



Pioneer Catchment & Landcare News

May 2010

PCL Project Update

- **Fish Kill project:** Water quality data continues to be collected on a fortnightly basis at 9 sites along Fursden and Reliance Creeks. A big thankyou to all the volunteers along those creeks who have dedicated so much of their time and ensured the data collected is of the highest quality. A special thankyou is extended to Margaret Meng & Neiola Vella.
- **Healthy Waterways:** A continual thankyou is extended to all Healthy Waterways volunteers for their exceptional effort and dedication. A warm welcome to new volunteers Kay Kunze & Antonia Champion.
- **Sandfly Creek:** PCL is running educational programs for school-aged students to introduce concepts of natural resource management, using disturbance of shorebirds at Sandfly Creek as the central example. We are seeking teachers who may like to include this program into their conservation activities. If interested please contact PCL on 4944 1979.



Mercy College students at Sandfly Creek
Image: T Hackney

Upcoming Events

Lots of PCL projects are busy in May! Write these events in your calendar, and bring your family and friends... For further information on any of these events, please call PCL on 4944 1979.

Film screening *No Impact Man*

When: Friday 14 May, 6.30-8.30pm

Where: Cook Lecture Theatre (Central Queensland University, off Boundary Rd, Planlands)

Acclaimed documentary about New York City man Colin Beavan, who tries to completely eliminate his personal impact on the environment for the next year. This means buying only local food, turning off the refrigerator, no television, no cars, no electricity and no garbage. No problem – at least for Colin – but he and his family live in Manhattan. So when his espresso-guzzling, retail-worshipping wife Michelle and their two-year-old daughter are dragged into the fray, the No Impact Project has an unforeseen impact of its own...

Slade Point Reserve Working Bee

When: Saturday 15 May, 3-5pm

Where: Meet at the end of Teal St, Slade Point

Help protect this valuable and beautiful Reserve by joining this month's working bee. Wear protective clothing and footwear and bring a water bottle.

Workshop *A Lower Carbon Future for Mackay*

When: Wednesday 26 May, 4-7.30pm

Where: Mackay Conservation Group office, 156 Wood St

This workshop introduces participants to the rapidly growing 'Transition' movement. Transition Initiatives involve collections of people with a positive vision of a better and more satisfying life, working together to address the global challenges of peak oil and climate change. Participants will be able to discuss issues around these challenges, connect with existing groups and initiatives in the community, and explore opportunities for lowering Mackay's carbon footprint. Workshop supported by funding from the Department of Environment and Resource Management. **Places are limited** - register your interest with PCL by Friday 21 May.

Cat's Claw Working Bee & BBQ

When: Saturday May 29, 2-4pm followed by BBQ

Where: Meet at the end of Brown's Rd (off Yakapari-Habana Rd), Habana

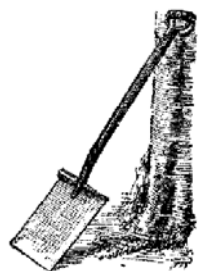
Take part in a fun community working bee in Reliance Creek National Park, to help remove the threat of Cat's Claw Creeper which is smothering vegetation. Enjoy a free BBQ after the working bee. **Please RSVP** to PCL by Thursday 27 May for catering purposes.

EcoExpo

When: Sunday June 6, 10am-4pm

Where: Queens Park, East Mackay

Come and visit PCL at the EcoExpo, where we will display our *Lower Carbon Future* project. EcoExpo showcases a wide variety of environmental workshops, displays and services. Free admission! For information call Betty Hobbs (4953 0808) or Patricia Julien (4966 8025).



Plant of the Month

Rusty Pittosporum *Pittosporum ferrugineum*

Rusty Pittosporum is in flower around our catchment right now – for an example, visit Slade Point Reserve. It is an attractive small ornamental tree which attracts birds to the colourful fruits.

FAMILY: *Pittosporaceae*

HABIT: Large shrub to small tree with a dense rounded canopy.

LEAVES: Simple, alternate, pseudo-whorls, broadly elliptic to obovate, stiff up to 12 x 6cm; bright green above, paler beneath and covered in rusty hairs. New growth is also covered with soft rusty hairs.

FLOWER/FRUIT: Cream yellow, five-lobed tubular flowers, about 1.5cm in diameter are borne in terminal and axillary clusters in winter. The rough, yellow-orange, two-valved ovoid capsules, about 1cm in diameter, open to reveal sticky red seeds.

