



Quarterly Update No 15 ... January 2019

Best wishes for 2019 to LUCI members and supporters. LUCI had a busy last quarter to 2018 with another full year ahead as you will read in this latest *Update*!

LUCI accepted into the Great Eastern Ranges family

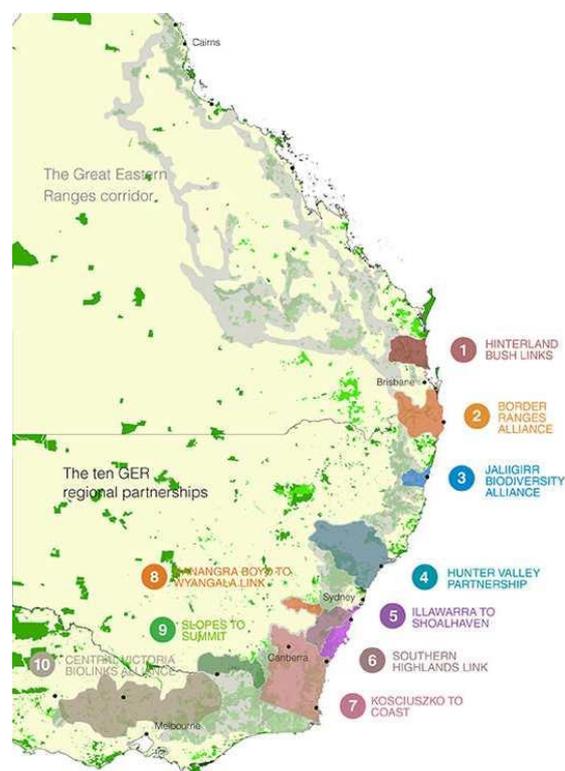
LUCI members and supporters can be proud that they are contributing to "one of the world's largest conservation projects"¹.

While LUCI works to improve and better connect patches of native habitats in our local landscape, our aspiration has always been to contribute to the larger effort of the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative (GER). The GER vision is to connect and maintain the large natural landscapes to be found along the Great Dividing Range and the Great Escarpment from Victoria to northern Queensland. It is "recognized by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature as one of several significant continental scale connectivity projects."²

To achieve this vision, the GER supports and enables on-ground conservation efforts by community, industry and government agencies in identified high priority areas. By focusing on these priority areas the GER aims to "stem the loss of native species, provide natural solutions to a changing climate, protect precious resources and ensure a healthy, resilient landscape for wildlife and people".³

We were delighted to be informed by the GER's Executive Director, Gary Howling, that the GER Board considered LUCI's objectives, activities and achievements at their December meeting. The Board was "impressed with the breadth of activity and

strength of commitment being shown by the LUCI network. The Lockyer Uplands are a vitally important connectivity area that supports both local wildlife movements as well as the transit of a variety of long-distance nomadic and migratory species moving along the GER corridor."⁴



Existing GER regional partnerships in identified high priority areas. Source <https://www.ger.org.au/where-we-work/about-regional-alliances>

What does this mean for LUCI...

Through a regional partnership with the GER, LUCI's work on one section of the Main Range-Helidon Hills Corridor will contribute to the GER vision of connecting 3,600km of mountainous landscape. The Main Range-Helidon Hills Corridor is a biologically diverse and regionally significant ecotonal area. It is a corridor that "[links] the globally recognised Gondwana Rainforests of

¹ <https://www.ger.org.au/about-us/history>

² *Ibid.*

³ <https://www.ger.org.au/about-us/vision-and-goals>

⁴ Gary Howling, Executive Director, Great Eastern Ranges Ltd, email correspondence.

the Border Ranges to sub-tropical habitats to the north.”⁵

Through its partnership with GER, LUCI will be able to network with over 250 organisations involved in doing their bit to provide buffers, stepping stones and corridors along various stretches of the GER. Our work will benefit from the exchange of knowledge and experience that the partnership will bring.

