



## Geckos Alive!

Geckos are generally considered one of the cuter types of reptile. They don't suffer from the same stigma as do snakes and people are generally happy to have them around their homes. Most residents of SEQ would know the introduced Asian House Gecko, but may not be as familiar with the seven species of native gecko also found in SEQ. Four of these native species more readily occupy the house gecko niche and are arguably being outcompeted by the Asian House Gecko. The article on pages 8-9 discusses this further.

The other three species of native gecko that occur in SEQ are less commonly found around homes. Two of these species, the Stone Gecko (*Diplodactylus vittatus*) and the Barking or Thick-tailed Gecko (*Underwoodisaurus milii*) occur in bushland areas with lots of fallen timber and rocky outcrops. They shelter under rocks, in burrows and in crevices. The Stone Gecko has more climbing ability than the Barking Gecko, but neither gecko will readily occupy homes.

The Stone Gecko (top), Barking Gecko (above left) and the Leaf-tailed Gecko (above right) are three of the seven species of native gecko found in SEQ. Photos by Todd Burrows.

The Barking Gecko is aptly named due to its habit of barking at perceived predators when threatened. It is the only gecko in SEQ that has thin front arms and holds its body off the ground. The individuals pictured here all have regenerated tails which differ in appearance from the original tail.

The impressive Southern Leaf-tailed Gecko (*Saltuarius swaini*) is heavily camouflaged and difficult to spot. It does occasionally live around houses, but only in areas that are immediately adjacent to its habitat of cooler sub-tropical rainforests around the Border Ranges north to Mt Tamborine.

Native geckos are delightful to have around. They help control unwelcome insects such as cockroaches and mosquitos and will benefit from having fallen timber and rocks left on your property.

Article by Todd Burrows

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A few weeks ago I went to hear Bill Gammage talk about his somewhat controversial book, *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines made Australia*. The quote that stuck with me the most was "If we can't look after animals like koalas and kangaroos, how can we call ourselves Australian?"

He was in part referring to Australia's horrid record of having the highest rate of recent mammal extinctions in the world, and in part referring to our seeming lack of contemporary knowledge about how to manage this land for our remaining wildlife. Wildlife, such as koalas and kangaroos, which are only found in Australia.

Bill's take home message for me was that it is surely our responsibility as Australians to look after our country and its animals. I couldn't agree more, and I suspect many readers would also nod their heads.

My view is that non-indigenous Australia is a very young country and we still have a lot to learn. We need to share stories about what has worked and what hasn't. We need to share stories about our land management and our wildlife. If we have access to traditional land management stories, we should listen carefully and share. You can almost guarantee that what you are seeing on your property will be of great interest to someone else.

It is my aim that the SEQ Land for Wildlife program is here to help facilitate this discussion. Land use in SEQ has changed very rapidly since European settlement and it continues to change. Some of these changes are discussed in this newsletter, for example, the landholders who have seen the displacement of native geckos by the introduced gecko and the emergence of new solanum weeds. Many properties are also experiencing changes that are favouring our wildlife, such as the transformation of a property from lantana to rainforest and the involvement of school students in planting koala feed trees.

I think that Land for Wildlife members play a critical role in helping our wildlife and, in turn, are helping define what it means to be an Australian.

Please help us learn more about you and your property by filling in the survey form that will be sent to you in July. This will help us adapt the Land for Wildlife program to better support you to manage your property for our wildlife.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this edition. Feel free to contribute your story about your property to this newsletter anytime. Happy reading!



**Deborah Metters**  
Land for Wildlife  
Regional Coordinator  
SEQ Catchments

Landholder Registrations, Land for Wildlife SEQ - 1/3/2013			
Registered Properties	Working Towards Registration	Total Area Retained	Total Area under Restoration
3005	737	54,600 ha	4,616 ha

Forward all Letters to the Editor, Fauna Vignettes and My Little Corner contributions to:

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# fauna vignettes



## FREE BOOKS

SEQ Catchments is giving away free copies of *Field Guide to the Frogs of Queensland* (released November 2012) RRP \$45 to selected Land for Wildlife members who contribute published articles in 2013. Limit of three free books per newsletter edition. Please send your article and/or photographs to the Editor (details pg. 2)



## It's amazing what you find

While walking on our property the other day, we were excited to come across a couple of what we believe to be 'Pink Nodding Orchids'. We'd noticed the plant previously and thought they were probably baby palm trees until we spotted the beautiful flower on the weekend. We had not seen or even heard of these until we looked them up in the *Mangroves to Mountains* book and were wondering if they are common in our area? It's amazing that after 8 years we are still finding new plants and just goes to show that when you get out there and walk around regularly, you never know what you might discover.

*Reply from Rachel Booth, Land for Wildlife Officer, Logan City Council:*

Yes, it is a Pink Nodding Orchid (*Geodorum densiflorum*) and is uncommon in the Jimboomba area. Native orchids can remain dormant for years until the right conditions (such as the recent rains) when they can put on a beautiful display of flowers that are often fragrant but short lived.

**Matt and Connie Clune**  
**Land for Wildlife members**  
**Jimboomba, Logan**

## The losing battle against invading geckos

It would be good to see a little article to raise the profile of the Australian Gecko. The image here is a photo of one [native Robust Velvet Gecko] that used to appear each summer evening in one of our bedrooms. We fought a (losing) battle against the invading Asian geckos. We checked every box when we brought anything into the house in the hope of keeping the little beasts at bay, but now have at least one chuck-chuck-chuck in residence – and it is too quick for removal so far!

I must admit I have to admire their resilience as our home is not close to neighbours so it must have travelled across bush. Meanwhile the Aussie geckos seem to have retreated to the garage where one sleeps on the inside of an external door. I've learnt to open the door cautiously as one day I pulled it out quickly before the gecko had time to scuttle into hiding. In the second or so it was outlined vividly against the white painted door, and a nearby butcherbird swooped with astonishing speed and would have had dinner if I hadn't got in the way. We seem to have so

few left and I'm keen to safeguard each one as I love their silence and their 'Aboriginal' markings.