PROPAGATION: Fresh seed.

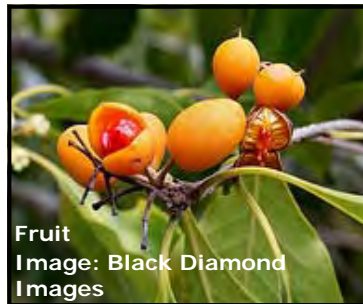
LOCAL HABITAT: Littoral forests.

DISTRIBUTION: Coastal eastern Queensland north of Nambour, the Northern Territory and overseas.

REFERENCES: PCL *Plant Information Sheets*, & Alcock & Champion (1989) *One Hundred and One Trees of Mackay*.



On show in Slade Point Reserve Image: T McDonald



Fruit Image: Black Diamond Images



Rusty hairs on leaves Image: S&A Pearson

Looking for local native plants for your garden or property?

Visit the **Society for Growing Australian Plants** stall at the **Farleigh Palm & Cycad Fete** on May 16, from 8am-1pm at the Farleigh Mill Palm Gardens. Arrive early to get your local native plants, as they are always very popular!

Weed of the Month

Castor Oil Plant *Ricinus communis*

The Problem: Castor Oil Plant spreads over sandy soil areas, creek banks and gullies. This can lead to a significant loss of prime grazing land. Castor Oil Plant seeds contain ricin, a poison extremely toxic to livestock and humans; leaves have a lesser amount of toxin. Symptoms of poisoning in animals usually do not appear for a few hours or days. Seeds cause gastrointestinal disorders and leaves tend to cause neuromuscular disorders. Poisoning in livestock is rarely reported, as castor oil plant is seldom grazed by stock when other pasture plants are available.

Description: Tall, perennial shrub growing to 3m high (occasionally higher). Stout, hollow branches are dull pale green or red; older branches and trunks turn greyish. Large leaves (10–60cm across) are widely spaced on the branches and grow on long, hollow stalks attached to bottom of leaf. Each leaf is divided into 7–9 pointed triangular segments with toothed edges and conspicuous veins. Leaves are glossy, dark reddish-green when young, glossy green when mature.

Flowers are crowded in stout, erect spikes in the forks of upper branches. Flowers develop into fruit about 2.5cm across, covered with soft green or red spines. Fruit have three segments, each containing a large, mottled, smooth seed. When ripe, fruit explode violently and throw the seeds up to several metres.

Control: Small infestations may be removed by cultivation or hand-pulling. Broad-scale infestations may require spraying with herbicides to control—refer to QPIF fact sheet for recommendations.

Reference: QPIF Factsheet



Castor Oil Plant Image: www.tiuli.com



Leaves (top) and fruit Images: S&A Pearson

Committee Member Profile—Cr George Christensen

Mackay Regional Councillor George Christensen replaces Councillor Karen May on the management committee of Pioneer Catchment & Landcare Group, having taken on the portfolio of Parks, Environment & Sustainability.

A Mackay local born and bred, George was raised in Andergrove just down the road from Morag McNicol before relocating to live in a rural area near his grandparents' cane farm in Te Kowai. The Christensen family had been involved with the sugar industry for more than three generations, since emigrating from Denmark to the Mackay region in 1901.

Having a degree in journalism, George started and successfully ran a publishing business producing two community newspapers (the Walkerston & Valley Advertiser and the Northern Beaches Advertiser). George was elected to Mackay City Council in 2004, and re-elected to Mackay Regional Council in 2008.

As a civic leader George has been involved in a range of community organisations. He is currently a board director of Mackay Regional Housing Company and Vice-President of Mackay Regional Council for Social Development. He was foundation chairperson of Walkerston Community Kindergarten Association Inc. and former chairperson of community transport provider HACC Transport Mackay Inc.

PCL welcomes Cr. Christensen and looks forward to working with him in the future.



Photo: Mackay Regional Council

Recovery From Cyclone Ului Continues in the Region

Parts of the region are still cleaning up after Cyclone Ului hit the region, over 5 weeks ago. Mackay Regional Council have reported that they have received almost 100,000m³ of unprocessed material since the cyclone. There were also over 13,000 visits recorded at the three major green waste sites in March—almost six times the monthly average.

Further afield cleanup activities are still underway. Fallen trees on rural properties have caused significant damage to sheds, equipment and fencing, and many property owners are still dealing with the high number of fallen trees that require removal. Cameron's Pocket organic banana farmer and PCL Management Committee member Dave Hunter is one such farmer.

