

FENCELINES:

EUNGELLA AG-NRM UPDATE



Vol 3 SUMMER 2021

Build-up Season

As we shift into the build-up to the Wet, it's a good time to make sure you have any erosion risk spots covered—and to take five from the warmth and have a read of this new edition of Fencelines. This newsletter was developed from the Landholders Driving Change Eungella Cluster Group project, run by NQ Dry Tropics and Pioneer Catchment Landcare, prompted by the 2018 Eungella-Clarke Range bushfire disaster to help build climate shift resilience and capabilities. Feedback, contributions and ideas are welcomed at communications@pioneercatchment.org.au. Past editions and information can be found at pioneercatchment.org.au/what-we-do/current-projects.

Birdy Biodiversity at Eungella State School

Birdlife Mackay's Eungella Bird Week was held once again in September, including a special native species planting event at Eungella State School.

Along with members of Birdlife Mackay, Pioneer Catchment Landcare Project Support Officer Hannah Murphy was on hand to assist Eungella State School students with the planting and took the opportunity to speak to the students about the importance of growing native plants as a food source and habitat for our native wildlife.

"It was a pleasure to be involved in the planting day at Eungella State School, with such an inquisitive bunch of students who are learning valuable knowledge about their beautiful environment up in Eungella," said Hannah. "Birdlife Mackay did an amazing job organising the event and I was more than happy to assist on the day!"

Plant species were carefully selected by Birdlife Mackay Member, PCL Volunteer and native plant enthusiast Jenny White to represent the local regional ecosystem with an emphasis on wildlife attracting species. All were native to the Eungella area, including Eungella Mint Bush (*Prostanthera eungella*), Native Coleus (*Coleus eungellaensis*), and Eungella Bottlebrush (*Melaleuca paludicola*). Plants were donated by Mackay Regional Council through Pioneer Catchment Landcare's *Free Support for Local Schools* program and propagated at Mackay Natural Environment Centre nursery and Native Plants Queensland (Mackay).

🌀 **See Page 4 for Birdlife Mackay's wrap on the 5th annual Eungella Bird Week!**

BELOW LEFT: Participants in the Birdlife Mackay Eungella Bird Week planting event at Eungella State School. Centre: Tubestock heading for planting by the students. RIGHT: Birdlife Mackay members work with Eungella Students



ABOVE: PCL Support Project Officer Hannah Murphy works with students of Eungella SS. Photos: Jenny White/Shiller Images



Exploring Soil and Pasture Health Initiatives in Eungella

Multi Species Planter Field Day

Wednesday, October 20, 2021

by

Clara Friswell, Graduate Project Officer Reef Catchments

Peter Arthofer, Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator - Burdekin Dry Tropics Region

Rodger Walker, Landholders Driving Change Project, NQ Dry Tropics

Central and North Queensland NRM staff (Including Rodger Walker, Clara Friswell, and Peter Arthofer) have noticed a recent upswing in interest around the topic of soil health. This has led to landholders and farmers around the district trialling new approaches to boost soil health. These practices include high intensity grazing, landscape rehydration, biodynamic farming and multi species cover crops. Luckily, we have people like Simon Mattsson in the district who have a wealth of expertise in the field of multi species cover crops, to lend a hand.

Emphasising this interest, twenty-five participants, comprising landholders, industry and NRM personnel, attended the Eungella multi-species planting and soil health field walk on Wednesday, October 20, at Paul and Linda Oates' Kiama farm, in the Dalrymple Heights area.

Simon Mattsson, from Central Queensland Soil Health Systems (CQSHS), led the morning off in the shed with an information session on multi-species cover crops and their positive influence on soil health via soil carbon, crop biomass, soil food webs, nutrient availability and perennial plant diversity.



CQSHS Member Simon Mattsson presents the planter to field day attendees

Picture: Clara Friswell

We then headed out into the paddock to discuss the field trials that are currently underway on this and two other local farms which aims to determine the most successful plant pasture species mix to improve soil health in the Eungella region.

Simon gave an overview and demonstration of the CQSHS planter, which is designed to sow multiple seeds to achieve a diverse cover crop.

This was followed by a discussion on seed species selection, planting methods, pre-planting preparation, post-planting management and monitoring.