The other photo is a shot of a dumpy little bird that I surprised while it was eating fallen pears. Initially I thought it was either deaf or blind (because it let me get up quite close to it before scuttling into the lantana forest), then I realised it was very young, but fending for itself. I'll no doubt regret it when it grows up and invades my vegetable garden, but it [an Australian Brush Turkey] is an endearing little thing and I have to admire its fortitude all alone in a very inhospitable bush.

**Gilda Cowell**  
**Land for Wildlife member**  
**Elimbah, Moreton Bay**

*Editorial response:*

Thanks for your letter. What a nice coincidence that Todd Burrows has written a story on native geckos and the introduced Asian House Gecko on pages 8-9.



# flora profile

## Prickly Delights

Birds love to eat the fruit of Orange Boxthorn (*Pittosporum multiflorum*) and also nest among the sharp spines, which offer protection against potential predators. Basically, this is a great plant for wildlife.

Photo by Deborah Metters.

Some native plants are misunderstood or unappreciated when really we should be marvelling at the important roles they play in our ecosystems. One group of plants that falls into this category is prickly plants. Before you chop out that shrub or vine with the nasty thorns, just take the time to consider the many benefits it may offer.

Prickly species occur naturally in all ecosystem types and we can protect, encourage or even plant them to improve habitat for our local wildlife. In general they provide protection and/or nesting opportunities for a large array of birds, reptiles and small mammals and make an ideal replacement for weeds such as Lantana. They make great edge plants in revegetation, as many are bushy, and help protect the forest within. I'd like to outline a few species that occur in SEQ and look at some of their many values for our wildlife and even our landholders.

### Native Lime (*Citrus australis*) and Finger Lime (*Citrus australasica*)

These two species are ideal for use in the garden and in some cases in revegetation sites. Native Lime usually grows to 4-6 m tall and Finger Lime to 2-4 m. Both can be pruned if necessary. They are attractive shrubs with a dense growth habit making them ideal for edges, screens, windbreaks or hedges. Their bushiness and spines (to 2 cm long) offer great habitat for wildlife and you will often find birds nesting in them.

Limes are also the larval food plants for several beautiful butterflies – Orchard Swallowtail, Dainty Swallowtail, Fuscous Swallowtail and occasionally Chequered Swallowtail. By including limes in your revegetation and gardens you will see a lot more of these butterflies and, as they prefer

the native citrus, it will help reduce damage to your exotic citrus in the orchard.

Traditional landowners ate limes as a rich source of vitamin C. Native Lime fruits are green to yellow and Finger Limes can be green, yellow, red and even black with pink caviar like flesh. It is difficult to find information on wildlife eating native limes. I assume possums may eat them as they enjoy other citrus (let us know if you observe anything eating them). Both species are great for human consumption. The crisp flesh can be sprinkled on salads or made into desserts, drinks, jams and sauces, but my favourite way is to add them to a spicy guacamole dip. The leaves can be used as a substitute for Kaffir Lime.

Flowers of native limes are sweetly perfumed and attract native and exotic bees in profusion. Other insects are also attracted to the flowers, in turn, attracting insectivorous birds.

### Orange Boxthorn (*Pittosporum multiflorum*)

This species has many of the same characteristics as the limes and birds love to nest in them. It is also useful for edges, screens, windbreaks and hedges. It is very compact and attractive - the one I planted in my garden looks like a perfectly topiarised ball. The orange fruits add colour and are edible (although I personally think it is an acquired taste).

Orange Boxthorn and another local prickly plant Black Thorn (*Bursaria spinosa*) are larval food plants for the Bright Copper butterfly. The Bright Copper has a symbiotic relationship with the plants above and the ant *Anonychomyrma nitidiceps*. The butterflies lay eggs on the leaf underside,

and after hatching, are farmed by the ants. At night the larvae are herded up the plants to graze on the leaves (when the ants diligently protect them from predators) and they sleep and pupate in special chambers in the ant nest. The ants benefit by harvesting a sweet substance that is rich in amino acids that is secreted from special glands from the larvae.

### Cockspur Thorn (*Maclura cochinchinensis*)

This species is often despised and labelled a weed due to its sprawling habit and strong curved spines (up to 25 mm long). Cockspur offers fantastic habitat for birds, mammals and reptiles. It can occur as a dense shrub-like plant near the ground or can climb into trees providing thickets in the canopy. It makes a great edge species, helping to shade out weeds and keep out animal pests. If it is a problem (eg. near a path) simply train it upwards by tying it to a tree and it will be out of the way.

The spines were important to traditional owners for removing splinters and the fruits were a food source. In the same family as figs and mulberries, the sweet, orange fruits are sought after by wildlife. Interestingly, they taste of apricots, but are far sweeter.

There are many more prickly native species that are valuable for wildlife other than those listed here. Many prickly weeds such as Lantana also harbour a wide variety of native fauna. Ideally weed species are gradually replaced with a diversity of appropriate native species and hopefully you will include some of our wonderful prickly plants too. No habitat is complete without spines and prickles, so if you have some space in a back corner of your property, why not plant some prickly plants.

Finger Lime fruit (left) and Native Lime fruit (right). Both plants provide habitat for wildlife and food for people.

Photos by Marc Russell.







Larvae of the Dainty Swallowtail butterfly devour the leaves of this Native Lime (*Citrus australis*). Photo by Bob Miller.

#### Other valuable prickly species

**Native Capers / Wild Orange (*Capparis* species).** Native Capers have edible fruits and the flower buds can be pickled as with Mediterranean Capers. They provide prickly habitat in a diversity of ecosystems and are larval hosts for several butterflies.

**Black-fruited Thornbush (*Pittosporum viscidum*)** is bushy and thorny. Ideal for screens and edges.

**Macadamias (*Macadamia tetraphylla* and *M. integrifolia*)** have prickly leaves especially when young and edible nuts. They are larval food plants for several butterflies.

**Bunya Pine (*Araucaria bidwillii*)** has very prickly foliage and edible nuts with cultural values. Great prickly habitat for birds and other organisms.

**Hoop Pine (*Araucaria cunninghamii*)** is prickly when young and often contains bird nests. I once counted four nests in a three metre tall sapling.

**Native Raspberries (*Rubus* species).** There are six native species of raspberry vines or bushes, all with edible fruit.

