



Pioneer Catchment & Landcare News

November 2010

Welcome Dallas Milburn!

PCL would like to introduce Dallas Milburn as our new project officer. Dallas started work as Project Officer with PCL on November 1st. Dallas will work with Hayley to deliver a range of programs and projects to meet our funding agreements with various bodies. Dallas hails from New Zealand but has most recently been working in vegetation management in SEQ. He brings a range of other skills and experiences to our group, including working with volunteers in both Australia and overseas. Some time ago Dallas worked in Airlie Beach as a scuba diving instructor, and is happy to return to this area to work in NRM.



A few words from Dallas: Hi, I'm looking forward to hitting the ground running in this exciting position to develop and deliver NRM projects within the region. I come from a terrestrial ecology background and have been involved with numerous projects in Queensland and overseas. My experience in Integrated Vegetation Management will neatly flow through into this position with PCL, and hopefully I can bring accrued and relevant information into the management of weeds within the area. I look forward to meeting and working alongside you in the community.

New signage installed in Sandfly Creek Environmental Reserve

by Reef Catchments' Coastal Coordinator
Kerri Woodcock

A series of interpretive signs has recently been installed in Sandfly Creek Environmental Reserve, at the mouth of the Pioneer River.

The signs were developed by Reef Catchments in partnership with Mackay Regional Council and funded through Ergon Energy's Envirofund. The new signs were placed along the Bluewater trail and highlight the values of the wildlife, vegetation community and ecosystem services within the Reserve. The signs also provide information for visitors on how they can help to protect the Reserve.

Ergon Energy General Manager Operations Steve Leighton says "This means that visitors to the Reserve will now gain a better appreciation of the unique environmental value of this area and the significant work that has been undertaken by a broad cross section of the community to nurture and preserve this valuable asset".

Sandfly Creek Environmental Reserve is well known for its environmental significance and supports a variety of wildlife and vegetation communities close to the Mackay city centre. Large numbers of international migratory shorebirds visit the reserve between October and April each year.

The interpretive signs are important in raising the awareness of the ecological values of the reserve. Many regional organisations, community groups and individuals are continuing to work together on projects to maintain and improve the natural environment of the Sandfly Creek Environmental Reserve.

Weed ID Field Day

PCL and Sarina Landcare Catchment Management Association (SLCMA) are working with Biosecurity Queensland and Mackay Regional Council to hold a series of Weed ID field days around the region, in November. This event is supported through QLD's Blueprint for the Bush Program.



Bring a weed and swap it for a free native species.

Marian— Monday 22nd November, 9—11am. Melba House Grounds, Marian.

Habana—Monday 22nd November 11:30am—1:30pm. Catholic Church grounds, Mackay—Habana Rd, Habana.

Sarina—Friday 26th November, 10-12noon. Farm HQ, Sarina-Homebush Rd.

Sarina— Sunday 28th November, Sarina Markets, Sarina Showgrounds

Please ensure that all weed samples brought to events are sealed in plastic bags, to prevent spread.

Natural Resources Awareness Grants 2011

The 2011 grant theme is 'Celebrating the contribution of youth and volunteers in natural resource management'.

Grants of up to \$5000 are available to community natural resource management groups for the development of small projects that promote the importance of natural resources. Grants of up to \$10000 will be considered where projects are a genuine collaboration between two or more organisations. Projects should be educational and should encourage people to become involved in natural resource management activities.

Applications close 5pm Friday 26th November 2010. For more information or to discuss project ideas, please contact PCL on 4944 1979.

Plant of the Month

Blue Tongue or Native Lasiandra / *Melastoma affine*

Description: A medium shrub to about 2m.

Leaves: Between 6—11 simple, opposite and ovate leaves around 2-4cm. The leaves are covered with stiff hairs, dark green above and usually paler below with prominent longitudinal veins.

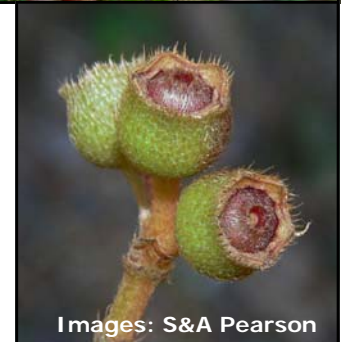
Flowers/ Fruit: Large open-petalled purple to mauve flowers, rarely white, in spring to autumn. The fruit of *M. affine* is globose, semi-succulent becoming dry, December to June. The fruits are edible and leave a bluish black stain in the mouth. Aborigines ate the ripe fruit and the roots raw. The fruit is also eaten by the Australian brush turkey, double-eyed fig parrot and Lewin's honeyeater. Also the larval food plant of the coral jewel butterfly and of the hawk moth.

