



MOGGILL CREEK CATCHMENT GROUP

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www.moggillcreek.org.au

MCCG NEWSLETTER: AUTUMN 2017

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ABOVE: Who Lives Here?

Leah Hattendorff, pictured after giving a recent cottage talk (examining a banana bush, *Tabernaemontana pandacaqui*). See page 7



LEFT: A date for your diary: Kid's Day (including wildlife show), 28 May 2017, see page 8 for details

Pictured, left, wildlife at the 2016 Kid's Day (pictures above and left: Dale Borgelt).

BELOW: Jim Pope and members of the Huntington/Tuckett bushcare group

see page 3 for more



Chairman's report

We had hardly finished congratulating ourselves on our achievements for 2016 and we find ourselves back into work mode for 2017. This Christmas past seemed busier than usual, with funding applications to complete and work plans to prepare. This year, we will be celebrating our 20 year anniversary and we will mark the occasion suitably.

Many of us attended a moving commemoration ceremony in mid-January—held to farewell Graeme Wilson, one of our founding members, who died in December 2016. I listened to many anecdotes from friends, colleagues and former students who, amongst his many attributes, remembered him as a great teacher. We will do our best to honour his legacy into the future.

We have completed our strategic plan for the next 3-5 years. Details can be found on our website. Many thanks to those who contributed ideas and comment. A few highlights for me, from the plan, are the emphasis we are placing on better communication, on attracting new volunteers, and on concentrating on our major projects.

A significant priority for the group is attracting more volunteers—both to our Bushcare groups, and to take on functional roles. We will work to make better use of our Newsletter, Website and Facebook to catch your interest. We will also continue to work hard on our major projects: focussing on Cat's Claw control, Creek Health Monitoring, Rowena Park, the Platypus survey, and the Bird project. The Green Army project will continue to mid 2017, working to remove weeds and planting native species on several sites around the catchment (you may have noticed the Campbell Page bus in your area that ferries the Green Army team members around the area?).

The year has started well. In February we were very pleased to receive a BBC Lord Mayor's Environment Grant to assist us with administrative expenses. We've also applied for funding to tackle an emerging Anzac Daisy infestation in Wonga Creek. Planning is also well underway to bring you our Kid's Day at the Cottage and the Photography competition.

Finally, a sincere thank you to those who responded to our call for donations. We have received around \$5,000 so far and this will make a significant difference to our ability to do our work.

Warren Hoey

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Editorial

Hi. We are fortunate to have regular contributors to our newsletter (in particular Bryan, with three interesting updates on pages 5-6). Equally, it is great to hear some new and returning 'voices.' Thanks to Jim, Steve, Adrian, Michelle and Malcolm for their contributions. I hope you will be as inspired as I am when you read Jim's article, updating us on the Bushcare Group experience. I am sure that everyone will enjoy 'searching' our website (review Michelle's tips on page 4). Thanks to Adrian for his piece on the battle with Cat's Claw, and to Steve for the positive news on the Celtis Leaf Beetle. And congratulations to Malcolm; I feel the title of his piece will be hard to beat!

*Our newsletter is also the place where requests for help often appear. There are two requests I'd highlight in this issue. Firstly, the Photography Competition team are **really** in need of help. **NOW** is a great time to join in—a chance to work alongside the committee members who are making 2017 their final year (see page 8 for more). Secondly, I'd love to hear more from members (including YOUNGER members). **Please email** me to share **your** experience of working or relaxing in our catchment. Perhaps your tip for a winning picture for the photography competition? Or your highlight from the May Kid's Day? I look forward to reading YOUR story, and to seeing your pictures (the next deadline is 31st May, so get writing now).*

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: Warren Hoey. Secretary: Cathie Mortimer, P.O. Box 657, Kenmore 4069 mccgsecretary@live.com.au

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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. **Please email your ideas direct to the editor** (mccgeditor@outlook.com.au).

Editor: Dr Catherine Lawrence (Cathie)

Printing: John Gower

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Dedicated to a better Brisbane

As you can see from the photographs on page one, and below, the Bushcare Group experience certainly makes participants smile. Jim Pope shares some of his thoughts on MCCG Bushcare Groups. If this sparks YOUR interest, why not look at the website or visit the Facebook page for dates and places for future working bees?

MCCG Bushcare Groups: A Personal View

I have been both a keen gardener, and an environmentalist, virtually all my life. So when I moved to Kenmore Hills almost 6 years ago, I jumped at the opportunity to join the local (Huntington/Tuckett) bushcare group, which at that time was led by Malcolm Frost. The group looks after the 'riparian zone' along a section of Moggill Creek that runs through the parklands from Rafting Ground Rd to Tuckett St.

