

SLCMA Catchment News



**February/March
2019**

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**Office
opening times:**

**Monday to Thursday
9-12noon**

**(other times,
by appointment only)**

Staff

Administration Officer

Kristy Thomsett

Coordinator

Saskia von Fahland

Project Officer

Adam Eaton

Call us for information:

- ◇ Weed management
- ◇ Plant identification
- ◇ Land management
- ◇ Local projects
- ◇ FREE property visits
- ◇ Land for Wildlife

Volunteer opportunities:

SLCMA Community
Volunteer Program,
Wednesday 9-12noon

SLCMA Executive 18/19

Chair: Mark Evans

Vice-chair: Karen May

Treasurer: Jeff Burt

Secretary: Grace Tipping

Executive members:

Sandy Evans
Lachlan McBride



Aerial feral pig control follow-up a success!

A follow-up aerial feral pig control event was undertaken in the Rocky Dam Creek catchment on 20 February. A combination of feedback from landholders, a solid knowledge of the area and good timing (with high tides and full wetlands from recent rain), saw 53 feral pigs controlled.

Rocky Dam Catchment includes farming land (grazing, cane and horticulture) as well as ecologically significant wetlands and other natural areas. All of which are negatively impacted by feral pigs through crop destruction, habitat and soil degradation, direct predation, and native vegetation disturbance. Feral pigs are considered to be one of the highest priority pests under the Mackay Regional Pest Management Plan and State Legislation.

This event was a follow-up of a larger scale aerial control event carried out across the Rocky Dam and Carmila Catchments, in December 2018; which saw 127 feral pigs controlled.

Since the start of the control program in 2008, landholders across the catchments have seen a drastic improvement in the productivity of farming land as well as improvements in the health of surrounding mangrove and wetland environments.

The ongoing involvement and financial commitment of the landholders, stakeholders and project partners has made the program successful over the years, ensuring ongoing sustained pressure on the feral pig population in the catchments. SLCMA will continue to work with landholders in both the catchments on follow-up events throughout the year. Thankyou to the landholders, stakeholders and Reef Catchments for their involvement and financial contribution towards this follow up event.

Healthy Rivers to Reef Partnership — Mackay Whitsundays: 2017 Report Card

The 2017 Report Card has been posted online <https://healthyriverstoreef.org.au/report-card/report-card-download/>. You can go online to see the results of this years research & surveys into the quality of our regions' coastal waters & river catchments. The online report is interactive and covers Environmental, Stewardship, Cultural Heritage, Social, Economic, Marine Debris & Coral Bleaching reporting.

While you there, check out other areas of the website including 'The Catchments' feature under the 'Our Region' banner. The QLD Wetlands Program has produced a series of Walking the Landscape Catchment Stories for each of catchments or river basins in our region including- the Don, Proserpine, Pioneer, O'Connell & Plane Creek River basins. Each Catchment story details the way in which water moves through the catchment on its way to the sea. Information in these Walking the Landscape series covers geology, topography, rainfall patterns, land uses, vegetation and human impacts. Understanding these fundamental processes enables decision making for the sustainable management of these important river systems. There are great interactive maps too.

The Healthy Rivers to Reef Partnership, hosted by Reef Catchments, is a collaboration between Community, Traditional Owners, Farmers and Fishers, Industry and Science—26 local organisations— seeking to understand and improve the health of the Mackay- Whitsunday waterways and marine environment.



Photos: M Sant

*Feral Pig controlled in cane;
Helicopter taking off*



SLCMA Community Volunteer Program *by Adam Eaton*

It's hard to believe we are half way through March already and after the last few years of below average rainfall we have been treated to a nice start to the wet season.

After all of this rain it is great see the plants in the nursery looking lush and green. There is an abundance of fresh seed this time of year and the humid weather is helping with germination. All of which is keeping our volunteer team busy seed raising and potting-on, and filling the nursery benches with new plants.

The volunteers have also been busy helping with the stocktake and plant orders. The stocktake was a good opportunity for a thorough clean out and to find some hidden treasures that had gathered over the years. With the stocktake complete, we have moved on to preparing plant orders for future revegetation projects. With a good team of volunteers, it is amazing to see how many plants we could get ready in such short time.

