

SLCMA Catchment News 2021



May

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Office opening
hours:
9am-4pm weekdays.

Other times by
appointment, please
call 4956 1388 :)

Staff

Administration Officer
Kristy Thomsett

Coordinator
Saskia von Fahland

Nursery Officer
Susie Tomlinson

Project Officer
Morgan Thomas

Call us for information:

- ◆ Weed management
- ◆ Plant identification
- ◆ Land management
- ◆ FREE property visits
- ◆ Land for Wildlife

Volunteer opportunities:

SLCMA Community
Volunteer Program,
Wednesday 9-12 noon—
please register prior, to
attend.

Native plants available for
purchase \$3.30 each.

SLCMA Executive 20/21

Chair: Mark Evans

Vice-chair: Lachlan McBride

Treasurer: Kevin Plumb

Secretary: Shirley Sidey

Executive members:

Sandy Evans
Karen May



SLCMA News and events!

COVID-safety — To ensure that all visitors, volunteers and staff stay as safe as possible. Please be aware of the following procedures when visiting the SLCMA Office and SLCMA Community Nursery.

- ◆ Please do NOT visit/attend if you are feeling unwell, have recently travelled to known hotspots or have been in contact with someone who has the COVID-19 virus.
- ◆ All visitors must: * Complete the sign-in/out register * Maintain social distancing (minimum 1.5m spacing) * Utilise hand sanitiser supplied upon entry & exit to the office or nursery

Upcoming events

Seed Collection and Awareness Event

When: Wednesday 2 June 2021

Time: 9.30am - 11.30am

Where: Louisa Creek Reserve, Edmonds Ave, opposite Community Hall. Morning tea provided. *Supported by Communities Environment Program.*



Plane Creek Revegetation Site—Working Bee

When: Friday 11 June 2021

Time: 2:30pm - 4:30pm

Where: Plane Creek Revegetation Site (Brewers Road Reserve). Morning tea provided. *Supported by Mackay Regional Council Natural Environment Levy.*

Rubbish Collection and Guided Walk

When: Friday 25 June 2021

Time: 9am - 11am

Where: 9am—Sarina Beach Boat Ramp
approx. 9.45am—Sarina Inlet Trail (opposite Service Station)
Morning tea provided. *Supported by Communities Environment Program.*

For ALL activities please:

Wear: Closed shoes and long sleeve shirt; long pants recommended.

Bring: Water bottle, hat and your passion!

RSVP: Register your attendance and advise of dietary requirements, prior to the event by calling 4956 1388 or email admin@sarinalandcare.org.au

*** Gloves, tools and PPE will be provided by SLCMA***

Come and soak up some warmth in the sunshine while getting your hands dirty to help your local environment!

Free land management support

Last chance to get involved in our Reef Assist program and benefit from FREE land management support for eligible landholders. Your goal must be to protect or enhance natural values such as native vegetation, waterways on your own property. Participants must be committed to ongoing works into the future.

Participants will receive for free:

- A property visit from your local Landcare Officer
- 2 days of onground labour from our Landcare Reef Assist Team (2 persons)
- Land management and technical advice and information pack
- Personalised land management plan specific to your goals
- 40 local native plants (and plant guard kits) to help enhance you're the natural areas on your property

The expression of interest can be found on our website ([click here](#)) or contact us on admin@sarinalandcare.org.au

Weed Feature: Common Sensitive Plant (*Mimosa pudica*)

A very common weed found in the Sarina Catchment in disturbed areas is Sensitive Weed/Plant (*Mimosa pudica*).

Sensitive weed originates from Central and South America and was likely introduced into Australia as an ornamental plant which has then “jumped the fence” as an escaped garden plant.

It is a prickly, long-lived herb or small shrub which can occasionally become woody with age, exhibiting a creeping or low sprawling habit. Although it typically only grows to 15-50cm tall but can sometimes grow to 1 metre tall when supported by other vegetation. Stems are rounded, reddish-brown or purple and are armed with scattered curved prickles.

Leaves of the plant are dark green, feathery, fern-like and divided into one or more pairs of segments near the end of the leaf stalk. Each segment is divided into many pairs of leaflets (10-25) which close when disturbed or injured. Flowers are pink or purplish-pink and fluffy, in clusters resembling pom-poms.

