



Pioneer Catchment & Landcare News September 2010

Landcare Day in the Gardens 2010

Despite the threatening weather, Landcare Day in the Gardens 2010 was a success! The theme for this year's event "Kids Make a Difference... in Your Backyard" attracted lots of kids—young and old!

Activities were varied but ran with the theme of engaging children in learning about our environment and ways we can protect it. Shine Mietzel from Shine's Fun Key Food inspired everyone with a cooking demonstration experimenting with various fruits to make delicious smoothies. Luke Matthews from the Mackay Community Gardens demonstrated how to easily create no dig gardens and compost at home. Another popular activity was the sustainable petting zoo run by the Fyfe family; on display were a variety of chickens, ducks, puppies, with goats the most popular of all.

Other activities included the popular lagoon-caught fish display with QPI&F, drawing skills with the Botanical Art Interest Group, planting local native seeds to take home and watch grow with Conservation Volunteer Australia, water-saving activities and a recycled art competition display from the Mackay Regional Council and bird watching with MACBOCA. Kids also played games that taught them about sustainable fishing and ways they can reduce their carbon footprint thanks to the enthusiastic staff from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

PCL created a water plant display using specimens collected from the Botanic Gardens Lagoons. These specimens were accompanied by information sheets to allow the public to learn more about common water plants, and issues created by water weeds. PCL also ran a macro-invertebrate display where kids helped collect macro-invertebrates from the lagoons and then tried to identify them. This entertained many children, particularly

when we magnified the creatures using a microscope and projected them onto a screen in the movie theatre!

The Society for Growing Australian Plants' (SGAP) plant sale was very popular, with lots of people proudly displaying their SGAP purchase as they wandered the stalls.

Thankyou to all organisers of the event, particularly Mackay Regional Council staff and especially Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens staff for hosting the Day. We would also like to thank the volunteers who provided much appreciated assistance on the day.



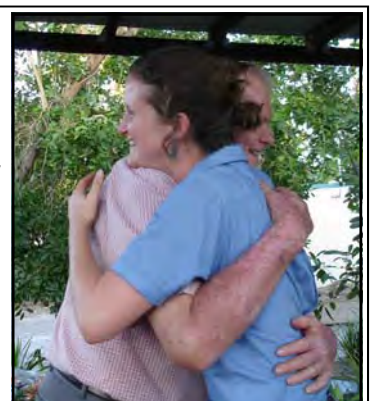
Landcare Day activities: Scrumptious smoothies with Shine (top); sustainable pets (middle); home composting with Luke (bottom); and Margaret Meng identifying water bugs (left). Images: T McDonald

Annual General Meeting wrap up

The AGM was held on Tuesday 24th August, with 14 members attending. All previous Management Committee members were re-elected, along with new member Bruce Milles. Bruce is a community member of the Natural Environment Advisory Committee and has keen interest in sustainable land use matters. Wendy Eiteneuer takes over from Joan Fitzsimmons as Treasurer.

After the AGM we had time to farewell Tess, and she received numerous heartfelt thanks for her contribution to our group. Members present also enjoyed healthy and fresh food from Shine's Fun Key Food. Once again the Natural Environment Centre provided a pleasant location for our AGM.

John Ross saying a very special thankyou and farewell to Tessa
Image: M Lane



Plant of the Month Tree *Omphalea Omphalea Celata*

Omphalea celata is the favoured food plant of the Zodiac or North Old Day Moth (*Alcides metaurus*), the very large and beautiful day-time flying moth featured in last month's newsletter. The North Old Day Moth can often be seen in the Regional Forest and around Palm Walk at the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens. The larva feeds on Euphorbiaceous vines or trees and has found its way to the MRBG from over 80kms away, west of Eungella.

Omphalea celata is something of a curiosity in that it is only known from small isolated populations in Central Queensland at Hazelwood Gorge and Gloucester Island. Previously, it was thought to be a species of Candle Nut (*Aleurites* sp.) The other two Australian *Omphalea* species are both large woody vines (lianes).

