



Pioneer Catchment & Landcare News

August 2010

Where to now for PCL? Margaret Lane, Chairman

After many months of uncertainty I am happy to inform you all that PCL does have a future. I know many of you will not know that our future has been uncertain so I will give you a brief update. PCL has been in existence since 1992, when it was funded through both federal and state governments as one of three (I think) trial Catchment Management Associations in Queensland. Since then we have always had a Coordinator, funded through various state and federal programs, and project officer/s depending on the project funding we had secured. Under Natural Heritage Trust funding we worked with the newly established Regional NRM group (now Reef Catchments Mackay Whitsunday - RCMW) to develop a Natural Resource Management Plan for the region and then to deliver priority actions from that plan. In June 2009 this funding ceased with the change of federal programs to Caring for Our Country, a competitive program that focuses on national priorities.

Since then we have continued operating on our carryover funds, some Regional Landcare Facilitator funding through RCMW as well as project funds won from a range of organisations, including RCMW. During that time we have lobbied all levels of government for continued funding support, as well as submitting numerous applications to a range of funding programs. This has been a difficult and exhausting process. To strengthen our case we formed an alliance with our fellow catchment/Landcare groups in the region (Sarina Landcare Catchment Management Assoc. and Whitsunday Catchment Landcare) forming the Central Queensland Coast Landcare network.

While we are still awaiting responses to some of our submissions, RCMW has received notification of continued Landcare Facilitator Funding (which provides for one officer for our region and has in the past been divided between the three catchment/Landcare groups) and has agreed to provide funding to each group for a coordinator and some operating costs. PCL has accepted and is now working towards a formal agreement with RCMW. We look forward to working with RCMW to deliver priority projects in our catchments. Subject to Council's agreement, we will continue to operate from the Natural Environment Centre in Swayne St, North Mackay.

Unfortunately Tessa McDonald has resigned as Coordinator. Our process from now will be first to employ a coordinator, then depending on the projects for which we have received funding, we may employ a project officer as well.

And now I want to say a big THANKYOU to Tessa for the time she has spent with us and the wonderful contribution she has made to community based natural resource management in our catchment. Tessa joined us in March 2009 and her arrival, after the disruption we had experienced over the previous 18 months, heralded a new era of activity and involvement for our group. It has been a great pleasure to work with Tessa, and on behalf of PCL I wish Tessa the very best in her next endeavours.

Thankyou and Farewell from Tessa McDonald

It is with regret that I've resigned from PCL, and will finish my time with the Group on September 3. It has been a real pleasure to meet, work with and learn from many of you, and I've been continually inspired by the innovation and passion that land managers demonstrate in caring for our catchment. A special thanks to the PCL Management Committee, to Hayley, to Saskia and Christine from the Sarina and Whitsunday catchment groups and to staff from many other organisations for all their assistance and support. As you may have heard, I'm off to enjoy training in shoemaking in the Gympie region. I hope to see many of you on August 24 (see below) and look forward to maintaining contact with the group into the future.

Notice of Annual General Meeting of Pioneer Catchment & Landcare Group Inc.

When: Tuesday August 24, 4pm-5.30pm

Where: 6 Swayne Street, North Mackay

What: All members and friends of PCL are warmly welcomed to PCL's AGM – this will also be an opportunity to farewell Tessa from the group.

RSVP: Please RSVP by 19 August for catering purposes.

Agenda for Annual General Meeting:

- Receipt of the Annual Report and financial statements for 2009/10;
- Receipt of the auditor's report upon the books and accounts for 2009/10;
- Election of members of the Management Committee; and
- Appointment of an auditor for 2010/11

Putting the 'culture' back into agriculture

Deb McLucas

I am a farmer, a former rural journalist and a passionate advocate for the development of sustainable farming systems for the health of both the natural environment and the people who inhabit this planet. There are some exciting initiatives underway and I am regularly inspired when looking for alternatives to the industrial food production system that most of us have become dependent on. One model that is really challenging the old paradigm of food production and supply is Food Connect. This Brisbane based group have developed a community shared agriculture model which supplies local, sustainably produced food to the community in South East Queensland. Their produce is sourced from around 80 farmers who live within a five hour radius of Brisbane and are rated via a peer assessment system for their performance in relation to the safety and nutrition of food, the landscape and environment, the use of resources as well as values and ethics. City people who subscribe to the service develop a close connection with the farmers who produce their food and even get to visit them on organised farm tours. Food Connect started in 2004 and now distributes approximately 1000 veggie boxes each week. Founder and ex-farmer Robert Pekin said they are passionate about changing the way food is grown and distributed in this country, where exploitation of farmers and customers is rampant.