My background is as an academic physicist who grew up in England. I therefore had very limited knowledge of Australian native flora and fauna, and no experience in Bushcare. But fortunately Malcolm, and other members of the group, were eager to provide advice and show me the ropes. I soon found that, armed with energy and enthusiasm and the ability to recognise a few of the more prevalent weed species, (especially Glycine, Madeira vine, Balloon vine and Chinese Elm), even a novice like me can soon make themselves useful.

Having seen at first hand the destruction that these 'public enemies' wreak on native vegetation, I now get considerable satisfaction (and some healthy exercise) attacking them with a pruning saw - wielded at times like a machete!

Typical 'working bees' involve brush cutting long grass, removing the weed vines and planting natives to expand the riparian zone (or to fill gaps in the canopy). Over the years you gain great satisfaction from seeing how such plantings grow and flourish,

and how the quality and diversity of the bush is improved.

Of course there are setbacks from time to time. Floods knock over some of our newly planted trees, necessitating an occasional emergency working bee to stand them up and re-stake them. Times of drought are a constant threat to immature plants, and occasional invasions by feral animals or humans sometimes take their toll. But overall we have a very high success rate.

As important as the working bees themselves, are the morning teas that follow them. There is nothing better after a strenuous working bee on a warm day, than to socialise with fellow volunteers over a few drinks, home-made cakes, fresh fruit and perhaps a sausage roll or meat pie.

One of the benefits of a volunteer group such as ours is the diversity of the participants. They are all very interesting people who come from a variety of backgrounds and ages, but we all share a common goal.



I took over the leadership of the group about 3 years ago, and am greatly indebted to other members of the group. I also thank both MCCG and Habitat Brisbane for the excellent support and assistance we have received from them.

We are always looking for new recruits. But I am gratified that so many people are prepared to devote a few hours on a Sunday morning, once a month, to help make our surroundings just that little bit better – both for us and the native plants and animals we share it with.

Jim Pope

Go Searching!

We asked our wonderful website editor to share with us some thoughts on just what can be found when you visit www.moggillcreek.org. Michelle's advice is to "Go Searching!"

At the MCCG we spend a lot of time searching! We search for wonderful (and often endangered) treasures in our catchment like koalas and butterflies. And we're forever on the lookout for invasive species in the plant and animal kingdoms. It's pure magic when our search produces a healthy result.

Yes, we're great searchers. Our website search will not disappoint if you're seeking something particular. The search reviews and displays all references to any term included on the site. The search covers all of our archived data—which includes all of our newsletters, which are simply an AMAZING repository of info.

Just go to the 'home page' for the website (www.moggillcreek.org/). Simply type the word you're looking for in the "Site Search" box, in the top right of the screen, and then click on the Search button.

Let's use "koalas" as an example. If you use the word "koala" for your search, you'll be rewarded with a list of 20 instances where a MCCG website reference has been made to koalas.

Give it a go.

If you open the first link, you'll visit our "Koalas" page and learn that a small number of koalas are indeed surviving in our catchment. Although they're elusive, they've been seen in 'hot spots' like Mt Coot-tha Forest, Gap Creek Reserve, Deerhurst Road and Haven Road.

And, despite continued urban development, there have been recent sightings in Pullenvale as well. This was confirmed by Douglas Kirlin, then Chief Ecologist at the Australian Koala Foundation, at his fascinating Cottage Talk in 2016 [ED: see this issue, pages 6-7].

On our "Koalas" page you'll also find a link to the Koala Tracker (www.koalatracker.com.au). This is a free national database; anyone can join to view, or report, koala sightings.

If you then search on this site (Koala Tracker) you'll be further rewarded. You'll see that a koala was seen at Upper Brookfield, near Haven Road, in October 2013. In addition, three were spotted on different occasions in Pullenvale in 2014 and 2015. There are maps and photos too. Definitely worth making that search!

Back at our initial list of references from our own website, you'll find several links to our newsletters

where you may encounter gems like the article by **Ulrike Zimmermann** in our 2010 winter edition (extract in the text box below):**

A Koala!

I have seen a Koala! I was out jogging in the morning along Haven Road when, on my home stretch, I heard a noise, and then saw something coming down a tree. I thought "wow, this is a big possum" before realising it is the wrong time of day for a possum. I stopped abruptly, mid jog, as it dawned on me that what I saw was: a Koala. A determined little Koala, as it turned out. It looked at me and at the same time ignored me completely, in the way only Koalas do...

*Ulrike Zimmermann***

So, GO SEARCHING—indoors AND outdoors—and be rewarded!