**Wait-a-while / Lawyer Vine (*Calamus muelleri*)** is a climbing palm with sweet (but scant) edible fruit. Stems can be woven into baskets.

**Cabbage Palms (*Livistona australis* or *L. decora*)** are larval hosts for Yellow Palm Dart and Orange Palm Dart butterflies.

**Mother-in-law Vines (*Caesalpinia scortechinii*, *C. subtropica* and *C. nitens*)** provide great bird, mammal and reptile habitats and offer an excellent replacement for Lantana. Attractive yellow flowers and larval host for the Tailed Emperor butterfly.

**Bush Peas (*Daviesia* and *Podolobium* species)** are nitrogen fixers with attractive flowers and dense growing habit.

**Acacia hubbardiana** and **Prickly Moses (*A. ulicifolia*)** are tough, shrubby nitrogen fixers with attractive flowers.

**Native Currant (*Carissa ovata*)** has small, sweet edible fruits that are eaten by birds. Larval host plant for Common Crow butterfly.

**Chain Fruit (*Alyxia ruscifolia*)** has prickly leaves and small, fragrant flowers related to frangipani.

**Native Hibiscus (*Hibiscus* sp.)** have prickly stems with large attractive flowers. An important fibre source for traditional owners.

**Barb-wire Vine (*Smilax australis*)** provides great habitat and produces fruits that are eaten by birds. Great edge species and larval host for Coral Jewel and Bright Forest-blue butterflies.

**Solanum species.** A wide diversity of prickly shrubs with bird attracting fruits.



Article by Marc Russell  
Land for Wildlife Officer  
Sunshine Coast Council



A larvae of the Caper White butterfly on one of its host plants, Native Caper (*Capparis arborea*). Photo by Bob Miller.



Native Hibiscus species, such as this *Hibiscus splendens*, are both prickly and beautiful. Photo by Marc Russell.



Chain Fruit (*Alyxia ruscifolia*) is a prickly shrub of dry rainforests with fragrant flower and bright orange fruit. Photo by Marc Russell.



All six species of native raspberry in SEQ, including *Rubus probus* shown here, produce edible fruit. Photo by Deborah Metters.



# weed profile

## The thorny problem of managing weedy Solanums

Not too many years ago, Wild Tobacco (*Solanum mauritianum*) was one of the most common of the introduced Solanums in SEQ. Now it seems that a thorny newcomer is becoming just as prevalent or, in some areas, even more so. The Giant Devil's Fig (*Solanum chrysotrichum* syn. *hispidum*) is mostly found growing in forest margins, areas of regrowth, roadsides, degraded pastures and revegetation areas. It is spread by the birds that feed on its fruit – for example the Brown Cuckoo-dove, Satin Bowerbird and Figbird.

The genus name *Solanum* has uncertain derivation, it may come from the Latin word *sol*, meaning sun, or it may come from *solare* or *solamen*, which mean to soothe or comfort, referring to the pharmacological properties of some of the species in the genus. The species name '*chrysotrichum*' means 'golden haired'.

In some rare cases the Giant Devil's Fig can grow so thickly as to out-compete and exclude other species of plants. In this regard it is no different to Wild Tobacco except that Giant Devil's Fig is seriously thorny, which can make bush regeneration or other management activities practically impossible for anyone who doesn't have rhinoceros hide overalls.

It is quite a distinctive plant and not readily confused with any of the locally native Solanums. However it can be confused with the similarly named Devil's Fig (*Solanum torvum*) which is also an environmental weed but not as difficult to manage because it doesn't grow as large.

To tell them apart look for the following features:

Giant Devil's Fig (*Solanum chrysotrichum*) has moderately large to very large leaves (usually 9-35 cm long) with several to numerous (7-13) moderately deep to very deep lobes. Its relatively large white flowers

(30-40 mm across) have relatively large sepals (7-10 mm long). The dense star-shaped (i.e. stellate) hairs on its new growth are reddish in colour.

Devil's Fig (*Solanum torvum*) has moderately large leaves (usually 5-21 cm long) with several (about seven) slight to moderately deep lobes. Its relatively small white flowers (up to 25 mm across) have small sepals (3-4 mm long). The dense star-shaped hairs on its new growth are whitish or yellowish in colour.

Like most plants that we call weeds, both of these plants have some redeeming features. They both produce berries that are popular with many species of frugivorous (fruit-eating) birds and the thorns offer protection for small animals from predation. The berries of Devil's Fig (*Solanum torvum*) are a key ingredient in Thai green curry paste and the plant is used as root stock for grafted eggplants. I wouldn't recommend that you use the berries from wild Devil's Fig unless you are absolutely certain of your identification and the correct method for using them as many plants in the genus *Solanum* contain poisonous compounds such as solanine.

Seedlings can be controlled by hand-pulling, but you'll need very sturdy gloves, or by foliar spot spraying with glyphosate as per off-label permit 11463. Larger plants can be controlled by grubbing out with a mattock or by cut and paint treatment with glyphosate as per off label permit 11463. Always read the herbicide label and permit carefully before use and use the herbicide in accordance with label direction. Other herbicides or techniques may be useful in certain situations. For more information talk to your local Land for Wildlife Officer or consult a council or state government weeds officer.



Devil's Fig (*Solanum torvum*) with its slightly lobed leaves.  
Photo by Deborah Metters.



Giant Devil's Fig (*Solanum chrysotrichum*) with its deeply lobed leaves.  
Photo by Alan Wynn.



Article by Alan Wynn  
Land for Wildlife Officer  
Sunshine Coast Council





Velcro Vine or Silver-leaved Desmodium with surfactant.



Velcro Vine or Silver-leaved Desmodium without surfactant.

# practicalities

## Dishwashing detergent is for washing dishes, not for spraying weeds!

There is a commonly held belief amongst many suburban gardeners and acreage owners that the addition of a few drops of dishwashing detergent into a herbicide spray mixture will result in a better kill of weeds. At recent Brisbane City Council Understanding Herbicides workshops, many Land for Wildlife members confessed to trying this. A quick Google search reveals many websites and gardening chat rooms spruiking this idea. Unfortunately the result could not be further from the truth, and the exact opposite may result.

