

The opening of our new office and the christening of New Beaut Ute II will be held in July or August - stay tuned for more details. This will be an opportunity for us to thank everyone who has volunteered for, funded, and worked with PCL, and to show off our new office, the refurbished community nursery and our shiny new truck!

Apologies for the change of plans since we sent the printed edition!



Bigger, brighter and better!

This newsletter is coming to you from a new PCL office! We have been busy in the last little while negotiating, organising and carrying out a move to a larger donga just a few metres from our old one. It is still in the MRC Natural Environment Centre grounds so that we can continue running the community nursery and using its outputs for projects. As we are a community group we always rely on support from many places, and this move was no exception. We would like to sincerely thank a number of people and businesses, without whom our move could not have happened:

- Mackay Regional Council for agreeing to swap dongas!
- Cr Theresa Morgan for the tip-off about the Ergon furniture.
- Graham Smith for his help obtaining and packing the new desks, chairs and shelves.
- Jonathon Dykyj, Richard Brown and team for organising repairs and maintenance to the building, including a new energy-efficient air conditioner.
- Craig's Removals, who are very friendly and helpful.
- Kelvin from Floorzone.
- Graham Townson from Townson Plumbing for the snazzy flashing Di installed to cover some holes.
- Margaret Lane for her tireless negotiation and advocacy on PCL's behalf, and Di Salau for her amazing handi-person and IT skills. Quite truthfully, PCL would not work without these two committed people.



But wait, there's even more excitement in these parts!

We heard last week that we received \$35,000 from the Community Gambling Fund for the purchase of a new vehicle, so we have ordered a Mitsubishi Triton from Carlisle Motors, who have also agreed to a trade-in on our trusty (kind of!) old ute.

Backyard Explorer Workshops

Did you know that 75% of land animals are insects? But that only a quarter of these have scientific names? Arthropods (including insects) are a very diverse groups of organisms. Participants in the Backyard Explorer workshops held at CQU and Northview State School last month had the chance to learn all about the common orders of insects from Queensland Museum experts Christine Lambkin and Noel Starrick. We tried trapping, preserving and identifying insects using real scientific techniques and equipment.

The results from the survey that was conducted during the workshops will be added to Queensland biodiversity assessments, and are available online. The data showed that altered grass lawn environments have a lower biodiversity than more natural rainforest garden habitats. In both locations, however, there were *lots* of the order Diptera, the pesky flies and mosquitos!



Workshop participants sampling with a hand net and vial (right), and vial contents (left). (I. Flett)



Wetlands Walkabout

The Wetlands Walkabout on Keeley's Rd is a fantastic community resource that really shows how determined land management practices can



transform a site in just a few years. Where there were once soggy pastures, rats, weeds and cattle, there are now seasonal wetlands and a healthy estuarine ecosystem with over 115 species of birds and at least 10 different types of native fish.

Property manager Mark Gallete (pictured) is an enthusiastic guide who is keen to equip teachers and community leaders with the knowledge to continue his educational legacy when he departs in October for a well-earned break.

Until then, school groups can arrange to go on trips with Mark, and hear all about the life cycle of the barramundi (who you might be lucky enough to see being fed), the importance of keeping waterbodies like this healthy, and the fascinating story of the mistletoe bird's dirty bottom!

Contact PCL staff for more information about Wetlands Walkabout or if you would like to lead a school or community group outing there.

2013 State and Territory Landcare Awards

Nominations are open in the 2013 Landcare Awards. There are nine categories in the QLD awards, including for Individual Landcarer, Innovation in Sustainable Farm Practices, Partnerships with Landcare, Young Landcare Leader and Junior Landcare Team.

If you would like more information about nominating a Landcarer you know, please contact the PCL office, or see the website: www.landcareonline.com.au

Plant of the month

This plant can be seen growing in the Mackay Regional Botanical Gardens, and is a tree that we grow in the Community Nursery for revegetation work.