Gerard Dogao from PGG Wrightson Seeds also joined the Field Day to deliver expert local knowledge on sensitive and tolerant plant species and seed selection advice.

The group then left Simon to sow the trial paddock, while we ventured back into the shed to hear about Paul and Linda Oates' on-farm soil and pasture health initiatives.

Paul treated us to numerous affordable ideas to improve productivity and even provided us with compost tea recipes, tips, and tricks, produced with a little know-how, a few ingredients, and produced in his own shed.

Continues



A selection of Paul Oates' pasture fertilising brews, including humate, hydrosylate, worm juice and fish amino acids, for improving soil health and pasture growth.

Picture: Clara Friswell



Paul Oates demonstrates improvements to soil and pasture achieved over the past two and a half years.

Picture: Rodger Walker

The talk was accompanied by a field walk and farm tour that show-cased and demonstrated their positive use on pastures during the Oates' two and a half years of Kiama ownership.

The organisers of the day noticed there was quite a high level of capacity regarding soil health already among the group. Evidence that the group were engaged and already on the path to learning about soil health was highlighted at the point where the host Paul showed the group how he uses a brix sugar refractometer to assess the vigour of the pasture. Most people were familiar with it, but one participant couldn't see the reading, and said "If all these people weren't here, I'd accuse you of bullshitting me!"

Feedback from attendees on the most valuable take-aways from the event included:

- "The knowledge and one-on-one experiences Paul passed on" ◦ "Information about soil nutrient catalysts and the way they work" ◦ "Cost effect [sic] sprays" ◦ "Networking with like-minded people who have shown different ways of doing things" ◦ "The importance of multi diversity of plants" ◦ "Soil treatment options" ◦ "Learning cost-effective ways to improve your country" ◦ "How different species are vital to ground structure" ◦

A big thankyou to the host landholder Paul Oates who was particularly proficient at sharing his knowledge and on-farm experiences with the group. Thank-you also to Simon Mattsson for sharing your insight and practical experiences on multi species plantings. During the event Kiama's caretaker managers Kellie and Jesse Tydd gave us an overview of their local rural weed control business Altitude Spraying. They specialise in controlling all noxious woody weeds and grasses prominent in the Mackay region on rural property and lifestyle blocks. Email altitudespraying@outlook.com. Thanks to Kellie and Jessie for donating your time to assisting with running the field day site.

This event was hosted by the NQ Dry Tropics' Burdekin Regional Landcare Facilitator, funded through the Australian Government's National Landcare Program, with support from Reef Catchments Regional Landcare Facilitator program, and the Landholders Driving Change project.

- 🌀 Further information on the CQSHS seeder, CQSHS and soil health can be found via www.cqshs.farm/
- 🌀 Case study handed out at the field day by Reef Catchments, on multispecies cover crop trials can be found at:
 - reefcatchments.com.au/resources/seaforth-multispecies-trial-case-study/
 - reefcatchments.com.au/resources/brightly-multispecies-case-study/
- 🌀 The RASH kit manual (Rapid Assessment of Soil Health) can be found via ldc.nqdrytropics.com.au/rash/
- 🌀 The legume dominated seed mixes sown across the trial site included 1. Lucerne - SF Force 5 @4 kg/h; 2. Centro - Cardillo @2kg/h; 3. Cowpea - Ebony @15kg/h; 4. Serradella - Margurita @5 kg/h; 5. Desmodium - Greenleaf @1kg/h; 6. Chicory - Puna 11 @2kg/h; 7. Digit Grass - Premier @2kg/h; 8. Sunflower - Ausigold 62 @1kg/h.



Eungella Bird Week

By Ian Cruickshank, Activities Organiser
Birdlife Mackay

Eungella Bird Week was held for the fifth time from September 13-17, albeit with numbers reduced by Covid restrictions.

Birdlife Mackay organised a program of citizen science surveys, informal birding, and social events that attracted bird lovers from Brisbane and Townsville, as well as the locals from the Whitsundays and Mackay, raising awareness of the unique qualities and value of endemic Eungella birds.



Eungella Honeyeater

Image: Barry Deacon

With the support of Mackay Regional Council, Eungella Bird Week 2021 was advertised Australia-wide, but restrictions imposed by Covid 19 meant some who wanted to come from interstate were disappointed. In all, 30 keen birdwatchers enjoyed the week.

