



From the Chair

The final newsletter of this year provides an opportunity for me to acknowledge the work of Kate and Wendy. Since losing our Landcare Facilitator at the end of June extra workload has fallen on these two and I applaud their commitment, dedication and capacity for hard work. Kate took leave in October and Wendy will have a well-deserved break over Christmas and the January school holidays; I trust this helps them continue to cope with the workload. Wendy and Kate - thank you for your contribution to Landcare.

At the AGM a new member, Robyn Law, was elected to the Management Committee. Robyn is a Land for Wildlife landholder and a nursery volunteer, and is a very welcome addition to the Committee. We still need more new blood on the committee – if you are interested contact us to have chat. Gerard Masters is our volunteer newsletter folder - what a hero. I am sure he would welcome some help if there is anyone who would like to join him or fill in when he is not available. Our Website gets out of date – we would welcome someone with appropriate skills to help us update it regularly. Contact Kate if you think you could help.

I hope you all have a very happy Christmas and that 2014 will be a good year.

Nursery Update—The Team is back home!

Article and Image: M Lane

PCL's team of nursery volunteers has been back working at the Mackay Natural Environment Centre (MNEC) nursery for 4 weeks. The new roofed potting area is very cool and comfortable and we are gradually making it orderly. The new shade house has lots of room for the seed trays and potted up seedlings we are growing. There is plenty of space for sun hardening and we are able to spread the plants out to ensure they receive enough water. All plants have been moved to MNEC from Di Williams' place and the National Parks facility at Slade point. Many thanks to John Atkinson and his team at National Parks, and to Di for providing a home for more than 2000 plants for five months.

The nursery team now has two volunteer team leaders, Nicole Murphy and Robyn Law. These two have put in many hours - in fact we have counted them and they equate to 9.7 days in October and November - taking over a lot of my workload. Since being back at the MNEC nursery we are able to cater for a larger team and therefore produce more plants. Just in November we sowed seeds of 6 species and potted up 700 seedlings of more than 12 species. Now that we have all the plants we have grown in one place we are catching up with regular fertilising and weeding.

A big thankyou to Council and the Natural Environment Program, for the upgraded facilities at the MNEC which include a recycled watering system, new shade houses, the roof for the potting area, solar panels and numerous other improvements. Richard Brown managed the project and we acknowledge the huge achievement delivered in a little over 4 months. Also over this period Irene champion provided much advice and support - thanks Irene

The nursery team meets on Tuesday mornings. While we are unable to take on new volunteers for the remainder of 2013, if you are interest in volunteering in the nursery next year please leave a message for Wendy on

admin@pioneercatchment.org.au or 4944 1979 to register your interest and we will contact you early next year.



Nicole, Peter, Robyn and Marguerette potting up seedlings at the first nursery day back at the Mackay Natural Environment centre.





Plant of the month

Syzygium australe

Creek Cherry/Brush Cherry

Family: Myrtaceae

Habit: Small to medium sized tree, with brown flaky bark.

Leaves: Simple, opposite, leathery, elliptic to obovate leaves, 10 x 4cm, are shortly pointed at the apex and taper into the reddish coloured stem at the base. They are smooth dark glossy green above and dull beneath. New growth is brownish-red.

Flower/Fruit: Fluffy cream flowers with showy stamens are borne in terminal and upper auxiliary sprays. They are followed by bunches of oval to pear-shaped, fleshy pinkish red berries which contain 1-2 seeds. Fruit matures during summer.

Propagation: Remove flesh from fresh seed before sowing immediately.

Local habitat: Riparian.

Distribution: Eastern Australia from Mossman in North Queensland to Nowra in southern New South Wales.

The very attractive foliage, flowers and fruits make this a desirable ornamental which attracts birds. The edible fruits have been used to make jelly and wine.

