



Streamlines

Newsletter of the Pullen Pullen Catchments Group Inc.

November 2019

Welcome to the final issue of Streamlines for 2019.

This issue includes a brief report on the PPCG Planning Workshop held on October 26th and a report by our Wildlife Officer on the sorry state of our wildlife under current environmental conditions. Carers are coping with unprecedented numbers of animals and while the numbers go up, the condition of the animals goes down with wide-ranging consequences.

John Ness gives some answers to the question 'Why Plant Trees?' and two more trees suitable for planting in our area are described.

Streamlines would never make it to publication if it weren't for the members who contribute items, Brian Dean who proofreads every issue, the ladies at PEEC who print the hard copies to go by mail and Nola Dean and Liz Dominguez who between them make sure email copies are sent out and each issue is uploaded to our website. Thank you to you all. You make my job so easy.

All members are welcome to submit articles to Streamlines via helian@pretirementresorts.com.au. Articles by members on what they have done to restore habitat on their own land are always popular. If you would like to share your story – either written by yourself or in conjunction with me – I would love to hear from you at the above email address. The deadline for the next issue is 15 February 2020.

Very best wishes for the Christmas Season and the New Year

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

Anstead Bushland Reserve – 1st Sunday of the month, 8.30 - 11 am.
Pullenvale Forest Park – 2nd 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 2019

President:	John Ness	3202 7556	john.ness@emsolutions.com.au
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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.



Dedicated to a better Brisbane

“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”

NEWS

Planning Workshop held of October 26th at the Pullenvale Environmental Education Centre was well attended and well run. It produced good ideas as well as several possible projects. It is now up to the Committee to work out how to turn the ideas/projects into reality. The group also developed strategies for further recruitment and engagement of new members and partners. Several participants expressed great satisfaction of the day, its outcomes and the positive mood of all those who participated.



Workshop participants

Management Committee News The Committee has reluctantly accepted the resignation of two members recently. Ray Krafft, an Honorary Life Member, devoted large amounts of time and energy over many years to carrying out PPCG's regeneration and conservation programs especially as Bushcare Coordinator for Anstead Bushland Reserve from 2005-2017. His contributions to committee meetings were always practical and appreciated. Rob Preslmaier took over as Bushcare Coordinator in Anstead Bushland Reserve in 2018 and his fresh ideas, enthusiasm and energy were greatly appreciated there and on the committee. Best wishes to you both.

Pullenvale Forest Park Lynn reported that 26 people attended the October working bee including a number of Girl Guides who planted more Richmond Birdwing Butterfly vines that are still doing well. A \$10,000 grant has been received to clear vine weeds on the southern bank of Pullen Pullen Creek and a further grant application has been submitted for federal funding to restore habitat in the Park to increase biodiversity and enhance its role as a wildlife corridor in a predominantly cleared area. **Working bees are held on the second Sunday of the month from 8.30-11 am and will resume in February. All members are welcome to attend, participate as much as their abilities allow and enjoy an excellent morning tea.**

Anstead Bushland Reserve With Rob's resignation as Bushcare Coordinator, the position is open and applications are being received on contactus@pullenpullencatchments.org.au. **Working bees will hopefully resume in February. They are currently held on the first Sunday of each month from 8.30-11am. All members are welcome to attend, participate as much as their abilities allow and enjoy an excellent morning tea.**

Airlie Road Minor maintenance has continued in the Park. There are around 20 mid-sized trees (2m or so tall) that probably have not survived the current drought. The small seedlings were watered enough to allow them to survive and so far the larger trees have managed to hang on. When it finally rains, the dead trees will be replaced.

Wildlife See Irene's report on page 5.

Education A talk on spiders by Rob Whyte has been deferred until April, being one of four events Ron is planning for 2020.

Proposed PPCG/Local School Nursery There has been in principle agreement that the nursery at Moggill State School can be set up over the school holidays but the firm details have yet to be decided.



Position Vacant

Bushcare Coordinator Anstead Bushland Reserve

PPCG is seeking someone to take over this well-established and thriving Bushcare Group.

Co-ordinating the group requires planning activities and liaising with Brisbane City Council on the ongoing management of the Reserve, ensuring that tools, plants and other materials are ready to use on each working bee, keeping the workers happy (eg with morning tea!) and above all a desire to work alongside other lovers of the land in a common cause - making and keeping our environment a rich and diverse legacy for the future. For more information or to express your interest in this position, please contact Rob on 0488 738 250 or contactus@pullenpullencatchments.org.au.

Annual General Meeting

Our Annual General Meeting will be held at 3:00 pm on Sunday, 8th December 2019 at the Pullenvale Environmental Education Centre, 250 Grandview Road

We are delighted to welcome our guest speaker Rachel Alexander who will be speaking about pest animals.

