

# Pioneer Catchment & Landcare News

October 2022

## Cleaning up our Region

How to get involved

### Get the "Swoop"

on Magpie Breeding Season

### PLUS

Keep up to date with PCL's recent and upcoming events!



Plant of the month -  
Native Sarsparilla



Kindy Visits with  
Darrell and Angus



Community Spotlight -  
BirdLife Mackay



Meet the Team -  
Darrell Barba



#### Our Mission

To implement an integrated, science-based approach to natural resource management through supportive partnerships across our catchment



## Cleaning up our Region

In August, PCL participated in two clean up events as a part of Mackay Regional Council's 'Clean Up, The Mackay Region' (previously known as 'The Great Northern Clean-Up') that occurred over two weekends. This year, litter clean ups were held by MRC at nine different sites around Mackay in which community members were encouraged to join in. People could also create their own clean up event by registering a site on the Clean Up Mackay website.

At Shellgrit Creek on the 15th August, PCL partnered with MRC and Mackay Airport to run an event that saw more than 640 kilograms of rubbish removed from the local environment! There were 13 incredible volunteers who collected everything from tyres, car parts, roof guttering, general rubbish and even a shopping trolley! PCL also attended our regular site at Riverside Drive at Crenmore on the 28th August and collected a significant amount of litter.

Despite everyone's extraordinary efforts, there is so much more that can be done to clean up our region. Litter in our streets, parks and around our homes is likely to end up in our waterways, and may eventually find its way into our oceans, negatively affecting marine life and our world heritage listed Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

That is why PCL has partnered with Tangaroa Blue and ReefClean on the 'Great Barrier Reef Clean Up' project that facilitates litter clean up events and litter audits at regular monitoring sites in the Pioneer River Catchment. Recording the types of litter being collected is extremely helpful in identifying why and how people litter and what solutions we can try to implement.

If you would like to know more information about this project and how you can get involved, please contact Sally Stutsel at [projectofficer@pioneercatchment.org.au](mailto:projectofficer@pioneercatchment.org.au).



*PCL Officer, Sally Stutsel, at Riverside Drive, Crenmore*



*Above: Shellgrit Creek Clean Up. Right: PCL Officer, Darrell Barba, at Shellgrit Creek Clean Up.*



### **OUR VISION:**

To empower our community to build biodiverse ecosystems

### **OUR MISSION:**

To implement an integrated, science-based approach to natural resource management through supportive partnerships across our catchment.

### **VALUES:**

- We are innovative, and driven by action at a grassroots level •
- Ethical • Engaged • Passionate •

## Get the 'Swoop' on Magpie Breeding Season

With Magpie breeding season in full swing, it's important to understand the behaviours of the Magpie so that we know the best way to stay safe and avoid being swooped, while continuing to enjoy the native wildlife in our area.

According to the Department of Environment and Science, only a small percentage of Magpies swoop people, but when they do, it is usually a male Magpie defending his chicks and eggs. So, the best thing to do is to avoid known nesting areas whenever possible. The Magpie's defence zone can be a radius of 100-150m from their nest and they are more likely to attack singular unaware pedestrians and cyclists. Breeding season typically extends from July to November.

If you can't take an alternate route during breeding season, there are a few things you can do to protect yourself from swooping magpies.

- Wear protective clothing such as a broad-rimmed hat, sunglasses and use an umbrella. You can even draw large eyes on the back of your hat to deter them.
- Walk in groups when you can and ensure you maintain eye contact with the swooping bird as you walk past a nest, and dismount your bike if you are a cyclist.
- If you are swooped, do not fight back and do not panic. Stay calm and maintain eye contact as you leave their defense zone. Fighting magpies will only make them more aggressive towards humans in the future.

For more information on swooping magpies, you can visit the [Department of Environment and Science](#) website or if you would like to keep up to date with known swooping areas and submit your own experience, you can visit the [Magpie Alert](#) website to see a map of the swooping magpies in your area.



Australia Magpie (*Gymnorhina tibicen*)

Sources: 'Stay safe from swooping magpies', Department of Environment and Science, 2021, <[https://environment.des.qld.gov.au/wildlife/animals/living-with/magpies/swooping?](https://environment.des.qld.gov.au/wildlife/animals/living-with/magpies/swooping?fbclid=IwAR2fkvqOmQOX5q9wK36eHOj2IKAw4DN80qFeLWiJSehINwOqmVLI_Sz_huhc)>. Photo: <https://www.krg.nsw.gov.au/Environment/Your-local-environment/Wildlife/Living-with-wildlife/Australian-magpie>.

## Community Spotlight: Eungella Bird Weekend with BirdLife Mackay

Eungella turned on the weather for this year's September 2022 BirdLife Mackay's Birdweek survey. High rainfall during winter saw lush green forest with little flowering. Using a similar format to last year, the group used the data point markers at various locations to formulate sightings for the Clarke Range, with a total of 86 birds species identified. Eungella Honeyeater, Russet-tailed Thrush, Noisy Pitta, and Regent Bowerbird are an impressive sample of some of the birds of Eungella.

