

CONGRATULATIONS!

Mackay Turtle Group wins State Coastcare Award

The Mackay and District Turtle Watch Association (MDTWA) were announced as the winners of the State Landcare Award in the Coastcare category at the recent State Landcare Conference Gala Dinner in Warwick.

As winners of the Queensland Coastcare Award, the Mackay and District Turtle Watch Association will now move forward as a finalist for the 2014 National Coastcare Award, and will compete against other state Coastcare winners from around Australia.

Congratulations to everyone involved in "Turtle Watch", this is a very successful volunteer program in our region.



MDTWA members; Fay Griffin (Treasurer), Ken Griffin (Secretary), Diane Clarke (President). Image: K. Woodcock

Turtle nesting season begins

Marine turtles will begin nesting in mid to late October on our beaches; nesting season runs through February, with a few stragglers hatching into March. Marine turtles are a keystone species in marine ecosystems around the world, and particularly in the Great Barrier Reef. It is our responsibility to make sure our actions don't adversely affect turtle nesting and hatching success, so the turtles will survive for the future.

To volunteer at Coastcare activities, subscribe to emails, or find out what projects are happening on our coast, contact Claire Bartron: email claire.bartron@reefcatchments.com or call 0429 155 841.

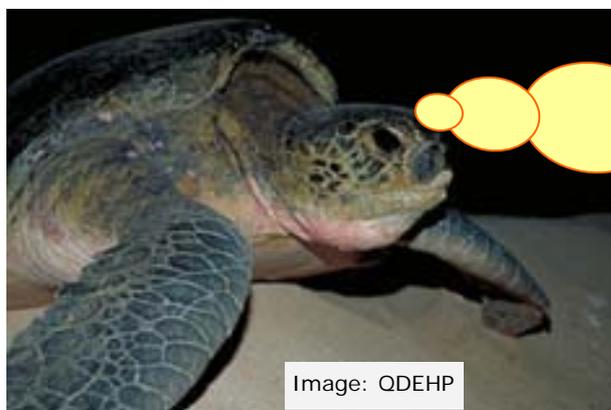


Image: QDEHP

Here's what you can do to make our beaches safe for nesting turtles:

- * **Live on or near the beach?** Keep lighting to a minimum. Both nesting adults and hatchlings are disoriented by strong lights, so turn off any outdoor lights, and keep curtains drawn at night.
- * **During nesting season,** keep your dogs on a leash. Dogs can smell freshly-laid eggs and will dig up nests, and they can injure turtles and hatchlings.
- * **Obey the local laws** and keep vehicles off our sand dunes.

Annual General Meeting

Our Annual General Meeting held on Thursday 31 October was well attended. 8 members were elected to the Management Committee: we welcome back Margaret Lane (Chair), Dave Hunter (Deputy-Chair), Di Williams (Treasurer), John Atkinson, Irene Champion, Cr Theresa Morgan and Di Salau: a special welcome goes to our new committee member, Robyn Law.

Attendees enjoyed an informative tour of the renovated nursery facilities at the Mackay Natural Environment Centre thanks to Mackay Regional Council's Richard Brown. Richard presented new shadehouses, workflow plans, building extensions and sustainability & renewable energy technologies: a new water capture & recycling system, Thermoshield building insulation and solar panels that offset power use & contributes to Mackay's power grid.

Refreshments and socialising followed the meeting - many smiles suggesting an occasion enjoyed by all. The committee and officers appreciated the chance to relax & chat with our members



Plant of the month *Terminalia sericocarpa* Family Combretaceae

Damson

I've been away for a month and when I arrived back at the PCL office, I wondered if a cat had died in the yard. Then Margaret and I were at Reliance Ck palm vine forest and there it was again, a very sweet sickly smell. So now I have discovered Damson in its full pungent glory!

Many people will know this tree as a fast growing tree suitable for rainforest (esp. riverine) revegetation projects. It has a thin, succulent edible fleshy fruit. It is the small white flowers that occur this time of year, which give off an unpleasant odour.

LEAVES: Alternate ovate to obovate shaped to 10cm, borne on pseudo-whorls on the end of layered branches. Shiny green leaves but old leaves turn purplish-red and drop during September and October.

FLOWER/FRUITS: Axillary flower spikes produce oblong, bluish fruits, about 1cm long, containing 1 seed.

HABITAT: Endemic to northern Australia and southwards as far as coastal central Queensland. Altitudinal range from near sea level to 750 m. Usually grows in well developed rain forest but also found in drier rain forest, monsoon forest and gallery forest. In this region Damson is a conspicuous emergent riverine species. Produces large crops of small fruits which appear to be an important food resource for a number of fruit eating birds, particularly fruit pigeons.

POINTS OF INTEREST: PCL seeks to propagate Damson at Mackay Natural Environment Centre Nursery for use in local revegetation projects. If you have seeding trees, please call us!

Source: Australian Tropical Rainforest Plants Fact sheet. Mackay SGAP, 1989 One Hundred and One Trees of Mackay



Leaves and Fruit. Image: CSIRO

Weed spotting this month *Syngonium podophyllum* (and relatives)



Monstera climbing a blue gum near Habana. The tree may eventually be in danger of being pulled down.

At a recent visit to **Land for Wildlife** members' properties Helen Douglas and John Atkinson I was shocked at the potential of *Monstera deliciosa* vines to pull down trees. The Douglas' had just spent days cutting them out of Eucalypt trees and John is facing a similar problem with vines in healthy blue gums growing close to buildings. Most people possibly don't think of this green leafy climber as a potential weed. It makes such a lovely green feature in the garden giving home to frogs, lizards and other critters. However, left unchecked, the *Monstera* can really impact your native gardens. Readers may be interested to know there is a native monstera — *Epipremnum pinnatum*. This is a large local rainforest root climber. The older plants have deeply lobed leathery leaves similar to *Monstera* and also makes an attractive container plant when young. Mackay branch of SGAP often have the native monstera for sale.



