

# Mitchell River Review

June 2005

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## Bellyache bush ? The next “rubber vine”

Weeds are one of the biggest issues that we have to deal with, whether it is a landholder managing a large pastoral property or a small urban or semi rural lot. Not everyone agrees on which species should be classified as weeds but we do agree that it is a plant growing in the wrong place at the wrong time! In Australia, weeds cost more than 4 billion dollars each year and that doesn't account for all the in-kind work done by landholders!

Experts are now stating that bellyache bush (BAB) could become our next rubber vine.

There are two infestations in the Mitchell catchment and the Group is working with landholders and government staff, assisted by funding from Australian Government Envirofund program, to try and control these outbreaks before they infest the whole river system. So far these infestations are only within the high banks of the waterways but BAB is happy to grow in most


soil types and pasture covers and quickly outcompetes native vegetation. It impacts on our biodiversity, the native flora and fauna.

In Queensland its area of infestation has increased 70% in the last two years. It is a huge problem in the Burdekin. BAB is poisonous to stock and people. For further information about this weed please contact MRWWMG.



Sid Clayton  
Mareeba  
Shire pest  
Officer  
amongst  
bellyache  
bush on  
Emu Creek

The Queensland Government Gambling Community Benefit Fund provided \$7909 to MRWWMG for community education and awareness resources. This publication is part of that project.



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## ‘Weedies’ get together at the Weed Symposium

In late May, 268 people from all over Queensland (in fact there were representatives from all over Australia and even NZ) with an interest in weeds gathered in Townsville for the 8<sup>th</sup> Queensland Weed Symposium. People attending included landholders, local government, State agency

officers, Landcare, students and contractors. There were some very interesting papers, presentations, posters discussions and field trips. One of the most devastating presentations showed photos around the Pacific. All those tourist brochures and images of lush green

islands have fooled many people – much of that lush green is massive weed infestations!!

For instance *Miconia calvescens* covers 70% of the hillsides in Tahiti and this weed has been found in the wet Tropical World Heritage area in the very east of the Mitchell catchment and Northern Gulf region.

The Weed Symposium field demonstration of the

Ellrott plough clearing Chinese apple was impressive. This 3-metre front mounted blade-plough can munch through plants of any size in a range of soil types.

An example given by one landholder was a saving of 10:1 of time and labour in comparison to basal barking. (No contact with those savage prickles either!!)

## Landcare In Irvinebank



Ian Adcock (L) MRWMC Executive member, with Irvinebank Landcare Group members and John Wason (R) Northern Gulf deputy Chair and Bar Barrum Traditional Owner

MRWMC attended the inaugural meeting of the Irvinebank Landcare Group

in November 2004. This enthusiastic group of volunteers have been actively involved in natural resource management within the Greater Irvinebank Area.

The Group has already received a number of grants to undertake natural resource management in this historic town. They received a grant from DNR&M to establish a native garden alongside Gibbs Creek, on the southern entry point to the town. "The planting will beautify

the area while helping raise awareness of the role riparian vegetation plays in the health of rivers and creeks", Irvinebank Chairperson Donna Meade said.

Irvinebank is regarded as a botanically important area and is known among plant enthusiasts for some of its endemic species including *Acacia purpureopetala* and *Grevillea glossadenia*.

## Irvinebank School Students

Students from the school were invited to assist the Group in designing an appropriate logo for the Irvinebank Landcare group. A competition was held and all the students submitted a design, each entry was worthy of a prize! Well done to the winner Tahlia Millard, and we would like to thank all the people at the John Moffat Festival who judged the competition in absolute earnest.

The Landcare Group and school students will be involved in a joint project to rehabilitate a degraded area

and create a native garden. Planting species endemic to the Greater Irvinebank area, the school will have a valuable environmental study site for present and future students. Each student may plant their own tree with a botanical marker identifying the species, date planted, and student's name. Queensland Government's Gambling Community Benefit Fund provided \$3468.30 to the Irvinebank Landcare Group to establish this native garden.



Irvinebank State School students with teacher Belinda Featherstone



Simon Glead among the sisal (*Agave sisalana*) on Gibbs Creek

## National Bush Fund Grant

The Irvinebank Landcare Group has been approved for project funding in the latest round of grants from the nationwide Bundaberg Rum Bush Fund. \$2505 has been approved to rehabilitate and protect a section of Gibbs Creek. The Bundaberg Rum Bush Fund is in its second year and is a joint initiative with Landcare Aus-

tralia to help protect and repair Australia's rivers and waterways. Mareeba Environmental College and Irvinebank Landcare Group are working jointly on this project. Students from the MEC, under the guidance of consultant/lecturer Simon Glead, will prepare a report and plan for the rehabilitation of this site.

## Barbarrum Cultural Centre

The Queensland Government Gambling Community Benefit Fund provided \$5500 to MRWVG for the purchase of a new water tank for the Bar Barrum Cultural Centre at Emuford.

Having a water tank at this outstation will create much needed opportunities in the development of indigenous youth by allowing them back on country throughout the year and able to participate fully in their community.

The Bar Barrum people are members of the Northern Gulf Indigenous Sa-

vanna Group (NGISG) and are in the process of developing a plan that will reflect the aspirations of the NGISG in 'Caring for Country'.