We enjoyed a very social weekend with 23 participants coming from as far as Warrnambool, Victoria. Lots of eyes, lots of sightings.

A highlight for me was the Russet-tailed Thrush ... right under our noses of course! Eungella Honeyeaters graced us with their presence along the survey point tracks where the Climbing Pandan was just coming into bloom. Thanks everyone for contributing to make it a very enjoyable weekend for all participants.



Written by Paula Sjostedt—BirdLife Mackay



## Mackay Goodstart Kindergartens Education and Planting Days

Over the past month, PCL Officers, Darrell Barba and Angus Mecoles, have been out and about visiting Goodstart Early Learning Centres in Eimeo and Bridge Road, West Mackay. On their initial visits, they attended the centres to teach the kids about native flora and fauna and brought along some native plants and seeds, a snake's skin and a bee hotel. On a later date, they returned to the centres to plant native trees with the children, putting in 50 native plants at each Kindergarten! It's fantastic to see so many educators in our community making environmental education a priority for our little people!



Top: PCL Officers, Darrell and Angus, at Goodstart Bridge Road. Right: Planting days at the kindergartens

## Wattle Talk with Sally

On the 1st September 2022, PCL Officer, Sally Stutsel, held a stall at the Country Women's Association (CWA) at North Eton to celebrate Wattle Day. As a part of Mackay Regional Council's Free Plant Giveaway Program, PCL was also able to provide 30 free



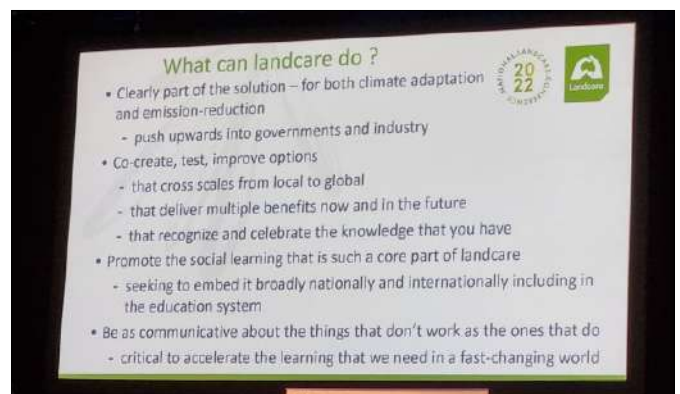
Sim's Wattle (*Acacia simsii*), as well as a bag of useful information on Wattles, planting natives in your garden and the Land for Wildlife Program.

One of the brochures included in the bag, "Are your garden plants going bush", sparked a conversation with Sally and the women in attendance about plants that they may have in their gardens that may be 'ticking time bombs' for our local environment and why it is so important to plant local native species instead.

Thanks to CWA for having us and Mackay Natural Environment Centre nursery for providing the free native plants.

## National Landcare Conference 2022

PCL Coordinator, Nancy Pratt, and Chair, Sharon Dwyer, attended the National Landcare Conference this year which was held on the 23rd - 25th of August in Sydney. PCL is always looking for valuable learning experiences such as this to assist the growth of PCL and help us achieve environmental goals into the future!



**Native Sarsparilla****Family: Leguminosae (Papilionoideae)**

*Hardenbergia violacea* is a perennial bushy or climbing legume with long twining stems that may wrap around other plants. Plants develop a thick rootstock from which new stems are produced. This plant can be found in a variety of habitats across Australia and is also a host to the Common Grass Blue Butterfly (*Zizina labradus*).

**Leaves:** Alternate, with a single leathery leaflet, dark green above, grey-green beneath with prominent venation, 30-120mm long, 10-50mm wide, broadest towards the rounded base. Leaf stalks (petioles) 5-30mm long.

**Flowers:** Violet-purple pea shaped, about 10mm across, with two white or yellowish 'eyes' at the base of the petals, borne in axillary sprays (racemes) 60-200mm long, mostly in Spring.

**Fruit/seeds:** Pod oblong, 35–50mm long, about 8mm wide, flattened, hairless, almost black when ripe, and containing 6–8 kidney-shaped seeds, 4–5mm long and 2.5–3mm wide.

**Growing Notes:** Useful as a spreading ground cover and can be pruned to promote bushier growth. Prefers full sun to semi-shade and well-drained soil. It is also suitable for hanging baskets.

Sources: Hacker 1990 *A Guide to Herbaceous and shrub legumes of Queensland*

**Pest Spotting***Ipomoea cairica***Mile-a-minute****Family: Convolvulaceae**

*Ipomoea cairica* is a rampant perennial climber that also runs along the ground rooting at the nodes and has tuberous roots. This vine, native of Tropical Africa and Asia, is now a serious environmental weed in this region, smothering native vegetation in coastal areas, often close to mangroves and creek banks.