Not to be confused! A real threat to our bushlands is the vigorous climber *Syngonium podophyllum*. Also known as Goosefoot, or White Butterfly owing to the shape of its leaves.

Native to Panama and Mexico, *Syngonium* is a popular foliage plant easily recognized by its 3-lobed arrow-shaped leaves, with white centres on young plants; becoming dark green on mature plants. It is a vigorous fleshy climber with watery-milky sap; climbing by adventitious roots or spreading over the ground.

This is a garden escapee still commonly planted in gardens or as pot plants, and often spread from dumped garden waste. It is a serious weed in a number of locations within our region, capable of completely enveloping tree trunks and overtopping trees. It forms large colonies and is very difficult to control once established. The sap causes permanent blood-like stains on clothing.



Syngonium podophyllum. Image: S.Burchill

Source: 2011, Weeds of Mackay Whitsunday Region

Update from the Queensland State Landcare Conference

Over 200 conference delegates including Kate Steel, Dave Hunter and Margaret Lane from Pioneer Catchment & Landcare Group travelled to Warwick in late September for the 24th State Landcare Conference.

This was a very good time of Landcare networking with colleagues and hearing inspirational talks on a range of projects and approaches to Landcare from across Queensland. There was wide representation from north, west, east and south of the state.

Key note speakers highlighted the challenges and threats to sustainable agriculture, and particularly the impending 'world food production crisis'. It is disheartening to realise that Australian soils are still being degraded with less than 10% of our soils being improved through changed attitudes and practices. Landcare remains relevant and essential in finding and promoting local food production solutions to world-wide problems. The conference occurred just after the Federal election so that there seemed an undercurrent of anticipation of change in government policy and priority for Landcare and NRM.

Field trips highlighted local projects. I enjoyed a walk through a local reserve of mountain coolibah grassy woodlands where Allora Landcare group are working to improve the biodiversity of the reserve, develop and promote local use of the area with the local school, attract visitors, protect heritage, and negotiate changed grazing regimes with the lessee.

A highlight of the Gala dinner on Saturday night was the State Landcare Awards. Five nominees from our region were made and the Coastcare Award went to Mackay and District Turtle Watch group, and was accepted with a speech by Margaret Lane.

The Junior Landcare delegates also made a heart-warming theme song, which you can hear on YouTube at

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNYtXkXkCDc> .

2014 will see the 25 year anniversary of Landcare in Australia. Wherever the conference is to be held, it is sure to be a great time.



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Volunteers wanted for Eungella study

Have you always wanted to explore the picturesque Eungella National Park, whilst helping scientific study?

Mackay Regional Council is seeking volunteers to assist Researchers from Griffith University to undertake a biodiversity study of one of Queensland's most ecologically diverse parks.

From counting samples to trekking through the rainforest setting up traps and a chance to camp on the summit of Mt Dalrymple, a variety of volunteering opportunities are available.

From early November, the Scientists from Griffith will commence the second phase of this unique study. Further field work will continue after the wet season in early 2014.

To volunteer on the Eungella Biodiversity Study fill in the registration form on councils website visit: www.mackay.qld.gov.au/eungellastudy

Landcare activities in October...



At Far Beach—Three of the 335 volunteers who helped remove close to 5 tonnes of garbage from Mackay beaches at the Mackay Coastal Clean Up in October.



Work gets underway on the Engineered Log Jam construction on Owens Ck. Funded through Queensland Government and Reef Catchments

Upcoming Events

NOVEMBER

Thursday 7 —SGAP general meeting, Steve Pearson presenting Plants for the Whitsundays. Contact 4955 1745

Sunday 3 —Birdlife Mackay outing to Lake Clive. Contact 49522964

Saturday 2 and Saturday 30 —Morag McNichol Reserve Working Bees. Contact 49550153

Saturday and Sunday 9-10— Flying Fox Workshop, with Fauna Rescue Whitsundays. Free to members or \$10/day. Contact 49591901

November 16 - Ball Bay 9--11 am Join us at Ball Bay to remove invasive weeds from this important coastal ecosystem. Meet at the end of Buoro Street.

November 16 - Halliday Bay 1-3 pm Come and learn about marine turtles at this important nesting beach, presentation by Mackay and District Turtle Watch Association. Meet at the southern end of Headland Drive, near the picnic area.

November 26-27 - Sandfly Creek Reserve Coastcare Activities. Contact CVA for details 4951 0933

November 28—Far Beach 7.30 am - 3 pm Coastcare Activities. Contact CVA for details 4951 0933

DECEMBER

Saturday and Sunday 1-2—Birdlife Mackay National Bird Count and Xmas breakup. Contact 49522964

Tuesday 3—Everyone's Environment Coastal and Riparian projects bus tour (To be confirmed). Contact 49441979

Thursday 5—SGAP General Meeting and Xmas supper. Contact 4955 1745

Monday 23—Pioneer Catchment & Landcare office closed for Xmas break

Join us for a morning Walk in Reliance National Park

Saturday 23 November

8.30am Meet & greet

9am Set off for walk into Palm
Vine Forest

10am refreshments and
discussion

Attendees need to be aware that we will be walking over rough ground and will need strong boots, hat, sunscreen and insect repellent and water.

Please Phone to let us know you are coming

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Mackay Australia Day Awards:

Who would you nominate for an *Environmental Achievement Award*?

Recognise individuals or groups who demonstrate a genuine passion for the environment and strive to improve it through conservation, preservation, protection and education.

Pioneer Catchment & Landcare Group
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