

Wildlife Watch

When I opened the pot-belly stove this winter for the first warming fire of the season I was horrified and intrigued to find two mummified little bats in there. Mouse-size, these little microbats (as they are called, to distinguish them from the much larger fruit bats) must have crawled down the chimney looking for a nice hollow or cave, but were unable to crawl back up around the stove's top-plate to make their exit. It was sad but reminded me of just how many microbats there must be sleeping away in crevices and hollows in the forest all around us.



There were, at last count, some 45 species of microbats that have been recorded in our local forests. Highly specialized insect hunters, some species work the tree-tops. Their "radar" is tuned to pick up large beetles that feed on the eucalypts, and once locked-on the bats fly straight at them in a head-on collision. Their huge rubbery lips act as shock absorbers as the beetles are caught with a bang! Other bats hunt in the dense forest understorey and have a radar signal to match, at a frequency tuned to reduced excessive "noise" in the signal that bounces back to them as they hunt for bugs and other food. Yet others, hunt in more open forest and they too have a signature radar signal, suited to their habit. Who would have thought that there was such an abundance of these cute little critters in every little nook and cranny?

Dominic Hyde

Bushfire

Is your property under threat from your garden?

Spring and Summer usually remind us of our vulnerable position on the mountains in relation to bushfire. Many of us are completely surrounded by vegetation which puts us in immediate danger.

The ideal is to keep our gardens well away from the house and also to plant appropriately. Some knowledge of plant characteristics will assist us in our choice and these are listed below

Fire Resistant:

Does not mean that they won't burn, but that they have the ability to regrow after a fire.

e.g. Eucalypts (Good for them but not for us.)

Fire Retardant: These plants won't catch fire easily and can actually prevent sparks reaching your house. Generally, most rainforest species come into this category.

Highly flammable: These have a high oil content in the leaves which is indicated by a strong odour from the foliage, particularly when crushed, so they are best avoided completely.

REMEMBER: Fire occurs in hot, dry conditions when plants are also dropping more leaves. This results in an increased build up of litter on the ground and in gutters, which will promote the spread of fire.

At best, because of our environment, we can only protect ourselves from small fires, not raging wildfires.

Wendy Lees

Mountain Festival, 5 September

MEPA: - "Free a Tree"
- Friendly advice and information.

Greening Australia:
- Local plants for sale
- Information sheets

Land for Wildlife

Recently I was contacted by Moreton Bay Regional Council's "Land for Wildlife" Officer Ed Surman, as part of his efforts to keep in contact with the widely dispersed 'flock' of people who have registered their land. Two weeks later he visited with a really useful folio of information, including a recent aerial photo and lists of the local plant and wildlife species recorded within two kilometres. We spent several hours walking around naming plants and talking about bush regeneration.

Land for Wildlife is a voluntary program of habitat and wildlife conservation on private and community-owned land. Each landholder is offered information and advice in order to assist with management of plant communities such as grasslands, wetlands, forest patches and vine thickets — with the aim of retaining good habitat and preventing weed invasion, or aiding in the restoration of remnant vegetation. Since joining the program in 2006, I've benefited from several visits to fellow members' places for a walk around, good discussions, weed and plant and wildlife spotting, and always a great morning tea.

One memorable visit was to Chatswood Hills State School, a eucalypt-dominated habitat that supports koalas. The grounds are enthusiastically cared for by the students, many of whom work with plants in the nursery, make compost, build paths, and more.

This year, 2010, is declared the International Year of Biodiversity by the United Nations. It's also Land for Wildlife's twelfth year in Queensland. Though the program started in Victoria in 1981, it came to SEQ in 1998 with the registration of 184 different landholders that year. Today around 2,700 properties are included, representing a total of over 48,000 hectares of conserved habitat. In several cases species thought to have disappeared from the region have been found thriving in Land for Wildlife habitats: one example is the Yellow-spotted bell frog species (*Litoria castanea*). It was thought extinct for the last 30 years, but found living on private property in the New South Wales Southern Tablelands!

The LfW program promotes action such as use of local plants, restoration of connections between habitat patches, reduction of mowing and slashing to permit seedlings to grow and form a future canopy, and gradual, mindful, removal of weeds.

Other related programs, with increasing levels of commitment and activity, involve establishing a 'Voluntary Conservation Agreement', a 'Voluntary Conservation Covenant' or a 'Nature Refuge'.

Consider joining this fun and helpful network: it's voluntary, and it's up to you how you participate.

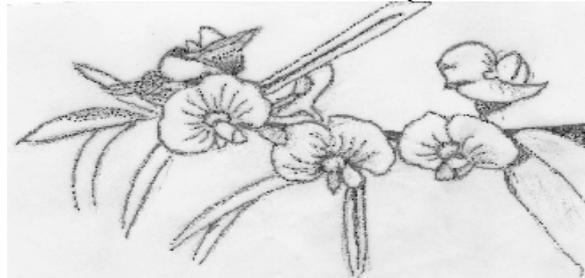
For more information, contact Moreton Bay Regional Council Land for Wildlife officers:
Ed Surman 3283-0289 and
Amanda Sargeant 3283-0291.

Sarah Lowe

Natives - Flowering now

Hardenbergia violacea (Native Sarsaparilla)
Twining plant with purple pea flowers in racemes. Flowers in spring and can continue for 6 months.

Hovea acutifolia (Purple Pea Bush)
Narrow, open shrub (2m). Clusters of purple pea flowers in spring, followed by seed pods. Tolerates semi-shade but flowers better in open situations.



Pandorea pandorana (Wonga Vine)
A strong climber with rope-like stems. Some plants are deciduous, producing leaves and flowers in spring. New leaves are an attractive lime green, and flowers can be from cream to red.

Do your block!

Free bushcare service

Would you like some assistance managing bushland on your block? Advice on weeds or advice on planting local native plants in your garden?

MEPA has a free service offering advice and information (supported by MBRC)

Contact Maggie - 3289 8175 or
Dominic - 3289 0029 or
Email: askmepa@yahoo.com.au