Tree *Omphalea* is often multi-trunked with smooth, pale bark and has soft drooping foliage, inconspicuous green flowers and large green fruit with marble-sized seeds that germinate readily. A water wise plant that stores water in its fat fleshy carrot shaped roots, it is easy to grow in sandy, rocky and shallow soils.

As Tree *Omphalea* is the favoured food plant of the North Old Day Moth's caterpillar, planting one in your garden will encourage this moth to visit and lay her eggs. Beware though: the caterpillars eat lots of leaves and can defoliate your tree! Take care to plant away from driveways and cement paths, as its fleshy roots can lift concrete. The plant is only available from specialist local native suppliers such as the Society for Growing Australian Plants Mackay branch.

Article reproduced with kind permission of Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens.

References: Irene Champion and Maya Harrison.



**North Old Day Moth
(Image: Maya Harrison)
and the Tree Omphalea and
fruit (Image: Dale
Arvidsson)**

Update on Leucaena

Many readers would recall our request for locations of *Leucaena* infestations early last year and might be wondering what's happened since then to control *Leucaena* around our region...

The Mackay Regional Pest Management Group (MRPMG) has been working hard to:

- develop a strategy for the management of *Leucaena*;
- develop a brochure for suburban gardeners;
- develop a number of trial *Leucaena* control sites including one at Hampden (see below) ; and
- work with stakeholders to increase the delivery of *Leucaena* management in the region.

PCL has been active in this process through MRPMG's *Leucaena* working group, and organised a field trip to the sites last year.

Hampden Trial Site

A large area of *Leucaena leucacephala* was burnt on 25/08/10 at the Hampden Trial Site on the Bruce Highway, Hampden. While a number of successful trials had been completed at the site, the infestation was so large that it was decided to trial using fire. The trial is thanks to a collaboration between MRPMG's *Leucaena* Project (funded by Queensland Government's Bringing Back the Bush), Reef Catchments Mackay Whitsunday, Kuttabul and Balnagowan Rural Fire Brigade, Main Roads and the neighbouring landholders (the Perna Family). Fire will be used on this site over the next 12 months to trial its effectiveness in dealing with this woody weed.

See the April 2009 issue of PCL's newsletter to revisit *Leucaena*'s profile as weed of the month (available at www.pioneercatchment.org.au) or visit http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/4790_6998.htm for the DPI *Leucaena* fact sheet.



**Leucaena burning at Hampden
Image: M Lane**



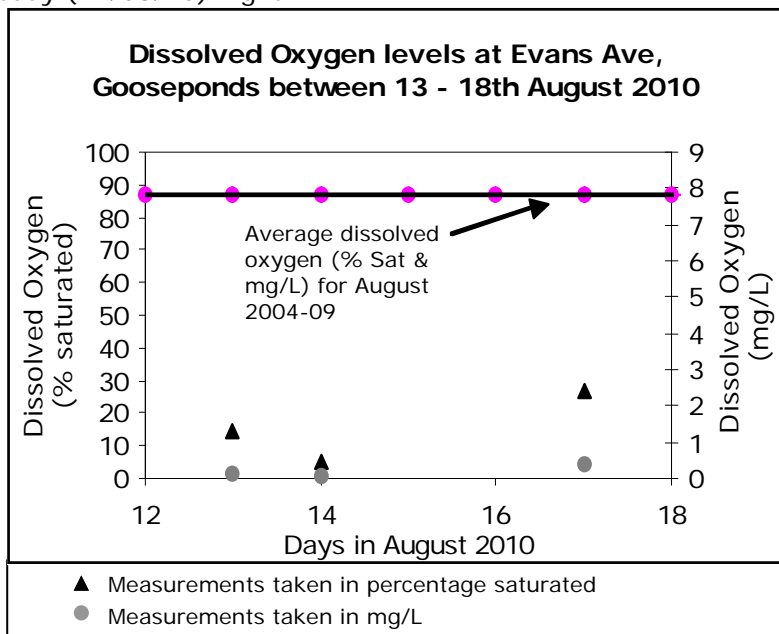
**Burnt Leucaena
Image: A Folkers**

Fish Kill in the Gooseponds

If anyone was wandering around the Gooseponds between the 13th-17th August you would have received quite a shock, due to the sight of numerous dead fish. Fish kills in local waterways are of high concern to our community, so as a result this fish kill received a lot of media attention. On Friday (13/8/10) PCL received a report that fish were seen gasping at the water's surface within the Gooseponds. PCL promptly responded to the report and was on the scene within a few hours. PCL Healthy Waterways volunteers and staff investigated the site and measured water quality parameters. These samples tell a really interesting story of how water quality changed in the Gooseponds following significant rainfall in our catchment on Wednesday (11/08/10) night.