The participants gathered reliable scientific data with bird surveys at specified sites each day.

Additional bird and wildlife observation outings were held at a variety of locations in the Eungella District, with a total of 132 different bird species recorded, along with platypus, wallabies and reptiles. The data gathered add a bit more to what little we know about the population, distribution and habits of the Eungella Honeyeater.

As part of the week, Eungella State School held an art competition, judged by Eungella Bird Week participants. A very enjoyable and important morning was spent by the participants helping the students plant trees in the school grounds, with plants provided by the Mackay Natural Environment Centre and the Mackay branch of Native Plants Queensland, and help with planting from Pioneer Catchment Landcare. Having the students and the community engage with their local birds is one of the major aims of Bird Week.

Participants and volunteers stayed in a range of accommodation for the week, at commercial accommodation in the Eungella Chalet, at the Broken River Resort, in cabins and in houses, or camped on the town oval which was hired for the event. Lunches and dinners were included as part of the program.

Highlights of Eungella Bird Week included the barbecue put on by Birdlife Mackay, and the Farewell Dinner held by the Eungella Community Development Association. The guest speaker for the Farewell Dinner, Graham Armstrong, Chairperson of Whitsunday Catchment Landcare, spoke of the importance of Eungella and the Clarke Ranges Region for biodiversity, and the overlap of species from the south, north and west in this special place. This is a key message he takes to landholders in the district.

Based on the feedback after the week, all those who took part had a greatly enjoyable time, with Eungella Bird Week striking the right "balance between citizen science, social birdwatching and socialising."

Stay up to date with Birdlife Mackay by following them on [Facebook](#), or visit www.birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlife-mackay



ABOVE: Bird Week Survey team at Crediton

RIGHT: Gerygone Survey team visiting Diggings Road

Images: Jenny White/Shiller Images





Regent Bowerbird Male
©Shiller Images: Jennifer White



Noisy Miner
©Shiller Images: Jennifer White



Blue-winged Kookaburra
©Shiller Images: Jennifer White



Southern Ocellated Velvet Gecko
(*Oedura tryoni*)
©Shiller Images: Jennifer White



Scarlet Honeyeater
©Shiller Images: Jennifer White



Pink-tongue Skink,
(*Cyclodomorphus gerrardii*)
©Shiller Images: Jennifer White



Golden-crowned Snake, (*Cacophis squamulosus*)
©Shiller Images: Jennifer White

NQ Dry Tropics Landholders Driving Change Update

Compiled by Rodger Walker, Land Management Support Coordinator, Bowen Office

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Greetings Eungella landholders,

Feeling the heat of summer Eungella landholders? I know I am as we reach that 'sunscreen and sweat' time of year.

As always, I've enjoyed the visits to the Eungella area to hear from landholders on what's happening on farms, and the trends and changes they are observing.

While my commitment to the Eungella area has been reduced for now, NQ Dry Tropics is still committed to supporting events in the region as part of its wider Bowen, Broken and Bogie (BBB) community engagement.

For further information and stories about what's happening on the LDC project please read the upcoming Grit December newsletter via ldc.nqdrytropics.com.au/the-grit/ or visit the LDC website: ldc.nqdrytropics.com.au/

Eungella multi-species planting and soil health field walk

I was amazed at the passion, creativity, ideas and biological knowledge on display at the multi-species planting and soil health field walk back in October on Paul and Linda Oates farm "Kiama" (refer main article). With machinery part delivery holding us back from an early September event, then enduring a last minute cancellation in early October, it was touch and go whether the event could even occur given the weather systems expected leading in. Luckily, Eungella had a mini drought to start October and hence the seeding could occur. Big thankyou to the seeding demonstration host landholders (Di Williams, Paula and Dale Fortescue, Paul and Linda Oates) for their patience here. With some technical support the Landholders are now monitoring the emergent seedlings of the trials and we look forward to hopefully good establishment levels by the end of the wet.



Gerard Dogao from PGG Wrightson Seeds speaks to the 25 participants at the Eungella Multispecies Planter Field Day. Picture: Rodger Walker

Giant Rat's Tail Grass Management

Some may remember the expression of interest to host a GRT grass wick wiping trial in the Eungella area that I emailed out in August. As a result, we had about five landholders put their hand up. From this Dr Wayne Vogler (Principal Scientist, Invasive Plant and Animal Science, Biosecurity Queensland, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries) has been in correspondence with the landholders involved and visited a number of them in Eungella during September to assess sites. With slightly drier conditions this week, the GRT trial treatments will now be installed by Wayne and technical officer Clare Warren. There is much we will learn from this in the coming months.