Packing veggie boxes at the Food Connect warehouse Image: Food Connect

I had a chance to meet some of the people involved with Food Connect when they recently hosted an international delegation from La Via Campesina. This organisation has 148 members from 70 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas. In total these members represent more than 500 million farming families across the globe. Some of their objectives are to lead the fight for food sovereignty, to preserve and protect land, water, seeds and other natural resources, and to promote sustainable agricultural production based on small and medium sized producers. Australia currently has no representation with this group, although the visit did start the conversation of building solidarity and identifying some actions Australian farming families can take to support this movement. Much of what both of these groups have to say is a big wake up call for the majority of Australians today.

If you want to learn more about these issues, the following resources may be of interest:

- www.foodconnect.com.au
- www.viacampesina.org
- www.foodfarmingaustralia.com.au
- www.polyfacefarms.com
- *Family Friendly Farming* by Joel Salatin

A Food Connect subscriber picking up her weekly veggie box

Image: Food Connect



Growing Local, Sustainable Food in Mackay

Are you are interested in growing, eating, learning about or accessing local sustainable food in Mackay? If so, get along to the Mackay Community Gardens on the first Sunday of each month. These monthly gatherings are a great opportunity to get involved in local food production in Mackay, as well as to learn about the Transition Town group that has been meeting. So far there has been interest in working on developing a Local Food Directory, to gather information on and promote locally- and/or sustainably-produced foods, and healthy, nutritional foods in our region. To find out more about this, and what you can do in your backyard, come along to the next gathering.

Mackay Community Garden / Transition Town Gathering

When: First Sunday of the month 9am-12noon. Next gathering will be held on Sunday 5 September, with a discussion of the findings from the Transition workshop held in May running from 10-11am.

Where: Mackay Community Gardens, 3-5 Sarah St (off Streeter Ave), West Mackay
Visit the Community Garden's website at www.permaculturemackay.org for more information, including upcoming workshop dates and topics.

What: Come along to meet like-minded people and learn about successful food plants suited to our climate.

Bring: Sun protective clothing, gardening gloves and a plate of yummy food to share.

The Zodiac Moth... A discovery and study

Maya Harrison, Visitors Services Officer at the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens

Whilst resting on a log at the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens and gazing upward towards the leafy canopy in the Shade Garden, I noticed a large 'butterfly' resting on a leaf with its head down. "Wow, what are you?" I asked myself, noticing its bright arc of iridescent colours. Not having seen such a large creature like this before, I looked in our Australian butterflies book to see if I could identify it. No luck, so by chance I thought to look in an Australian moth book and there it was, in the *Uraniidae* family, *Alcides metaurus* (formerly *A. zodiaca*), commonly known as the North Queensland Day Moth or Zodiac Moth.

According to the literature, *Alcides metaurus* is a very large and conspicuous day flying moth, most readily seen in the early morning when it visits flowers to feed. It is found in rainforests from Cape York south to Mackay in Queensland. The larvae feed on *Omphalea queenslandiae* and two species of *Endospermum* (the former vines and the latter trees in the family Euphorbiaceae).

The moth species pictured (right), was photographed during December 2008 at the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens in the Shade Garden and adjoining Palm Walk. In the Palm Walk Gardens are a number of Tree *Omphalea*, *Omphalea celata*, the only tree species in the *Omphalea* (mostly vine) genus in Australia. These moths can be seen fluttering at all times of the day and are especially active in the late afternoon.



A caterpillar was located on the Tree *Omphalea* growing in the Regional Forest Garden, the tree had been decimated, but with leaves from other trees the rescued larva was fed until pupal stage in March 2009.

Having found many caterpillars in the Tree *Omphaleas* in Palm Walk, differences were noted in the colourings of the caterpillars. Some had deep red and black markings, some were green with lighter stripes and others were a plain green... Why the differences? It could be that the different stages of the caterpillars' development coincides with their changes in colour? The young caterpillar is dark with red patches and some white spots and stripy black bands. The caterpillar seemed to become greener the larger it became...or was this just what appeared to be from the specimens available?

