



Land for Wildlife Profile– Discovering how to build a legacy in the bush

Welcome to Maya Harrison and Kevin Jackson on the recent registration of their new property near Mt Blackwood. The 45ha bush block is an outstanding place to preserve the unique habitat and species of the region. A recent discussion with Maya reveals the many wonderful dreams and plans they have for their new home, and in making this place known as a treasured place where wildlife is important for friends and visitors alike.

Maya explains that they want to live as carefully as possible amongst the bushland, "Since the block is untouched, we had to start with a limited amount of destruction, putting in an access track, testing soils and designing a fire strategy in order to build our house. However, we have already started to repair the extent of this clearing. We don't want weeds moving into the open area so weed prevention and control is underway already – getting cover on the cleared ground, especially along waterways, is essential before the wet season begins or we will risk an erosion problem" says Maya. With access tracks established, a house site had to be chosen with minimal disturbance to the woodlands, "We have to live within a fire zone, so there are requirements we must follow for that, but these are not restrictions, it just reflects the beauty of the eucalyptus forest" comments Maya.



Mount Blackwood Holly *Graptophyllum ilicifolium*
Image: Amos T. Faichild



Kevin Jackson and Maya Harrison
Image: K. Steel

Our real dream for this place is to preserve the wonderful habitat here, and work with others to raise awareness amongst family, friends and acquaintances about the importance of all wildlife, from insects, to plants and reptiles. "In time we will welcome bird watchers, herpetologists, bushwalkers and people who just come to appreciate nature". And there is plenty to study and appreciate here. The property contains a range of vegetation communities from open *Eucalyptus* woodlands, tall woodlands, wetlands and creeks, and gully rainforest areas.

Already, surveys by Maya and Kevin have revealed populations of the rare local plant Mt Blackwood Holly (*Graptophyllum ilicifolium*). Nearby records point to probable habitat for at least 15 reptiles,

including the near threatened skink, *Eulamprus amplus*. Since there are gum tree hollows and the area is well-connected to larger tracts of eucalypt forest, it is very likely that healthy populations of squirrel gliders inhabit the property. "We will put up some extra homes for them as well. All these wonders are yet to be explored" says Maya.

"Our legacy won't be the house we build but the message that 'we made an effort to live amongst Nature'. There are moments of lucid realisation, when I sit out amongst the bushland watching the changes that nature brings with time and seasons, that we don't need to make a huge impact, we can leave this little patch a better place, unspoilt" explains Maya.



Eulamprus amplus
Image: Brett Manning



Plant of the month

Dendrobium discolor ORCHIDACEAE

Golden Cane Orchid

Now flowering at the Mackay Botanical Gardens

Dendrobium: from the Greek **dendron** 'tree' and **bios** 'life'—describes the life form of the species which is epiphytic; **discolour** from Latin **dis** 'unlike'

FORM: Large terrestrial epiphytic or lithophytic orchid with tall cane-like pseudobulbs from which roots develop; forms large colonies.

LEAVES: Ovate-elliptical, thick pale to dark green.

FLOWER/FRUITS: Tall racemes, up to 1m with numerous brown to yellow or golden flowers, long lasting through spring and summer. Pollinated by native bees. Fruit are capsules.

HABITAT: Needs strong light and good drainage, common on rocky areas and coastal headlands and islands, drier rainforest, open forests, mangroves, areas subject to wind and salt spray.

POINTS OF INTEREST: Many of the orchids that occur naturally in our region were once common but clearing of habitat, and/or human greed have severely depleted populations. Collecting orchids from the wild only serves to contribute to the denudation of our diverse habitats, and is illegal. If you buy orchids, take responsibility to know where they came from and that they are sold under permit. Purchasing from markets is very uncertain. However, when the Mackay Branch of Society for Growing Australian Plants sells orchids at their market stalls you can be sure they are permitted and sustainably grown.



Image: S. Glenum

Source: Melzer and Plumb (2007) *Plants of Capricornia*

Weed spotting this month

Mimosa pigra—Giant Sensitive Tree

"The price of freedom is eternal vigilance"

This famous quote seems particularly relevant management of the pest plant 'Giant Sensitive Tree', or *Mimosa pigra*.

