



# Pioneer Catchment & Landcare News

## February 2012

### Welcome to Pioneer Catchment & Landcare 2012!

Management and staff wish all our members and readers the very best for 2012. We look forward to a happy, busy and productive Landcare year.

Hayley Glover left us in January, and I thank her for her contribution over her time with us, firstly as Project officer and then as Pioneer Landcare Facilitator. I hope that she has a good life in Longreach. We look forward to our new facilitator starting work in March.

*Margaret Lane, Chair*

### Myrtle Rust Update

The onset of summer over Queensland has seen the spread of the potentially devastating Myrtle Rust, and it seems to be just a matter of time before it arrives in Mackay.



Image: [Wildlife.org](http://Wildlife.org)

The Preservation Society of Queensland has reported that incidences on eucalypt species have increased. Blue Gums (*Eucalyptus tereticornis*) and Flooded Gums (*Eucalyptus grandis*) are but a few of new species to be confirmed as suitable hosts. The total number of host species in Queensland has risen to 120.

Recent outbreaks of the wind borne pest have been confirmed in the Rockhampton Botanic Gardens, Yepoon, and the Whitsundays. A total of 19 Council regions are now infected.

To date Mackay remains free of Myrtle Rust however it is unlikely that the region will be spared. The warm moist airflow conditions currently occurring throughout the area are ideal for transportation of the spores into new areas. Biosecurity Queensland are urging people to continue to send in reports of Myrtle Rust. The more that is known, the more that can be learnt about how to manage it.

If you suspect Myrtle Rust you can ph 132523 or visit [www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au](http://www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au) for more information.

### King Tides—A View to the Future

Along the Queensland coast the summer of 2012 will bring very high spring tides (king tides) which are visible during daylight hours. Green Cross Australia invites Queenslanders to witness the 2012 king tides, and to contribute to the project by taking photos and sharing them online. Upload your photos to create a visual database to show areas at risk of inundation and assist with planning for future implications of sea level rise.

King tides can demonstrate what our coasts might look like in the future under conditions of sea level rise due to climate change. Relatively rare water levels today (king tides) are likely to be common water levels along much of the coast by the end of the century due to projected sea level rise. With over 85% of Australia's population living within 50km of the coast line, learning what the future might hold is important.



Image: [Witness King Tides](http://WitnessKingTides.org)

For further information and to register, visit [www.witnesskingtides.org](http://www.witnesskingtides.org). The next king tides in Mackay are scheduled for the 8th and 9th of February.

### Thank you and Farewell from Hayley Glover

It is with regret that I've resigned from my role as Regional Landcare Facilitator, and finished on 27th January. 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 Dallas, to Saskia and Christine from Sarina and Whitsundays and to the staff from many other organisations for all their assistance and support. I am leaving the tropics for the browner pastures of Longreach which I am very excited about. I wish you all the best in your land management activities and look forward to maintaining contact with the group into the future.

A replacement has not yet been appointment so ... Watch this space!



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## Plant of the Month

### Wheel of Fire *Stenocarpus sinuatus*

A very flamboyant tree that is often used in ornamental situations, this member of the *Proteaceae* family is a lovely rainforest specimen guaranteed to light up anyone's day with its beautiful floral displays.



Image: D Milburn

**Leaves:** Alternative, simple, entire to deeply lobed, 120-200mm in length. Upper surface of blade glossy dark green, paler below.

**Flowers/Fruit:** Bright orange to red produced in umbels of 12-15 flowers, developing from the stem so they are inside the canopy. January—March. Fruit a dark grey-brown follicle, 5-10cm long and more than 2cm wide, somewhat boat-shaped, containing numerous winged, overlapping seeds. Ripe Apr to Sept.

**Propagation:** Propagate from fresh seed, average germination time one month. Cuttings can be difficult. Slow growing in early stages.



Image: D Milburn

**Distribution:** Northern NSW up to Atherton Tablelands, Qld.

**Habitat:** Primarily a rainforest or riverine specimen preferring rich loamy soils, but will survive drier habitats such as lowland scrub.

**Pioneer Catchment:** These trees have been flowering since Christmas throughout Mackay. They can still be seen flowering behind the council buildings today on Gordon St.