The graph shows the fluctuation in dissolved oxygen (DO) in the Gooseponds over the days after the rainfall. The first measurement collected on 13/08/10 shows very low DO levels; this dropped further the following morning to the lowest recorded DO of 5.0% saturation and 0.41mg/L. Interestingly, measurements on 17/08/10 showed DO levels had begun to increase within only a few days.

Through the Fish Kill project, PCL has learnt that the causes of fish kills are varied and often interrelated. DO - essential for fish survival - is a key indicator of water quality health that is often implicated in fish kill events. The observations of fish gulping at the surface and the water quality results gathered after this fish kill event suggest that a lowering of dissolved oxygen was the likely cause of the fish kills.



Eimeo Road Students Explore Biodiversity at Slade Pt Reserve by Corbin Duncan, Year 5 student, Eimeo Road State School

On Thursday 19th of August, year five students from Eimeo Road explored with great pleasure, nature's true beauty. We discovered the wide range of biodiversity within Slade Point Reserve after seeing a lot of native plants and unfortunately a lot of weeds, but hey that's the way nature works.

Miss McDonald from the Pioneer & Catchment Landcare Group informed us about the conditions that are best for different types of plants and explained the special features they have. One of these plants was the Morton Bay Ash. It has a stocking of rough bark to withstand extreme heat in the duration of a bush fire.

We spotted a great deal of wildlife. We saw a butterfly being wrapped in a web by a massive spider while one was caught trying to escape. We truly saw nature at its best.

We also learnt how to take care of the Reserve. We learnt that motor bikes, camping and fires are absolutely prohibited! We need to take care of this Reserve for future generations to come so they get the same joy we do today.

All this wouldn't be possible without the help of Pioneer Catchment & Landcare Group as they covered the payment for all the buses. All the teachers, parents, and especially students thoroughly enjoyed the experience throughout the day.



Student drawing Native Olives & Tessa showing Macarangas to students Images: Eimeo Rd SS & T McDonald



PCL enjoyed introducing 100 Eimeo Road State School students to biodiversity and the Reserve through talks in classroom followed by a visit to the Reserve. The students also participated in macro-invertebrate surveys with Hayley at Wetland Walkabout. Whilst in the Reserve, students also did a spot of weeding and a plant observation exercise. Look for the students' posters and plant drawings on show at the entrance displays at the Reserve soon!

This project is supported by PCL through the Australian Government's Caring for Country.

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

Supported by:



Upcoming Events

September

Saturday 4, 8am—Morag McNichol Reserve working bee. Contact Jim McNichol (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 and 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!

Wednesday 8, 7-7.30pm—Sarina Landcare Catchment Management Association AGM (followed by Monthly General Meeting), Plane Ck Canegrowers Building, Broad St Sarina. Contact SLCMA (4956 1388).

October

Saturday 2, 8am—Morag McNichol Reserve working bee. Contact Jim McNichol on 4942 8802 for details.

Sunday 5, 05.45am—MACBOCA trip to Mt. Ossa and surrounds, meeting at the Coningsby Mobile Service Station. Contact Marj Andrews for details (4952 2964).

Thursday 7, from 8pm—SGAP Monthly Meeting. Guest presentation "Update on Quoll Research" by Tina Ball, QPWS. Mackay Gem and Craft Society Hall, Leisure Court. Visitors welcome.

Did you Know?

PCL's vehicle runs on **Biodiesel**, which is diesel that has been refined from either vegetable or animal oil. For about 18 months now we have been purchasing Biodiesel, made by The Future Fuels Company, at The Organic & Natural Store. Currently the price is \$1.28 per litre. More information about Biodiesel can be found at www.organicfoodmackay.com.



Image: T McDonald



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