Native to Mexico, Central and South America, it is a fast growing, aggressive weed in Northern Australia's seasonal tropics. The potential for *Mimosa pigra* to cause severe economic and environmental impacts has it declared as a Weed of National Significance (WONS) and a class 1 pest plant in Queensland. *Mimosa pigra* thrives in wetlands, on riverbanks and floodplains, particularly where habitats are disturbed. The plant is shrubby, with thorns, hairy stems and fern-like leaves that fold at night and when touched. Tiny flowers, purplish to pink in fluffy globular heads, are borne in pairs or singly. It can form dense stands that smother pasture, out-compete native plant communities, displace wildlife and threaten biodiversity. They can also hamper mustering and restrict water access for stock, irrigation and recreation.

In the Northern Territory, *Mimosa pigra* has invaded over 140,000ha of floodplain, but it's estimated that a further 4,600,000ha are at risk across northern and eastern Australia. Queensland currently has only one known infestation at Peter Faust Dam near Proserpine. An eradication program is in place but this outbreak needs ongoing attention as seeds can remain dormant in the soil for up to 23 years.

Boat owners, fisher people, graziers, contractors, farmers and travellers are all called to vigilance as seeds can be spread by water, mud, animals, manure, machinery and vehicles.

If you suspect you may have seen *Mimosa pigra*, contact the Weed Spotters' Network via the Queensland Herbarium or e-mail a photograph to: Queensland.Herbarium@science.dsitia.qld.gov.au. Alternately, contact Biosecurity Queensland on **132523**.



Mimosa pigra. Image: P.Mee

Sources: 'Weeds of the Mackay Whitsunday Region'; 'Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry' and 'The Weed Spotters' Network Queensland'

Mackay Coastal Clean Up

presented by:

Eco Barge Clean Seas Inc.

Keeping our seas clean

in association with:



BPP British Mitsubishi Alliance

'Bringing People Together to Protect our Coastline'

AFTER TWO CLEAN UP EVENTS, THE MACKAY COASTAL CLEAN UP HAS NOW BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR REMOVING 7,440 KGS FROM BEACHES IN MACKAY AND SARINA.

The next Mackay Coastal Clean Up will be being held on 26 and 27 October 2013 and will focus on the northern beaches in Mackay. There are plenty of exciting opportunities for you to become involved with this event.

Pioneer Catchment & Landcare is supporting the Far Beach Clean-up site on Sunday 27th Oct.

9—11.30am followed by a BBQ lunch

We hope you can join us - Volunteers are Welcome and plenty of fun is guaranteed.

Please call the Pioneer Catchment & Landcare office for details on 4944 1979

may lay a second). Their 'nest' is a simple scrape on the ground, just above the high tide mark or in the fore dune. The lack of formal nest, the camouflage of eggs and chicks along with the nest location make them very vulnerable to accidental crushing. Hatchlings are dependent on their parents for 7 – 12 months, with both parents involved in raising their young.

The main threats facing the Beach Stone-Curlew are loss of habitat through coastal development, as well as disturbance from feral and domestic animals (such as dogs and pigs), which predate on eggs and chicks, or simply displace them with repeated disturbance. Vehicles on beaches (particularly driven above the high-tide mark where birds roost and nest) also poses a threat as does foot traffic during breeding season, due to the cryptic nature of the nest, eggs and chicks.

article by Claire Bartron

The Beach Stone-Curlew

(*Esacus giganteus*)

The Beach Stone-Curlew is a large wader, resident to Australia's coastline. It is found from southern NSW, and north around to Carnarvon in the North-West of WA. It has largely disappeared from the Southeastern extent of its former range, being listed as 'Critically Endangered' in NSW, where it is rarely recorded. In Qld it is listed as 'Vulnerable', and is uncommon in the southern beaches of the state but numbers gradually increase heading north.

The Mackay region has a number of breeding pairs found along the coastline. Whilst most commonly seen as individuals or in pairs, they are also seen in groups of up to five birds. They are found in open, undisturbed beaches, islands, intertidal zones of estuaries and mudflats, feeding on crabs and other marine invertebrates at low tide. During high tide they can be seen resting in nearby coastal vegetation, such as the margins of mangroves, or long grass and amongst coastal she-oaks. They can be easily distinguished from the similar Bush Stone-Curlew by their heavy black, yellow-based bill and distinctive black and white face markings. They also display a head-bob and tail 'waggle' behavior, not seen in the Bush Stone-Curlew.