Continues.....

GRT Signage Arrival

The GRT biosecurity awareness signage arrived to a number of landholder properties in August. Some landholders have installed these since, others have been waiting for specific signage poles, which are arriving this month. Thank you to all the signage host landholders.



Carbon Farming and the Land Restoration Fund (LRF) 2021 Investment Round 2

Emissions Reductions Fund, Net Zero, low emissions technology, carbon capture and storage have all become favorite media topics of the past month and central to all of this is agriculture and carbon farming. If you didn't catch the Landline special on Carbon Farming on Sunday 7 November, then I suggest you watch it on iView iview.abc.net.au/show/landline or via the Landline website www.abc.net.au/landline/archives/. The challenges and opportunities carbon farming brings to rural landholders both large and small is quite well explained in the stories here. Particularly of interest to smaller landholdings is the likely move towards reduced auditing costs for carbon certified projects which is often a major barrier to their involvement.

Furthermore, applications for the second round of funding under the Land Restoration Fund (LRF) closed on 8 October 2021. The fund had a number of forums in August and September which were also recorded and broadcast online for attendees around the state. As reported in the last newsletter, for further information or to register to receive email updates about the Land Restoration Fund, see www.qld.gov.au/environment/climate/climate-change/land-restoration-fund/2021-investment-round-2

NRM enquiries and feedback

If you have any questions or enquiries that you think NQ Dry Tropics can help with, then please drop myself a line and I will see what I can do. Furthermore, please continue to support the projects and field events that Reef Catchments and Pioneer Catchment Landcare have on offer.

Wishing everyone a wet and non-windy end to the year and a prosperous new year!

Rodger

Soil Health

By Peter Arthofer, Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator - Burdekin Dry Tropics Region

Soil is made up of chemical, physical, and biological components. Healthy soil has these three components in balance.

Healthy soil includes effective natural processes such as nutrient cycling, carbon sequestration, and interactions between plant roots and mycorrhizal fungi. These natural processes are central to healthy, fertile soils and regeneration of productive resilient biosystems.

Microorganisms such as fungi and bacteria and larger organisms such as nematodes, springtails and earthworms make up the biological component of soil. These soil organisms are arranged in a complex food web that begins with carbon energy entering the food web through two pathways: firstly, the release of carbon rich substances from living plant roots, and secondly, plant decay.

Soil organisms use this carbon energy to grow and reproduce. When an organism dies or excretes waste, nutrients, principally inorganic soluble nitrate (NO_3) are released into the soil, which are then readily available for plant roots to take up.