Dave is still removing fallen trees from his property and says many farmers in the region will continue to clean up for months to come. In the days following the cyclone, Dave and others were busy collecting fallen fruit from the ground, however power outages stemming from the cyclone delivered a second blow, making it impossible to run cool rooms to store the fruit. Dave predicts his banana plantations will take years to fully recover from the damage.

The Pioneer Valley was also hit hard as the winds funnelled up the valley, arriving with substantial force at Eungella. A drive around Eungella shows the immense force of the winds, with whole sections of trees down whilst adjacent sections appear untouched. Another phenomenon observed by Eungella resident and PCL Management Committee member Dianne Williams was the 'twisting' of trunks, around 3m from the base and 50cm below the horizontal break of the tree. Dianne says this phenomenon primarily occurred to the Sydney Blue Gums (*Eucalyptus saligna*). Also noted by Dianne was the apparent untimely flowering of many plants after the cyclone, almost as if a last attempt to set seed before they die, which many have now done.

The impacts to wildlife are unknown. One would expect frugivorous species to flourish in the days following the cyclone, followed by a population crash when fallen fruit has been eaten or rotted. Dianne observed that species such as flying foxes and honeyeaters have become more adventurous and daring on her property when looking for food, a sign that their natural food sources are scarce.

The recovery from Cyclone Ului is far from over. We wish our rural neighbours the best with their recovery efforts, and will be interested to hear further reports on floral and faunal responses to the cyclone.



Dave clears a fallen tree (above) and damage to banana plantations
Images: D Hunter



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 May

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

Friday 14, 6.30-8.30pm— Film screening 'No Impact Man'. Cook Lecture Theatre, Central Queensland University (off Boundary Rd).

Saturday 15, 3-5pm—Slade Point Reserve community working bee. Meet end of Teal St. Contact PCL on 4944 1979 for details.

Sunday 16, 8am-1pm—Farleigh Palm and Cycad Fete. Farleigh Mill Palm Gardens.

Thursday 20 & Friday 21—BSES Field Days

Wednesday 26, 4-7.30pm—Lower Carbon Future workshop. Mackay Conservation Group, 156 Wood St Mackay. Contact PCL on 4944 1979 to register your interest.

Saturday May 29, 2-4pm—Cat's Claw Working Bee & BBQ. Meet at the end of Brown's Rd, Habana. RSVP by 27 May on 4944 1979 (for catering purposes).

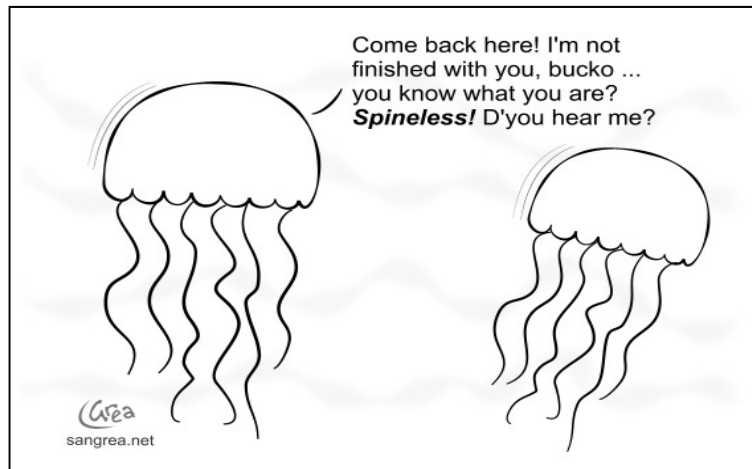
June

Thursday 3, 8pm—Society for Growing Australian Plants general meeting. Mackay Gem & Craft Society Hall, Leisure Ct, Mackay. 'On Farm Composting and its Value' presentation by Dave Hunter.

Sunday 6, 7am—MACBOCA trip to De Moleyn's Lagoon, Kinchant Dam, meeting at the Tourist Information Centre. Contact Marj Andrews for details (4952 2964)

Sunday 6, 10am-4pm—EcoExpo. Queens Park, East Mackay. Free admission. Contact Betty Hobbs (4953 0808) or Patricia Julien (4966 8025).

Supported by:



A reminder that marine stingers (Box Jellyfish & Irukandji) continue to be netted at our local beaches.

Take precautions when entering the water!



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