Dishwashing liquid is a type of surfactant (surface-acting-agent). Certain surfactants are beneficial when added to a herbicide spray mix as they reduce the surface tension on the leaves of sprayed plants. This allows the herbicide to stick to and spread evenly across the leaf surface for maximum absorption. This is very useful for plants with extremely waxy or hairy leaves where the herbicide spray would otherwise bead on

the leaf surface and run off or sit on top of the leaf hairs without contacting the leaf surface. Dishwashing liquids do this well, *however* they also bind with the herbicide's active ingredient, effectively neutralising much of the herbicide's effectiveness. They can also cause equipment failure and create a foamy mess when filling and using spray packs.

Non-ionic surfactants, also called non-ionic wetters, are the correct choice to add to most herbicide mixes, as they do not foam up as much as dishwashing liquids and will not interfere with the herbicide's effectiveness. Non-ionic surfactants are inexpensive and widely available at hardware and produce stores.

Some herbicides already contain a 'built-in' surfactant in the bottle, so there is no need to add any more to the mix. Other herbicides (often dry granular formulations) require the addition of a non-ionic surfactant into

the mix to work correctly. Always check the herbicide product label first before adding a surfactant.

A word of caution for using herbicide sprays with surfactants around waterways and water bodies. Owing to their very nature, surfactants can be toxic to fish and frogs, often far more toxic than the herbicide itself. Registered 'aquatic safe' herbicide formulations are available for these situations. If you are unsure of where and when to use surfactants, please contact your local Land for Wildlife Officer.

### References

Woods N, Cowles G, Crome J, Lambourne R, Simpson P & Webster R (2005) *Agricultural chemical users' manual*. Qld Government Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries. (Available to download for free from Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry website.)

Jordan TN (2001) *Adjuvant Use with Herbicides: Factors to Consider*. Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service.

Canna Lily with surfactant.



Canna Lily without surfactant.



Article and photographs by Scott Sumner  
Land for Wildlife Officer  
Brisbane City Council



# pest profile

## Asian House Gecko: What potential threat does this invader pose to the biodiversity of SEQ?

A pale Asian House Gecko eating a lacewing.  
Photo by Deborah Metters.

The Asian House Gecko (*Hemidactylus frenatus*) is a native of Asia and the Indo-Pacific Region and has undergone a massive human-mediated range expansion over the last century, making it one of the world's most widespread reptiles. It spreads as a stowaway and has been greatly aided by increasing shipping and cargo movement.

The species first became permanently established in Australia in Darwin in the 1960s. The first record for SEQ was in 1983 when it appeared at the Port of Brisbane. It remained fairly localised in inner-Brisbane into the early 1990s gradually spreading along transport corridors. From the mid 1990s it expanded rapidly across much of SEQ into both urban and rural communities. Many residents of SEQ will have had first hand experience witnessing the arrival and establishment of this species into their neighbourhood.

The Asian House Gecko grows to a total length of about 11 cm, its colouration varying from pale pinkish-brown to dark grey, with mottled patterning. Individuals can vary their appearance and are usually dark with pattern by day and pale and patternless at night. This species has a series of small spines along the edge of the tail and lower back (although a regenerated tail will be smooth) and claws on all toes.

Mature adults of both sexes make a distinctive chuck-chuck-chuck call, which is uttered both day and night.

Females lay two eggs every four to six weeks but do not breed during the winter months in SEQ. They are not a fussy eater taking on a large variety of prey from insects and spiders to small lizards of other species and they even successfully prey upon paper wasps and their nests!

Originally a tree dwelling species this gecko now thrives in human habitations and structures. The numerous flat surfaces

of ceilings and walls combined with lights concentrating insects on them has greatly enhanced their natural feeding strategy.

When one considers the potential impact on Australia's biodiversity, in particular our native gecko species, why is it that this invader has not raised more alarm here in Australia? It seems a number of factors have contributed to the Asian House Gecko spreading with little concern, such as:

- a general ignorance that it is an introduced species;
- a mindset that it is 'cute' and 'friendly' and the enjoyment gained from having geckos around the house (especially for children);
- it doesn't harm people or pets (although they can damage air conditioners and other electrical appliances/circuits);
- that eradication from suburban areas is not possible;
- the fact that they decrease the number of insects/spiders around the house (they have been shown to be an effective predator of mosquitoes);
- the fact that native geckos are usually rare, inconspicuous or absent on houses prior to the arrival of the Asian House Gecko and thus displacement of the native species is not seen, and;
- the fact that it is not perceived as a threat to primary industries.

In addition, amongst scientists and naturalists, it is generally considered to be restricted to houses and unlikely to invade natural habitats.

However, scientific research of the Asian House Gecko reveals that within its introduced range including Australia it is increasingly being recorded occupying a wide variety of natural habitats. The extent of invasion into natural habitats in Australia

remains poorly known with little evidence of this yet occurring in SEQ.

In the Northern Territory and North Queensland invasion into natural habitats has been found to generally be patchy and localised, although at a number of sites it was in high densities considerable distances from human habitation. Why this species has not yet been found to invade natural habitats in SEQ is unknown but could be linked to a shorter occupation period, effects of a cooler climate or competition with native geckos.

The Asian House Gecko has been implicated in displacing native gecko species from the house gecko niche in many places within its introduced range. Studies overseas have shown that the primary impact of the Asian House Gecko on other gecko species is exploitative competition for food resources and thus the larger body size of many Australian native geckos may not provide the expected benefits in competitive interactions.

In one Brisbane suburb, the Asian House Gecko was found to be common on houses except those near forest which were occupied by a number of native gecko

A dark, mottled-looking Asian House Gecko. Photo by Todd Burrows.







(Above) The Dubious Dtella (*Gehyra dubia*) is the most likely native gecko to be confused with the introduced Asian House Gecko. Photo by Todd Burrows.

(Left) The native Clouded Velvet Gecko (*Oedura jacovae*). Photo by Angus McNab.

species. This possibly indicates that native species were competitively excluding or predated on the smaller introduced species. Unfortunately later studies within the same suburb found that Asian House Geckos had become abundant on the houses adjacent to forest with the native species now rare. Thus reports from Brisbane of coexistence between native species and the Asian House Gecko may in fact be temporary coexistence after recent arrival of the introduced species.