When you're outside, search up in the trees and down on the ground for hints that treasures like the koala may indeed be nearby.

And give our website search a try. It is guaranteed that you'll be pleasantly surprised!

Michelle Johnston

**** For more of the 2010 story, by Ulrike Zimmermann, why not visit our website and 'go searching' (to quote Michelle)!**

Encourage that Beetle!

Over the last 5-10 years, a small, brown beetle, known as the Celtis Leaf Beetle (*Menippus cynicus*), has started causing noticeable damage to the young leaves of the highly invasive introduced weed-tree Chinese Celtis (*Celtis sinensis*) around south-east Queensland.



Celtis beetle (picture credit: Steve Csurhes).

The Celtis Leaf Beetle (pictured above) is native to coastal, central Queensland. We are unsure whether it has moved by itself to south-east Queensland, or if it was transported by people. Regardless, it is here now. We can only hope that it reduces the vigour of Chinese Celtis.

Steve Csurhes

Weed Alert: *Ruellia tweediana*

Over summer, have you seen pretty purple flowers (see below) growing on 1m tall plants along our creeks? This plant is particularly common along lower Moggill Creek and McKay Brook. Sometimes known as Mexican petunia, this is one of our worst riparian weeds, and has spread rapidly along the riparian zone, out-competing most native herbaceous species.



As with other invasive plants, it is best to catch it when first spotted. Young plants can be pulled by hand, depending on the nature of the substrate they are growing in. However, Mexican petunia soon develops rhizomes (underground stems), making it very difficult to hand-pull. That leaves us with using herbicides. Cody Hochen, Land for Wildlife officer, advises that Amicide 625 (2,4-D 625) at 30ml/10L of water is effective (and is registered both under PER11463, and for use along waterways).

Where *Persicaria* (see below), and other native species (especially lomandras) are present, the use of



glyphosate (roundup) is discouraged. as they are also likely to be killed by this herbicide.

Mexican petunia is tolerant of high levels of shade, spreading under existing trees. It also spreads up the banks of creeks, although not to where moisture levels are low. Being rhizomatous, it holds the soil together and so should not be poisoned in erosion-prone areas where there are no other plants to protect the soil.

Progressive removal of the weed and replacement with natives would be recommended.



It can be quite difficult to distinguish Mexican petunia from some of the natives. Mexican petunia has quite long, grassy leaves, as do some of the native species, notably *Lomandra* spp. (from which it would readily be distinguished) and *Persicaria* spp. Several *Persicaria* spp. occur naturally along Moggill Creek, including *Persicaria decipiens* (pictured above). All have alternate leaves, not opposite, as in Mexican petunia.

Seeds: *Cupaniopsis parvifolia*

Seed of some species is readily available every year, but for others, it is quite difficult to find. One such is the small-leaved tuckeroo, *Cupaniopsis parvifolia*.



There is one growing close to the Cottage, and another some way down the slope (see picture, above). I don't remember ever having seen them seed as prolifically



as they did this year. This is a small, dense rainforest tree which could be a useful addition to our small list of screening plants, suitable for planting between neighbouring properties. It is quite similar to a tree commonly grown in roadside situations known as the Tuckeroo, but has much smaller leaves (leaflets 3-8 cm long cf. 5-15 cm long). Flowers are in panicles (branched flower-heads) and are about 5mm in diameter.

Collecting fruit (see picture at the bottom of page 5) required patience, and spotting the right time. Initially green, the 3-lobed fruit turned yellow as they ripened, then splitting to reveal the red fleshy 'aril' which encloses the black seed and is an attractant for bird-dispersal.

Sometimes we find *Cupaniopsis* seedlings coming up in our bushcare sites, but I have not been able to ascertain whether they are our local species or the commonly planted tuckeroo.

And when will plants of this species be available to members? We have lots of seed, but it depends very much on how well they germinate. If we are lucky and germination percentage is high, plants could be available to members late autumn or spring this year.

Busy times at our Nursery

The last few months have been very busy times at our Nursery. Seedlings have been growing fast in response to the warm weather, and members have been keen to plant following several rain events. Seedlings have needed pricking out. For several species, it has been a very good seeding year, so seed has needed preparation and sowing. Fortunately, we have had as many as 20 volunteers at some working bees, so operations are largely under control.

Bryan Hacker

Check the Exotic Vines!

Adrian Webb shares some great information on the control of Cat's Claw. For more, including pictures showing quite how destructive it can be, search our website (www.moggillcreek.org/)

For those who have been managing cat's claw creeper in remnant forests, it would be wise to have another check on the regrowth since late last year. In a few sites we have been managing there is about 2 to 4 metres of regrowth up tree stems, and the tubers will be getting bigger by the day.