Become a LUCI member

Only \$5/year, children free.

Join like-minded others in caring for native habitats. Contact lucatchmentsinc@gmail.com

Australia's least known bird...by Ray Shimomura*

The Black-breasted Button Quail (BBBQ) is one of the least known birds of Australia as they are rarely seen. BBBQs range from Marlborough in the north to the Border Ranges in the south.



A female BBBQ recently banded at Ipswich.

They are listed as ***Vulnerable*** in Queensland and Australia under the Nature Conservation Act 1992 and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999, respectively, because of the declining population.

Fact sheets - Did you know...

- Button Quails are more closely related to waterbirds such as plovers whilst True Quails are related to chickens.

- Button Quails are polyandrous, where a single female mates with multiple males whilst True Quails are polygamous, where a single male mates with multiple females.
- BBBQs inhabit dry vine forests and littoral forests with a low closed canopy and a regular leaf fall throughout the seasons such as semi-evergreen vine thicket and low microphyll vine forest.
- BBBQs create small depressions in leaf litter while foraging, called platelets.



Platelets in leaf litter in Semi-evergreen vine thicket.

BBBQs are threatened by...

- Habitat loss and fragmentation with 90% of their habitat lost since European settlement. Clearing for agriculture is the main threatening process.
- Habitat degradation by feral herbivores such as deer and wallabies in addition to pigs and livestock, which causes soil and leaf litter disturbance and prevents the regeneration of habitat.
- Predation by feral animals; Feral pigs are reported to predate BBBQs, and cats are a potential threat.

Lockyer Valley (LV) is one of the most severely fragmented habitats of BBBQs

Dwyers Scrub Conservation Park (DSCP) is the only protected habitat of BBBQs in LV. Evidence of BBBQs has been observed in private properties adjacent to DSCP and in Plainlands. We need to protect existing habitat from clearing and feral animals.

Research at the University of Queensland Patrick Webster and Ray Shimomura are surveying the current distribution and abundance of BBBQ across SE QLD. We are

⁵ *Ibid.*

seeking any sightings of the birds or platelets. You can **report your sightings** to p.webster.94@outlook.com.

Related information:

The Chronicle: "Rare bird found in Toowoomba after 20 years"

<https://www.thechronicle.com.au/news/rare-bird-found-toowoomba-after-20-years/3545994/>

YouTube: BBQ in the wild

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jPIVmM MwsY8>

* Just finished a master's degree in Animal Science at the University of Queensland. Wildlife photography and filmmaking occupies most of my spare time.

Contact: r.shimomura@uq.net.au

Continuing our members' stories "why conservation matters to me"

... by Penny Kidd "Ironbark Ridge"



I panic a little, when I walk through our Ironbark regional ecosystem (RE) patches and observe a dominant lantana sub-storey without a single young ironbark poking its head through. There may only be

'big bopper' mature Ironbarks with no babies following behind them.

I could be looking at a forest with no succession that will eventually die out. I care because I don't want to see this happen, so that means caring must translate into action.

Where we have commenced weed control in this RE, I get a great kick out of seeing little ironbark seedlings naturally regenerating. But this can take many seasons.

Those little seedlings are a slow but just reward for lantana and tree pear control work (small patches) around the big Ironbarks.

It's easy to imagine them growing into the next generation of forest and the next and the next.... When we work, it feels like we're manufacturing hope for the future, one weed at a time.

It's also gratifying the way dead lantana and dead tree pear 'gives back' to the earth by breaking down to wonderful mulch and contributing to erosion control on our hills.

Recently while working on our property, the bush reminded us of the fauna we're working for - a family of 4 Tawny Frogmouths crowded silently on a single Ironbark branch, an Eastern Bearded Dragon playing 'statue' on an old Ironbark log, Caper butterflies fluttering around flowering Currant Bushes (*Carissa Ovata*) under a shady tree and Eastern Fire Tailed Skinks flitting through leaf litter.

How can I not care (and not act) ?