Seed pods of Sensitive Weed are oblong and flattened, clustered together at the end of stalks. Pods can contain 1-5 seeds and the edges are covered in stiff almost prickly bristles. They are initially green and turn brown and breaking into one-seeded segments when mature.

Sensitive weed is widely distributed and most commonly found in coastal areas of northern and central Queensland. It is a weed of disturbed and cultivated areas such as roadsides, vacant allotments, heavily grazed pastures, crops, and lawns.

Sensitive weed contains the compound “mimosine” (which also occurs in *Leucaena leucocephala*), which can cause a range of problems in cattle such as loss of appetite, enlarged thyroid glands, poor breeding performance, tongue ulceration and congested buckle cavity, scaly skin, and ear and eye lesions.

Sensitive weed spreads via movement of animals or people, with the pods readily attaching to wool, fur, clothing etc., and small seed segments can spread easily in water. Seeds can remain viable for many years.

Where manual/mechanical control methods will not suffice, chemical control may be useful. See the [DAF Pest Fact Sheet](#) for recommended control methods including permitted herbicides. https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/58015/common-sensitive-plant.pdf

Information sourced from: <https://profiles.ala.org.au/opus/weeds-australia/profile/Mimosa%20pudica>; Koli, P., Bhardwaj, N. R., & Kautkar, S. (2018). Mimosine: a toxic chemical for livestock feed. *Popular Kheti*, 6(1), 146-149.



Photo: BSES



Photo: S von Fahland

Sensitive weed flowers and leaves.

Working Bee - Louisa Creek Reserve

On Tuesday the 25th of May, we had the pleasure of hosting our first working bee in what will be a series of working bees across the Catchment. The working bees aim to provide opportunities for the local community to get involved with hands-on landcare activities at some of our project sites. Participants will learn about weed identification and management, local native plants and general principles of rehabilitating natural areas.

The first working bee was held at Louisa Creek Reserve, a Land for Wildlife registered property managed by Mackay Regional Council. The area has received a great amount of community support and involvement over the years—working to enhance and protect the important coastal reserve for the future. A big thank you to participants who came along who, with smiles on their faces got their hands dirty helping to weed around one of our revegetation areas. The important work will help reduce weeds and build the health and resilience of the native plants, giving them a better opportunity to survive. We also planted an additional 10 native plants in some of the bare sections. A huge thank you to all those that came along and helped out, we could not have done it without you.

If you are interested in joining in future working bees, please feel free to contact us or check out our Facebook page for upcoming events. We have a few working bees scheduled throughout June with a range of activities including weeding, seed collection, planting and marine debris clean ups...we look forward to seeing you soon :). *This working bee was proudly supported by Mackay Regional Council Natural Environment Levy.*



Photos: M. Thomas



Above: Volunteers getting stuck into weeding one of our revegetation areas and planting native species.

Koala-ty Information Session—Land for Wildlife Field Trip

On Tuesday 11th May, SLCMA hosted the 2021 Land for Wildlife (LfW) “Koala-ty Information Session” Field Trip, with special guest speaker Dr Alistair Melzer, a koala expert from CQUniversity. LfW landholders and community members were invited to attend the field trip to learn more about our local koalas; including how to identify evidence of koala presence via scats, tracks and scratches; koala habitat within our region and the importance of connectivity and enhancing habitat across the landscape. We were also lucky to have staff from Department of Transport and Main Roads attend, who were available to answer questions about the great work they are doing to help our local koalas, such as koala fencing initiatives along Peak Downs Highway.



Photo: M Thomas

Above: Field trip participants learning about Koalas in our region and observing the koala exclusion fencing.

Luckily at one of our stops, we were able to spot a koala and her joey, resting close by in an Ironbark (*Eucalyptus crebra*). Spotting a koala is not as easy as some might think, as they tend to remain motionless when a perceived threat is present and they also have flecked hindquarters (*with the white patches becoming more pronounced with age*). This pattern provides them with a surprising degree of camouflage when sitting in the trees.

There are a number of signs that can help determine if koalas are present in an area. One sign, is scratch marks on tree trunks. Although, these should be interpreted with care, as other animals such as possums or goannas can inflict similar scratches. With a keen eye, you will notice that Koala scratches create distinctive parallel scratches on the tree. This is due to each paw of the koala having five digits, with two of these digits being opposed to the other three (similar to a human's thumb).