Our approach is to first pull the thin vines down and coil them up on the ground, and then spray the bunch of leaves with glyphosate (or a selective weedicide) to

the point of runoff. We have had several of our members say they are getting better tuber control using Dicamba (known by the trade name of Kamba 500®), which contains 500g/L of the active ingredient.

A copy of the Sunshine Coast Regional Council technical sheet on *Dicamba* is in the weed management section of our website. A few key points to emphasise are:

- ✓ The mixing rate for foliar spraying with dicamba is 4ml of a 500g/L dicamba herbicide per 1 litre of clean water. As dicamba is a selective herbicide, it won't kill grasses and some other strap-leaved plants.
- ✓ As with all spraying, take care if you are spraying around desirable trees and shrubs that have a shallow root system. Non-target plants can absorb the chemical through their roots if the spraying has been too heavy and a shower of rain washes the chemical into the soil.
- ✓ The best situations to use dicamba in are: to spray tuber regrowth; to spot-spray small infestations; or to spray large amounts of prostrate cat's claw creeper growth across a grassy area. We are using this method across a heavily infested site in Upper Brookfield with success.

Adrian Webb

Cottage Talk Report: What will a Koala Recovery look like?

Dr Douglas Kirlin, former Chief Ecologist for the Australian Koala Foundation (AKF), spoke to members at the August 2016 Cottage Talk. We are delighted to be able to include here the promised short report on his presentation.

Dr Kirlin is a population ecologist, specialising in mathematical and statistical models of population change. He worked for the AKF for a number of years, specialising in researching the reproductive biology of koalas, and examining the disease ecology of koalas and other animals.

Most koala casualties result from dogs, with disease also significant. At the talk, we were told that the AKF estimates that Koalas are declining, with an estimated 43% drop in their numbers (1990-2010). Dr Kirlin stated that the Commonwealth government estimates of koala losses are 'staggeringly lower' (Government estimates are of a 28.9% national loss for the same period). Either way, koalas need protecting.

Dr Kirlin outlined a recovery plan which concentrates on three aspects: regulation, planning and rehabilitation. He argued that current **regulation**,

especially the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1990, is not working. The AKF believes that governments at all levels claim they cannot intervene to protect koalas when considering development applications. The AKF has drafted a Koala Protection Bill (similar to the USA *Bald Eagle Act 1940* approach). The AKF continues to lobby for such national legislation, which would prevent interfering with koalas or destroying their feed trees.

Planning involves noting historic distributions of koalas before over 8 million skins were shipped from 1901-1927. Koalas live mainly in Queensland, NSW, Victoria and some parts of SA. Populations follow waterways, in which food trees flourish. Dr Kirlin suggested targeting waterways in new developments: here parks are often on floodplains, unattractive as building sites to developers. Fencing these and planting food trees could enable koalas to use river corridors to link populations. Incentives to farmers to conserve koala habitat could include developing an eco-label certifying produce as koala-friendly, where farmers implement conservation measures.

Climate change prevention can be consistent with improving koala survival rates. For example, the tallowwood is a favourite food tree, and also has dense wood which is good for storing carbon.

Rehabilitation of koalas is difficult: they dislike relocation, with low survival rates. Planting food trees is essential. Apart from the tallowwood (*Eucalyptus microcorys*), koalas favour *E. tereticornis* and *E. robusta* (swamp mahogany). They also eat other genera: corymbia, melaleuca, angophora, lophostemon, acacia and allocasuarina.

This seminar was well attended and Dr Kirlin fielded many questions following his talk. The AKF is a not-for-profit, non-government funded organization dedicated to the conservation of koalas & their habitat. For more information visit www.savethekoala.com.

Margaret Palmer

Coming Event: Members-only Cottage Talk

20th APRIL: *Nuts, leaves and bark—Your Eucalypt decoding clue*” (Leah Hattendorff)

Cottage Talks: Leah Hattendorff

Leah Hattendorff, our Creek Catchment Officer is a regular contributor to our Cottage Talks program. The March *Who lives here? Spotting fauna clues and creating more habitat niches at home*, was enjoyable and well-attended talk, encouraging us all to spot fauna clues,

and create more habitat niches. It was greatly enjoyed by an audience of members interested in the often unseen wildlife in their backyards. Afterwards we visited a remarkable flowering native ‘banana bush’, *Tabernaemontana pandacaqui*, in the Cottage garden (see picture, page one). Leah is also joining us in April. Why not book YOUR place for one of these free, member-only talks?