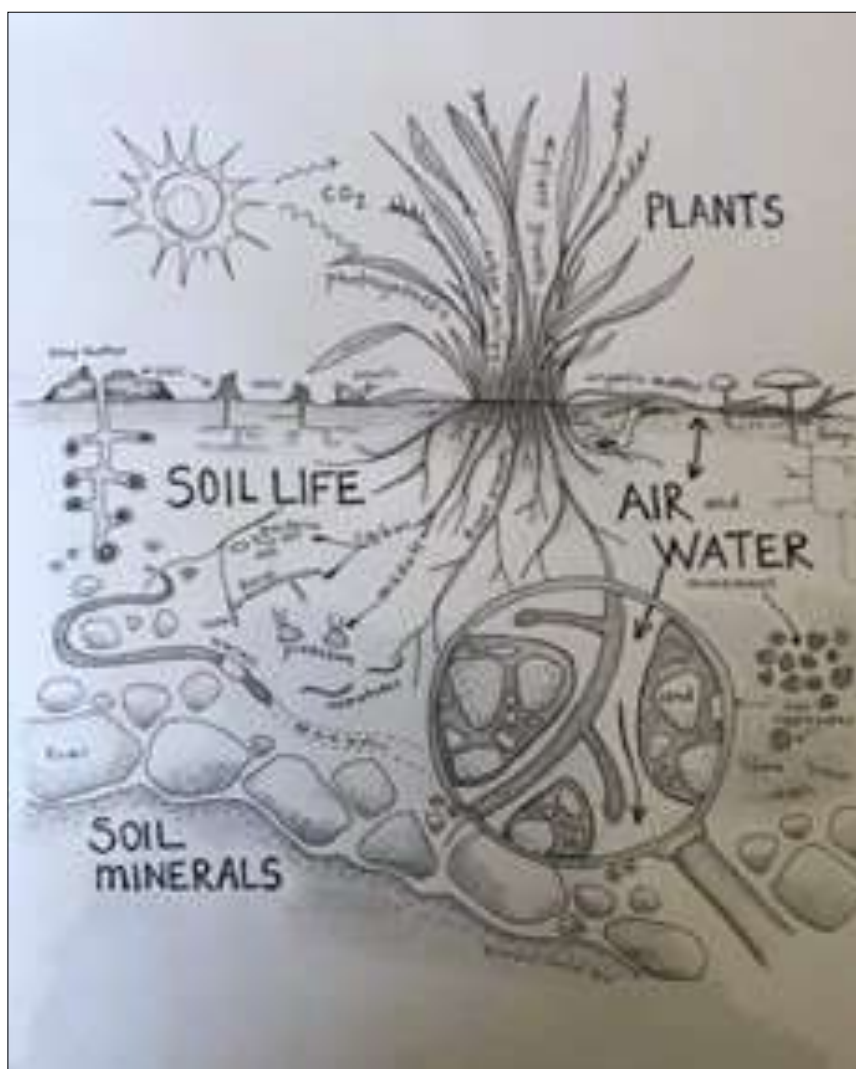
The breakdown of plant residues and roots and the cycling of nutrients and carbon through the soil food web builds soil organic carbon. Soil organic carbon and the action of organisms around the root zone and throughout the soil helps to build structure.

Good soil structure is critical for land managers as it allows for:

- ☞ Aerobic conditions for beneficial soil microbes
- ☞ Maximum root development
- ☞ Rainfall infiltration

Building soil health can:

- ☞ Increase agricultural productivity without high input costs
- ☞ Boost soil fertility
- ☞ Extend growing periods and boost water-holding capacity
- ☞ Enhance ecosystem services such as clean water and air
- ☞ Improve downstream water quality
- ☞ Improve the nutritional quality of food



The Soil Food Web
Illustration: Sharon Cunial, 2021

Healthy Soils Symposium Celebrates a Decade

by Gilly Barbat, Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator, Reef Catchments

This November, the Healthy Soils Symposium celebrated its first decade of sharing, informing and invigorating landholders in the Greater Mackay-Whitsunday-Isaac region. In past years, Reef Catchments has presented international, national, and regional presenters and landholders to share their passion for our soils, foods, and health of our ecosystems.

In 2021, we learnt to heed the warnings from weeds, learn of the chemistry occurring underfoot and understand the benefits of nurturing our soils in what is the most variable climate on the planet - healthy soil is productive, sustainable, and profitable.

The Mackay-Whitsundays-Isaac (MWI) region is known for its extensive grazing, sugar cane production and forestry industries which contribute to significant sediment and nitrogen loads in our rivers, waterways, and reefs. For these reasons, understanding, supporting and improving healthy soils, our first resource, is of primary importance.

In 2021 we welcomed Gwyn Jones once again as keynote speaker, to share his passion for soil – plant – animal health, managing soil chemistry, plant success and, using weeds as indicator plants of soil health, innovative weeds can be managed.

Gwyn was supported by Daniel Gonzalez and Marcus Bulstrode from DAF, and Mark Sugars from the Department of Resources. Guest speaker Rob Bauman, of Freckle Farm, returned to continue to share the successes he and his partner Deb McLucas have achieved in transforming their regenerative, biodynamic operation.

With David Hardwick's *Tropical Soils Guidebook* coming in hot off the press, Simon Mattsson shared the stage to launch this essential tool for all our regions' landholders.

This year's Field Day was hosted by Mary and Ken Ede at Longmile Mangoes.

50 guests attending the field day were able to witness how their flexibility, innovation and passion for sustainable and regenerative agriculture has allowed them to adapt quickly and effectively to the needs of their livestock, their horticulture and the increasingly obvious changes in our climate.