Propagation: Seed or cuttings.

Distribution: *M. affine* is found in sclerophyll forest with high soil moisture or sandy soils in damp areas, along stream lines and in swamps. *M. affine* ranges from WA, NT, QLD to NSW.

Notes: *M. affine* does not produce any nectar, instead it produces large amounts of pollen, which must be extracted through pores on the anthers. Bees are the main pollinators of *M. affine*.

Source: Melzer R & Plumb J. 2007. Plants of Capricornia. Capricornia Conservation Council, Rockhampton.



Images: S&A Pearson

Weed of the Month

Captain Cook Tree or Yellow Oleander/ *Cascabella thevetia*

Captain Cook Tree is native to tropical South America and the West Indies. Captain Cook Tree was planted as an ornamental tree in domestic gardens, however it has become a highly invasive weed in parts of Queensland, especially along creek systems. It is a declared Class 3 plant. The tree is spread by water, feral pigs, illegally dumped garden waste and gravity which invades creek banks, Melaleuca forest and open forest. All parts of the plant are poisonous, especially the seeds.

Description:

The Captain Cook Tree is a large, attractive tree up to 10m in height. Flowers are yellow or orange, funnel shaped up to 5cm in diameter and slightly fragrant. Leaves are narrow and pointed. The tree produces large green (black when ripe) fruit 2.5—5cm in diameter, containing 4 seeds enclosed within 2 bony endocarps.

Management:

Captain Cook Tree can be effectively controlled by using a combination of mechanical and herbicidal treatments or by herbicide treatment alone. Small individual plants may be manually removed, ensuring the roots are removed.

Mature trees can be mechanically removed and any remaining broken and exposed stems should be treated with basal bark spray and regrowth must be sprayed. There are various suitable methods of herbicide control depending on the size of the tree and situations. Some herbicide treatments may take more than a year to kill this species. Refer to the QPI&F Fact sheet for details on control methods.

Fire is not an effective control tool as it will only affect seedlings and damage parts of mature plants. Regrowth is normally rapid and few plants are killed.

Source: QPI&F Fact Sheets; 'Are Your Garden Plants Going Bush?', Mackay Regional Pest Management Group. Available by contacting the PCL office on 4944 1979.



Images: S&A Pearson

Conserving northern quolls and their eucalypt habitats in the Mackay Highlands

by Tina Ball, Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service (extract from SGAP newsletter No 235)

The Mackay Highlands, which includes Crediton and Gamma State Forests, and Homevale and Eungella National Parks, contain a high level of biodiversity and provide habitat for the northern quoll *Dasyurus hallucatus*, one of the few remaining populations in Australia that does not appear to have been decimated by cane toads - despite toads being present in the area.

Quolls are carnivorous (insects, reptiles, small mammals, birds, amphibians, carrion); marsupials (pouch for young); short lived, ~3 years, but males generally die post-mating. Their habitat around the Mackay Highlands is mostly eucalypt communities with large boulders/logs within 1km of boulder creek lines. They have been found denning in logs, tree stumps and under large boulders.

Wildfire is a major threat to the survival of quoll populations. This project is looking at quoll survivorship from controlled low intensity burns as a method of wildfire prevention.

Funding is from within the Agency. Cameras and equipment have been purchased as part of Agency funds, and Reef Catchments has assisted through the purchase of radio-collars and the use of their remote cameras to increase camera numbers available to the project.

Quolls are being surveyed at Crediton State Forest, Gamma section of Eungella National Park and Homevale National Park, before and after planned burns by using remote-censored cameras, micro-chipping individuals, and radio-tracking selected individuals. This will determine short term survivorship from the actual fire and longer-term survival from potential reduction of food supply and ground cover providing protection from predation. Results to date include:

- Den and habitat use for 8 quolls with radio-collars fitted.
- 10 quolls fitted with identifiable microchips.
- 60% of cameras positioned at Gamma with images of quolls.

