



February 2018

Welcome to the February edition of Streamlines, our first for the New Year. We begin the year with several pieces of exciting news.

Firstly, Brisbane City Council last year invited authors to submit their own insights or reflections on 'The Nature of Brisbane' in its inaugural Nature Writing Competition. One of our regular contributors, Brian Dean, was a co-winner with his entry 'O Clouds, Unfold' which is reproduced with permission and illustrated with images of three of Brian's lithographs. Congratulations, Brian!

Secondly, we have new Coordinators for Anstead Bushland Reserve – see page 3 for an introduction.

Last, but not least, Pullenvale Market Place have invited us to promote the activities of PPCG in their centre – see page 8 for details. We look forward to seeing as many members and everyone else they know during the morning!

Late last year, I was reading *The Orchid Thief* by Susan Orlean when I came across an interesting section on Australian paperbarks, *Melaleuca quinquenervia*, that have created havoc in the Florida Everglades. The extract appears on page 6.

How often while weeding at working bees have we looked at a plant and wondered whether it is the 'baddie' Wandering Jew or a look-alike 'goodie'. I've summarised information from Department of Agriculture and Fisheries Biosecurity Queensland and Weeds of Australia – Biosecurity Queensland Edition Fact Sheet websites to help us decide.

All members are welcome to submit articles to Streamlines via helian@retirementresorts.com.au. The deadline for the next issue is 15 May 2018.

Very best wishes,

Helen Ogle

Editor

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Pullen Pullen Catchments Group

A Landcare Group

Meetings

Meetings are held at 7pm on the first Wednesday of each month at Pullenvale Environmental Education Centre, 250 Grandview Road, Pullenvale.

Website

www.pullenpullencatchments.org.au

Working Bees

Pullenvale Forest Park – 2nd Sunday of the month, 8.30 – 11 am
Anstead Bushland Reserve – 1st Sunday of the month, 8.30 - 11 am.

Tools, gloves, etc are provided at Working Bees. Just wear sturdy boots, tough clothes and bring water and a hat!

Committee Members 2017

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Membership Options

Membership fees are:

- Annual Membership – \$10 per person payable on March 1 each year
- Life Membership – \$100 per person

We are delighted to accept donations.

- a) Send a cheque payable to PPCG to PO Box 1390, Kenmore, 4069 or
- b) Transfer the funds electronically to BSB 064 152, Account No.10107038 Ref: your name.



"The PPCG acknowledges the support of the Lord Mayor's Community Sustainability and Environmental Grants Programs for a grant to help with administrative, bushcare and educational costs"

Dedicated to a better Brisbane

NEWS

Wonderful news to start the year! **Anstead Bushland Reserve** has a new Coordinator. Rob Preslmaier and his wife Tracy Martin have stepped up to the plate full of enthusiasm and great ideas for the way forward. We sincerely thank Brian and Nola Dean for their efforts over the last few years. Brian has ensured the maintenance of 'our' area, seen the idea of an area of labelled plants through to fruition, prepared and maintained a supply of information brochures and generally encouraged us to tackle the seemingly endless sea of cobblers' pegs vigorously. Special thank you to Nola for the much-anticipated and much-enjoyed morning teas!

Rob and Tracy are PPCG life members and have been helping out at various PPCG sites since inception of the PPCG in the late 1990s.

Rob is hoping to build on the efforts of previous volunteers and coordinators by utilising a range of methods to control weeds and in so doing create the ecological space needed for natural regeneration to occur. Residents of a one hectare property in Sugars Rd for the last 24 years they have observed many species appear as they have cleared weeds and birds have brought in desirable seeds.

Apart from regenerating their own block Rob and Tracy are both chemical engineers – Rob is an environmental manager/consultant and Tracy an Organisational Psychologist. They have two children, Maya (girl) and Odin (boy), who each have four legs and are otherwise known as German Shepherds.

With Rob and Tracy becoming Coordinators, it is anticipated that, following consultation with interested parties, **Anstead Working Bees will change to the first Sunday of the month – April 1 and May 6. In the meantime, the next Working Bee will take place on February 25.**



Brian Dean handing over the Anstead Bush Coordinator baton to Rob Preslmaier

Lynn Brown reported that a new storage shed has been delivered to **Pullenvale Forest Park**, Chinese Elms have been poisoned by Council contractors and that practically all of the 460 plants planted last year survived the hot, dry weather in January. **Working bees will be held on March 11, April 8 and May 13.**

John Ness reported that plant survival at **Airlie Road** has also been good despite the weather conditions. Council contractors will clear the area around the **Moggill Wetlands** and an offer to plant large numbers of plants in the cleared areas has been received. Details still need to be finalised with Council.