SYMPOSIUM SPEAKERS: (from left) Gwyn Jones, Daniel Gonzalez, Rob Bauman and Deb McLucas . ABOVE : Mary and Ken Ede.

Images: Contributed, RCL

Preparing for Fire

by Kirili Lamb, Communications Officer, Pioneer Catchment Landcare

It is fire season in North Queensland, and while many landholders will have plans and strategies for responding to bushfire in place, it is always worth taking stock of these on an annual basis and refining where possible.

Queensland Fire and Emergency Service Area Direct-Mackay, Rural Fire Service Andrew Houley said landholders needed a good property protection plan based around the risks.

“If people live in timbered country, then they need some separation between forest and the dwelling,” he said. “This setback allows for defence in a fire, particularly embers. Access to the dwelling and infrastructure for one of our 4WD Rural Fire appliances is also a good idea.”

Routine maintenance throughout the season is also important. This includes clearing gutters, slashing long grass near buildings, and ensuring combustible material like hay bales are not being stored against dwellings.

Mr Houley said this season was showing itself as an “average” season for the Pioneer Valley and Hinterland, backed by fuel reduction activities by RFBAQ and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. Conditions were a little above average west of the range. A couple of wildfires had been attended in the district.

“Parks [QPWS] and the brigades have maintained the breaks down at Netherdale and Parks have fuel-reduced the ridge lines under Eungella with aerial ignition earlier in the year,” he said.

“Conditions are quite dry and we have had some lightning fires west of Eungella and through to Mia Mia.”

There has been a higher than usual number of lightning strikes this year.

Although there is a popular perception that fire is not a part of rainforest ecosystems, Mr Houley pointed out the presence of Eucalypts in the forest were a signal of fire potential.

“Interestingly we get those severe fire weather patterns every 20-25 years. In 1992-1994 there were a couple of large fires that damaged Rainforest at Dick’s Tablelands and another at Carmilla. Long term families will remember them. The possible longer drier seasons with shorter, wetter wet seasons predicted as possible with climate change could see an increase in frequency.”

Mr Houley said it generally took three to five years for fuel to build up in forested areas, so with the three year anniversary of the 2018 disaster upon us, it was definitely time for landholders to be thinking about fuel loads on properties. He said it was and useful to be **thinking in terms of the “fire triangle”**: the three main elements needed for a fire to begin and sustain: heat/ignition, fuel, oxygen. By way of example, in smaller fires, we might remove elements like oxygen with a fire blanket, or with a BBQ, cut fuel by turning off gas, or a paper fire by extinguishing with water (removing heat and fuel).

“In a major bushfire, we try to remove the fuel by backburning and at times like in 2018 we may use water bombers to slow fires down. The only part of the fire triangle we can attack months or years before a bushfire is the fuel. **Planned burning, grazing, slashing all reduce the fuel load,**” he said.

Mr Houley said he wished to extend thanks to Eungella landholders, who were remaining vigilant.

“The feedback from the brigades is that most properties are well prepared for fires and that makes it easier for us to help them.”



USEFUL LINKS

- 🌀 www.rfbaq.org/bresources : Rural Fire Brigade Association’s one stop shop for weather and fire information, with useful community links.
- 🌀 www.qfes.qld.gov.au/safety-education/resources Queensland Fire & Emergency Services suite of Safety & Education resources.
- 🌀 www.qfes.qld.gov.au/bushfires Create a bushfire survival plan step-by-step.
- 🌀 www.reefcatchments.com.au/projects/fire/ Information and resources about fire, land management and our environment

Image: www.qfes.qld.gov.au/bushfires

Cat's Claw Creeps into Eungella

Recently, Cat's Claw Creeper was spotted in the Eungella area.

In Queensland, Cat's Claw Creeper is classified under the *Biosecurity Act 2014* as a **restricted invasive plant** and must not be given away, sold, or released into the environment. Under the Biosecurity Act everyone has a general biosecurity obligation (**GBO**) to take all reasonable and practical steps to minimise the risks associated with invasive plants.

Cat's Claw Creeper is a native of tropical Central/South America.

As an aggressive climber, it has the ability to completely smother native vegetation, growing up over trees and bushland areas, which adds to difficulties in controlling the weed.