Last year we were donated a brush chipper from Sarina State School. After sitting in the shed with little use over the years, it required a little bit of maintenance. A few of the volunteers with a mechanical background ran their eye over it and with a bit of tinkering had it operating again. The chipper will be a handy asset to have, especially in the Sarina Community Native Gardens—to dispose of branches and create mulch for the gardens. A big thankyou to Sarina State School for their generous donation.

We are aiming to head out of the nursery more regularly this year, to give our volunteers the chance to see some of our local natural areas; brush up on plant identification skills and collect native seed. On these mornings, we will still meet at the nursery at 9am and be ready to leave by 9.15am. We will travel to the chosen site via the SLCMA Work car and car-pooling and, return by 12 noon unless otherwise advised.

Amongst the work, we always make sure we take a well-deserved morning tea break. Often being treated to some yummy home baking from our volunteers. Smoko time is always welcomed and the team are always bringing in all sorts of tasty snacks, one of our newest volunteers Calvin brought in one of his famous black sapote and walnut loafs which was a delicious treat. After a great start to the year I'm looking forward to the rest of the 2019 with the team and encourage anyone to come along or if you're already a volunteer to bring a friend.

If you would like to volunteer in your local community and meet new people while learning about local native plants and their propagation, come along to the SLCMA Community Volunteer morning, every Wednesday, 9am to 12noon. The SLCMA Community Volunteer Program is proudly supported by Mackay Regional Council, Natural Environment Levy. For more details contact SLCMA on 4956 1388.

Land for Wildlife Program

The annual Land for Wildlife (LFW) field trip was held at the end of last year, at the spectacular property of David & Donna Lowe, who operate the eco-tourism experience 'Forest Flying', Finch Hatton.



Photo: S von Fahland
Mulcher donated from Sarina State School

Despite the warm weather, attendees enjoyed the trip up the Pioneer valley which started with introductions and afternoon tea by the crystal clear creek. This was followed by a guided tour of the property showcasing beautiful views and a diversity of habitats including rainforest, riparian forest and eucalypt woodland. The event ended at sunset with good conversations over a bbq, 'beer, bubbly & bats' while watching the flying fox colony that roosts on the property, take flight.

A big thankyou to hosts, David & Donna Lowe for sharing their property and stories with us. David & Donna have been in the LFW program for 19 years and are extremely proud of their 20 hectares of paradise. These trips are a great way to showcase the hard work of our members as well as an opportunity to connect with other LfW members and share knowledge of what landholders are doing to protect and enhance the natural areas on their own properties.

SLCMA delivers the Land for Wildlife program within the Sarina Catchment area of Mackay Regional Council, on behalf of Mackay Regional Council. If you would like to find out more about the LfW program and how to become involved, please contact us on 4956 1388 or admin@sarinalandcare.org.au



(Left) View at the end of the tour (Middle) Enjoying evening meal (Right) Flying foxes flying out at dusk

SLCMA Community Nursery “Plant of the Month”

This month's 'Plant of the Month' is **Native Rosella** *Abelmoschus moschatus subsp. tuberosus*

Family: Malvaceae

What is in a name? *Abelmoschus* derived from Arabic *abu-l-mosk* (father of musk) referring to the sweet, flowery, scented seeds similar to musk. *Moschatus* Latin for 'musk' refers specifically to the scented seeds.



Photo: S von Fahland

Flowers of Native Rosella (*Abelmoschus moschatus subsp. tuberosus*)

Form: Perennial herb or small shrub, with soft hairy stems.

Leaves: Alternate, rough, hairy, heart-shaped or lobed leaves.

Flowers: Hibiscus-like, vivid watermelon pink (sometimes white or yellow) with a dark centre appearing at the start of the wet season, between November and April.

Fruit: Capsules, hairy & woody.

Habitat: In seasonally wet areas or near creeks, open woodland and forest, in a wide range of soils from sands to heavy clays.

Distribution: Across northern Australia.

Notes: The foliage dies back in the dry season to grow again from its tuber during the wet season. A great addition in small gardens and a welcome surprise at the start of the wet season with its bright pink flowers.

