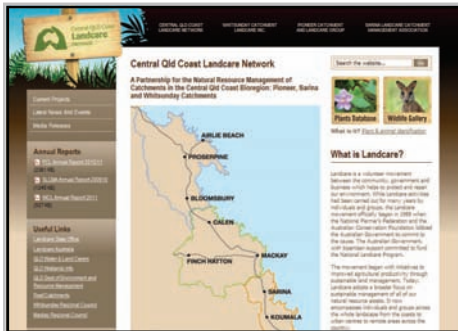




# Pioneer Catchment & Landcare News

## November 2011



### CQCLN New Website!

The Central Queensland Coast Landcare Network invites the region's landcarers to check out the new website:

[www.cqclandcarenetwork.org.au](http://www.cqclandcarenetwork.org.au)

The website contains individual sites for each Landcare group and includes latest news and events as well as information about each group; their activities past and present.

The website features a searchable plant database so users can go through a simple search and select process to try to identify a local plant whether it is a native or a weed. This database is being compiled by Landcare volunteers and staff and over time should become a great local resource.

There is also a wildlife gallery for those with an interest in our local fauna. This gallery is also being added to by staff and volunteers. For each of these the emphasis is on local content; plants and animals native to the Mackay Whitsunday region. Anyone interested in contributing to these pages is more than welcome to send through photos (which will be fully acknowledged) and information. Please contact PCL if you would like more information on how to contribute.

This project is supported by The Central Old Coast Landcare Network through funding from the Australian Government's Caring for our Country.



What is it? [Plant & animal identification](#)

### PCL General Meeting with Guest Presentation by Michelle Field, Regional Pest Management Officer, Reef Catchments.

**When:** Friday 18th November, 10:15—12noon.

**Where:** Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens meeting room (opposite the Café).

**What:** Michelle will introduce the Mackay Regional Pest Management Group's (MRPMG) Regional Pest Management Strategy 2011-2014, with opportunity for feedback on the plan.

**Who:** All welcome.

### Managing Horses on Small Properties Workshop

In November PCL will be hosting a workshop promoting the safety care and welfare, for your horses and your environment.

#### Guest Presenter Jane Myers

The workshop will be presented by Jane Myers who has been involved in the horse industry for over 30 years and has been the author of a range of CSIRO horse management publications.

The workshops will cover a range of topics including;

- Horse characteristics.
- Pasture improvement and management for horses.
- Management of water, manure and vegetation.
- Property design and planning.

**When:** Sunday 13th November  
9am-3pm

**Cost:** \$20 per person, or \$30 for 2 (includes lunch)

**RSVP:** Registration and payment required by 8th November. For further information on this event and to register please phone PCL on 4944 1979 or email [admin@pioneercatchment.org.au](mailto:admin@pioneercatchment.org.au)

#### ***Cant make it to this one?***

- Friday 11 November, Proserpine. Phone Whitsunday Landcare on 4945 0267
- Saturday 12 November, Sarina. Phone Sarina Landcare on 4956 1388

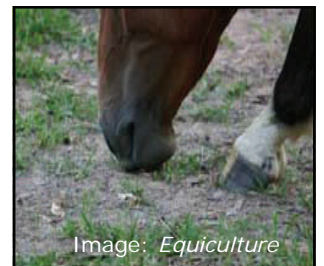


Image: Equiculture

*This project is supported by the Central Old Coast Landcare Network, through funding from the Australian Government's Caring for our Country.*

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## Plant of the Month

### Blue Flax-lily *Dianella caerulea*

Flax-lilies are hardy long-lived, tufted perennial herbs with creeping underground stems (rhizomes) and fibrous or tuberous roots. Several species occur in this region.

**Blue Flax-lily - *D. caerulea*** – with several recognised varieties is the most common and largest, to 2m tall and often forming large clumps. *Dianella* is the diminutive of *Diana*, Roman goddess of hunting and queen of the woods. *Caerulea* is derived from the Latin *caeruleus*, meaning dark blue.

**Leaves:** long narrow, 100–750 x 3–25mm, folded lengthwise, with closed basal sheath; margins finely toothed (serrated), as is the midrib on the underside.

**Flowers/Fruit:** Pale to dark blue star shaped flowers, 6-12mm long, borne on long stems in any month but especially spring and summer. The succulent, vibrant purple-blue, slightly flattened berries, 7-12 x 8-15mm, are edible and contain 6-12 shiny black seeds.