Checking the ground for koala faecal pellets (scat) is another good way to determine if koalas are present. Their faecal pellets are distinctive jelly bean shaped, generally smooth and have rounded edges. Contents are finely fragmented and almost always without large fibres. For the real enthusiast, the smell test can be applied...koala scats (the fresher the better) smell of eucalyptus leaves, or like hay when they have dried out. Brush tail possum scats, unlike Koala scat, are variable in shape, have flattened facets, are sometimes joined and commonly have pointed ends with protruding fibres.

Unfortunately, koalas are facing a range of environmental stresses, including habitat loss, impacts from bushfires and climate change as well as the increasing threat of dog attacks and car strikes. So how can we help?

Protecting and restoring koala habitat is a fundamental part in safeguarding our local koala populations. Koalas live over a range of open forest and woodland communities, but their habitat is ultimately defined by the presence of a select group of food trees. Koalas are typically found in higher densities where food trees are growing on more fertile soils and along watercourses.

Retaining koala food and habitat trees as well as maintaining or reinstating vegetation connectivity across the landscape. On a property level, this may mean not clearing or reducing the extent of clearing native vegetation to ensure koala food and habitat trees are retained. By speaking with your neighbours, you can also ensure the vegetation on your property is linked to neighbouring properties thus, retaining (or creating) essential wildlife corridors throughout the landscape, rather than just on your own property. This connectivity between properties helps to alleviate some of the pressures koalas (& other wildlife) are facing—by improving their ability to move away from threats or move into areas with better resources (e.g. food & shelter). Hence, the more properties linked by vegetation corridors, the better! *For example, an isolated patch of native vegetation with productive koala fodder trees may not actually be able to support koalas due to its lack of size and connection to other areas of vegetation. However, if it was linked to other areas of suitable vegetation, it would allow koalas (& other wildlife) to move safely through the landscape and provide adequate food and shelter to support a koala population.*

By recording koala sightings, you can help build our knowledge of local koala populations. This information is important to help to guide and prioritise future efforts for habitat protection, restoration and threat mitigation. It will also help confirm koala habitat mapping and assist to secure funding for future projects, that will help protect habitats and strengthen vulnerable areas. **To record koala sightings please complete a [Koala Record Sheet \(click here\)](#).** Alternatively, you can download the free BioCollect app on your phone, search for the project “Koala Mapping Mackay & Whitsundays Areas Mapping Project” and add your records directly.

SLCMA is working collaboratively with other stakeholders as part of the recently formed **Koala Working Group**, with the aim to improve knowledge of local koalas and their habitat, raise community awareness; guide, plan for and implement projects and activities that will protect and enhance koalas and their habitat across the Mackay Isaac Region. **Information sourced from:** Melzer, A. (2007), Koalas, koala tracks and traces., Department of Environment and Science (2020), South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy 2020-2025.



Photo: K. Thomsett

Above: Female koala spotted during field trip.

Carmila Beach Reserve—receives some TLC!

Carmila Beach is a unique part of the Sarina Catchment, located within the Isaac Regional Council area. It's uniqueness is attributed to consisting of critically endangered (**) beach scrub, categorised as *Littoral Rainforest and Coastal Vine Thickets*. Carmila Beach is highly sort after by locals and visitors for camping and is also one of the few remaining stands of relatively intact beach scrub remaining within the region.

Beach scrub is an important part of our coastline helping to keep our coasts in shape by:

- stabilising coastal landscapes and beach dunes and preventing erosion
- acting as a windbreak
- providing habitat for animals, including a number of threatened species

Through the QLD Government Reef Assist Program and the Australian Government Communities Environment Program, and in partnership with Isaac Regional Council, our revegetation teams have been working within the Carmila Beach reserve to undertake the following rehabilitation activities to help enhance the health and resilience of the site.

- Weed control will provide an opportunity for native plants to naturally regenerate
- Supplementary revegetation with native plants in bare areas will help provide a canopy of native plants as quick as possible.

The revegetation teams have undertaken initial weed control within two areas of the coastal reserve (see photos for before and after). The main weeds being controlled are Rattlepod (*Crotalaria pallida*), Pink Periwinkle (*Catharanthus roseus*), Lantana (*Lantana camara*) and other weedy broadleaf herbs. Selective weed control by hand removal has been very effective to ensure any young native plants regenerating remain untouched.