The "Plant of the Month" is currently available from the SLCMA Community Nursery. Landcare members are eligible to receive 1 free "Plant of the Month" throughout that month. This and other native plant species are also available for purchase at \$3 each. All plants are grown from locally collected seed in the SLCMA Community Nursery by SLCMA staff and the SLCMA Volunteer team. Please contact SLCMA on 49561 388 for more information.

Information sourced from: Townsend (1994) *Across the Top*

Wildlife of the wet season

From drought and bushfires to summer rain...the wet season, is a time of magnificent skyscapes, dramatic thunderstorms and rushing creeks and rivers. It is also a time of celebration as summer rain, revitalises plants and animals that have been suffering from the stress of a prolonged dry season.

With the wet season well and truly upon us, you may have noticed an abundance of new wildlife, fresh plant growth and critters using or moving through your property. Here are just a few observations you may have noticed.

Seasonal creeks, for most of the year are dry, showing a wonderful assortment of round river-rock of all colours and sizes. However, after the first flush, the pools are filled, rocks covered and there is an instant influx of aquatic life including freshwater yabbies, gudgeons and rainbowfish. For some fish, such as sooty grunter and certain catfish, this is an opportunity to make their way upstream seeking flowing water which they need for breeding. Other fish, such as barramundi, ox-eye herring and jungle perch, move in the opposite direction swimming downstream as soon as the rivers begin to flow well. They must breed in salt or brackish water; their sperm, eggs and/or larvae cannot survive in fresh water.

Seasonal wetlands, like in the Sarina Community Native Gardens become alive with an abundance of freshwater crabs and subsequent birdlife looking for a tasty treat.

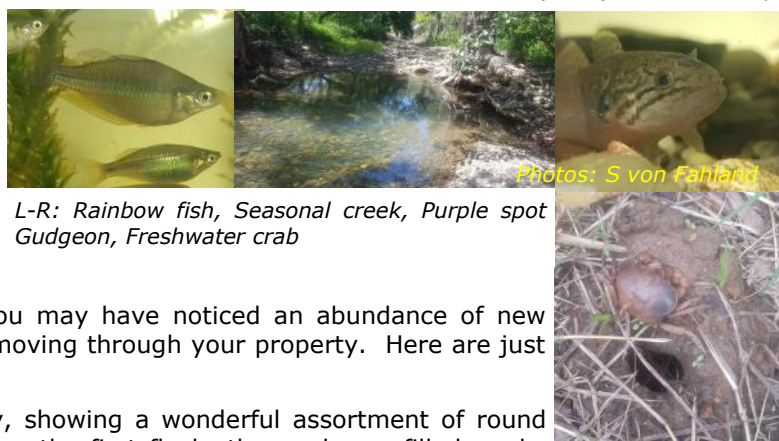
Insects thrive in response to summer warmth, humidity and rain, their rush to breed forming the basis of a flourishing food chain which includes frogs, fish, insectivorous bats, birds and reptiles in its links. A shower on a humid evening may inspire winged termites to spill out from their nests. Appearing in sudden clouds, most of these sexually active adults have a limited future. Birds wheel and swoop, darting at the winged bonanza. Those termites which escape lose their wings when they fall to the ground but, if they are able to mate, may establish a new colony.

Rain stimulates **frogs** to breed. **Waterbirds** in Australia tend to be nomadic, their movements dictated by rainfall. When the wet season begins they spread out, moving away from the shrunken pools and billabongs.

Water soaking into the roots of the **plants** leads to a **flush of growth**, the new leaves on many tropical plants glowing pink, red or bronze. The pigment, anthocyanin, which creates this colourful display, may act as a sunscreen to protect the tender young leaves as they are developing.

Like nature, make the most of this time of year!

Information adapted from [Tropical topics Newsletter article 2011](#) and personal observations.



L-R: Rainbow fish, Seasonal creek, Purple spot Gudgeon, Freshwater crab

Photos: S von Fahland

Keep our waterways free of Pest Fish

Catchment Solutions were engaged by Fisheries Queensland to undertake electrofishing surveys to investigate recent reports of Peacock Bass in the Gooseponds, Mackay. Unfortunately, after extensive sampling throughout the Gooseponds wetlands and the lower reaches of Janes Creek, two mature male Peacock Bass were recorded.