Nature Photography Competition

LUCI's inaugural *Lockyer in the Wild* Nature Photography Competition 2018 attracted 150 entries showcasing the diversity of bird, insect, reptile, plant and fungi species in the Lockyer Valley. An exhibition of the photographs was held on the 3rd November at Stockyard Creek Hall during which the Deputy Mayor, Cr Jason Cook, presented category winners with their awards and prizes. A second presentation of the photographs was held at Ma Ma Creek State School during the last two weeks of final term.



Overall Winning photo Azure Kingfisher by Garry Innes

LUCI thanks all those who contributed to the success of the competition and exhibition including major sponsor, Lockyer Valley Regional Council, donors of cash prizes Lockyer Printing, jAK & MO Taste Co, Rosier Futures, Dawn Properties and Dr Guy Castley and major supporters Stockyard Creek Community Hall and Ma Ma Creek State School.



Deputy Mayor Cr Jason Cook presents Photography Competition Overall Winner, Garry Innes, with the LVRC Mayoral award and prize.

Encouraged by positive feedback from all involved, LUCI will hold the competition and exhibition again this year. The 2018 photographs set the benchmark, so it's not too early to get out into nature and learn about, enjoy and photograph the Lockyer's amazing native species.

2018 competition entries can be viewed at www.lockyeruplandscatchmentsinc.wordpress.com

LUCI AGM/GM November 2018

Fifteen people attended the November meetings and LUCI Christmas party. We thank LVRC's Cr Rick Vela and Brian Venz, SEQ Board Member of Queensland Water and Land Carers, for their attendance, participation and encouragement.

President's and Treasurer's Reports were received and nominations and voting for 2019 office bearers was conducted. Diane Guthrie and Elspeth Darvall were re-elected as President and Treasurer, respectively, and Penny Kidd was elected as Secretary.

The General Meeting endorsed ongoing projects, namely, GBC Project Phase 2, Friends of Dwyers Scrub, Biodiversity Property Planning Group, Lockyer Uplands

Koala Project, Special Interest Walks, LUCI Breakfast and the Nature Photography Competition. Members supported a project to address feral pig control in the local landscape in 2019.

Minutes of both meetings and Reports presented are available on request at lucatchmentsinc@gmail.com

Glossy Black Cockatoo Project

Landholders participating in LUCI's GBC project met with project mentor, Dr Guy Castley (Griffith University), on 4th November. Guy provided landholders with a progress report on our survey data for investigating GBC feed tree phenology.

The project involves eight properties and Dwyers Scrub Conservation Park with 678 trees now tagged and surveyed at approximately six-month intervals. Surveying is now into the fourth interval.

While it is early days in the five-year project, cycles in fruiting and pollinating seasons are becoming evident. Of interest are the emerging patterns of GBC feeding on the different *Allocasuarina* species (*A. littoralis*, *A. inophloia* and *A. torulosa*), as indicated by ort presence. It is too early to draw any conclusions yet and more trees are being added to the sample.



Dr Guy Castley explaining the operation of a remote camera for use in GBC surveys at waterholes.

If you are interested in joining the project or can add to our local knowledge of GBCs and their habitat contact us on lucatchmentsinc@gmail.com

Biodiversity Property Planning Group meeting 13th January

January's meeting of the BPP group was hosted by Peter and Elspeth Darvall at their home. In talking about his property management, Peter focused on soil and water, particularly the improvement of both under changing climate conditions.

Given the prevailing lack of soil moisture and low rainfall, Peter has adopted a largely nature-led process to biodiversity management on the majority of his property, which contains high value regrowth areas and other areas that are irreparably disturbed. Minimal interventions include: the construction of a number of swales in a particular high value regrowth area to retain moisture longer in the landscape; and control of lantana in strategic areas.

