



## LUCI Update No 34 ... January 2024

Summer greetings and enjoy reading LUCI's Update!

### LUCI AGM/GM and looking ahead

The AGM/GM and Christmas Party on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2023 was well attended (43 people) and our guest speaker, UQ Professor Martine Maron, was very well received. The [President's and Treasurer's reports](#) highlight the very full program of projects and activities that LUCI undertakes on behalf of members with the support of a range of collaborators.



UQ's Professor Martine Maron was guest speaker at LUCI's well attended AGM/GM 2023.

The election of office bearers for 2024 saw members return Diane Guthrie, Penny Kidd and Fiona Watters as, respectively, President, Treasurer and Secretary. In addition to the office bearers, LUCI's 2024 management committee includes general members John Hopwood, Anita Huber and Mark Kidd, ex-officio member Elspeth Darvall and supporters Martin Bennett and Chris Hoffmann.

Members confirmed their support for LUCI's existing direction and projects and offered suggestions for this year's workshop topics including fungi, insects, fire management and pest animals (e.g. cats, foxes).

### A reminder to renew your LUCI membership for

**2024** Only \$10 per person per year, join like-minded others and enjoy membership benefits such as free workshops, guided walks, access to grant programs to support property management, surveys of your property's fauna, loan of weeding equipment, newsletters, and lots more.



### What I learned from guest speaker, Professor Martine Maron...by John Hopwood

Martine is a shining beacon in conservation, especially knowledgeable in the birds of Queensland, and her research tackles questions central to the conservation challenge. Her intense, information packed talk immediately reminded us of the importance of conserving biodiversity, as she presented an array of very disturbing facts, especially the number of endangered (49) and threatened (216) bird species. Obvious examples were the eastern Bristlebird, the Regent Honeyeater and the Diamond Firetail, to name but a few.

Habitat loss is the greatest threat specially to ground dwelling birds with the huge expansion of development in SE Qld causing enormous strain on our environment. Other major threats to habitat include introduced pasture grasses, such as buffel and green panic, which largely replace or outcompete native pasture.

Yet despite the plethora of threats to bird habitats, ironically, the increase of the native miner (*Manorina melanocephala*) was singled out in Martine's research as a serious threat to other bird species.

Seemingly despised by some, the 'problem' of native miners led to considerable discussion during question time with some noting that human-disturbance of bird habitats is the problem not the miner. Martine reminded us that, when rehabilitating habitat, to mix the plants with low and high understory plants, especially plant species with spiky branches, to discourage miners.

### Updates on grant funded projects

#### *Maintaining and Increasing Native Bird diversity in the Lockyer Uplands*

Thanks to BirdLife Australia's Community Conservation Grants 2023 program, LUCI is extending its bird survey efforts into the Little Liverpool Range (LLR) area to build a regional baseline of bird diversity. To date, project lead and ornithologist Roger Jaensch has recorded 152 bird species across 19 LUCI members' properties. A recent information session attended by LLR landholders saw another eight landholders sign up to have their property included in the bird survey project.



Speckled Warbler recorded on five LUCI members' properties. Photo Roger Jaensch.

The grant will also support the development of a tool for describing bird-habitat relationships that can be used by landholders to understand how birds use habitat resources on their property and how best to manage those resources for continuing bird presence.

The bird survey project is part of a larger strategy called Birds of the Lockyer Uplands Conservation Action Plan, which

aims to maintain/increase the diversity of native bird species across the Lockyer Uplands landscapes by: better understanding what birds we have in the landscape and bird-habitat relationships; improving habitats to keep the birds in the landscape; and advocating to both community and government on bird conservation matters.

#### *Bunyas to Border Corridor project by Justine Rice, LUCI Project Coordinator*

We are thrilled to share the latest accomplishments in our ongoing Bunyas to Border (B2B) Corridor project, which is supported by the Great Eastern Ranges and International Fund for Animal Welfare Koala Climate Corridors initiative. With five tree planting locations now confirmed, on-ground preparation kicks off this month, marking a significant step forward in enhancing our natural habitats. An expected 1,600 trees will be planted in March in the Lockyer valley region and four additional locations across the corridor are also slated to commence planting throughout March, April and May. Community planting days are set to begin in March, with advertisements starting in early February, inviting everyone to join us in making a positive impact.



TREE TROFF® water station for wildlife. Photo WIRES.

Our TREE TROFF® initiative garnered an overwhelming response, with 31 applications received for 45 drinkers. This enthusiasm



reinforces the community's commitment to supporting wildlife. The TREE TROFF® drinkers are expected to be delivered in January and installed by the end of February.

Additionally, in the realm of supplementary habitat, we've selected [Habitech](#) nest boxes for their unparalleled quality and durability. Up to 10 nest boxes suitable for Greater Gliders will be installed by April.



