirumala hamata* - see photo) are migratory and relatively long-lived (6 months). They are mostly a tropical species that migrate south in spring and summer, particularly following periods of high rainfall. They were seen in large numbers in Brisbane over the summer of 2014/15 and again last summer. Their main host plant, Corky Milk Vine (*Secamone elliptica*) contains toxins that are poisonous to many animals, but which protect the larvae from being eaten by birds and which are passed on to the adult butterflies. For more information on Brisbane's Big Butterfly Count visit: www.brisbanecatchments.org.au/brisbanes-big-butterfly-count

Until next month!

Jim Pope

VIST MCCG: www.moggillcreek.org.au



Blue Tiger butterfly (*Tirumala hamata*) - photo Jim Pope