In terms of biodiversity indicators, Peter noted that he has observed a discernible decrease in general bird presence over the period from 2010-11 to the present. He surmises this decrease may be due to the increasing dry conditions. As the property is involved in the GBC Project, surveys indicate some feed trees are highly stressed and dying although evidence of GBC feeding in particular feed tree stands remains stable.

In their curtilage area, Peter and Elspeth maximise water storage through installing multiple tanks, recycling grey water and maximising roof areas for catchment. Peter relies heavily on the cultivation of worm farms for improving soil for domestic purposes as well as the assistance of his many and various chickens. To minimise water usage in his vegetable gardens, Peter has adopted the wicking bed method and permaculture style planting for best effects. A guided walk around the curtilage areas proved Peter is a master of recycling!

Other topics discussed during the meeting included weed control methods (e.g. with mother of millions, tree pear and exotic grasses), origins of groundwater and

relationship to tree growth and the impact of increasing temperatures on regeneration and revegetation planning.

The next meeting will be held on Sunday April 14th. If you are interested in managing biodiversity on your property and would like to share your experiences with like-minded others, let us know on lucatchmentsinc@gmail.com

Local plant profile

*Underneath the Brigalows.... by LUCI
member Karen Gruner*

It's pleasant to stroll in the dappled shade among the Brigalow (*Acacia harpophylla*) trees on my property. In some areas, the trees have created a thick layer of leaf mulch which seems to have inhibited the growth of understorey species. There are, however, two interesting plants that appear in spots, and that go hand-in-hand with Brigalow forest: Hooky grass and Twinleaf.

Hooky grass, (*Ancistrachne uncinulata*), grows to around 80cm and has fine, wiry stems with small alternate leaf blades. The flower spikes produce seeds which are covered in sticky hooks, allowing them to adhere to passing animals. If I need to

collect seed, I just pluck them off my trouser legs!

My neighbour likes to grab seeds from the grass as he walks by and he then scatters them into non-grassed areas to aid their distribution.



Hooky grass seed head



Hooky grass foliage

Hooky grass forms clumps which are about 50cm wide, and they are often seen grouped together in areas of partial shade.

Another low lying plant is Twinleaf (*Zygophyllum apiculatum*). It is a fleshy-leaved ground cover with small yellow flowers.



Twinleaf flower

Twinleaf grows to about 45cm but will cover up to a metre of ground. I particularly like the seed capsules as they are three-lobed, angular and hang down from the stems like little pointy lanterns.

Important number: Wildlife carers Kath and Steph 0410 334 661 (available 24/7)



Twinleaf seed capsules

Only the toughest of the tough survive the conditions where these two species are growing. The slope is very steep and full of sandstone. The soil is very dry and sandy, and there are highly competitive weeds such as Panic grass and Madeira vine to contend with. My aim is to remove patches of the weeds, propagate lots of Hooky grass and Twinleaf, and then plant them in those cleared areas on the slope.

Karen Gruner www.tanglewoodnatives.com.au
(Karen is holding an open morning at the nursery. Further details in Upcoming Events two pages over.)

Of interest...

Worth a look...by Martin Bennett

I always check under a plastic wrapped bale of sawdust at my place as I saw a female three toed worm skink (*Anomalopus verreauxii*) under there one day, and more recently her and her eggs. It's one of the fossorial skinks with reduced limbs to aid in burrowing.

General description: Worm or snake-like in appearance with a long body and short weak limbs, each of which have 3 digits and reduced to clawed stumps in the hindquarters. It is brown to grey on the top with a creamy-yellow band across the base of the head. This band is more prominent in juveniles and tends to fade with age.



Photo by Mick Drew.

Distinguished from snake by:

- Presence of movable eyelids,
- Fleshy tongue (not forked),
- Fore limbs present,
- Hind limbs present although greatly reduced in comparison to fore limbs,
- Ear openings.

Average length: 300mm with records of individuals in excess of 350mm.

Habitat in SE Qld: Prefers more humid habitats such as wet sclerophyll forests, rainforest margins, vine thickets and coastal scrubs. Tolerant of habitat disturbance, it thrives in compost heaps and gardens in suburbia, and beneath logs in open paddocks.