Revegetation with appropriate native plants will begin shortly to help speed up the process of re-establishing native vegetation and subsequently help to minimise future weed colonisation, so keep an eye out! As with all rehabilitation projects, the sites will need ongoing monitoring and follow up care.

If you see either team working, feel free to come and say hello and let them know what an awesome job they're doing. Many thanks to our Reef Assist team and our SLCMA Revegetation Team, for their hard work.

** *Critically endangered means that less than 30% of the original extent of the beach scrub remains along Australia's east coast. Most of which has been cleared to make way for development and beach access or reduced by farming, fire and natural disturbance.*



Site 2: Before & after initial weed control



Site 1: Before & after initial weed control

Sarina Community Nursery Volunteer Program

The nursery has had another re-shuffle with plant benches in the sun hardening area being shifted in preparation for 3 new benches to be installed and an upgrade of the irrigation system. Many thanks to Alana and Darrin for their assistance shifting plant trays, benches and irrigation. We have also installed an extra blind to provide more shade to the covered workspace. Thanks to Neil and Pete for their help making this happen. Thanks again to the volunteers for your continued assistance with seed cleaning, sowing, potting on, weeding tube stock and providing the nursery officer Susie with company and conversation. Your support is appreciated.



Moving benches in the nursery



Photos: S von Fahland

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. SLCMA Community Volunteer Program is proudly supported by Mackay Regional Council, Natural Environment Levy. For more details contact SLCMA on 4956 1388.

Local Fauna Spotlight: Keelback (*Tropidonophis mairii*)

The Keelback snake (*Tropidonophis mairii*) or otherwise known as the Freshwater Snake is Australia's only non-venomous semi-aquatic snake. The name 'keelback' refers to its scales which are strongly keeled producing ridges which run along the snake's body. These scales actually help it to move, as it can use them to grip onto slippery surfaces when travelling over mud or vegetation.

Keelbacks are generally olive brown with irregular dark cross-bands. The belly is cream and usually flushed with a pink or orange tinge along the edges. It can grow up to 1m long, but typically only grows between 50 to 75cm.

Keelback snakes prefer wet areas and are most commonly found near freshwater habitats such as dams, creeks, swamps and wetlands. They also live in other habitats such as open grassland, parks and suburban gardens, where they have managed to become resilient to human disturbance. They can be found in northern and eastern Queensland, Western Australia and north east New South Wales.

They are active during the day and night, depending on temperature, and feed on vertebrates such as frogs, tadpoles, lizards. Unlike other snakes who may eat their prey head first, the keelback will consume their prey from the rear.

The keelback is one of few Australian vertebrates to successfully prey on the exotic cane toad, although when toads become large enough, attempts to eat them may prove fatal.

Luckily for humans, the keelback is non-venomous and therefore a largely inoffensive species, but is often confused with a highly venomous snake, the rough-scaled snake (*Tropidechis carinatus*). It can climb trees well, however is typically found at ground level hiding under logs, vegetation, or even in empty burrows.

Keelback snakes produce clutches of 5-12 eggs up to 3 times per year. Young hatchlings are around 15cm from the tip of the snout to the base of the tail (snout-vent length). In the last few months, there has been quite a few observations of keelback hatchlings within our region.

Information sourced from: What snakes live near you? (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://environment.des.qld.gov.au/wildlife/animals/living-with/snakes/near-you/keelback>; Freshwater snake (Keelback snake) (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://www.qm.qld.gov.au/Explore/Find+out+about/Animals+of+Queensland/Reptiles/Snakes/Common+and+dangerous+species/Freshwater+Snake+Keelback+Snake>

SLCMA Community Nursery 'Plant of the Month'

This month's 'Plant of the Month' is the **Damson** (*Terminalia sericocarpa*).
Family: **Combretaceae**

What is in a name? *Terminalia* from the Latin *terminalis* meaning terminal, referring to the leaves which are clustered at the ends of branches in many species.

Form: A large spreading tree 20-30m high with layered branches.

Leaves: Oval, tapering at the base, tip usually rounded, smooth, shiny green above and paler beneath. Turning red before falling.

Flower: Cream, strongly scented borne on hair spikes in the leaf axils.

Fruit: Egg-shaped, blue to purplish with woody-shelled seed.

Habitat: Typically grows in well developed rainforest but also found in drier rainforest, monsoon forest and gallery forest.

Distribution: Coastal areas of northern Australia from the Kimberleys to Rockhampton.