Pairs are largely sedentary, and young tend to take up territories near their parents. They breed from September to November, laying one egg per season (if the first is lost they



Pair of Beach Stone-Curlews at Slade Point
Image: C. Bartron

Migratory Waders return to the Mackay Whitsunday region

Up to 23,000 shorebirds migrate from the northern hemisphere to Mackay Whitsunday region every year from October to April. While the birds are here they are feeding and resting to build strength for the long journey back to the northern hemisphere to breed.



Image: Felicity Moore

Sandfly Creek Environmental Reserve is a significant shorebird roost site in the region, part of a group internationally declared as an Important Bird Area.

Disturbances from recreational activities are a major threat to visiting shorebirds. We can help with simple actions: heed "No Dog" and "Dog on Lead" areas, and avoid walking at

Draft Town and Far Beach Plan open for public comment

Mackay Regional Council and Reef Catchments invite public feedback, due by 1 November 2013

The draft Town and Far Beach Plan is available at www.mackay.qld.gov.au/environment/coastal_management, or contact Mackay Regional Council on 1300 622 529 to request a copy.

You can comment by filling in the online survey at www.mackay.qld.gov.au/environment/coastal_management, or collect a hard-copy from your local library. Mackay Regional Council will send a survey form to you: call 1300 622 529 to arrange delivery.

high tide in known roost sites.

Source: Noni Zahmel 2012

More information is available at Reef Catchments' 'Welcome Back Waders!' event, **Sunday 13 October**, 10 am - 2pm. Free BBQ included. Contact Claire Bartron Mob: 0429 155 842

Upcoming Events

OCTOBER

Fridays, 9.30am —Free Guided Walks at Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens

Thursday 3 —SGAP general meeting, Botanical Gardens update. Contact 4942 6671

Saturday 5 —Mackay Bluewater Ecofest. Riverside 9-3pm

Sunday 6 —Birdlife Mackay outing to Eungella. Contact 49522964

Saturday 12 —Morag McNichol Reserve Working Bee

Sunday 13 —Welcome Back Waders 10am-2pm inc. free BBQ. Contact Claire Bartron for details 0429 155 842

Tuesday 15 —Chiming Tree Sound Sculpture ribbon-cutting ceremony. 10.30am on cement walking track beginning at cnr Bunya Way & Dollarbird Lane, Woodlands Andergrove, followed by morning tea at the Woodlands Sales Office. For more details contact Karen Moran, Ph 07 3263 9524

Saturday and Sunday 26-27—Mackay Coastal Clean Up. See www.ecobargecleanseas.org.au for sites and to register

NOVEMBER

November 3— last chance to see 'Botanica 2013' - An exhibition by the Mackay Botanical Art Interest Group. Lagoons Gallery, Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens

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

Great Barrier Reef update

UNESCO has deferred a decision to place the Great Barrier Reef on its 'World Heritage in Danger' list. UNESCO was advised by the Federal and Queensland Governments that progress was being made to address their concerns.

However, the 2011 Great Barrier Reef Report Card indicates that the overall health of the Reef has declined since 2009. Inshore water quality was poor overall and varied from moderate to poor depending on the region. Inshore seagrass was in very poor condition overall, and its condition has continued to decline since 2006-2007. Inshore coral reefs were in poor condition overall. It is reported that overall 72% of the corals appear dead.

The Mackay Whitsunday's marine condition declined from moderate to poor. Inshore water quality also declined from moderate to poor, inshore seagrass meadows declined from poor to very poor and coral reefs remained in moderate condition.

To read the detailed report go to:

<http://www.reefplan.qld.gov.au/measuring-success/report-cards/report-card-2011.aspx>

2013 Queensland Landcare Award Winner

CONGRATULATIONS to

Mackay & District Turtle Watch Association!!

Mackay & District Turtle Watch received the 'Coastcare' Award. Details of the presentations available next month

Pioneer Catchment & Landcare group proudly Supported by:



CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY

Please note: the Pioneer Catchment and Landcare office will be open on Tuesdays and Thursdays only from 30 Sept to 19 October 2013

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