Peacock Bass are a large voracious predatory fish species native to the Amazon basin in South America. The species is also a popular aquarium fish in Australia, and it is likely that the 2 specimens captured in the Gooseponds were deliberately released. The highly predatory Peacock Bass represents a **significant threat to native fish** communities, including important recreational and commercial fish species such as juvenile barramundi.

Sampling activities also removed high numbers of invasive pest fish; tilapia, which have become well established in the wetlands. It is vital that all aquarium fish are **not** released into the wild. If any non-native fish are captured from the wild please do not release them – take a photo and notify Fisheries Queensland on 132 523. Thanks to Fisheries Queensland for their efficient response to initial reports and being proactive on this important issue.

On positive note, numbers of barramundi were very high throughout the Gooseponds, ranging from this seasons recruits (210mm) right through to large mature specimens, including a 920mm fish. The high numbers of barramundi and widespread distribution throughout the Gooseponds can be attributed to many fantastic habitat (log hotels) and connectivity (fishways) projects initiated by the Mackay Regional Council, Reef Catchments and Mackay Recreational Fishing Alliance. All the more reason, to keep our local waterways free of exotic pest fish.

In an attempt to eradicate the peacock bass out of our local waters. Mackay Recreational Fishing Alliance (MRFA) have announced a \$50 bounty on all Peacock Bass caught in the Lower Pioneer River or Gooseponds (with strict requirements and conditions to ensure people do not empty their aquariums), please contact MRFA by email on mrfa@easynet.net.au for more details.

Native Bee Workshop



Come along and learn the basics of native bee management with [Native Bee Rescue & Education Sunshine Coast](#) (NBR & ESC) on Friday 12 April 2019.

Where: SLCMA Office, 101 Beach Road, Sarina

When: 12 April 2019, 9.30 – 12.00noon.

Cost: \$15

Details for RSVP are still being finalised, in the meantime please contact SLCMA to register your interest in attending. A flyer will be out shortly.

Note from the organisers NBR & ESC: *We like to have people arrive at 9.30 for a chat & 10am start the presentation. This usually goes for around 2 hours. As we transfer a hive from an old log or box into new OATH boxes you get to see & have explained every detail of a native bee hive and its occupants. Propagation & best management is also discussed. This is a very popular workshop.*

International Year of the Reef 2018

2018 was International Year of the Reef and through this initiative, partners of the Healthy River to Reef partnership put forward some fantastic and diverse pledges that themselves and their organisations would commit to, to help look after our Great Barrier Reef and coral reef worldwide.



SLCMA's pledge was to reduce waste, particularly single-use plastics. See other pledges [here](#).

Photo: Catchment Solutions



Peacock Bass from Gooseponds

The **SLCMA Revegetation Team** searching for the 'gold at the end of the rainbow' ...and doing a great job looking after one of the Reef Catchments NDRAA revegetation sites, recently.