Treatment can be difficult and time consuming:

- 🌀 There are several herbicides registered for use. Please follow the label
- 🌀 Cut mature plant stems at 1–2 m high, the upper portion of the vine will die. Then cut closer to ground level and immediately (within 15 seconds) paint the cut stump with herbicide. (See images at bottom, right)
- 🌀 Spot spray foliage of regrowth and low growing stems.
- 🌀 Dig out seedlings and small plants including tubers.
- 🌀 Follow up regularly.

If you suspect you have CCC on your land, please contact your Mackay Regional Council Pest Management Officer, Maria Ferraro on 1300 622 529 (MACKAY).

More info also available at [Queensland Government DAF](#)

Plant Description: **Cat's Claw Creeper: *Dolichandra unguis-cati* (prev. *Macfadyena unguis-cati*) Family: Bignoniaceae**

Cat's Claw Creeper is a Restricted Invasive Plant and a Weed of National Significance, which invades rainforests and creek banks, and strangles trees and dominates the ground layer.

Form: Rampant woody climber; climbing by adventitious roots and tendrils. Extensive tuberous roots system that sends up shoots; can cover the ground.

Leaves: Opposite compound with two ovate to oblong-elliptic lateral leaflets, 20-70 mm long and terminating with a three-clawed tendril (the cat's claw), each claw 10-15 mm long. Juvenile leaves are simple.

Flowers: Large bright yellow bell-shaped with 5 petals, tube 40-80 mm long, borne singly or in axillary pairs; perfumed. Flowers for a few weeks in Spring.

Fruits/Seeds: Narrow flat brown or black capsules to 150-450 x 8-20 mm, containing many flat papery seeds, winged at both ends, 20-40 mm long.

Spread By: Wind, water, contaminated soil and garden/property waste.

SOURCES: 'Weeds of the Mackay Whitsundays Region' 2nd Edition (2018: Mackay Regional Pest Management Group, Mackay); Queensland Government /Business Queensland



Cats Claw Creeper is a Restricted Invasive Plant and Weed of National Significance.

Images: PCL FILE - Steve and Alison Pearson (top), QLD DAF (centre x 2), PCL RAP Team (skirting process at bottom)

Cats on the Range

Feral cats (*Felis catus*) have been reported as a problem in the Eungella District, killing farm poultry and wildlife.

While cats have long been a companion species of people, they have never been native to Australia, and their escape into the wild and subsequent cross breeding between domestic and feral cats has led to a significant environmental issue. In Eungella, with several bird, reptile and amphibian species occurring nowhere else in the world, this is a significant issue. Keeping domestic cats contained will minimise the impact of beloved companion animals on the environment, and also allow for effective management of feral cats by landholders.

Predation by feral cats is listed as a key threatening process under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. Cats kill a wide range of native wildlife and spread disease and parasites, and for this reason are understood to reduce the distribution and abundance of many native species—sometimes surprisingly large ones, such as platypus and kangaroos. Roaming domestic and feral cats have contributed to the extinction of more than 28 native species.

A 2017 University of Queensland study, published in *Biological Conservation* found that feral cats covered 99.8% of the Australian land mass. The study brought together the research of 40 of Australia's top environmental scientists from 100 separate studies. "Australia's total feral cat population fluctuates between 2.1 million when times are lean, up to 6.3 million when widespread rain results in plenty of available prey," said UQ researcher Dr Sarah Legge upon the study's publication.

An international Cat Tracker research project conducted in 2018 by researchers at Victoria University of Wellington (NZ), University of South Australia and North Carolina showed that some domestic cats, fitted with GPS trackers could range across 200 hectare. 637 cats in NZ and SA were mapped. The median range was one hectare.

There are a range of options open to landholders in managing cat incursions. Mapping is a valuable tool, and the *Queensland Government* suggests using a cat activity mapping platform like Feral Scan (www.feralscan.org.au). Feral Scan enables people to log sightings and killings, but also to view any logged events in their area.

Landholders are entitled to engage in cat trapping if cats are doing damage on their property. Traps are best semi-buried as wire will disconcert the cat and a successful capture is less likely. The feral cat is a category 3, 4 and 6 restricted invasive animal under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*, and comes with a General Biosecurity Obligation around managing any trapped animals. Cat traps are available for hire from Mackay Regional Council, with an \$81.60 refundable deposit. Council does not collect cats, but the hirer can deliver trapped cats to the MRC Pound. Queensland Government permits other removal methods, such as rubber-jaw leg-hold traps and humane exterminatory methods.