Elaeocarpus grandis ELEAOCARPACEAE

Blue Quandong

A lovely riparian rainforest tree with distinctive bright red leaves and bright blue fruit which is attractive to a variety of animals including the spectacled flying fox and the musky rat-kangaroo.

Description: A tall tree with cylindrical trunk and large buttresses. The bark is wrinkled and grey with small fissures. The crown is quite open, forming a sparse canopy, often with a few bright red leaves amongst the green. The light coloured, soft wood is easily worked.

Leaves: Simple, alternate, oblong-elliptic, 7-18cm long with finely toothed margins. Dark glossy green above and paler below with numerous, prominent pit like *domatia*, which are little chambers that the plant produces to house arthropods. Old leaves turn bright red before falling.

Flowers and fruit: Sprays of greenish white, small bell shaped flowers with fringed petals and no scent. They usually occur from October to March.

The thinly fleshed globular fruits are bright blue, 18-30mm in diameter, and contain 1 large deeply pitted stone (any month). The flesh is edible and the stones are sometimes used to make jewellery.

Distribution: Coastal areas from northeast NSW to northeast QLD.

Propagation: Sow fresh seed and file the stones before sowing; germination can be slow.



Source: Melzer & Plumb, 2007 *Plants of Capricornia*; The Mackay Branch Society for Growing Australian Plants, 1989 *One Hundred and One Trees of Mackay*.
Photos: S & A Pearson

Weed spotting this month

How to tell a native Wandering Jew from a weedy one.

Tradescantia fluminensis and *T. zebrina* COMMELINACEAE

Wandering Jew

Do you know there are native 'Wandering Jews' that occurs in our region? *Commelina cyanea* is a common understory plant of moist forest areas. It may also be growing in your garden. However, you may confuse it with two weedy invaders and inadvertently pull it out.

Take a look at the comparison, and get to know the native herbs that grow around here. Encouraging healthy native understory plants is a great way to combat weedy invasions. The best way to tell them apart is when flowers appear.

Tradescantia fluminensis (Trad) and *T. zebrina* (Silver Striped Wandering Jew) are both WEEDY Wandering Jews.

These Wandering Jews are a common pest which spread by sending out roots at each nodal point. They trail over the ground to form a thick carpet-like cover. They reproduce via above ground runners, seeds and tubers. *T. fluminensis* has white flowers and the stems and leaves of this plant are weak and easily broken. *T. zebrina* has bright pink flowers and two distinctive silvery stripes on each leaf.

Native Wandering Jew species are also fleshy and ground hugging, but the stems and leaves are more robust than the Trad and not striped as in the Silver Striped Wandering Jew. The local native species have blue flowers, with approximately equally sized petals. *C. cyanea* flowers throughout the year. *C. diffusa* can form large colonies in damp areas and will also grow in standing water.

If you would like help identifying species, contact the PCL office. We may be able to help you identify your specimen, or send it on to other experts who can!

Sources: Watsford and Elliot, 2006 *Plants of the forest floor*.



Do you have Land for Wildlife?

Many of the landscapes in our region are managed for purposes other than wildlife conservation. Farming, grazing, coastal housing and infrastructure development, and all the associated impacts, take their toll on wildlife and habitat. This means that private landholders play an important role in preserving the unique wildlife of this area. Retaining bushland on private property can contribute to the survival of plants and animals and provide important corridors for wildlife movement. Through thoughtful management, private landholders can be part of a bigger contribution to environmental preservation and wise use of the land.

Of course, many landholders do this quietly and by themselves, but the Land for Wildlife program can help if you are looking for support in your conservation efforts.

What is Land for Wildlife?

Land for Wildlife is a free, voluntary conservation program that supports participants in protecting, enhancing and rehabilitating native flora and fauna on private and community owned land. The program encourages landholders to incorporate nature conservation with existing and future land management practices. Land for Wildlife is free to join and is not legally binding. The program provides an

opportunity for you to contribute to nature conservation in your local area.