Pullenvale Environment Education Centre's tame Botanist, Daniel, is sufficiently recovered to provide a guided walk in the Pullenvale Forest Park later in the year. Further information will be forthcoming.

O Clouds, Unfold!

Brian Dean

I'm a bushcare coordinator. Sometimes. I'm also a printmaker, a lithographer. Sometimes.

I've spent many, many hours rubbing grease onto a heavy, dead-flat slab of Bavarian limestone (that's what lithography means – "stone drawing"), creating images which emerge after crushing pressure transfers oily ink from the stone to white, bright paper. A lot of these prints are of clouds, and it might seem strange that such airy, evanescent forms should arise from massive, weighty stone and cruel pressure, but there is a logic, a rationale, underpinning this apparent anomaly. And it's linked (or I see it as being linked) to the earth, to tree and landscape, to the atmosphere, and to the waters, and to the stupendous, inexorable and terrible forces which shape the world around us.

If you want to see majesty and mind-numbing splendour, just watch a cumulus cloud towering slowly, brilliantly across the blue, changing a little, a little, as you watch. Queensland does them rather well, by the way. This is beauty, but utterly indifferent, and it comes about by forces we can hardly imagine – huge updraughts that lift tonnes of water miles high, winds that pound and pummel like hammers on anvils of vapour, moving, changing, driving.



Chance of a Storm



Clouds and Rocks

It comes as a shock to realise that equally gigantic forces are shaping the earth and rocks on which we're standing, gawping at the clouds. A whole lot slower, of course – can you see that hill heaving itself up, hoisted

on tectonic shoulders, and then melting away in millennia of rain and frost? That tree you planted last week, did you watch it grow? Thanks to time-lapse photography, you can, with David Attenborough's voice over. And five years later you can do your "before & after" slide show, with Ooh-aah voices over. Rocks become plants become clouds, see.

We bushcarers, (we lithographers), are like ants negotiating the patterns of the land that we can perceive, inhabiting the two dimensions of nature's topography. It's only when we move into another dimension and look down on the pattern, or make a time-shift, that we can really grasp what we have been doing. Ant-like, we fiddle and nibble and may even infinitesimally change things.



Marking Time

But we humans are also aware (or ought to be) that whatever we do is destined to pass and fade – we've only been here for a split-second in terms of the "lifetime" of a forest, a hill, a rock, a sea, a continent. Let's face it – talk of "good" and "bad" species, "weeds" and "natives" is meaningless, or at least anthropocentric, which we may as well admit to. Everything that we do is designed to make, or keep, the world *suited for humanity*, and humans uniquely (or at least we think so), are the only creatures who value, or even have an idea of that elusive thing that defies definition, yet everyone knows about it: beauty. It's not only in the eyes of the beholder, it's *only* in the eyes of the beholders, us, people, *Homo sapiens sapiens*.

If we ignore our sense of beauty, dismiss aesthetic concepts as irrelevant to bushcare, we run the risk of chasing the will-o'-the-wisp (or Min-min light if you want to keep things local) that sometimes lures us into thinking we are, or can be, "conservers" or "restorers" of a pristine environment which existed before *Homo sapiens* did catastrophically unwise things to it.

Well, bollocks to that – there never was a "Pure Land", a Garden of Eden, a Golden Age. The earth has been changing for billennia, admittedly far too slowly for us to realise, but still changing even as we stand on it.

No, what we do "conserve" is an idea, a concept. We want to make things better, we want to fashion an environment which we humans can relate to. We sustain the aesthetics of survival, of regeneration. We want the earth to be, or become, more beautiful because we humans know about beauty even if we can't say what it is.

And even if you don't like the idea of "beauty" as a legitimate goal of bushcare, if you think that "aesthetics" (note the inverted commas!) has no place in the state of nature and how we treat it, never mind – it will all pass and fade. As we do, leaving not a wrack behind.