Notes: Propagate from fresh seed. Suitable for most well drained soils, an ideal large shade tree for parks and larger gardens.

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 sourced seed in the SLCMA Community Nursery by SLCMA staff and the SLCMA Volunteer team.

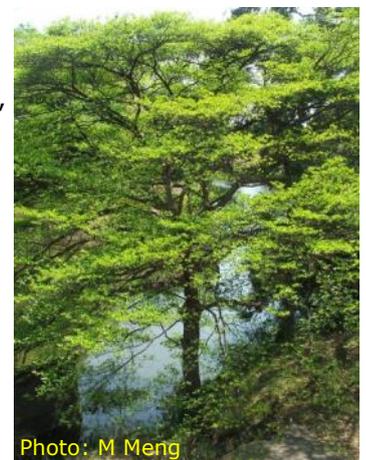
Information sourced from: Townsend, K. (1994) *Across the Top*.



Above: Keelback with distinct banding.



Above: Keelback eating cane toad, rear end first.



Above: Damson tree/foliage.



Above: Damson flowers



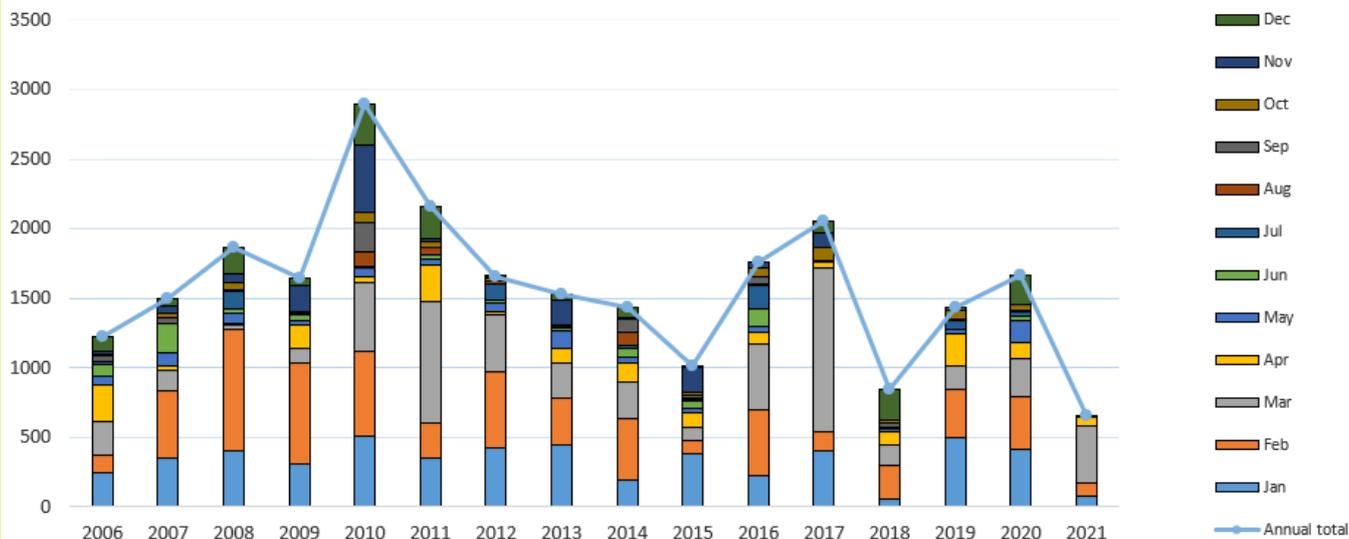
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What SLCMA Membership does for you !

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

Monthly rainfall for SLCMA Office, 2006 -2021 (inc annual total)



Just for fun!

My jokes are like eucalyptus leaves steeped in water...
 Koala-tea

What did the trees say to the Australians pruning them?
 Eucalyptus!

What did the tree wear to the pool party?
 Swimming trunks!

I have a pet tree...
 Its like a pet dog, but the bark is much quieter.

I used to make loads of money clearing leaves from lawns. I was raking it in.



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

Containers for Change

SLCMA has registered with Containers for Change for virtual donations and we are hoping that you will consider using our identifier code — **C10002138**. We also welcome physical donations of eligible containers to our office, feel free to contact us on 4956 1388, to arrange drop-off. Thankyou to those who have donated your containers, so far we have raised **\$241.00** —Thankyou :)



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