

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ARE DUE

Membership renewals for 2013/14 are due now. Notices will be sent to members in the next week or two, so if you don't receive yours by the end of July, please contact the office on admin@pioneercatchment.org.au

Another Goodbye...

It seems such a short time since we welcomed Iona Flett into our organisation, and now we have to say goodbye. In fact it was just 3 months ago, but in that time Iona has made a big contribution and been a very valuable team member. The current arrangements for Regional Landcare Facilitators end on 30 June; in future Reef Catchments will employ and host one Regional Landcare Facilitator and the position will focus on sustainable agriculture. These changes have come about because of reduced government funding to regional groups, and changing government priorities. Our capacity to deliver will be reduced for the time being, as we actually lose one-third of an officer's time. We also lose the benefit of having another person bringing a range of skills and experience to our team.

However, Iona will be working in Reef Catchments so we are not losing her completely. Iona, we have very much enjoyed having you on our team and we appreciate the effort you have put in. We look forward to continuing to work with you in a different capacity.

Margaret Lane, Chair

The Magic of Gypsum

Last week 71 farmers attended a series of workshops about soils. Dr Ross Coventry from Soil Horizons delivered a set of lectures about soil physical and chemical properties in the morning, and then in the afternoon we followed John Hughes (of QDAFF) into the cane fields to look at soil pits and see some demonstrations.

Farmers were encouraged to have their soils professionally analysed, since even within one field there can be great variability. This could save money and help keep excess nutrients out of waterways.

Sodic soils are a specialty of Dr Coventry's. He explained how these soils often have crusting, clumping (which is worsened by cultivation) and poor water penetration, and do not retain their structure when they are wet, which results in extensive and potentially dangerous erosion. There is an inexpensive treatment for sodic soils, however: Gypsum applied at the correct rate will work in a way that might seem like magic (but is actually very scientific). The calcium in gypsum is the secret. Calcium ions have two bonding sites (that's what the ⁺² means), so by replacing sodium ions, which have only one (⁺¹) they bind the soil particles together more strongly. An important tip that Dr Coventry shared was that soil treatments like gypsum must be applied at the correct rate – never try to save money by spreading it more thinly over a larger area.



Ross Coventry demonstrates a slaking test (I.Flett)

Happy Birthday to the Eungella Honeyeater

Mackay's only endemic bird is the Eungella Honeyeater. It was thirty years ago that this bird was recognised as a species separate from a more northerly species called the Bridled Honeyeater. The Eungella Honeyeater occupies a restricted habitat ranging from the tropical rainforest of Eungella National Park to the open sclerophyll forest of the adjacent Crediton State Forest. Both of these forests are essential to its survival.



Eungella Honeyeater (D. Burndred)

Earlier this year, a logging company applied for a permit to re-log in part of Crediton State Forest. Patricia Julien of the Mackay Conservation Group is concerned that the initial logging permit was granted without any requirements to monitor the impacts of logging on threatened species. "Survey data shows a decline in the Eungella Honeyeater over the past two decades. As a result, it has been nominated for listing by the Australian government as an endangered species. The Forestry Code of Practice stipulates that trees providing habitat or food for threatened species should not be logged, but at least one of the species selected for logging in Crediton, the Forest Red Gum, provides food, as the Eungella Honeyeater has been recorded feeding on lerps specific to that tree species."

Community members who sight the Eungella Honeyeater are requested to take detailed notes about its location, and get in touch with Daryl Barnes at dbarnes02@dodo.com.au. Patricia Julien is on 4953 0808.

Community Food Grants - Apply by 5pm July 4, 2013
www.daff.gov.au/agriculture-food/food/community-food-grants

Friends of Parks small grants program - Apply by July 17, 2013
www.nprsr.qld.gov.au/funding/parks

Plant of the month

A beautiful plant that's currently fruiting. See it in the Regional Forest at the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens.

Acronychia laevis RUTACEAE

Yellow Wood or Hard Aspen

A pretty garden tree with a bushy rounded shape. It is sensitive to poor soil drainage but copes with dry and cold conditions. Great for water-wise gardens. The fruit are eaten by pigeons and although bitter, are not poisonous to humans. Attractive to many butterflies.