Where to from here?

- Homevale completed a planned burn earlier this year. Cameras will be set to monitor if quolls are using the recently burnt area to den and forage.
- Due to high soil moisture from the recent rain, we plan to burn Gamma and Crediton in November or December (further heavy rain may interfere with planned time of burn).
- Trap and microchip quolls at Crediton prior to, and after the burn.
- Continue to bait and monitor remote cameras several months post burn.
- Vegetation surveys prior to and post burn at all sites.

Conduct surveys at other sites in the Mackay Highlands to detect quoll presence / absence based on 10 year fire scar maps and historical quoll sightings using cameras set in areas with different fire histories.



Quoll wearing radio-collar. Spot patterns on their pelts enable identification of individual quolls. Image: John Augusteyn.

Managing Singapore Daisy / *Sphagneticola trilobata*

Mackay Regional Council and Mackay Ports Limited will work together to manage, and eventually eradicate, Singapore Daisy (*Sphagneticola trilobata*) in the wetlands near the Kommo Toera Walk at Slade Point.

The walk, on Keeleys Road, goes through Melaleuca Swamp which was once dominated by the woody weed Broad-leaved Pepper Tree (*Schinus terebinthifolius*). Mackay Ports Limited has been working for nearly 10 years to rid the wetlands of the Pepper Tree, and has treated many hectares of the forest, starting from Slade Point Road and working west towards Andergrove. Each year more Pepper Trees are destroyed.

Pest management in the port lands is an ongoing business, with the most recent project being the Leucaena Trial Site on Harbour Road. Council's attack on Singapore Daisy in the wetlands has been delayed due to the un-seasonal rain.



Image: Shelley Molloy and Greg Steward inspecting Singapore Daisy

For information on and how to treat Singapore Daisy go to the Pests section of the Reef Catchments website www.reefcatchments.org.au and select Outlaws.

Who's who in Pioneer Catchment & Landcare?

Management Committee

Chair Margaret Lane

Deputy Chair Dave Hunter

Treasurer Wendy Eiteneuer

Secretary (Non voting) Hayley Glover

Committee Members

Cr. Wendy Cameron

Irene Champion

Joan Fitzsimmons

Cr. Karen May

Bruce Milles

Dianne Williams

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Newsletter Hayley Glover, Dallas Milburn

Supported by:



Upcoming Events

November

Thursday 4, from 8pm—SGAP Monthly Meeting. 'The experiences of an avid Australian Plant Grower in the wet subtropics of NE NSW' by Kris Kupsch. Mackay Gem and Craft Society Hall, Leisure Court. Visitors Welcome.

Saturday 6, 8am—Morag McNichol Reserve working bee. Contact Jim McNichol on 4942 8802 for details.

Sunday 7, 05.45am—MACBOCA trip to Eungella, Chelmans Rd, meeting at the Tourist Information Centre, Nebo Rd. Contact Marj Andrews for details (4952 2964).

Saturday 13, 9am– 12 noon—Mackay Regional Council's free composting workshop. Community Gardens, Streeter Avenue, West Mackay. To register, contact Council's Environmental Education Officer on 4961 9051.

Saturday 20, 8am—Morag McNichol Reserve working bee. Contact Jim McNichol on 4942 8802 for details.

December

Thursday 2, from 8pm—SGAP Monthly Meeting— *2010 in Review*. Mackay Gem and Craft Society Hall, Leisure Court. Visitors welcome.

Friday 3— National Art and Photography Competition 2011 entries close. www.wetlandcare.com.au

Sunday 5, 1pm. Rare Fruits Club meeting, South West Mackay Neighbourhood Centre, corner Clements and Pompey St, South Mackay. BBQ starts at 11:30am. Visitors welcome. Contact Paul Andrew on 4959 8671 for details.

Look who has arrived...

Channel-billed Cuckoo, *Scythrops novaehollandiae*, have arrived from Indonesia and New Guinea to spend the summer in northern and eastern Australia.

Commonly recognised by their raucous call they are surprisingly shy birds who feed and roost high in the treetops.

Like most cuckoos species, they are parasitic nesters which means they lay their eggs in the nests of other bird species such as currawongs and magpies. Keep an eye out for this loud visitor who can be found in open forest, woodland, farms and gardens around the region.



Image: Wikimedia



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