Diet: Feeds on ground dwelling insects.

Pay Attention to Strange Sounds...by Karen Gruner

I was outside, working in my nursery, when I heard strange noises coming from a nearby tree. Is that a bird, I asked myself? I stopped what I was doing and walked over to the tree to see what was going on.

The sounds were coming from a crow, which was repeatedly flying in towards a nesting Tawny Frogmouth, trying to get the bird to move away, presumably to access either eggs or young. In defense, the frogmouth was snapping its beak furiously at the crow

while not moving from the nest. The crow rested on a nearby branch in between attempts, and was coming at the frogmouth from different angles, but the frogmouth guarded the nest well. After about ten minutes of this, the other parent frogmouth arrived and shooed the crow away once and for all.

I went back to my vantage point about half an hour later and, armed with binoculars, I had a look, and there it was; a little ball of fluff with big eyes staring at me! What a joy to know that our local pair of frogmouths, who we periodically see and hear had actually nested and were rearing a young.

A few weeks on, and I saw Ma, Pa and an almost fully grown Junior on a tree branch, all looking well, with their heads stretched upwards, watching me through slitted eyes, as they do.

Help...

Entomologist Dr Don Sands, who some of you met at one of our Breakfast events, is



interested in knowing if anyone has seen colonies of the *Aristolochia meridionalis*.

Photo source Fort Bushland Reserve website

<https://fortbushlandreserve.wordpress.com/2013/12/09/aristolochia-meridionalis/>

In the wild, this small scrambling vine is a host plant for the *Cressida cressida* (Clearwing Swallowtail butterfly) and, in experiments, has proved a successful host for the Vulnerable *Ornithoptera richmondia* (Richmond birdwing butterfly).

<https://www.thechronicle.com.au/news/new-hope-endangered-butterfly/1380721/>

If you can help Don, let us know at lucatchmentsinc@gmail.com

Test your knowledge...

(Answers below)

Do you know the common and/or scientific names of the following?



Photos by Diane Guthrie

How did you go?

- *Ozothamnus diosmifolius* or rice flower or sago bush.
- Larva of a *Doratifera vulnerans* or cup moth (thanks Don Sands)
<http://lepidoptera.butterflyhouse.com.au/lima/vulnerans.html>
- *Dipodium punctatum* or blotched hyacinth-orchid (thanks Martin Bennett)

Upcoming events ...

☞ Open morning at Tanglewood Natives

Visit Karen Gruner's native plant nursery and hear how Karen started out and the challenges on the way. Meet members of Lockyer Organic Growers Inc and Native Plants Queensland Ipswich Branch. Bring morning tea to share. Arrive 9:00am, **Saturday 16th February**. Directions available following RSVP to lucatchmentsinc@gmail.com

☞ Property Planning Group meeting

Want to learn about/share your experiences of managing biodiversity on your property? Join other landholders on **Sunday 14th April** from 9:30am-12:30pm at Diane and Paul's home. Topics will range from weed control, native grass regeneration and the value of understory vegetation⁶. RSVP by 1st April to lucatchmentsinc@gmail.com

☞ Special Interest Walk

Boronia, brigalow, woolly bark she-oak, dry rainforest, boulders and billy tea... interested? Then come along to a walk on a Fordsdale property on **Sunday 28th April**. Arrive 7:30am for an 8:00am start. Numbers are limited so get in early, **confirm your place with Peter on 5462 6841**.

Do you have a photo or item of interest for the newsletter? Or concerns that you would like LUCI to consider? Then send us an email with your photo or item and...remember...

Stay connected, it's healthy!

If you do not want to be included on the email list for this newsletter please let us know at lucatchmentsinc@gmail.com.
Newsletter Editor Diane Guthrie 0413 333 681

⁶ For background reading see <https://www.lfwseq.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/The-Value-of-Understorey-Vegetation.pdf>