**Leaves:** Circular in outline, deeply palmately lobed with 5-7 lance-shaped lobes, up to 50 x 20mm, tapered at both ends, mid-green above, apple green below, stalks 20-60mm long.

**Flowers:** Funnel-shaped with 5 shallow lobes, purple or pinkish-lavender with a deeper-coloured throat, 30-80mm diameter, in one or few flowered groups on stems 5-70mm long.

**Fruit/Seeds:** Globular, brown papery capsules, 10-12mm across with 4 brown hairy seeds, about 4mm long, with tufts of longer white silky hairs on margins.

**Spread by:** Seed and vegetatively by rooting along its stems. Seeds are dispersed by wind and water and stem fragments are often dispersed in dumped garden waste.

**Control:** Small infestations can be removed manually. However, all roots and all stems touching the ground must be removed. For larger infestations with many stems, cutting and subsequent applications of herbicides are required.

***Merremia quinquefolia***, also with the common name of **Mile-a-Minute**, is a similar-looking weed that has been recorded in this region. It is a native of tropical America. Rather than deeply lobed leaves, it has compound leaves with 5 distinct leaflets, smaller white or pale-yellow flowers and its 4-valved papery capsules have persistent papery sepals. It is also known as Snakevine or Rock Rosemary.



Sources: Weeds of the Mackay Whitsunday Region, <https://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/28786#tosummaryOfInvasiveness>



## Upcoming Community Events

### October

**Tues 4** - PCL Volunteering in the nursery, 8am to 12pm.

**Thurs 6** - Native Plants Queensland (Mackay Branch) meeting 7:30pm at Mackay Regional Gardens Meeting Room

**Fri 7** - Reef Catchments Seagrass Monitoring at St Helens Beach

**Saturday 8** - Reef Catchments Seagrass Monitoring at Clairview

**Tues 11** - PCL Volunteering in the nursery, 8am to 12pm.

**Tues 18** - Great Barrier Reef Clean Up Bus Tour, 9am to 3pm, meet at PCL Office on Swayne Street.

**Tues 25** - PCL Volunteering in the nursery, 8am to 12pm.

### November

**Tues 1** - PCL Volunteering in the nursery, 8am to 12pm.

**Thurs 3** - Native Plants Queensland (Mackay Branch) meeting 7:30pm at Mackay Regional Gardens Meeting Room

**Tues 8** - PCL Volunteering in the nursery, 8am to 12pm.

**Tues 15** - PCL Volunteering in the nursery, 8am to 12pm.

**Tues 29** - PCL Volunteering in the nursery, 8am to 12pm.



**PCL'S ID:**  
**C10041933**

### COVID SHIFTS VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

Keen to volunteer with PCL? We are looking for new volunteers keen to get involved in Landcare planting activities, at beautiful locations like Far Beach and Lamberts Headland. Come join us! Contact [projectofficer@pioneercatchment.org.au](mailto:projectofficer@pioneercatchment.org.au) for more information.

Due to Mackay Natural Environment Centre COVID policy, there has been a temporary suspension on NEW volunteers for propagating activities at the MNEC nursery. Existing volunteers are still welcome.

### Pioneer Catchment & Landcare Group Inc.

#### Executive

**Chair** | Sharon Dwyer

**Deputy Chair** | Judith Wake

**Secretary** | Fran Mann

**Treasurer** | Claire Stribbles

#### Committee Members

Earl Neilsen

### Pioneer Catchment & Landcare Group Inc.

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## Meet the Team

### Darrell Barba—Field Team Supervisor



Darrell Barba grew up in Mackay, but has lived in Cape York for most of the past 20 years, leading resort cultural walks exploring flora and fauna in mangrove ecosystems around Bamaga. He also worked voluntarily on turtle conservation, including nest protection from predators. "There were problems with erosion on the dunes, and I spent a lot of time planting trees, trying to slow down that erosion," Darrell said. "Another thing I did was protect turtle eggs from feral pigs and goannas. I had a camp, probably the northernmost in Australia. I'd carefully collect the eggs, bring them home, put a cage over them to keep them safe, then let them go in the ocean, off on their own. I have a great love for that sort of stuff."

He completed a Deakin University Associate Diploma in Natural Resource Management in 2010 and has also studied Introduction to Biology as a pathway into a Bachelor degree. Darrell said he was happy to start work at PCL, which has also brought him closer to his family in Mackay. Since beginning with PCL in early 2021 as a part of the Reef Assist Program, Darrell has gained significant experience in environmental restoration and revegetation and has now transitioned into PCL's Field Team Supervisor position.

Darrell is also a carpenter by trade and spends his off-time completing a home renovation project with life partner Samantha Edwards, a teacher.

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