Examples of some colour variation

There still seemed to be differences between caterpillars just before they pupated... some were green but with visible stripes whereas others seemed to be a plainer green. The black band at the head end

was evident in both types of the fully grown caterpillars. Could it be that the differences were due to being either male or female? Lots of questions to be answered!

The caterpillars appear to have a defense mechanism of dropping on a strong and sticky silken thread when they detect danger. After hanging for a period of time, they then twist their bodies and climb back up the thread to resume their position on the leaves or twig. I took a small video to document this action. The caterpillar also passed excrement.

Before pupation the caterpillars create a silken pouch, joining several leaves together around them with a strong thread. It is like a totally enclosed vertical lacy hammock! Here the caterpillar changes into a pupa and the developing moth can be seen inside. I have observed that when all leaves of the Tree *Omphalea* are eaten and none remain, the caterpillar will create this lacy cocoon enclosure in adjoining trees and plants in natural conditions. I have not observed any caterpillars pupating elsewhere but in between joined leaves. However in my observation containers, the caterpillars make their transparent cocoons either between leaves or against the edges of the container either at the base in corners, on the sides or even on the underside of the lid.

Parts of the developing moth can be seen through the pupal wall just before the moth emerges. The wings and eyes are clearly visible in the developing pupae. After about 2 weeks the moth emerges then expands and hardens its very velvety looking wings. The upper and under sides of both wings are very different; the underside having strong jade green/light blue and black colourings while the upper side has a semi-circle of iridescent rainbow coloured scales. When taking a photo with a camera flash the reflective scales are accentuated. More differences in colours! "I wonder what is the purpose of these colour differences"



Pupa. Photos: M Harrison

I was still wondering about the different colour variations I had previously observed in the caterpillars. At least 13 different versions were noted, including yellow /orange, a tartan brown, red and black combinations, sometimes the caterpillar being nearly all black with some red and vice versa, a yellow green, a plain lighter green with faint yellow stripes, a dark plain green (these green ones always being much plumper than the other coloured caterpillars). Could one clutch of eggs produce one colour variation or could one clutch produce a range of colour variations?

On the 6th April 2009, I was fortunate to see a moth laying eggs and collected the leaf with these fresh eggs. The Zodiac Files had begun! ... To be continued in a future issue....

Who's who in Pioneer Catchment & Landcare?

Management Committee

Chair Margaret Lane
Deputy Chair Dave Hunter
Treasurer Joan Fitzsimmons
Secretary (Non voting) Tessa McDonald
Committee Members
Irene Champion
Cr. Wendy Cameron
Wendy Eiteneuer
Cr. George Christensen
Dianne Williams

Coordinator Tessa McDonald
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Project Officer Hayley Glover
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Newsletter Tessa McDonald, Hayley Glover

Upcoming Events August

Saturday 7, 8am—Morag McNichol Reserve working bee. Contact Jim McNichol on 4942 8802 for details.

Wednesday 11, 5.30pm-6.30pm—Rusty Riders Workshop at Rock N Road Cycles, 164 Victoria St. Learn how to change bike tyres, general maintenance and more. RSVP on 4957 4484 or to steel@rocknroad.com.au

Sunday 29, 9am-1pm—Landcare Day in the Gardens 2010, including SGAP plant sale.

September

Thursday 2, from 8pm—SGAP Monthly Meeting, Mackay Gem and Craft Society Hall, Leisure Court. Visitors welcome.

Saturday 4, 8am—Morag McNichol Reserve working bee. Contact Jim McNichol on 4942 8802 for details.

Sunday 5, 6.30am—MACBOCA trip to Tedlands, Koumala area, meeting at the Tourist Information Centre. Contact Marj Andrews for details (4952 2964).

Sunday 5, 9am-12noon—Mackay Community Garden / Transition Town Gathering, Mackay Community Garden, 3-5 Sarah St West Mackay.

Monday 6-Sunday 12—Weedbuster Week. Keep your eye out for weedbuster events!

Supported by:



Landcare Day in the Gardens 2010 "Kids make a difference... in your backyard"

When: Sunday 29 August, 9am-2pm

Where: Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens

What: Fun activities and displays to inspire both little and big kids to take steps to live more sustainably and to learn about our natural environment. The Society for Growing Australian Plants will also be selling native plants.

Enjoy a range of activities including:

- > puppies, goats & chickens on display
- > bug catching & identification, bird watching
- > no dig gardening
- > sustainable fishing game
- > composting & worm farms
- > weaving cubbies

PLUS workshops, games & giveaways!

A great family event—don't miss out!



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