The likely loss of native geckos from the house gecko niche in SEQ is distressing but of much greater concern is the potential for Asian House Geckos to competitively displace native gecko species within natural habitats as has happened in some overseas populations. Expanding urbanisation in SEQ and the spread of Asian House Geckos into these areas is providing numerous invasion fronts into a wide variety of natural habitats, some of which may prove more suitable for this species than others. In addition, the disturbed edge around human habitation may provide a gradient of environmental conditions which facilitate invasion.

(Left) The native Robust Velvet Gecko (*Oedura robusta*).

(Right) The native Spotted Velvet Gecko (*Oedura tryoni*). Photos by Todd Burrows.

Apart from the direct threat posed to native gecko species, the Asian House Gecko may compound impacts from habitat destruction/fragmentation and other introduced species. Undoubtedly further research is required to determine the likely impacts of the Asian House Gecko in Australia.

In urban areas the Asian House Gecko is here to stay as they will quickly recolonise any house they are removed from. Removing them from homes in more sparsely populated areas may give native gecko species a chance to persist in the house niche and reduce the potential for spread into local bushland. A cautious approach should be taken though to avoid confusing them with native gecko species! In rural/bushland areas where the Asian House Gecko is yet to establish practical measures could be taken in an attempt to limit further spread including checking vehicles and transported materials.

Seven species of native gecko are commonly found in SEQ and of these the Robust Velvet Gecko (*Oedura robusta*), Spotted Velvet Gecko (*Oedura tryoni*),

Clouded Velvet Gecko (*Oedura jacovae*) and Dubious Dtella (*Gehyra dubia*) are most likely to occur in the house niche. The Dubious Dtella is the most likely to be confused with the Asian House Gecko but can be distinguished by its smooth tail and lack of a claw on the inner toe of each foot.

We would love to hear from you if you have seen the Asian House Gecko in the bushland areas on your property or if you have witnessed other impacts of this species on native fauna.

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<http://www.qm.qld.gov.au>



Article by Todd Burrows  
Land for Wildlife Officer  
Gold Coast City Council







Chloe Antony (left) from KSHS and Katinka Herrmann (right) from Engelsburg planting a tree.



Jorin Meyer (left) and Lucas Tietz (right) from Engelsburg planting a tree that may one day be food for Koalas.

# property profile

## International students get their hands dirty planting trees

This article relates to a tree planting at Kenmore State High School (KSHS) that was undertaken by a group of German exchange students from Engelsburg Grammar School in Kassel who were in Brisbane for the annual student exchange. The occasion was to celebrate KSHS's 40th anniversary and the 20th anniversary of the commencement of exchanges between the two schools. Students involved are in the 15-16 year age group and are billeted with the families of students from the other school whilst on the exchange, usually for a period of about six weeks.

The article below was written by one of the students from Engelsburg. The planting is part of long-term efforts by the KSHS community to improve the environment of the school, particularly the natural environment bordering Moggill Creek and McKay Brook. KSHS has been a member of the Land for Wildlife program since 2000. We believe that the students enjoyed the opportunity to contribute to these efforts.

In all, 35 seedlings were planted on the day. They were mainly gumtrees favoured by Koalas such as *Eucalyptus tereticornis*, *E. siderophloia*, *Corymbia henryi*, *E. propinqua* and also a couple of *Casuarina cunninghamiana*. We have been busy in the interim keeping the water up to them so we welcomed the rain in January, although it has done untold damage to our plantings on the banks of Moggill Creek and McKay Brook.

Thanks to support from the Australian Koala Foundation, the students all received one of the AKF's "No Tree, No Me" stickers which I am sure are now well known in the Engelsburg area.

**Article by Bruce Dymock**  
**Environment Sub-committee**  
**KSHS P&C Association**



Dream Phuanitch stands next to the Kenmore State High School Land for Wildlife sign. Dream is a regular student volunteer helping out with the school's revegetation program.

On the 25th of July 2012 we, the German guest students, helped to plant new trees in the school area. 21 Germans, who decided to help a couple of days before, and three Australian students met volunteer Mr Bruce Dymock in the 4th period. At first, teacher Ms Miller told us some very interesting information about nature and the animals living in the creek, close to school. Mr Dymock told us more about each animal. After this short introduction we started planting! Everyone was very excited when Mr Dymock told us what to do. At first we put more than 30 trees in their holes. During this work everyone became dirty but it was all right for us because we all are convinced to make the world better with this project.

The next important thing to do was to get water for the trees. So we all went to the creek and some of us brought mulch to each tree. At last, every tree got a name, so they are called 'Siegfried', 'Matthias' and 'Turnschuh' now. After that we had a little trip through the 'outback' to the creek but we couldn't see any platypus. On the way back we picked up rubbish from the school area. Then we had a last meeting where the teachers took photos and we got our certificates! All in all it was a great afternoon for everyone and I'm sure that everyone is happy to help our environment. Later someone told me that tree planting is very traditional and so we can say: "We have been part of it!"

**Tim Rickfelder**  
**Engelsburg Grammar School**  
**Kassel, Germany**



# my little corner

## Caring for Orphaned Wild Ducks

After having successfully reared and released ten native Australian Wood Ducks I wanted to share my experiences.

The first lot of 6 ducks were brought to me from a landholder who found them in her backyard. The second lot of 4 ducks were found at a small dam in a park and taken to a nearby residence. These birds were probably waiting for their parents to return after being frightened off by dogs. However, I accepted both duck challenges as I have a rescue and rehabilitation permit and wanted to assist with their survival.

I soon realised that there was not enough information for carers in the care of ducklings. Some wildlife websites refuse to put the information out there to deter non-wildlife carers although I believe it is better to help with good information rather than let the ducks die. In some circumstances distance from veterinary clinics or wildlife groups could be a problem for anyone finding orphaned ducklings so here is how I raised these cute fluffy native ducks.

Firstly you need a snake proof cage. Mine was around 2 metres long by half a metre high and covered with small diameter chicken wire with shade cloth over one half. There was no floor so the cage could be moved daily to grassed areas for a short time in the sun and then left in the shade of trees. Place small logs inside the cage for climbing into water bowls.