Photo: W von Fahland



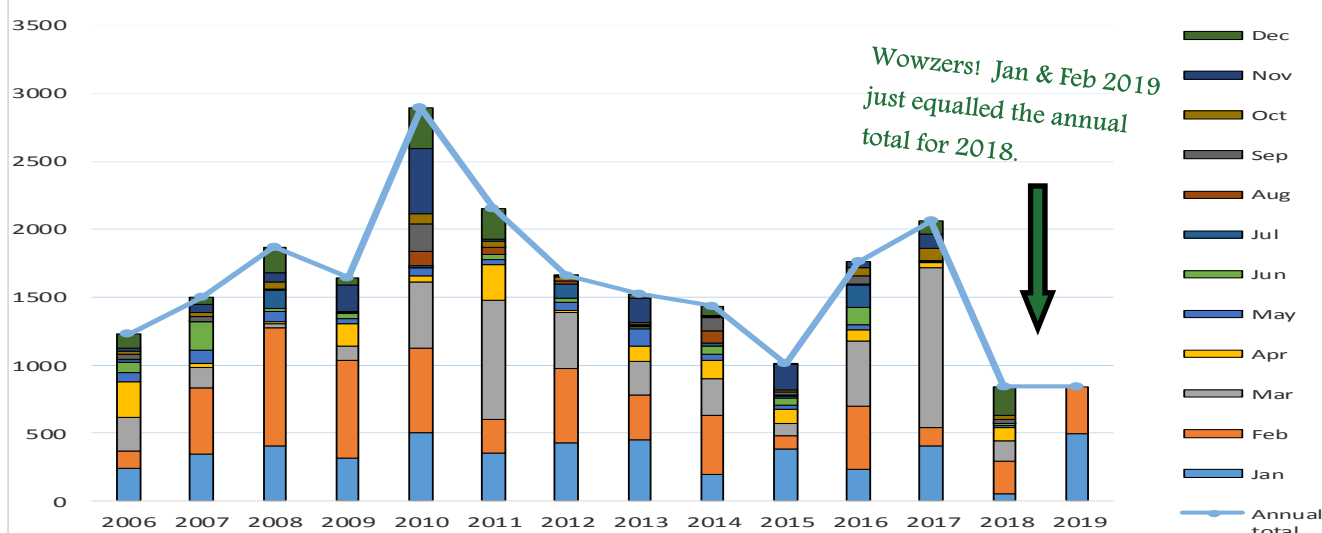
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What SLCMA Membership does for you !

A membership with SLCMA has many rewards:

- ◇ Easy access to Natural Resource Management information and extension
- ◇ Monthly newsletter, meeting minutes, progress and project reports
- ◇ A vote on issues in your catchment
- ◇ A say in the types of projects applied for
- ◇ Up to 10 free local native seedlings/year from the SLCMA Community Nursery
- ◇ Invitations to Natural Resource Management field days and workshops
- ◇ Copy of the SLCMA Annual Report
- ◇ Discounts on purchases of books for sale

Monthly rainfall for SLCMA Office, 2006 -2019 (inc annual total)



Just for fun!

An old ringer walks into a barbershop for a shave and a haircut. He tells the barber he cant get all his whiskers off because his cheeks are wrinkled from age. The barber gets a little wooden ball from a cup on the shelf and tells the old ringer to put it inside his cheek to spread out the skin.

When he is finished, the old ringer tells the barber that was the cleanest shave he'd had in years, but he wanted to know what would have happened if he had accidentally swallowed that little ball.

The barber replied, just bring it back in a couple of days like everyone else does.



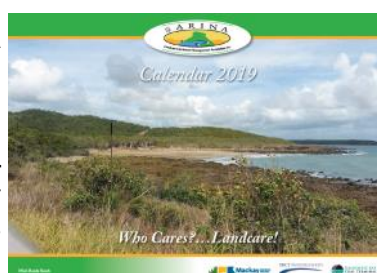
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A partnership for the natural resource management of catchments in the Central Queensland Coast Bioregion: Pioneer, Sarina & Whitsunday Catchments.

We still have some copies of the 2019 SLCMA Calendar available. Members are entitled to one free calendar and subsequent copies available for purchase for \$10 each.

A big thankyou to photographers for their contributions and to Mackay Regional Council, DBCT PL and DBCT Management for their support towards the printing of the calendar.



SLCMA is proudly supported by:





A big thankyou to those who have donated their container refunds to SLCMA. Your donation will help us to continue helping the local community and carryout various landcare projects and community education programs.

When you are returning your containers, write our identifier '**C10002138**' on a piece of paper and place it IN the bag with your eligible returned containers. See below for a page of coupons with our ID number— to get you started :)

Please visit <https://www.containersforchange.com.au/where-can-i-return> to find a drop off point that is close to you! Alternatively, you can drop them into the Landcare Office at 101 Beach Road.

- ⇒ Eligible containers and the ID number should be placed in an opaque bag and put inside the drop bins.
- ⇒ Containers must be empty and the caps removed.
- ⇒ Most aluminium, glass, plastic, steel and liquid paper-board beverage containers between 150ml and 3 litres are eligible for a refund (such as soft drinks, water bottles and small flavoured milk)
- ⇒ Containers must also have held a beverage included in the scheme and display the refund mark.

Sarina Landcare Catchment Management Assoc. Inc. (SLCMA) appreciates your donation through the Container refund scheme, our identification code is:

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