**Propagation:** Fresh ripe seed germinates after approximately 1 month, or by division.

**Habitat:** Open forest or associated with rainforest on a variety of soils. Can tolerate damp conditions.

**Distribution:** NE Queensland to southern NSW.

**Other species:** Smooth-leaved Flax-lily - *D longifolia* – has several varieties, is fairly common and mainly found in open forest on coastal landforms. Leaf blades, 2-25mm wide, often drooped, midrib on the underside smooth or with only a few teeth. Fairy Flax-lily – *D. rara* – a delicate grass-like species of open woodland with smooth leaves less than 4.5mm wide, is only noticed when in flower.

**Source:** R Melzer & J Plumb 2007, *Plants of Capricornia*. *Dianella* factsheet, *Save Our Water Ways Now*. *Census of the Queensland Flora 2010*, Cooper & Cooper 2004, *Fruits of the Australian Tropical Rainforest*. IGC - personal collections and observations.



D Milburn



R Whyte

Top: The small flowers of *Dianella caerulea*

Below: In matting form.

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## Weed of the Month

### Ochna *Ochna serrulata*

Ochna, or Mickey Mouse Plant, is a shrubby plant that was introduced into Australia from Southern Africa in the early 1900s. It was widely planted as a garden ornamental around the country, as it is a very durable plant and drought tolerant.

**Description:** Shrub to about 2m, branches covered in corky lenticels. Leaves are alternate simple elliptic to oblong, 20-50 x 7-20mm, almost stalkless, margins finely toothed, dark glossy green; new growth has bronze tinge. The flowers are yellow, 5-petaled, about 20mm in diameter, borne singly or in small axillary groups on short stems, 9-13mm long; perfumed. These are followed by one-seeded drupes up to 8mm long, green becoming black, up to 6 clustered on bright red fleshy calyx.

**The Problem:** Seeds are easily spread by birds and garden waste, and have a high germination rate. Ochna is an efficient coloniser of disturbed land, particularly along riparian zones. The plant is notoriously hard to eradicate once established. It develops an L shaped tap root that will readily re-shoot if the plant is insufficiently treated. Young seedlings can snap at this angle joint when pulled, and grow again. Germinating seedlings grow quickly and can form dense monotypic stands, greatly reducing natural recruitment capabilities of native species.

**Dealing with the Problem:** All young seedlings should be hand pulled, the use of a mattock will help reduce the chance of the tap root snapping. Research indicates that cut stump and paste method is the most ideal way, but stumps need to be split or drilled into to enable the poison to reach deep along the root. Basal barking is also an option that can be utilised. Regular monitoring must be undertaken to treat re-shooting plants. PCL is happy to help with further information regarding the control of this pest.

**Pioneer Catchment:** Ochna is not an established threat in the Mackay region, but it has the potential to be. Known infestations of Ochna have been identified and treated around the Teal St entrance to Slade Pt Reserve. The plant has been spreading in this area. If anybody knows of further infestations of this weed please contact PCL.

**Source:** MRPMG, *'Weeds of The Mackay Whitsunday Region'*; Biosecurity Queensland fact sheet.



Top: Young drupes on calyx

Below: Ochna leaves on stem  
Images: D Milburn

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## Create a suitable environment and the wildlife will move in—By Daryl Barnes, MacBOCA



A prime example of this was recently seen at Mackay's Regional Botanic Gardens. The Noisy Pitta, *Pitta versicolour*, right, is usually confined to rainforest or dense bushland where it forages amongst leaf litter for worms, grubs, snails and insects, however this particular individual has found its way to and claimed a small territory within the gardens.

This rather small (17-21cm in length), stocky, brightly coloured bird is mainly ground dwelling. It occurs from Cape York to the Hunter River, NSW. It is not well recognised by many as it is generally very shy in its natural environment, and yet, here it is on our very doorstep and quite easy to approach, if cautious. It has a liking for land snails in particular and it uses an anvil (stone or small stump) to break the shell of a snail.

The Noisy Pitta builds a large dome shaped nest constructed of twigs and moss, with a rounded side entrance, usually built on the ground between the buttresses of a rainforest tree and often with a 'doormat' of moist animal dung. It will lay a clutch of 3-5 eggs between October and January.

The next outing of the Mackay and Whitsunday branch of BOCA will be held at Tedlands, Koumala, on Sunday November 6th. For details contact Marj on 49522964 or Gerry on 0403172455.



The noisy pitta is a bright and colourful ground-dwelling bird species found locally.  
Photo Marlis Schoeb.