**Source:** Williams, K. (1979), *Native Plants - Queensland*, Vol 1. Australian Tropical Rainforest Plants factsheet, *Wheel of Fire*.

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## Weed of the Month

### Golden Rain Tree *Cassia fistula*

The Golden Rain Tree is a vibrant yellow flowering plant that can occasionally still be seen around the streets of Mackay and in backyard gardens. Although pretty, it is emerging as a threat to environmentally sensitive areas as a garden escapee. It was introduced as a garden ornamental, and has a long history of medicinal use; the pith from the pods yields a purgative medicine.



Image: D Milburn

**Description:** Semi deciduous tree to 8m or more. Large compound leaves 450mm long, 2-7 pairs of oblong to ovate leaflets, 50-90 x 40-90mm, increasing in size towards apex. Golden orchid-like flowers are borne in large pendulous sprays of 20-75 flowers; sweetly perfumed. Cylindrical indehiscent dark brown woody pods often exceeding 300mm in length. Some old pods retained on tree for most of the year. Seeds, around 8mm diameter, arranged horizontally and embedded in blackish pulp that gives off a strong smell of cascara.

**The Problem:** The tree produces large quantities of viable seed. This seed is spread by varying means, including water movement, mulch, and garden waste. Plants are beginning to emerge in sensitive areas throughout the region including riparian zones, beach scrub, and rainforest margins.

**Dealing with the problem:** Seedlings of this plant should be pulled out if people notice them on their property. Saplings and larger trees can be treated using the cut and paste method where feasible. Contact PCL for further details.

**Pioneer Catchment:** The trees are still common in older backyards and on Peri-urban properties. They are beginning to self seed into coastal scrub areas, most commonly along Blacks Beach coastal vegetation areas.

**Source:** Flora of Australia Vol 12 *Mimosaceae* (excl. *Acacia*), *Caesalpinaceae*; [www.weeds.org.au](http://www.weeds.org.au)



Image: D Milburn

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## Short-beaked Echidnas

*Tachyglossus aculeatus* (referring to quick tongued & spiny) is the Latin name for one of only two monotremes (egg laying mammals) to be found in Australia, the Short-beaked Echidna. It is closely related to the Platypus, with both monotremes sharing electro receptors to find prey, and a sharp barb near the hind foot ankle used for defence.



**Echidnas use a long tongue to retrieve prey.**

**Animal Pictures Archive**

These small boulder shaped animals occupy a large and diverse range of habitats throughout Australia from arid desert zones, to coastal margins and offshore islands. There are two sub species of echidna found in Queensland and the Pioneer Catchment and surrounding regions are home to *Tachyglossus aculeatus* subs. *aculeatus*.

Echidnas are most active in temperatures in the range of 16-20 degrees, therefore in the summer months they are predominantly nocturnal creatures. In the heat of the day they seek shelter in burrows, hollow logs, rock crevices, and have also been known to go for a dip to cool off.

Their diets consist mainly of small insects like ants, termites and beetles. They have electro receptors in their mouths which help them detect stealthy prey hiding in the leaf litter. Their 18cm tongue is sticky and may collect many termites in one flick, and they have the ability to repeat this action up to 100 times in a minute, helping them make the most of a quick meal.

Echidnas live mainly solitary lives, coming together to mate between June and September. They use their strong sense of smell to locate suitable partners, which can be quite a feat considering an average territory of 50 hectares. One baby echidna is produced every two years, and they remain in the mothers' pouch for approximately 50 days until they start to develop spines. The young (also known as puggles) then remain in the burrow until they are weaned at approximately seven months old, with the mother coming back to feed them every 5–10 days.

Echidnas are preyed on by large raptors like eagles, as well as dingoes, dogs, and feral pigs. It is important to keep dogs on a leash in known echidna habitat areas, to prevent injury or death to the animals. Habitat reduction is also a major threat with loss of foraging zones and places to breed and retreat in hot conditions. They are also commonly killed along roadsides as they wander the edges in search of food.