Members are encouraged to apply for committee or office positions. Nominations need to be made prior to the AGM. Nominations can be called for at the AGM for any positions that are vacant or have insufficient nominations.

If you are unable to attend, we would appreciate your proxy. You can nominate any PPCG member to be your proxy, including our president, John Ness. Please send it by post before Friday, 30 November 2018 to PPCG, PO Box 1390, Kenmore, Qld 4069. Alternatively, you may email a scanned, signed proxy form to contactus@pullenpullencatchments.org.au.

The meeting will be followed by our usual generous afternoon tea. We hope to see you there. To assist with catering it would be helpful to know if you are attending the AGM. Please reply to the above email address or let a member of the committee know.

‘Unprecedented’ Time for Wildlife

Irene Darlington

The article I submit for the very last edition of Streamlines for 2019 has a particular word I have been forced to use for the last year: ‘unprecedented’. This word has been used of late in relation to the catastrophic weather conditions preceding our current bushfires. I use the word ‘unprecedented’ in relation to what is happening to our wildlife, not only in the bush but in our suburbs.

The shortage of food and water for the wildlife sharing our land is having terrible consequences. Just look at your backyards devoid of most leaf and many full of dying or dead trees. The canopy which offers shelter, camouflage and food for our tree-dwelling animals is all but gone. Unprecedentedly, we wildlife carers are coming across wildlife in greater numbers than ever being found by people on the ground, being attacked by household pets, poisoned and hit by cars.

When a wildlife carer receives an animal from a vet or the public, we have to first note the general health and condition of that animal. Unprecedentedly, most animals coming into care have been starving in the environment and as a result have a very low body score and condition. The weight, or ‘body score’, of each wildlife patient has been steadily decreasing over the last few years. The consequences of this poor condition are many and varied.

A very emaciated, often dehydrated, sick animal has been having problems surviving long before your dog or cat attacked it in your back yard. So getting caught by your dog or cat may be due to the animal’s inability to get away from the attacking pet fast enough. That animal was in desperate need of food and water and placed itself into a dangerous situation lower to the ground than normal and often in an unfamiliar garden where it is more prone to a domestic animal attack or getting hit by a car getting there.

Starvation and dehydration lead to desperate measures, such as nocturnal animals foraging for food during the daytime. Some marsupial mothers are so weak that they are unable to climb to safety in a tree with their babies. Furthermore, the poor condition of the babies developing in pouches is troubling. The starving mothers are unable to produce enough milk for the babies to grow normally. The babies of starving mothers are often thin, weak and well behind in their growth rates. Animals like this coming into carers are unprecedented in numbers and severity of emaciation.

A truly sad scene I will never forget is an emaciated possum mother tucking into her dish of nourishing, juicy fruit and vegetables. Each night I observed her furless emaciated baby, eyes still unopened, climb out of her pouch, on to her head and lean over her face to start licking the fruit and attempting to eat it. The baby was so desperate for nourishment as its mother was unable to produce sufficient milk, that it was attempting to get nourishment any other way it could, even if it was too undeveloped to digest the fruit. In this scenario, I did something unprecedented; I started to take the baby off the mother, which she astonishingly allowed me to do, and I provided at least one good special wildlife formula feed to the baby each night. I then returned the baby to the mother’s pouch. She continued tending to the baby and eventually began producing sufficient milk as her weight and condition improved in my care. As carers we are receiving more and more of these emaciated mothers. We know there are thousands of expectant wildlife mums out there without such help. Their babies will die first and they most likely will too in the near future.

As a wildlife carer on call, I receive many calls from the public about ‘unprecedented’ occurrences in their yards, such as starving flying foxes flying out from their roosting colonies in the afternoons now, instead of sunset, desperately in search of food. Their primary food sources, blossoming ironbarks and many other native trees, are not plentiful enough or the trees themselves are dying in the drought. It appears to become more common to hear of brushtail possums in the garden taking great risks to eat any leftovers from dog and cat food bowls. I’ve had numerous reports from people astounded to see nocturnal wildlife such as flying foxes, gliders, possums, climbing on to the ground from bare trees and camping out on garden compost bins, eating banana peels and rotting fruit and vegetable offcuts. Even bird seed left out for the day seed-eating birds is being consumed by desperate wildlife such as gliders and possums. This can result in terrible gastric issues for them as their guts are unable to break down and digest the seed.