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**In the back yard**—Love them or not, Green Tree Ants, or Weaver Ants are apart of bush life in Mackay. These unique ants weaver their nests by joining leaves together by using a silky substance produced from their larvae which they obtain from the nursery of an existing nest. Worker ants transport the larvae between their mandibles (jaws) to the "construction site". With light pressure, the larvae is then squeezed between an ants mandibles to produce the silk.

Weaver ants will attack perceived intruders to defend their nest. Though they do not have a sting, after biting their enemy they secrete an acid (venom) from the tip of their abdomen into the wound to cause "discomfort" and irritation. However they play an important part in the ecosystem and we should all embellish our green friends, and leave them to do their thing.



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### Annual General Meeting wrap-up

The AGM was held on Tuesday 18th October with 13 members attending. It was a great opportunity for PCL management committee members, members and staff to catch up and celebrate the groups achievements.

All previous Management Committee members were re-elected, along with new member Di Salau. Di has come from a farming background in Victoria and has seen first-hand how good farming practises assist the natural environment and how detrimental bad farming practises are to both the environment and community.

Di has also been involved in the fishing industry with active involvement in reef line fishing. Di is passionate about native flora and fauna, at her St. Helens residence, Di's 'garden' has been created through what has been brought in and propagated by the local wildlife, Di says "with the exception of weeds that end up in the rubbish bin!". Di joined the PCL Management Committee as she wants to help spread the word of what natural biodiversity is and why it is so important to all of us today and into the future. PCL welcomes Di to the Management Committee and looks forward to working together in the future.

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### Dave Hunter appointed as Central Queensland representative with Queensland Recycled Organics Council Inc (QROC).

Congratulations to organic banana farmer and PCL deputy chair Dave Hunter on his appointment as Central Queensland representative on the Executive Committee with QROC.

The Queensland Government in conjunction with the Queensland composting sector are developing a working relationship that will result in more appropriate and efficient use of valuable resources – namely organic materials generated from different origins. An increasing awareness by Government of the need to divert organic materials away from traditional disposal streams confirms the preferred direction that society wants to take. The organics processing sector (composting) has the unique opportunity to develop this theme with significant good will and support from both government and the community of Queensland. We look forward to hearing from Dave and the achievements of this group.

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## Who's who in Pioneer Catchment & Landcare?

### Management Committee

**Chair** Margaret Lane (Society for Growing Australian Plants—Mackay Branch)

**Deputy Chair** Dave Hunter

**Treasurer** Wendy Eiteneuer

**Secretary (Non voting)** Hayley Glover

**Committee Members**  
Cr. Wendy Cameron (Mackay Regional Council)

Irene Champion

Joan Fitzsimmons (Mackay Conservation Group)

Bruce Milles

Di Salau

Cr. Ross Walker (Mackay Regional Council)

Dianne Williams (Australian Forest Growers)

**Pioneer Catchment office**

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**Newsletter** Hayley Glover, Dallas Milburn

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## Upcoming Events

### November

**Thursday 3 from 8pm**—SGAP Monthly Meeting. *Travelling with a SGAP Member to Broken Hill* by Margaret Lane. Mackay Gem and Craft Society Hall, Leisure Court. Visitors welcome.

**Saturday 5, 8am**—Working Bee at Morag McNichol Reserve. Contact Jim McNichol on 4942 8802 for details.

**Sunday 6, 5.45am**—MacBoca outing to Tedlands, Koumala. Meet at Tourist Information Centre, Nebo Rd. Contact 49522964 or 0403172455 for further details.

**Sunday 13, 9am-3pm**—Managing Horses on Small Properties workshop. To register or for further information contact PCL office.

**Friday 18, 10:15-12pm**—PCL General Meeting with guest presentation, Regional Pest Management Strategy 2011-2014 by Michelle Field, Regional Pest Management Officer, Reef Catchments.

**Saturday 19, 8am**—Working Bee at Morag McNichol Reserve. Contact Jim McNichol on 4942 8802 for details.

### December

**Thursday 1 from 8pm**—SGAP Monthly Meeting. 2011 in review, member's photos. Mackay Gem and Craft Society Hall, Leisure Court. Visitors welcome.

**Sunday 3-4th**—MacBoca National Bird Count. Contact 49522964 for further details.

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## New website for Wedgie conservation

Wedge-tailed Eagles have long been over-represented in the roadkill on our nation's highways. Their natural scavenging tendencies attract them to other roadkill.

When approached by a speeding car or truck their large size prevents them from taking off in time. A new website provides important tips on how to avoid hitting a wedgie on the road, there is also information on how to deal with injured eagles as well as the contact details of people who can help.



[www.wedgetaileagle.org.au](http://www.wedgetaileagle.org.au)



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