If you wish to make your property a better place for echidnas there are a few things you can do to help out

- Retain potential food sources like termite mounds and ant nests
- Retain potential nest burrowing sites such as piles of mulch, leaf litter, or wood piles
- Don't tidy up wood land areas, leave fallen braches, logs, undergrowth (native), dead trees, rocks and rocky outcrops
- Control domestic pets and feral animals



If you would like more information on echidnas, their habitat, or Land for Wildlife, please contact the PCL office.

### EchidnaWatch

EchidnaWatch is a program of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland (WPSQ) that aims to collate information on the distribution of echidnas in Queensland, and give an up to date assessment of their current state of wellbeing. Where ever you live in Queensland you can watch out for echidnas and tell EchidnaWatch what you have observed. For more information visit [www.wildlife.org.au/projects/echidnas](http://www.wildlife.org.au/projects/echidnas) or call WPSQ on 07 3221 0194.

### Sick of seeing Wayward Trolleys?

Shopping trolleys have become an integral part of Australia's retail distribution network. It's estimated there are more than two million shopping trolleys across the country – one for every 11 Australians. As well as being of significant cost, wayward trolleys can become an environmental hazard to bushland, creeks and waterways when carelessly dumped.

You can now become involved by reporting wayward trolleys. You can phone 1800 641497, or visiting [trolleytracker.com.au](http://trolleytracker.com.au). All people who utilise this service go in the draw to win five prizes of \$1000 monthly.



[www.trolleytracker.com.au](http://www.trolleytracker.com.au)

### Don't bin your old batteries!

They are an integral part of our everyday lives, from portable radios to the latest in sophisticated technology. However incorrect disposal of batteries is a serious environmental concern, as they contain heavy metals and other toxic elements used to store energy. When released into the environment these heavy metal can become a major environmental issue. 8000 tonnes of batteries go into landfill each year in Australia.



**Battery World in Mackay** accepts all domestic batteries for recycling and correct disposal, sparing our landfills from being filled with all the associated nasties. For more information ph 131760 or visit <http://recycling.batteryworld.com.au/>

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

### Management Committee

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

**Deputy Chair** Dave Hunter

**Treasurer** Bruce Milles

**Secretary (Non voting)** Wendy Eiteneuer  
**Committee Members**

Cr. Wendy Cameron (Mackay Regional Council)  
Irene Champion

Joan Fitzsimmons (Mackay Conservation Group)  
Di Salau

Cr. Ross Walker (Mackay Regional Council)  
Dianne Williams (Australian Forest Growers)

### Pioneer Catchment office

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

**Pioneer Catchment Landcare Facilitator** To be advised

**Project Officer** Dallas Milburn

0447 749 769

[d.milburn@pioneercatchment.org.au](mailto:d.milburn@pioneercatchment.org.au)

**Newsletter** Hayley Glover, Dallas Milburn

## Upcoming Events February

**Thursday 2 from 8pm**—SGAP Monthly Meeting. *2011 in review*, member's photos. Mackay Gem and Craft Society Hall, Leisure Court. Visitors welcome.

**Saturday 4, 8am**—Working Bee at Morag McNichol Reserve. Contact Jim McNichol on 4942 8802 for details

**Saturday 4, 4pm**—'Wet Wet Wet', celebration of World Wetlands Day at Mackay Botanic Gardens. Walk followed by BBQ. Contact the Gardens for more information on 4952 7300.

**Sunday 5, 5:45am**—Birdlife Mackay (formerly MacBOCA) outing to Mt. Charlton Reserve, meeting at Mobile Service Station Coningsby. Contact 49522964 or 0488315757 for further details.

## March

**Thursday 1 from 8pm**—SGAP Monthly Meeting. Mackay Gem and Craft Society Hall, Leisure Court. Visitors welcome.

**Saturday 3, 8am**—Working Bee at Morag McNichol Reserve. Contact Jim McNichol on 4942 8802 for details

**Sunday 4**—Birdlife Mackay (formerly MacBOCA) outing to Sandringham Reserve, meeting at the Tourist Information Centre, Nebo Rd. Contact 49522964 or 0488315757 for further details.

**Saturday 24, 9am-12pm**—Friends Planting Bee in the Heritage Gardens at Mackay Botanic Gardens. Learn what was planted by the early settlers of Mackay. Contact the Gardens for more information 4952 7300.

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