An example of a Habitech nest box. Source: Habitech.

In our commitment to prioritizing conservation efforts, detailed spatial analysis reports have been finalized for the Greater Glider (GG) and Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby (BTRW). These reports guide our survey and monitoring initiatives, directing our focus to priority areas. Details on survey activities are forthcoming within the month following the announcement of our GG and BTRW workshops.

Looking ahead, we're excited to announce plans for workshops and events that promise to be both informative and engaging. April will feature **KoalaFest**, a koala-ty day of industry speakers, stalls, and more, dedicated to celebrating koalas. In May, exciting community workshops will be presented by Wildlife Queensland and will focus on Greater Glider and Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby conservation with demonstrations on nest box installation, survey techniques and monitoring. In June or July, a Bird Day will take place, featuring speakers, stalls, and activities centred around bird conservation.

As we celebrate these achievements, we extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone involved. Your dedication and enthusiasm are driving positive change for our local ecosystems.

### *NRRP funded weed management by Renee Ould, HLW Project Coordinator*

Healthy Land & Water (HLW), with the support of LUCI, are delivering biological control support to land managers with difficult cat's claw creeper (*Dolichandra unguis-cati*) and madeira vine (*Anredera cordifolia*) as part of the Natural Resource Recovery Program funded by the Queensland Government. The NRRP prioritises capacity building activities and targeted incentives to help improve and preserve important native vegetation in the Lockyer Uplands and Little Liverpool Range.

There have only been a few trials of biological controls in the Lockyer and Little Liverpool Ranges, but recent wet weather in the third La Nina event caused a lot of vine weeds to grow. These blooms have given us the opportunity to introduce biocontrol agents in large numbers to the region.

Since December, 2023, there have been 7,000 Cats Claw Creeper Jewel Beetles and 3,050 Madeira Vine Beetles released across the Lockyer Uplands. Delivery of these beetles from Gympie & District Landcare Group will continue over the next few months, with beetles being released weekly.



Renee Ould (Healthy Land & Water) releases Madeira beetles in Dwyers Conservation Park.



A batch of Madeira beetles, *Plectonocha correntina*, sourced from Gympie & District Landcare Group.

LUCI has also assisted Healthy Land & Water with engaging contracted bush regeneration crews from Ecosure to initiate weed control works at selected sites. At these sites, bush regeneration crews will assist landholders with their weed management practices by tackling Lantana and other WONS in an effort to improve native vegetation condition. Whilst there have been a few hurdles impacting this rollout of works, we are expecting works to start very soon and be completed before the end of the 2023/24 financial year.

### ***Protecting vulnerable dry vine forest in Dwyers Scrub CP project by Diane Guthrie***

Benefitting from three-years support from the Queensland Government's Community Sustainability Action Grant 2022, LUCI volunteers continue to treat Cats Claw creeper, Madeira Vine and lantana infestations in the endangered Semi-evergreen vine thicket (SEVT) areas of Dwyers Scrub Conservation Park.

The grant allowed for expert assistance in weed mapping to better inform the development of a weed action plan, contractor assistance with lantana control and the purchase of herbicides and spray packs and personal protective items. Monitoring of established photo points allow LUCI volunteers to chart their progress and report same to the funder.

Our volunteer methods have been augmented by the release of thousands of biocontrols for Cats Claw and Madeira vine, thanks to the NRRP actions described in the previous item. In treating the invasive

vines, LUCI volunteers use a cut and paste method, which avoids any indirect impacts on biocontrols.



Cut and paste method for control of Cats Claw creeper using Vigilant®

### ***Flagstone Creek Conservation Park weed management and native species surveys by Penny Kidd***

Last year LUCI was awarded a [Friends of Parks Queensland](#) - Member Group Grant to enable volunteers to conduct weed control work in Flagstone Creek Conservation Park to improve habitat condition and enhance biodiversity. The grant also supported much needed bird and flora surveys to build a more accurate record of species in the Park.

With work to be completed by end of May, LUCI volunteers will host a Community Open Day on Sunday 26 May (9 - 11.00am) to view the project work (see Upcoming events p.8). For further information, contact Penny Kidd 0407 581 996.

**A new word for our times - [Solastalgia or emotional or existential distress caused by environmental change](#)**

#### **Important numbers:**

**Wildlife carers Kath and Steph 0410 334 661 (available 24/7)**

**Wildlife Rescue Education and Rehabilitation (07) 4630 5208**

**Bat Conservation & Rescue Qld Inc 0488 228134**



### *Insects under LUCI's spotlight in 2024...*

LUCI members' interest in insects has grown since we commenced our bird survey project in 2020 and hosted a workshop by Helen Schwencke last October on Feeding Foodwebs. In December, Great Eastern Ranges Executive Director Gary Howling facilitated a meeting between LUCI and three members of the [Invertebrates Australia team](#) to discuss potential areas of mutual insect interest. At our AGM/GM in December, members approved further LUCI activity on the topic of insects.