Description: A small tree or large shrub with compact growth and dark, shiny green foliage.

Leaves: Opposite, elliptic to obovate, up to 9x4cm, rounded or slightly indented at the apex with numerous small oil dots. A distinct joint is visible between the leaf blade and stem. Crushed leaves produce a citrus smell.

Flowers and fruit: The small greenish white flowers are followed by four cornered, fleshy, slightly inflated fruits to about 1.4cm in diameter. Colour varies from pink to purple and like the leaves they are strongly aromatic. They flower and fruit over a long period of time.

Distribution: Understorey of beach scrub and rainforest from north-eastern Queensland to north eastern New South Wales, including Lord Howe Island and New Caledonia.

Propagation: Successful propagation can be achieved using cuttings (with persistence). Germination from seed is inconsistent.



Sources: Alcock & Champion, 1989 One Hundred and One Trees of Mackay. Photos: K. Elliot (Right) and I. Flett (Left).

Weed spotting this month

A declared weed to look out for.

Jatropha gossypifolia EUPHORBIACEAE

Bellyache Bush

What do the Slade Point Reserve and Grass Tree Beach have in common? "Well, lots" I hear you say. One thing they share is creeping populations of the tropical weed – Bellyache Bush.

Whilst there may not be large areas of this weed present in our region now, it is worthwhile knowing that it can invade grazed and disturbed areas, get amongst native vegetation and turn good pasture into a poisonous hazard. It is hard to believe it was introduced as a garden ornamental but is now a major weed of North Queensland.

Description: A squat erect thick-stemmed perennial shrub 2½-4 m tall. The stems have coarse sticky glandular hairs and all parts of the bush are poisonous to humans and animals.

Leaves: Alternate, simple, deeply divided into 3-5 lobes, about 100mm in diameter, margins covered in coarse, dark brown gland-tipped hairs; deep purple and sticky when young, becoming bright green at maturity.

Flowers: Small with red petals and yellow centre, about 4mm across, borne in clusters on upper parts of plant.

Fruits/Seeds: Oval 3-lobed capsules, about 12 x 10mm, containing 3-4 oblong seeds about 8mm long, that are explosively expelled at maturity.

Spread by: Seeds 'fired' up to 12m from parent plants, spread by water and in transported soil on machinery and vehicles. Tuberous roots produce suckers, especially after any disturbance.

Be aware of Bellyache Bush. If you notice it along roadways or waterways, please call Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23.

This is a CLASS 2 declared plant in Queensland and Landholders are required to control declared pests on their properties.

Source: http://www.daff.qld.gov.au/4790_7151.htm; Photo: SB



How important is the coast to you?

The CSIRO is leading a study to find out how people living in Mackay would like to see the coast managed in the future.

This is your opportunity to have your say and participate in an information session and survey.

Venue: Mercy College, corner of Penn St and Juliet St,



The Weed Spotters' Network

The Weed Spotters' Network Queensland is a community-based weed alert system for Qld. It aims to find, identify and document new occurrences of weeds at an early stage so that actions can be taken.

There are currently 1258 naturalised plant species in Queensland, with a range of impacts on the environment, agriculture and the economy; the cost of managing these weeds is over \$4 billion per year.

PCL newsletter readers are encouraged to join Weed Spotters and start reporting, collecting and identifying specimens of potential, new and emerging weeds in the region. Members are provided with training



in weed recognition and plant collecting techniques to assist their work. Weed Spotters also receive a newsletter, which last month featured *Hymenachne amplexicaulis* as the focus weed, as well as information about the new Weeds of Australia online [identification tool](#) to allow you to try identifying weeds yourself.

Contact Peter.Alden@daff.qld.gov.au or see www.qld.gov.au/environment/plants-animals/plants/herbarium/weeds/



The *Ecosystem Health Monitoring Database* is an online portal that is part of Reef Catchments' Citizen Science Network to record environmental activities within the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac region. Its purpose is to increase awareness of environmental monitoring within the region, highlight volunteer opportunities and help identify where gaps exist for possible future projects.