For more information on forthcoming events, why not check our website or Facebook page? Contact Dale to reserve your place at a future cottage talk (daleborgelt@gmail.com or call 0408 741 035).

Dale Borgelt

Land for Wildlife

Many members will already be participants in Brisbane City Council's Wildlife Conservation Partnership Program (Land for Wildlife). But for those who have always wondered just what is behind those diamond signs, here's a little more information.

More than half of Brisbane's wildlife habitat is located on privately-owned land, and conserving it is critical to the survival of our native wildlife. Brisbane City Council's Wildlife Conservation Partnership Program (WCPP) invites landholders to partner with Council to protect and improve wildlife habitat on private lands by joining *Land for Wildlife*. Landholders who join *Land for Wildlife* receive support and advice on revegetation, local flora and fauna species and how to conserve and restore wildlife habitat on their land.



To be eligible to join *Land for Wildlife* your property must have a minimum area of 0.5 hectares of existing habitat, or equivalent area able to be rehabilitated as habitat, and be located within the Rural, Conservation or Environmental Management land zones. The *Land for Wildlife* agreement is voluntary and has no effect on land ownership rights.

As part of joining *Land for Wildlife*, partners receive:

- expert advice and information on habitat management
- help with plant identification and weed management
- a property-specific Bushland Property Management Plan
- free workshops on habitat management topics
- regular newsletters and fact sheets

- free native flora and fauna reference books
- free native plants
- opportunities to meet like-minded people, *and*
- a rebate on the Bushland Preservation Levy.

Partners also become eligible to apply for BCC's Community Conservation Assistance grants to support on-ground bushland restoration activities

Land for Wildlife is an Australia-wide program, delivered in SEQ by local councils. The SEQ Land for Wildlife website has recently been upgraded (www.lfwseq.org.au). The website contains a wealth of resources for landholders, partners and anyone interested in various facets of wildlife and habitat management.

Moggill Creek Catchment has been described as the most well represented catchment in the LFW program in Brisbane, so if you've been thinking of joining, you'll be in great company. For enquiries, or more information phone Council (07 3403 8888).

Do we really need to feed giraffes and rhinos?

Andrew Wilson plays an important part in managing our nursery. Recently, he carried out a survey of plant species along Rowena Park (adjacent to Rafting Ground Reserve) in response to a commission from MCCG. This was before the commencement of a restoration program of the riparian zone surrounding the park, funded by Healthy Waterways and SEQ Catchments.

When Andrew came across a medium sized bush with these bicoloured flowers, about 2-3cm long (pictured below), he identified it as *Dichrostachys cinerea* or Sickle Bush. Apart from these 2.5cm long



bicoloured unusual flowers, the species grow vicious, 8cm thorns likely to cause serious damage to people's limbs and to horse flanks.

Kate McVicar, an active MCCG member for many years, comes from Namibia. Kate instantly recognised this plant, noting "giraffes, rhinoceros and other wild game love eating them [...]. They manage to cleverly avoid the thorns, and the seeds are very nutritious." For more botanical details refer to [Wikipedia](#).

This exotic plant is spreading steadily along the creek bank below Rowena Street. To have a closer look, walk from Rafting Ground Reserve and cross the footbridge through Rowena Park. Follow the footpath by the creek until the path opens out onto a wide grass patch. The Sickle Bush are easily visible on its borders (flowers best seen in January and February).

If there were a less suitable plant for a community park I can't name one!

Malcolm Frost

HELP NEEDED. Our Photography Competition team REALLY needs some new helpers. Contact mccgphoto@gmail.com for more info.

FREE Kids Day: 28th May 2017

Definitely a date for every diary!

This year, the Cottage Kids' Day is Sunday 28th May. Kids of all ages will again have plenty to enjoy at this popular free local community event. It is all about kids seeing, making, doing, finding out and getting involved with the world of nature around them.

Each of the scientists and experts in their field are devising ways to entertain, intrigue and interest kids in the wonderful biodiversity in our environment.

What displays and activities will there be this year? What will the different art and craft activities be? What native plants will there be to pot and take home? What wonderful creatures will Martin Fingland bring for a close-up look? Find out from 10am, Sunday 28th May 2017, at the MCCG Cottage (at the very end of Gold Creek Road on Gold Creek Dam Reserve).

MCCG is happy to offer this event **free** to the local community, thanks to support from: our volunteers, the Lord Mayor's Suburban Initiative Fund, Pullenvale Ward Councillor Kate Richards, BCC Creek Catchment Program, and SEQWater. For more info contact daleborgelt@gmail.com *Dale Borgelt*