Specific topics of interest concern the birds-insects relationship, monitoring insect abundance, identifying insects and cultivating healthy habitats for insects. LUCI will pursue opportunities to address members' interests and keep you posted.

Below are a collection of beetles (Order Coleoptera) observed on one of the (non-native) flowering plants in my garden. I think the first four may be types of Soldier Beetles but I welcome others' views on ID for any of the beetles.



<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/science-research/abrs/publications/other/numbers-living-species/discussion-invertebrates>

[https://www.publish.csiro.au/Michelle Gleeson's Miniature Lives \(2016\)](https://www.publish.csiro.au/Michelle_Gleeson's_Minature_Lives_(2016))

<https://www.brisbaneinsects.com/>

Links of interest...

[University of Sydney. Insect population faces catastrophic collapse.](#)

[CSIRO Blog - Scientists fear insect populations are shrinking. Here are six ways to help.](#)

Without insects, the incredibly complex food webs that feed all faunal species (prey and predators) would collapse and the pollination, waste disposal and pest control services provided to humans would disappear.

### *Calomela fulvilabris* by Martin Bennett

*Calomela* is a genus of beetles commonly called leaf-beetles, which are specialist feeders on various species of *Acacia* but not recorded as a problem species. Native to New Guinea and Australia, *Calomela* includes about 45 species and are found in all states of Australia.

The leaf-eating beetle pictured below was observed in the Ma Ma Creek area. It is uncommon or, at least, poorly recorded in Queensland where there are only three records. The beetle is a bright metallic colour with orange legs. During hot days, the beetle appears to hide in bark and in the drilled holes of wooden fence posts although it comes out to feed on dull cool days or at night.



Beetles appear to be feeding on the seed pods of a Sally wattle. Photo Martin Bennett.

Both adult and larvae feed on *Acacia* leaf while some adults feed on the flower as well. They feed on the chlorophyll of the phyllodes, eating small squares at a time, the affected leaves have a camouflage appearance to them. The plant usually returns to good health after the beetles have finished feeding on it.



Affected phyllodes of a Sally wattle, showing the camouflage appearance. Photo Martin Bennett.

### *Ragweed control* by Martin Bennett

Similar in appearance to Parthenium and also native to North America, Annual ragweed, *Ambrosia artemisiifolia*, is a category 3 restricted invasive plant under Queensland's *Biosecurity Act 2014*. Landholders are required to "take all reasonable and practical measures" to deal with ragweed under their control.<sup>1</sup>



Photo NSW Government Department of Primary Industries.

Treatment options include herbicide<sup>2</sup> although can result in off-target damage to other plants. Biological controls are an option and include a leaf-eating beetle and a stem-galling moth, which have been introduced into Queensland with some limited effects.

<sup>1</sup> [Annual ragweed | Business Queensland](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Annual ragweed Factsheet \(daf.qld.gov.au\)](#)



### *A novice's approach to identifying a bird*

Recently, I have been hearing a bird call that is a single plaintive and repetitive descending note. One day, the call was coming from a spot very close to the house. At first, I thought it was a Brown Quail call as we often have quail families foraging around and under the house.

I tracked the call to a garden at the back of the house, then a tree, and was surprised it was coming from a small-ish 'grey-brown' bird on a branch and not from a brown (quail) bird on the ground. I had my camera so photographed the bird to check against my bird reference book.



Brush Cuckoo tracked down from its insistent calling.

Where do you start with identifying a small grey-brown bird? I'm an amateur so I flick through pages of my reference book and mark all the birds that are possible candidates in terms of colour and size and any obvious marks or patterns, for example, looking for birds of small size, uniform grey colour from head through chest with darker wings and not a honey-eater beak.

Then I start narrowing it down from some obvious attributes, such as the obvious barring on the underside of its tail (brownish bands), which had a white tip, and its yellow feet. Then it's down to finer

details such as the colour of the ring around the eye, grey.

For good measure, I recorded its calls and sent both photo and recording to ornithologist and LUCI member Roger Jaensch with my ID of a Brush Cuckoo, which Roger confirmed. I'm getting better at learning to observe the attributes of birds and working my way through the reference book. I'm also trying to register calls together with visual attributes so that I can monitor presence of different species from call alone.

Of interest, the Brown Quail's call often consists of a combination of a single or two or three notes compared to the descending single, sometimes manic, note of the Brush Cuckoo. Well, that's me the amateur speaking but I'm open to being corrected!