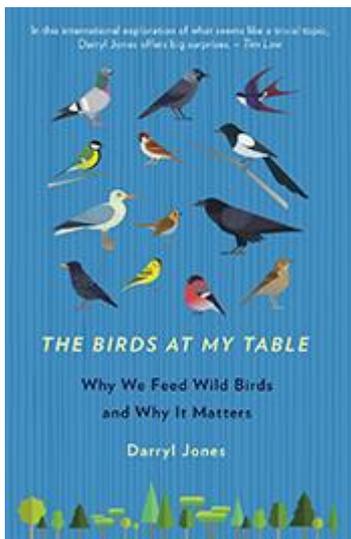
On the subject of birds, have you noticed the unprecedented ‘quiet’ for this time of the year in the absence of nesting birds? A time of year when wildlife carers are normally inundated with baby birds falling out of nests too early and unable to be returned, or orphaned baby birds ... very, very few out there. Nesting just isn’t happening for many birds. There is no leaf cover for nests, leaving the eggs and babies exposed to the weather and predator attack. If any laid eggs hatch, parent birds are having issues feeding their babies as the insects, seed, pollen and nectar they rely on are just not there to be found. This being yet another year the

entomologists report that the insect population of our environment has 'collapsed' due to the terrible increasing weather conditions and lack of water. The effects of a lack of insects in our environment has serious repercussions for all wildlife, and humans through the complex food web of our land. The huge absence of pollination of our plants and farm produce for a start, not just the lack of insects affecting all wildlife dependant on them for their survival.

So as I bury a young curlew which died shortly after being brought to my home one early morning by caring Pullenvale joggers following a car hit (shame on the driver for not rendering assistance and leaving the poor animal to die in the gutter!), it's just another statistic of a wildlife mother doing long treks through dangerous backyards and crossing roads in search of food for her feeding baby. Sadly, a baby now dead in the ground.

My last note on 'unprecedented' is my own take on 'support feeding'. As there is little to no native food to feed our wildlife growing in our own backyards and the wildlife is starving, I help the wildlife. I always have bowls of clean water in my yard for the wildlife. I have planted and looked after lots of native trees such as lillypillies, bottlebrushes, grevilleas and eucalypts that provide shelter and food for wildlife. I also choose to put out seed for seed-eating birds, and fruit and vegetables for the other wildlife. Not so much that they learn to solely depend on my handouts, but just a 'support'. That is MY decision and anyone truly wanting to help their backyard wildlife can also leave water dishes out, place collars and bells on both their cats and dogs to warn the wildlife of their presence and proximity, or start leaving their pets indoors altogether, not just at night! Your pet will be eternally grateful to be in the cooler indoors environment and the wildlife will have one less obstacle in their daily/nightly treks across our yards to find food and water!

Irene feels she has to defend her decision to provide support feeding which has had its critics from time to time in Australia. However, the book below which reviews research on bird feeding from around the world points out that attitudes in the Northern Hemisphere, where support feeding during the severe winter months has long been practised, are totally different. The numbers of bird feeders and the value of the bird feed industry are mind-boggling.



'Darryl Jones is fascinated by bird feeders. Not the containers supplying food to our winged friends, but the people who fill the containers, scatter the crumbs or seeds, or leave the picnic scraps behind for the birds.'

Here, Jones takes us on a wild flight through the history of bird feeding as he ponders this odd but seriously popular form of interaction between humans and wild animals. Jones digs at the deeper issues and questions of the practice of bird feeding, as he raises our awareness of the things we don't yet know and why we really should.

This beautifully written and engaging book reveals that what at first seems to be a niche topic — humans feeding wild birds — is in fact something a disproportionate number of us do. Half the citizens of Australia, the UK, and the US feed birds, whether it's by planting trees that attract them, putting food out on apartment balconies, setting up birds baths and feeders, or by unwittingly leaving scraps behind in parks. The international bird seed industry is huge and most of the seed is grown in India or Africa. Another way of describing all this activity is as an unplanned ecological experiment on an unbelievably large scale.

*In **The Birds at My Table**, Jones draws on an impressive knowledge of the latest scientific findings as well as his own personal knowledge, to reflect and explain the modern practice of bird feeding.' CSIRO Publishing*

Why Plant Trees?

John Ness

Trees, along with phytoplankton in the oceans, provide the basic food and thermodynamic gradient for virtually all other life on earth to exist. The photosynthetic reaction in leaves that uses solar photons as the energy source to break up water from the soil that then reacts with carbon dioxide from the air to build the various carbohydrate outputs along with oxygen that are the first steps in the global food chain has been known in

principle for over a 100 years. It is only in the last decade that the details of this reaction have become understood based on interrogation of the discrete steps in the photosynthetic reaction using ultrafast laser pulses.

People have been chopping down trees ever since a tool for doing so was invented. People have also been planting trees for almost as long but at a trivial rate compared to the rate of destruction. It is only in very recent years that it has slowly dawned on humans that we actually need lots of trees for our very existence ... so long term survival can now be added to all the various reasons why trees are planted.