Anyone who is part of a project that involves monitoring the environment in the region can add their project to an online database. This information is then available to anyone interested. To search the database or submit a project head to www.reefcatchments.com.au, select COMMUNITY then CITIZEN SCIENCE.



Out and About with Landcare in June ...



Clockwise from top left:
 Tina Ball (QNP) inspects a nest cylinder at Padaminka; Participants at the soil workshop at the Camilleri Brothers' farm; Young plants in their new home in the riparian zone of a tributary of Leila Ck (J. Hansen); Some of the 28 participants enjoying the regenerating bushland habitat at Padaminka Nature Refuge at a recent Field Walk; Di Williams and Robyn Law fight back a throng of eager tree seekers at the Pioneer Valley Show. PCL distributed 500 native plants at the show. Centre: Chris McAdam from the Iona West Men's Shed builds a nesting cylinder.



Upcoming Events

JULY

Thursday 4, 7.30pm - SGAP General Meeting including a talk about Coastal Projects by Kerri Woodcock. Mackay Gem and Craft Society Hall, Leisure Court.

Saturday 6, 8.00am - Friends of Morag McNichol Reserve Working Bee. Contact: Joyce on 4955 0153

Saturday 6, 9.00am-2.00pm - Far Beach Community Day. Presentations by Birdlife Mackay, Mackay Turtlewatch and others. Weeding, planting, beach cleanup and free barbeque.

Sunday 7, 6.30am — Birdlife Mackay outing to Mt Ossa and Mclean's Property. Meet at Coningsby Service Station. Contact 49522964

Tuesday 9 - Thursday 11, 6pm-8pm - CSIRO coastal management survey. Mercy College, corner of Penn St and Juliet St, Mackay. Refreshments provided. Contact: GBRMPA 4951 3454

Wednesday 10, 7.30am - MRBG Regional Forest working bee.

Saturday 13, Coastcare Activities. Contact Claire for more info: 0429155841

9-11am Ball Bay - Meet at end of Buoro St.

2-4pm Eimeo - Meet at the end of Graham Crescent.

Friday 19 - Monday 22, June Norman and other participants in Reef Walk 2013 will be passing through Mackay. Contact Ellen at Mackay Conservation Group on 49530808 to find out how you can be part of the celebration.

www.reefwalk2013.com

Wednesday 31, 7.30am - MRBG Regional Forest working bee.

AUGUST

Thursday 1, 7.30pm - SGAP General Meeting including a talk called *Some Plants of the Ayre Peninsula* by Bev Watson. Mackay Gem and Craft Society Hall, Leisure Court.

Saturday 3, 8.00am - Friends of Morag McNichol Reserve Working Bee. Contact: Joyce on 4955 0153

Sunday 4, 6.30am — Birdlife Mackay outing to Lyn Kane's property. Meet at the Tourist Information Centre on Nebo Rd. Contact 49522964

An exciting project is happening on Owen's Creek, and we need your help. The project managers are trying to source logs for a river improvement project. Logs should be 5-8m long, and 400-650mm diameter. If they still have the root ball, that is even better.

Please contact the office if you can help or if you would like more information.



**FAR BEACH
COMMUNITY DAY**
July 6 2013 9am to 2pm

Get involved at your beach! Help with dune planting, weeding, watering and rubbish collection. Hear from the community groups who work to keep the Mackay-Whitsunday coast beautiful.

9.00 am – Meet at Illawong Park for a guided walk and talk about the coast. Help with rubbish collection.

10.00 am – Weed ID & weeding activity.

11.00 am – Talk about CVA and tree planting at Far Beach.

12.00 pm – Free BBQ lunch with talks and displays from local community groups.

Please bring chairs or picnic rugs, picnic extras, sun-smart gear, sturdy shoes, family and friends!

Who's who at Pioneer Catchment & Landcare

Management Committee

Chair Margaret Lane (SGAP—Mackay Branch)

Deputy Chair Dave Hunter

Treasurer Dianne Williams

Secretary (Non voting) Wendy Eiteneuer

Committee Members Irene Champion, Di Salau, Cr Theresa Morgan, John Atkinson

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