Next, you need shallow bowls of water with pebbles for stepping stones. The water must be deep enough for the ducklings to dive and stretch their necks to clean the gullet and stones so they can step out of the bowl. Without stones for climbing, the ducks could drown. Water must be from a creek or dam and not from tap water and changed every couple of hours as fouling occurs quickly. Creek or dam water is what they will be use after being released and contains all the little wriggly insects necessary for a food source.

The bowls and depth of water and stones for climbing need to be changed as the ducklings grow. I used plastic shallow serving bowls when they were quite small until they had deep water in a large container with wood blocks for climbing

out. They were also taken down to the dam for a swim around each day. The ducklings would follow me to the dam and back.

Food was chick starter in water. The chick starter needs to be soaked in water until very sloppy as the ducks vacuum it up with their bills. They ate grass and weeds as the cage was moved around.

When first collected, the baby ducklings needed to be kept inside the house for warmth. The ducks were placed in a cane basket with a lid and the basket wrapped in blankets with enough space for air. The base of the basket was filled with hay or straw and a cloth mop head was placed inside. The ducklings hid under the mop to keep warm. At other times I used a feather duster which also works very well and mimics the mother's wings. Warmth after a couple of weeks was provided by the cane basket that was turned on its side and the lid tied half open. The basket was filled with grass or hay and changed daily. The basket was placed inside the cage.

The whole process of raising new born ducklings takes around 3-4 months. They grow very quickly and are ready for release when all the pin feathers have grown out. We took the ducklings to the release site a month before release. The ducks were let out each day and would fly around and return home for the night. One batch of ducks was taken to a large dam occupied by several species of wild ducks and they flew there during the day until eventually they didn't return at night.

It is a process for the dedicated as the water needs changing regularly and sometimes hourly as they continue to grow. If you have no access to dam or creek water, it is advisable to contact a wildlife group or vet for assistance.

The next group of six ducks were kept longer and released themselves at the same dam. They roosted in the trees near the house and flew away during the day and returned at night.

**Article and photographs by  
Robyn McIntosh  
Land for Wildlife member  
Coominya, Somerset**



The journey for ten lucky wood ducks from small, dependent, orphaned chicks to wild, healthy adults.





# property profile



## The transformation of a creek by 'ordinary suburban folk'

When Peter and Carolyn Burford (pictured above) bought their two hectare Tallebudgera Valley property 12 years ago, they weren't too sure what they were getting themselves into. They knew they had a creek hidden among the weeds - they could hear it after all. But the thought of actually seeing it was tantalising. Firstly though, they would have to fight their way through all that lantana.

Initially despairing, thinking that 'ordinary suburban folk couldn't handle it', they joined Land for Wildlife to gain advice on how to

restore their property from a weed infested, degraded banana farm, to the original rainforest. With the support and inspiration gained through their 11-year involvement in Land for Wildlife, and with a lot of their own blood, sweat and tears, Peter and Carolyn have restored not only the magnificent creek that once lay hidden but also an extra hectare back to subtropical rainforest.

While amazed and thrilled with the fruits of their labour, the fact that they had another hectare of lantana and molasses grass to go had them concerned. They were beginning

to wonder whether they would get through it. In 2012 the City of Gold Coast launched its Nature Conservation Assistance Program (NCAP). The program supports private landholders, like the Burfords, to restore bushland on their own property and in turn, contribute to the city's biodiversity and wildlife habitat.

The Burfords were successful in obtaining NCAP funding to restore the section of their property that remained degraded. Factors such as the property's position in a major wildlife corridor and its connectivity to large tracts of intact vegetation deemed it as one of high conservation value. The property also provides habitat to rare and threatened species and is significant in having a vegetation type mapped as 'of concern' by State Government. The Burfords are committed to restoring native habitat and work hard to ensure weeds don't re-establish.

The Burfords have used bushland restoration contractors to carry out initial lantana control, and over the coming years, will provide follow-up weed control to discourage weed regrowth and encourage natural regeneration. Because their property is so well connected to existing bushland, they do not need to plant and instead, will rely on the native seed bank to revegetate their property.

The Burfords are delighted to see the light at the end of the tunnel. They enjoy a thriving subtropical rainforest as their own backyard and the knowledge that their efforts are contributing to the conservation of the Gold Coast region gives them great satisfaction.

**Before lantana control (above left) and after control (left) at one section of the Burford's NCAP project site.**  
Photos by Peter and Carolyn Burford.



**Article by Lexie Webster  
Land for Wildlife Officer  
Gold Coast City Council**



# book reviews

## Planting for Wildlife

By Nicola Munro and David Lindenmayer

I really like these books that are authored or co-authored by David Lindenmayer. We have reviewed his other books *Wildlife on Farms* and *What Makes a Good Farm for Wildlife?* in past newsletters, May 2008 and May 2011 respectively.

*Planting for Wildlife* again ticks all the boxes in delivering a concise and generously illustrated summary of years of research into planting trees on farms.

The authors have visited many sites across south-eastern Australia looking at what works and what doesn't. Although the focus of the book is on the woodlands of south-east Australia, the principles about why, how and where to plant are just as applicable to south-east Queensland.

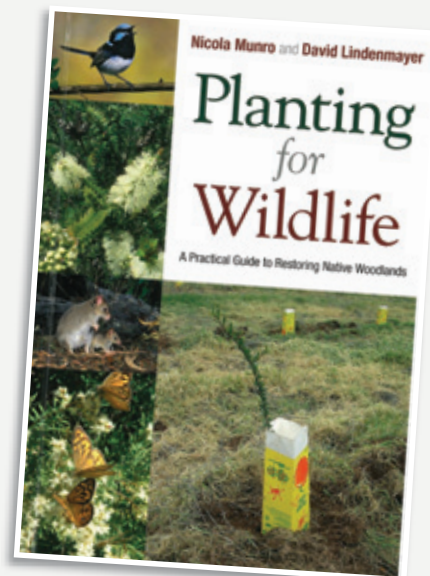
Why revegetate? A good question and is answered in this book with compelling facts about our wildlife and how they

depend on forests and woodlands.