Source: . Mackay SGAP, 1989 *One Hundred and One Trees of Mackay*

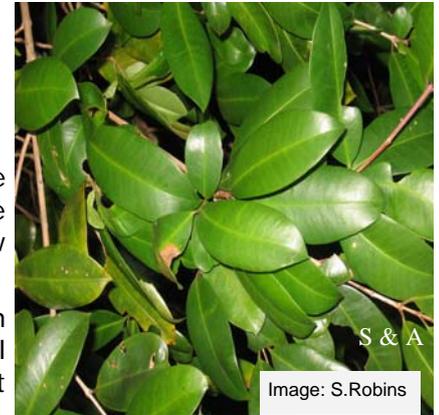


Image: S.Robins



Fruit. Image: S&A Pearson

Weed spotting this month

Syzygium cumini (and relatives)

Java Plum

Ever wondered what all those lush lovely trees are along the banks of the Gooseponds Ck near Willetts Rd? Java plum was widely promoted and planted as an amenity species in the Mackay district in the early 1980s. Since then, the trees have flowered and produced numerous fruit while young so there are now expansive populations throughout the area. Apparently four plants can germinate from each fruit and since it withstands long periods of drought and can survive in standing water, Java Plum has displaced all native species in some sites.

Family: Myrtaceae **Origin:** Southeast Asia, India

Habit: Dense tree to 20m or more.

Leaves: Opposite simple, elliptic to broadly oblong, 50-100mm long, glossy green with prominent yellowish midvein and numerous fine parallel lateral veins, oil glands present.

Flowers: Fluffy cream, about 10mm in diameter, borne in large branched sprays.

Fruits/Seeds: Purple-black ovoid berries, 20mm long, abundant, each with one brown seed embedded in juicy purplish flesh that stains.

Spread by: Primarily by water; also by bats and birds.

Invades/threats: Creek banks and Melaleuca forest.

Notes: If you have Java Plum on creek banks, near wetlands or in pasture the best approach is a replacement strategy. The mature trees may be the only shade or bank stabilising trees left at the site. Investigate what natives should be there and slowly replace the Java Plum by stem injecting a suitable chemical. Pioneer Catchment & Landcare Group can help with revegetation species.



Images: K.Steel



Source: 2011, *Weeds of Mackay Whitsunday Region*

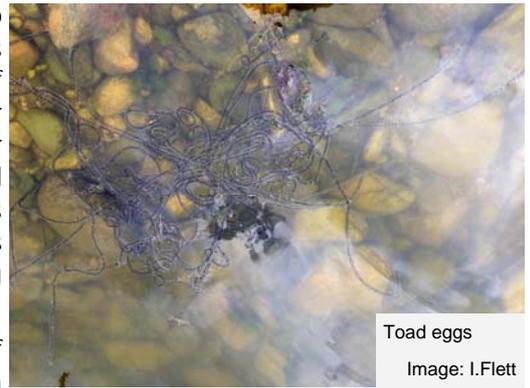
It's that time of year again—humidity, rain and an explosion of wetland life, including our favourite biosecurity disaster—Cane Toads ... The images below are recently taken at the O'Connell River, indicating toads are busy breeding. Here is a brief article adapted from the Frog Safe Inc website:

<http://www.frogSAFE.org.au/home/>

How to Identify Toad Eggs from Frog Eggs: ID & Disposal made Easy

In Australia toad eggs look nothing like any Australian frog's eggs so they are easy to identify (If you are overseas and have other species in the *Bufo* genus, you might not be able to tell which species of toad the eggs are). All Australian frogs lay their eggs in clumps or spreading mats rather than strings. They might be clumps under water attached to a rock or vegetation, a lump of foam (like frothed up laundry soap) on the water's surface, or as a film which spreads across the surface. (The Microhylid family of frogs lay clumps of eggs in soil and would not be readily identifiable to most people as being frog eggs at all, much less confused for toad eggs).