MRWVG are working closely with the Bar Barrum in caring for country, this includes working on bellyache bush management, protection of waterways and revegetation of creeks.

The Bar Barrum people are undertaking a number of TAFE courses in line with their development plan and these courses will increase economic opportunities for the cultural centre.



Bar Barrum elders Max & Lily Motlap and other community members with the new water tank at the Bar Barrum Cultural Centre.

## Mareeba Environmental College (MEC)

The Mareeba Environmental College (MEC) plays an integral role within the regional community, collaborating with various community natural resource management groups and agencies to strategically contribute to the environment within our region. The college has students studying Certificate and Diploma courses in

Conservation and Land Management. Since working on the Australian Government Envirofund Project at Mt Molloy, MRWVG and MEC have continued to strengthen their working relationship. MEC are assisting the MRWVG with three new projects; managing BAB on the Walsh River, erecting fencing and preparing a

report for the rehabilitation of Molloy Lagoon, and also preparing a report for the Irvinebank Landcare Group for the rehabilitation of a section of Gibbs Creek in Irvinebank. The MRWVG look forward to continuing this strong relationship in the future, as more projects arise.

**Note :** As of 1 July 2005 MEC is now known as Australian Agricultural College Corporation - Mareeba Campus.

## Molloy Lagoon Rehabilitation Project



JAMARR volunteers in the sicklepod at Molloy lagoon June 2004

Molloy lagoon forms part of a unique upland off-stream lagoon system in the Rifle Creek Reserve area, this system fills with overland flows during flood events. Molloy lagoon is an important permanent water source for fauna during the harshest part of the dry season when Rifle Creek stops flowing and smaller water holes dry up. The lagoon is under threat from invasion of weeds, including sicklepod (*Senna obtusifolia*), fire, stray stock and feral animals.

This exciting joint project involves Julatten and Molloy Area Residents

and Ratepayers (JAMARR) Environment group, Mareeba Shire Council, Queensland Parks and Wildlife, Mareeba Environmental College and MRWVG. We are maintaining the integrity of this biodiversity by rehabilitating the area including managing weeds, primarily sicklepod fencing off and revegetating with native tree shrub species. Funds have been provided from the NGRMG Incentives for Managing Native Vegetation which is funded by the National Landcare Program.

# Fire Project Update

Following generally poor wet season rainfall in 2005 many property owners are expressing concern over the threat posed by wildfires during the next few months. As in previous years, fire project staff will attempt to keep individual landowners informed about fire threats as they develop. The North Australia Fire Project has recently launched an improved website to provide current fire location information as well as access to fire history information dating back to 1997.

Access the new site at <http://firenorth.org.au> It includes a number of detailed "help" and "background" pages to assist users in getting the most out of the site.

The Cape York component of the Fire Project is to receive \$319,000 of Natural Heritage Trust funding following an announcement released by Queensland and Australian Government ministers on 31 March. Key aspects covered by this funding include continuation of fire information delivery, support for the aerial incendiary program and the training and employment of a number of local people to provide key contact and extension roles. Property level fire management plans and developing appropriate engagement and training opportunities with Indigenous communities are also priorities. Closer working relationships with other projects such as the Grazing Land Management Project and Landcare will assist land owners improve their capacity to manage complex issues and develop appropriate practical techniques for better management outcomes.

Feedback and suggestions are always appreciated and any queries can be directed to Peter Thompson on 40313432 or email [peter@cypda.com.au](mailto:peter@cypda.com.au).

## What's happening on the Rivers

People have been commenting for a long time how the rivers have changed. River beds are filling with sediment and many large waterholes have disappeared. We need to have a clear understand of exactly what is happening and why.

Researchers from Griffith University's Centre for Riverine landscapes have received funding from Land and Water Australia as part of a research program to improve understanding of ecosystem processes in rivers of tropical Australia that will help manage them in a sustainable way.

The geology of the landscape is a major factor. A pilot study will be undertaken on the Mitchell catch-

ment (the Mitchell has the largest discharge of water into the Gulf). This study will provide insights into sediment sources, erosion rates and processes underpinning the liberation of sediment from source zones.

The way sediment moves in a river system underpins a broad range of ecosystem processes and habitat dynamics in the river system itself, as well as the estuaries and the marine environment.

Field measurement and sediment sample collection will be extremely low key and done in a way to minimize environmental impact. The collection of samples will involve taking a few hundred grams from within

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Sustainable Management of the Mitchell Catchment

**Check out our website  
[mitchell-river.com.au](http://mitchell-river.com.au)**

### What's coming up:

**Next Mitchell meeting**— Kowanyama 12-13 July

**Landcare Conference Barcaldine** 4-7 August

**Membership**— \$2.00 due 1 September 2005

**Annual General Meeting**— Chillagoe, September

Have your say about management in the Mitchell.

Become involved, this is an opportunity to represent your catchment on the executive committee.



An eroding bend on the lower Mitchell - March 2004  
(photo Jim Tait-Econcern)

river banks, on river beds, and on hill-slope surfaces. Manually collected sediment cores will also be gathered from selected swamp or wetland sites. MRWVG will be assisting researchers to contact all relevant landholders and traditional owners to seek permission before work proceeds at end of July 05.