One of the early drivers for large scale tree planting was pure economics, namely to get access to a long term timber supply. In Australia, this was manifested in the large areas of land allocated to planting exotic pine trees, principally *Pinus radiata*, as a source of soft wood. Somewhat perversely, in other countries, the demand for a fast growing hardwood led to *Eucalyptus grandis* being the most widely planted hardwood tree in the world with vast plantation in North and South America and in some parts of Africa.

The ability of trees to modify the local environment has been a more recent driver of mass tree planting. It has been known for a long time that tree clearing in Australia often leads to soil salination land so there have been rather desultory efforts at tree planting to fix this problem. Similarly, tree planting for erosion control has been a long term practice although not always well thought through as the long term policy of the Queensland Department of Primary Industries to plant Chinese elms along water courses is a sad testament.

One way to limit or reverse desertification is to plant trees. About 40 years ago, China embarked on a plan to stop the spread of the western deserts which were then increasing at about 10,000 sq km per annum. So far about 70 billion trees have been planted, which puts into perspective the efforts Australia has put into planting. The deserts are now shrinking at around 2500 sq km per year. This is about 50 trees per person in China so our comparative task would be to plant around 1 billion trees. Australia is probably still a net destroyer of trees. As is usual for these schemes, questions are now being raised in China about the type of trees planted as the push to get fast growth may have led to high water demand trees being planted in the wrong areas.

Most Australians are city dwellers so perhaps one might look at city centric reasons to plant more trees. Recent work has shown that the temperature in tree lined streets and avenues in Sydney can be 2-3°C cooler than in adjacent streets bereft of trees. However, a more compelling argument that may resonate with Australians is that the number of trees per suburb is positively correlated with house prices - the higher the tree density the higher the average house price!

On a small scale, people plant trees for aesthetic reasons, for shade, as a refuge for wildlife, for screening and various other idiosyncratic reasons. Plantings based on such a diversity of reasons may be mutually incompatible such as trees planted for aesthetic reasons (to humans) may be of no use to wildlife and may even turn into pest species. If the tree planting is being done for longer terms reasons such as helping to mop up CO₂ then even here there is no necessarily optimum solution. *Eucalyptus grandis* is perhaps the world leader in turning CO₂ into cellulose but, depending on the time frame, it may be better to plant mangroves or even bamboo if locking up CO₂ is a primary objective.

The options open to Australians are, if anything, becoming more complex. It is good to plant trees for shade, wildlife and improving the local environment but given the shift towards longer and more severe dry periods with shorter and more intense storms and rainfall patterns, tree planting is increasingly problematic. More violent storms will turn trees into riskier neighbours just as long dry periods will make them a positive menace when even rainforests can now burn.

For the above reasons, it would be best if individual efforts to plant more trees were assisted with a more general framework of what can and should be achieved at the continent scale level. Since the latter policy looks to be indefinitely postponed, future articles in Streamlines will canvass what options are available to PPCG members in considering what trees to plant where at the local level.

Trees for Our Area (2)

Helen Ogle

Native Frangipani (*Hymenosporum flavum*) is closely related to Diamond leaf pittosporum (*Auranticarpa rhombifolia*) described in the May 2019 issue of Streamlines but not at all related to exotic frangipanis. It is a small tree that occurs in east coast brush forests from the Hunter River, NSW to Papua New Guinea. It is

popular in gardens and street plantings because of its narrow, upright growth habit, the tropical look of its dark green, lustrous leaves and its flowers. Flowering begins in spring and continues to early summer. The tubular, highly fragrant flowers resemble frangipani flowers. They occur in clusters, open cream and age to a deep yellow. They are followed by long, pear-shaped seed capsules. The flowers attract honey-eating birds and butterflies as well as native bees. Native frangipani is hardy and will grow in dry climates given sufficient water. Established plants are frost tolerant. It flowers best in open sunny positions.



Upright growth habit, cream to deep yellow flowers and glossy foliage of *Hymenosporum flavum*, Native frangipani

White cedar (*Melia azedarach*) is native to Indo-Malaya and Australasia and belongs in the same family as mahogany trees. Adult trees generally grow to 7-12 m with rounded crowns and dense canopies of leaves that yellow and fall in winter. The leaves are made up of many leaflets that are darker green above than below and have slightly serrated edges. Flowers are produced in abundant clusters of small fragrant flowers with five lilac-coloured petals. The fruit is light yellow fading to almost white as they hang on the bare branches through winter. White cedars are widely planted for the shade they provide, the spectacle and scent of their flowers in autumn and the colour of their fruit through winter. Birds eat the fruit and disperse the plant. Invasiveness and toxicity may be issues in some areas. The plant grows better in open sunny positions, is hardy to most frosts, can withstand extended dry periods and can grow in a wide range of soils.



Flowers, leaves and fruit on bare branches of White cedar, *Melia azedarach*