But cheer up! *Carpe diem*, and carry on planting, weeding, tending and delighting in the earth, the waters, the sky – it'll be better for us, and even, with luck, our descendants, whom we will never know, but who will know of us, and thank us.

Australian Invader in Florida!

Extract from 'The Orchid Thief' by Susan Orlean (1998)

'You could write a book about the invincible plants of Florida...There is even a grand champion of Florida's deathless plants. It is the melaleuca, a homely tree from Australia that was brought to the state in 1906 as an ornamental landscaping plant.

Melaleucas grow to be fifty feet tall and have spongy white bark and look a little like a eucalyptus tree with long hair. They drink so much water that they can dry out an acre of wetlands a day, so they were also used to help drain what was then considered Florida's useless swampland. In the 1930s real estate developers had melaleuca seeds scattered over the Everglades by plane.

Melaleucas love living in Florida. Since their introduction they have multiplied by the thousands. They spread at the rate of fifty acres a day. They have parched and then taken over a half million of the Everglades' 7.6 million acres.



A dense stand of melaleucas in the Florida Everglades

Melaleuca leaves are oily and burn intensely. A melaleuca-leaf fire in 1985 left two million people in Florida without electricity because the fuelled-up flames reached as high as the main power-transmission lines.

No one has any sentimental feelings about the species, and most people now consider them a spreading evil.

The problem is that melaleucas hate to die. If a melaleuca tree is frozen or starved or chopped or poisoned or broken or burned, it will release twenty million seeds right before it dies and resow itself in every direction, so in a sense it ends up more alive than dead.

The trick is to kill the tree gradually because the shock of dying is what causes it to shoot out its seeds. The ranger who led me on my first walk in the Fakatchee was a melaleuca-murder expert. He said that a tiny, pudgy Australian weevil known as the snout beetle lives on melaleuca leaves and flower buds, and that three thousand of them had been imported and released in the Everglades in the hopes of paring down the melaleuca population.

He said that, otherwise, the only way to kill the trees in an un-shocking way is a method called hack-and-squirt – you hack a little bit of the tree, squirt in just a little bit of herbicide, come back after a while and hack and squirt again, and keep hacking and squirting until the tree languidly dies.'



Hack-and-squirt control treatment

Wandering Jew?

Helen Ogle

Wandering Jew or Trad (*Tradescantia fluminensis*, formerly *T. albiflora*) came to us from South America. It is a succulent, creeping plant with a jointed stem that establishes easily in moist, shady areas and can be used as a ground cover. Wandering Jew has become a major environmental weed in subtropical and temperate rainforests. It out-competes native vegetation and can cause dermatitis in dogs if they roll in it.

Stems of the plant are easily broken and can develop roots at any joint touching the surface of the soil. Which is partly why it can so quickly become a pest! Leaves are oval, dark green, shiny, 3-6.5 cm long, 1-3 cm wide with parallel veins covered with small hairs. Flowers are produced mainly in spring and are about 2 cm across with three white, pointed petals (see illustrations on page 8).

Wandering Jew can easily be confused with several other related plants, including

- *Aneilema* (*Aneilema biflorum*) which has glossy, somewhat fleshy, green leaves and flowers with rounded white petals.
- Native Wandering Jew or scurvy weed (*Commelina diffusa*) which has relatively thin, hairless, dull green leaves and bright blue (rarely white) flowers with three rounded petals.
- Hairy wandering Jew (*Commelina benghalensis*) which has relatively thin, hairy, dull green leaves and bright blue flowers with two obvious rounded petals and a smaller petal.

Both Native Wandering Jew and Hairy Wandering Jew have been recorded in our catchment area, so we are left to decide whether or not they are out of place and, therefore, weeds in any particular situation.



Wandering Jew flower with three pointed white petals



Aneilema flower with three rounded white petals



Native Wandering Jew flowers with three rounded blue petals



Hairy Wandering Jew flower with two conspicuous rounded blue petals

Pullen Pullen Catchments Group Display

Pullenvale Marketplace, corner of Moggill Road and Bainbridge Drive

Saturday March 17th 9.30-11.30 am

Geckoes Wildlife show sponsored by Brisbane City Council

Rob Whyte talking on Spiders

Displays of our activities

Bring your friends, relatives, children, grandchildren, neighbours!