An on-site visit will help develop advice on such issues as:

- How wildlife habitat can be integrated with other uses on private land, to benefit both the landowner and wildlife
- Management and protection of habitat areas
- Weed control
- Incentives and assistance available to landowners



Image: Pacific Baza eating a frog at Padaminka (I.Gottke)

Property assessments are a key component of Land for Wildlife. Individual property assessments provide landholders with personalised advice, feedback, support and encouragement.

Land for Wildlife also provides contact with like-minded landowners and offers a chance to share ideas and experiences through field days, workshops and other activities. Regular newsletters are provided that cover a wide variety of topics, including flora and fauna, weed control, pest animals, habitat management and revegetation. A Land for Wildlife sign is sent to each registered landholder to acknowledge and advertise their contribution to wildlife conservation.

Mackay Regional Council sponsors the program through the Natural Environment Levy.

It's never too late to start composting!



Image: Black soldier fly larvae working on food scraps to create compost (I.Flett)

About half of the stuff Australians throw in our bins is compostable material. That means that landfills, which are expensive in terms of running costs, land area affected, and greenhouse gas emissions, could be much smaller and much better for the environment.

Commercial fertilisers often contain chemicals that are harmful to natural ecosystems, something that is a particular concern in our region, where runoff from farms and urban areas can harm that amazing World Heritage Marine Park just off the coast. What's more, some of the ingredients in commercial fertilisers are becoming harder to source, and could run out in our lifetimes.

There are many exciting innovations in the world of composting. In some places, where there is simply no space for landfill and the fertility of the land needs a helping hand, there are amazing community compost projects. And how's this for recycling? Scientists in Finland recently showed that plants grow just as well with a mix of urine and wood ash as they do with traditional mineral fertiliser. Urine is full of nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus (the nutrients plants need), and an average human produces about 500 litres per year, so this could be a fantastic way of increasing food production and improving water sanitation in the future.

That sort of change is still a long way off in Mackay, but there are local programs that you can be part of, and next week is International Compost Awareness Week, so it's a perfect time to get involved. Mackay Regional Council is sponsoring a free composting workshop at the Mackay Community Gardens on May 11, where you can learn how to improve soil quality in your garden, reduce greenhouse emissions, reduce the amount of waste you send to landfill, save water AND save money!

Contact Fiona Paterson on 4961 9051 to find out more about the composting workshop or about composting and worm-farming in the Mackay region.

The Rainbow Warrior's Visit Highlights Climate Change Impacts in Queensland

For the last month, Greenpeace's flagship vessel, the Rainbow Warrior, has been travelling up the Queensland coast to raise awareness of the impact that coal mining expansion will have on the GBR.

In Mackay, Greenpeace teamed up with Communities Protecting Our Region to run an open day on the fascinating custom-built campaign ship, Rainbow Warrior, and a public forum discussing the impacts of the planned coal expansion on the reef and on coastal communities.

At the forum, Patricia Julien spoke about the potential health impacts of expanded coal mining and the Dudgeon Point Port.

Greenpeace India campaigner, Arpana Urdapa, provoked discussion when she spoke about India's coal requirements in the coming years and the huge potential of renewable energy sources. She said that renewables are expected to be roughly the same price as coal by 2015.

The ship's captain, Peter Willcox, shared his very real concerns about the impacts of ocean acidification and warming sea temperatures on the marine life he has spent his career observing.



Image: Rainbow Warrior off Mackay, April 2013 (I.Flett)

Australian scientists are already extremely concerned about the state of the Great Barrier Reef. Overfishing, the impact of agricultural runoff, and increasing sea temperatures, have been responsible for the loss of 50% of the corals that were on the reef 100 years ago, according to JCU scientist Dr Terry Hughes. Dr Hughes wrote in 2012, that if coral loss is going to be reversed, "Governments need to focus on controlling pollution and dredging, reducing carbon emissions, and placing a ban on new coal ports".