This book answers more questions such as: where to revegetate; how big should a planting site be; what species should be planted; how many plants; how should the site be prepared; and, what to do to encourage more wildlife once the trees have become established?

This book can be used as a simple checklist of things to consider when planting and can hopefully help with the decision making process. I enjoyed reading about new facts such as how long it takes for leaf litter to form and for mistletoe to colonise.

I highly recommend this book for anyone who is planning on revegetating their property, or is trying to inspire someone else to do so.



Published by CSIRO Publishing, 2011  
Paperback, colour photos, 320 pages.  
ISBN: 9780643103122  
Price: \$39.95  
Available from CSIRO Publishing  
and all good bookshops.

## The Torrent: Toowoomba and the Lockyer Valley, January 2011

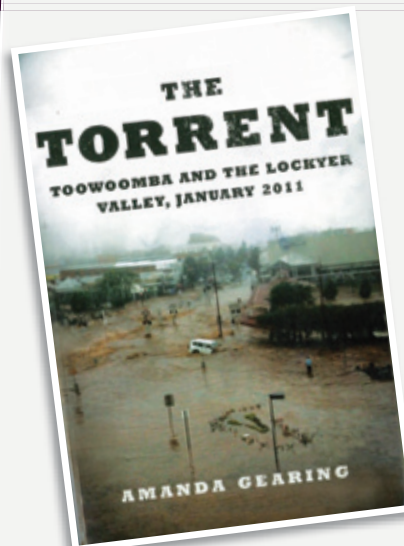
By Amanda Gearing

This face-paced, compelling read recounts the natural disaster that hit the western parts of SEQ in January 2011 in which 24 people lost their lives and hundreds more had their lives turned upside-down.

The numerous interwoven stories are eye-witness accounts of people who saw this disaster unfold from their homes. Some survival stories are hard to comprehend and a testament to the human spirit and capacity to help others in need.

This book takes the reader on a very personal journey into the lives of those affected by this disaster and is therefore both a gripping story and a heart-breaking tragedy.

I debated the relevance of this book to this newsletter, but I felt obliged to respect the Land for Wildlife members who were affected by this disaster, some of whom appear in the pages of this book.



Published by University of Queensland Press, 2012.  
Paperback, 255 pages.  
ISBN: 9780702249204  
Price: \$27.95  
Available from UQP and online bookshops.

Book Reviews by Deborah Metters

# letter to the editor

## There is no such thing as a good weed

Talk of 'good' weeds seems to have become trendy since Peter Andrew's passionate affair with weeds got such good publicity. Peter's idea to revegetate creeks in the Hunter Region was good, but doing so by planting declared weeds such as willows, when there were so many suitable native plants available, was disappointing.

On the weekend, I went for a walk in a section of a Nature Refuge which had never been logged or cleared because it was too steep. I was never far from a lantana thicket or Camphor Laurel tree. Birds drop the seed in the rainforest and when a tree dies from old age or a lightning strike, a gap appears in the canopy and the weeds take off, out competing native plants and threatening the resilience of the forest. Weeds that are allowed to grow and produce fruit that is

eaten by native birds will have their weed seeds distributed far and wide. Removing weeds which feed rare native birds should be done carefully, providing alternative food resources for the birds.

Information about suitable plants is readily available (eg. the Weeds CRC have a tool for selecting native plants to replace weeds). A campaign similar to the one aimed at saving the Richmond Birdwing butterfly should be followed; remove the *Aristolochia elegans* (Dutchman's Pipe weed) and plant the Richmond Birdwing Vine (*Pararistolochia praevensosa*).

It is wrong to assume that native plants growing under a canopy of weeds will eventually replace these weeds. Articles such as *The potential value of weedy*

*regrowth for rainforest restoration* by Kanowski et. al. in *Ecological Management and Restoration*, Vol. 9 Issue 2 (2008), compare ways of taking advantage of native plants growing under Camphor Laurel trees by either patch or staged removal of the camphors. Clearing and replanting is generally too expensive and unsuitable for some sites.

There is no such thing as a good weed. How weeds are replaced depends on many factors specific to each site but they should be replaced with a diversity of native plants suitable to the site.

**John Marnane**  
**Land for Wildlife member**  
**Braehead Nature Refuge**  
**Sunshine Coast**

## Please help our Glossies on the 19th May

**Set aside Sunday the 19th May 2013 to survey your block for Glossy Black Cockatoos!**

The Glossy Black Cockatoo Conservancy wants volunteers and landowners to survey South East Queensland and Northern NSW for one day to gather data about these iconic birds. Even data that shows where they aren't is valuable. So survey your block or your neighbour's or a nearby forest or National Park. Survey for as long as you can on the day and collect data for the Conservancy.

Every Local Government area will have a coordinator to advise on locations, provide recording sheets and to train people.

These surveys are annual events. One was conducted last October and 81 birds were

recorded in SEQ and Northern NSW, down a bit from the 100 recorded in 2011.

Check out the web page [www.glossyblack.org.au](http://www.glossyblack.org.au) for survey details and contacts. Register your interest.

The webpage also contains a map of Glossy Black Cockatoo sightings from the community and past surveys. If you don't have internet access, contact your Land for Wildlife Officer for more information.

The Glossies need your help! They are listed as a threatened species and face many pressures. Please register with your local coordinator as soon as you can.

**Keith McCosh**  
**Scenic Rim Regional Council**



**Glossy Black Cockatoos are fussy eaters only eating she-oak (*Casuarina* and *Allocasuarina*) seeds. Photo by Guy Castley**

## Capturing the outdoors on film

Nature has wonderful things to share with us. As a newcomer to this land, I am always amazed by my encounters with curious looking creatures that I have only ever previously seen through a David Attenborough documentary. Those of us more skilled behind a lens can capture these moments, freeze them in time and share the experience with others

With such beautiful natural environments around us in SEQ, there is a strong relationship with our natural environment, regardless of our age or ability.

The 2012 *Visioning the Outdoors Short Film Festival* last year brought a great calibre of films to the table, from 'slack-lining', a new sport similar to tight roping, to canoeing along our precious waterways. This year SEQ Catchments is once again sponsoring the *Visioning the Outdoors Short Film Competition* and we are hoping that there will be more entries from the SEQ region about our natural environment and its meaning to you.