It really comes down to the owner to take responsibility and not have cats wandering, potentially contributing to the feral cat problem. According to the Australian Veterinary Association (2016), "the more time a cat spends safe at home, the less risk of injury or death from road accidents, fighting and disease. A pet cat kept safe at home can live up to 4 times longer than a cat left to roam."

Mackay Regional Council requires all cats over the age of 12 weeks and living in the Mackay region to be registered (*Local Law No.2 (Animal Management) 2011*), and similarly, they should be microchipped by 8 weeks of age. Residents are only allowed two cats on allotments over 600 sq m. More information can be found on the *MRC website*.

SHOULD THERE BE A EUNGELLA FERAL CAT PROJECT? EMAIL FENCELINES AND TELL US YOUR EXPERIENCES

SOURCES: Mackay Regional Council, Reef Catchments, QLD DAF; FeralScan, Australian Science Media Centre/ UQLD/ *Journal of Biological Conservation*; www.australasianscience.com.au/article/issue-mayjune-2018/how-far-does-your-cat-roam.html



Feral cat devouring a small kangaroo.

Image: QLD Govt

Did you know.... By keeping cats safe at home, you're protecting them from harm and helping our precious native wildlife flourish.

- ☞ A roaming pet cat kills an average of 186 animals a year, of which, 115 are native
- ☞ In Australia 390 million animals are killed by domestic cats annually, of which, 241 million are native

Eungella Event a Great Success

The Eungella Ancient Arts and Crafts Fayre was held for the first time over October 9-10 2021, with visitor numbers exceeding expectations. Organisers from Eungella Community Development Association proclaimed it a great success.

ECDA committee member Mandy Tennent, said 70 formal volunteers and another 60 locals from the Pioneer Valley and across the Eungella district helped deliver the event.

“The event was planned to stimulate interest in Eungella which relies heavily on tourism, and to also bring the community together after some natural disasters impacted the area. The success of this event is another example of how special the Eungella Community is,” Ms Tennent said.

“The Fayre celebrated the beauty, history and uniqueness of the Eungella region as well as focusing on traditional arts and crafts. Visitors and locals got to experience a family fair offering workshops, live entertainment, a traditional Torres Strait Islander Kup Murri, a Viking village set up and battle demonstrations, woodchopping demonstrations, 28 market stalls, children’s activities and much more.”

A massive 1796 visitors attended across the two days of the event, travelling from Mackay, Moranbah and the coalfields, Whitsundays, Rockhampton and Townsville.

“The positive feedback buoyed the community and engendered pride in the area. The most common feedback from visitors was a request to have the event again.”

The event was supported with funding Mackay Regional Council Regional Arts Development Fund.

Ms Tennent said some of the highlights included Uncle Phil Ahwang from Finch Hatton who presented his T.I. heritage over two days by cooking demonstrations, dancing, and talking about his heritage, and the *Mercenaries of Western Europe*, who brought members from Rockhampton and Townsville to create a village and battle re-enactments.



Images: Colleen Heathwood James

What's on in Ag and NRM

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Dec 23-Jan 10: | Pioneer Catchment Landcare office closed for Christmas |
| Dec 8 | Key Industry Solutions Grazing Industry WHS Training Dalrymple Trade Training Centre, Charters Towers. Register by December 1st via TryBooking , or call 0400 922 342. |
| January 2 | Birdlife Mackay outing at Chelman's Road, Eungella. Enq: 0407 143 823 www.birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlife-mackay/upcoming-events |
| 2nd Sunday of the month | Eungella Community Markets @ Eungella Hub |
| Every Tuesday | Eungella Mens Shed, behind Eungella Hub, from 10am |
| Every Tuesday | Volunteering with Pioneer Catchment Landcare, 8am to noon. Activities include native plant propagation, PCL display garden, and re-veg projects such as Far Beach and Lamberts Headland. Please contact Tahnee Hamill at projectofficer@pioneercatchment.org.au . There will be a Christmas break in volunteering activities from Wednesday, December 15. First nursery day for 2022 will be Tuesday, January 11 |

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Feedback and contributions are welcome: communications@pioneercatchment.org.au