Upcoming Events

MAY

Thursday 3 to Monday 6, Winter Moon Festival, Cameron's Pocket. Turn off Bruce Hwy at Calen.

Wednesday 8 and Thursday 9, 9.00am-6.00pm - Ag.Trade.Life (rescheduled). Mackay Showground. Enquiries, contact Sonia Ball, 4944 2612.

Saturday 4, 8.30am-12.00pm - Friends of the Gardens Planting Bee. Meet at the Meadowlands amphitheatre, contact 4952 7300.

Sunday 5, 6.15am - Birdlife Mackay Outing to Berri Werri; meet at Tourist Info Centre, Nebo Rd, Mackay for travel to Gargett.

Friday 10, 6.00pm - Talk by Mark Ogge of the Australia Institute, "The Other Side of the Mining Boom". Cook Lecture Theatre, CQU.

Saturday 11, 11.00am-12.30pm - Rally for the Reef, Town Hall Park, Mackay, RSVP online at www.dudgeonpoint.org/rally_for_the_reef

Saturday 11, 9.00am - Composting Workshop at Mackay Community Gardens, Streeter Ave, West Mackay. Contact Fiona Paterson, 4961 9051

Saturday 11, Coastcare Activities

9-11am Bucasia - meet at the access track, accessed via easement beside 172 Waverley Street, Bucasia.

2-4pm Blacks Beach.

Saturday 18 and Sunday 19, 8.00-11.30am - Mackay Coastal Cleanup. Various locations, contact Eco Barge Clean Seas 4946 5198 for more information.

Sunday 19, 8.00am-1.00pm - Annual Farleigh School Palm Fete, at Farleigh State School. Call 4959 8229 for more information.

The Palm Fete at Farleigh is the occasion of SGAP's famous annual native plant sale. Come along early to get some bargains.

Friday 24, 6.00-7.00pm - The Bungee Jumping Caterpillars book launch, Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens. RSVP essential by May 20 to 4952 7300.

Saturday 25, 8.00-11.00 - Marian Community Group Working Bee. Meet at the Rotunda opposite Marian State School for a morning of tree planting along the river.

JUNE

Sunday 2, 6.30am - BirdLife Mackay outing to Sandringham Reserve. Meet at Tourist Information Centre, Nebo Rd. Contact: 49522964

Thursday 6, 7.30pm - SGAP General Meeting, including a presentation by Steve Pearson. Mackay Gem and Craft Society Hall, Leisure Court

Friday 7, 9.00am - Land for Wildlife field walk at Padaminka. RSVPs essential to Kate Steel: projectmanager@pioneercatchment.org.au by May 31

An exciting project is happening on Owen's Creek, and we need your help. The project managers are trying to source logs for a river improvement project. They should be 5-8m long, and 250-650mm diameter. If they still have the root ball, that is even better. Please contact Iona if you can help or if you would like more information.

Land for Wildlife field walk at Padaminka Nature Reserve, Friday 7th June.

Join the Land for Wildlife team and guest presenters for a property walk and wildlife conservation demonstrations at Ian and Andrea Gottke's property Padaminka, near Walkerston.

The half day will begin at 9am with Ian leading a tour and discussing the management activities and unique characteristics of the property; Demonstrations and discussions with Wildlife Carers and Tina Ball from QPWS demonstrating Nest Boxes for habitat, and a discussion with local conservationists about the ecological features of our region. Land for Wildlife members will be able to receive a free nest box, based on suitable habitat on their properties.

Numbers will be limited so to register your interest please call the PCL office on 49441979 by May 31.

Who's who at Pioneer Catchment & Landcare

Management Committee

Chair Margaret Lane (SGAP—Mackay Branch)

Deputy Chair Dave Hunter

Treasurer Dianne Williams

Secretary (Non voting) Wendy Eiteneuer

Committee Members Irene Champion, Di Salau, Cr Theresa Morgan, John Atkinson

Pioneer Catchment Office

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