Cane toads lay their eggs in very long strands of clear jelly, sort of like small black pearls in a long clear plastic tube. These strands can get all tangled up in underwater vegetation so, at first, they might look like the eggs are clumped together,



Toad eggs
Image: I.Flett

but if you use a stick or rake to try to pick them up, the long strands will hang down and you'll see that they are not clumped at all. If there is nothing underwater for the eggs to tangle onto, then they will sink to the bottom.

Pull the toad eggs out of the water and dispose of them by either putting them into your compost bin, burying them in the garden or leaving them on the lawn to dry in the sun.

In a warm climate, the eggs will hatch in only 24 to 48 hours so daily vigilance is necessary to catch them while they are still eggs.



Toad eggs
Image: I.Flett

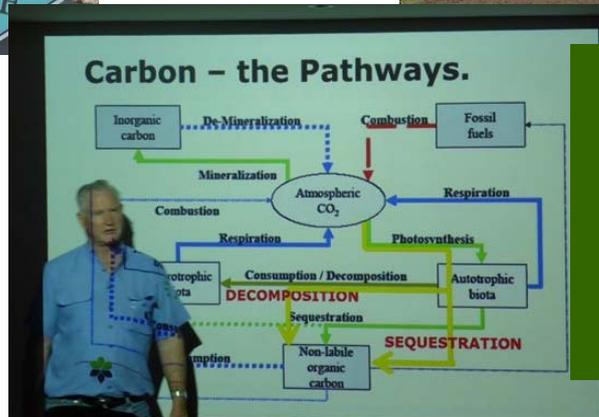
Landcare activities in November...



Welcome to four new Land for Wildlife members during November — Pictured are Murray and Bev Gibbs (Far left) and Kim Brett (Left). Tracey and Steve Crittenden and Libby and Dave Pender were also presented with signs - My lesson is to make sure the camera is charged before visiting the Gorge!



Above—Laurence Bonaventura shows Danielle and Julia Jesser and Shelley Molloy the intricate beauty of Reliance Ck rainforest, whilst John Atkinson (right) leads a walk through the Palm Forest. Around 20 people from the Habana area joined us for a walk into the National Park. Although too wet to go deep into the forest, the group enjoyed the walk and a chance to see the progress of our weed control program.



Above—Participants inspecting Compost Production at a recent Soil Carbon field walk, followed by a workshop dealing with measuring carbon, soil and crop improvement and Carbon Farming opportunities. Left—Terry McCosker presents on Carbon science.



Upcoming Events

DECEMBER

Friday 13— 9am to 1pm. A free workshop at The Leap Hall—Introduction to Permaculture Design and Basic Gardening Tips. Learn some permaculture principles to put in place over the Christmas break.

Thursday 19—Far Beach community tree planting activity and morning tea. Contact Pioneer Catchment & Landcare office for RSVP

Monday 23—Pioneer Catchment & Landcare office closed for Xmas break, reopen 6th January 2014—Happy New Year!

Pioneer Catchment Management Committee: as at 31 October

Chair

Margaret Lane

Deputy Chair

Dave Hunter

Treasurer

Di Williams

Committee Members

John Atkinson

Irene Champion

Robyn Law

Cr Theresa Morgan

Di Salau

This Newsletter bought to you in Full Colour, thanks to Mackay Regional Council. If you would like to see future newsletters in colour, please consider receiving it as a low-cost email version.

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.

Nominations close January 10, 2014.

**For further information,
phone 1300 MACKAY.**

Far Beach Community Coast Care

Far Beach is an important stretch of front and hind dune ecosystems along the Mackay Coast.

Pioneer Catchment & Landcare, Conservation Volunteers Australia and Mackay Regional Council are working together to repair and enhance the area.



Get involved at your beach!

Volunteers who care for our coast can get involved in activities including dune planting, seed collection, weeding, watering and rubbish collection.

We can support school group activities to learn about our coast, native dune plants and invasive weeds.

Contact us if you would like to get involved during 2014 activities.

Help the community groups who work to keep the Mackay-Whitsunday coast beautiful.



Everyone's Environment grants

This project was funded by the Queensland Government's Everyone's Environment grants program.

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