### *Interesting links to follow up...*

Too often, sadly, some native frog species are mistaken and dispatched as cane toads. [Martin Bennett has put together a fact sheet](#) that can help you tell the difference.

Little Liverpool Range Initiative has rescheduled their [Great Southern Bioblitz event to 24th and 25th of February 2024](#)

Worth reading about the 30 years plus journey of this not-for-profit organisation [Big Scrub Rainforest Conservancy](#)

UQ's Patrick Webster, who undertook surveys of the endangered Black-breasted Button quail in our landscape asks [Is the buff-breasted button-quail still alive? After years of searching, this century-old bird mystery has yet to be solved \(theconversation.com\)](#)

Listen to artist cartographer Anton Thomas describe his very interesting project to create a ["Wild World" map](#).

Whatever the continent, the importance of connectivity conservation in allowing species ["room to roam"](#), offers the best chance for population viability.

### The Currawong Soup Tray...by Karen Melissa

Currawongs tend to collect seeds and place them in a pond or bird bath to soften, making them easier to eat later on. Pam and Dave from Forest Hill decided to collect a pile of seeds in their pond, courtesy of the local Currawong, and they offered it to me for propagation. I received a container of what looked like soggy Italian soup mix. I rinsed the seeds in a colander and then placed them in a large tray of mix, covered them lightly with more mix, and waited.



The Currawong Soup Tray - a propagation medium full of surprises. Photo Karen Melissa.

The first thing to pop up was a number of broad-leaved pepper, followed by a few drunken parrot trees. After that came lantana, camphor Laurel, asparagus fern and some kind of palm, but wait, it gets better.....A week or so later, *Melia azedarach*, (White Cedar) and *Chenopogon nutans*, (Climbing saltbush), appeared, and after that, much to my delight, heaps of *Pavetta australiensis*, (butterfly bush), *Smilax australis*, (barbed-wire vine), and *Bridelia leichhardtii*, (small-leaved brush ironbark), a species of which the seed is not always easy to germinate. It's been fascinating to watch this tray - a gift that just keeps on giving!

### Upcoming events...

- ☞ **Propagating Native Plants Workshop** with Karen Melissa at Tanglewood Natives Nursery on **Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> February, 9:00am-12:00pm.** Registrations now closed.
- ☞ **LUCI's Summer Walk, Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> February, on a property in the Hampton area.** Arrive from 8:30am for a **9:00am start.** Martin Bennett will be our guide on this large property, which is largely weed free with regenerating vines and shrubs following early clearing. A chat on long-term fire management will be a focus of the walk. Directions available on booking your place on the walk at [LUCI info](#).
- ☞ A heads up on upcoming **B2B activities, specific dates tba...**
  - March** - invitation to participate in one or more **Community planting days** to enhance koala habitat on five Lockyer properties.
  - April - KoalaFest**, a koala-ty day of industry speakers, stalls, and more, dedicated to celebrating koalas.
  - May** - community **workshops on Greater Glider and Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby** with demonstrations on nest box installation, survey techniques and monitoring to be presented by Wildlife Queensland.
  - June or July** - a Bird Day featuring speakers, stalls, and activities centred around bird conservation. All enquiries to Project Coordinator [Justine Rice](#)
- ☞ **Flagstone Creek Park weed project Community Open Day on Sunday 26 May (9:00-11.00am)** - an opportunity to view the work achieved by LUCI volunteers to improve habitat condition in a less well-known conservation park. The morning will involve a 4WD tour along the Park's eastern boundary on Hell Hole Creek Road and morning tea will be provided. Contact Penny Kidd 0407 581 996 for further details and to RSVP.



### **The Peanut tree... story and photos by Martin Bennett**

The Peanut tree, *Sterculia quadrifida*, flowers and fruits from November-January. A Semi Evergreen Vine Thicket medium-sized tree, it can grow to 30m in height and happily grows on basaltic rock screes. In the Sterculiaceae family, the Peanut tree has an unusually fat stem like a Bottle tree, although not as large, and is deciduous when producing its elaborate fruits.



The small yellow/green flowers have a pleasant scent and the large orange tough skinned fruits split open to expose the black shiny 'peanuts'. These black seeds are edible and taste like raw peanuts but require the thin black bitter skin peeled off before eating. They can be roasted and salted or eaten raw.



*Sterculia quadrifida*, Peanut Tree. Photos by Martin Bennett.

**If you would like to share your stories and photos, we'd love to receive them. If you do not want to be included on the email list for this newsletter please let us know at [LUCI](#)**

**Newsletter Editor Diane Guthrie 0413 333 681**



Monarch butterfly larvae.

**Stay connected, it's healthy!**