So spread the word. If you enjoy close encounters with nature through outdoor

activities, whatever your ability, pull out the camera and get rolling! Parallel to this competition is the *It's Better Outdoors Photo Competition* that encourages photographers to capture images of recreation activities from the outdoors. Closing dates are 21 June 2013 for the Short Film Competition and 8 October 2013 for the Photo Competition. For more information visit [www.visioningtheoutdoors.com](http://www.visioningtheoutdoors.com)

**Article by Sibel Korhaliller**  
**SEQ Catchments**





A common sight on Land for Wildlife properties: a big pile of dead lantana.

# letter to the editor

## Is there such a thing as a good weed?

Both Spencer Shaw in the October 2012 newsletter and Peter Darvall in January 2013 have suggested that non-native species are sometimes valuable and should not automatically be eradicated.

I wish to suggest three criteria to apply when deciding whether to destroy a plant or encourage it. As Spencer and Peter remark, origin of the plant (indigenous, Australian or exotic) by itself is inadequate.

The first test is, what is the intended land use? In all parts of Queensland the landscape is now fragmented. We cannot assume that pure native bushland everywhere is the ideal. A mosaic usually supports a wider range of species than a single vegetation formation. Most Land for Wildlife properties carry a mosaic: on our family's acreage, about half is orchard and pasture - only half is regenerating rainforest.

Planning a property then laying out fences to segregate land uses are complex tasks and I urge any Land for Wildlife members seeking to do so for the first time, to fire up a barbecue and invite some experienced

landholders and your Land for Wildlife Officer to brainstorm the design.

The second criterion is the current distribution of the plant. Cobbler's Pegs and Wild Tobacco are ubiquitous throughout South East Queensland and rarely need to be controlled for the purpose of preventing spread. But for any plant which has not reached the limit of its expansion, prevention is the most prudent strategy. Broad-leaf Privet is gearing up for a dramatic expansion in SEQ and wherever eradication is practicable, I would eradicate.

The third criterion is the aggressiveness of the plant. Most exotic herbs fade away rapidly under shade. But others like Cat's Claw Creeper are an emerging catastrophe as they can smother even mature trees.

To apply these criteria combined, landholders are obliged to become knowledgeable about the identity and ecology of each plant being reviewed. For example, our property supports a native *Eragrostis* grass and an exotic *Eragrostis*, a rapidly spreading denizen of roadsides that

looks similar but is a menace. I pounce on every single plant of the latter that shows its head. Soil preferences, sensitivity to competition, palatability to cattle and so on must each be understood if the plant's potential to spread or to disrupt the chosen land use is to be evaluated.

The statutory list of regulated noxious weeds is not particularly useful for this purpose. It is conservative (because the State does not wish to expend funds on more weeds than the minimum), so many undesirable plants that ought to concern the Land for Wildlife members don't appear. The converse is less valid: any plant that appears on the statutory list should be regarded as a potentially serious weed.

I am wary of applying the usefulness of a particular weed for particular species of wildlife – as a fourth criterion – because of ecological complexity. Yes, Wild Tobacco is good for brown doves, but what other species are being poisoned by its exudates; and how many brown doves can the locality support without elbowing out other more vulnerable species?

No article on this subject can be complete without asking if lantana is a useful plant or an intolerable pest. It can be both, and both on the one property.

May this newsletter long serve as a forum for sharing knowledge and insights on these issues.

**Geof Edwards**  
**Land for Wildlife member**  
**'Fisher / Edwards Property'**  
**Mt Mee, D'Aguilar Range**

**Mosaics tend to be richer in wildlife than pure native vegetation because of edge effects and their suitability for the species of open grasslands or wetlands.**

GIS image of Mt Mee region courtesy of SEQ Catchments.





Australasian Pipit at Oxley Common

## We want to hear from you!

### The Land for Wildlife membership survey July 2013

I am one of those strange people who like surveys. I actually look forward to getting home to my waiting Census form. I may regret admitting this in writing, but I do like the idea that someone is listening to what I do, how I live and that the results help us all to track social norms and expectations.

The Land for Wildlife program has been operating in South East Queensland for nearly 15 years and although this may sound like a relatively short time compared to the Census there have been many changes in that time. For example, when the program first started we had no website, our newsletters were in black and white and there were only a couple of Land for Wildlife Officers.

Now we have nearly 4000 properties across SEQ that display Land for Wildlife signs, equating to an estimated 8000 Land for Wildlife members. There are now 31 people employed by 11 different agencies to deliver the SEQ Land for Wildlife program. And it continues to grow by about 200 properties per year.

So, it makes sense that we want your feedback. What about the program do you like? What do you think could be improved? It is also great for us to know about the work you have done on your property to help the environment and wildlife. This information helps us sell the program to our funders to make sure that we can deliver services that are relevant to you and your property.

It has been a while since we last asked you all these questions (2005 was the last SEQ-wide survey) so please help us out when you receive the survey in July. There will be some fabulous prizes to win and we encourage all members to complete the survey online via a survey website. Instructions will be provided on how to do this.

You will also have the opportunity to fill in the survey by pen and paper, if you wish.

To help us, please let your local Land for Wildlife Officer know your up-to-date email address, so we can send you a link to the survey website. A local Brisbane business called Eberhard Consulting has been contracted to help us create and analyse the survey. All your personal and property details will remain secure and confidential in accordance with the *Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld)* and you can still enter the draw for a prize and complete your survey anonymously.

Thanks for helping us deliver a better program.

**Deborah Metters**  
SEQ Catchments

**Logan Eco Action Festival**  
**Sunday 2 June 2013**  
 10 am - 3 pm  
 Griffith University, Logan Campus,  
 University Dr, Meadowbrook

Free event!

Wildlife displays  
 Kids activities  
 Exhibitors  
 Organic food  
 Give-aways  
 Workshops  
 Live music and entertainment

For further information contact  
 Ph: 1300 1 LOGAN or 07 3412 3412  
 email: council@logan.qld.gov.au web: www.logan.qld.gov.au

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