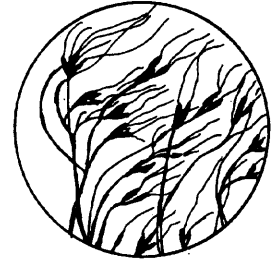




BUSH NEWS

from the Natural Areas of Kedron Brook & Environs



No 24, Autumn 1995

GreenBrook Association

SAVE THE OLD TREES

Australia broke away from the great southern supercontinent of Gondwana about 50 million years ago.

The isolation that resulted allowed the evolution of one plant that became uniquely Australian - the eucalypt. To cater for the tough conditions that prevailed, eucalypts developed the ability to grow at any time of the year, and from dormant buds behind every leaf stem.

They also grow very fast, and the combination results in long, lanky branches that they really cannot support. So, in addition to shedding leaves, eucalypts shed whole branches, and the wounds that result develop into cavities.

In parallel with the evolution of eucalypts, a whole range of animals evolved in Australia, many of which came to rely on these hollows for both breeding and roosting.

The degree to which this occurred is staggering. Half of our insect-eating bats use tree hollows; all except 4 of our arboreal possums; all of our gliders; nearly 90% of our parrots, all but one of owls ... the list goes on.

Among all of our birds, the proportion of hollow users is nearly 20%. For 60% of these, hollows are essential for survival.

On a global scale, this dependence on hollows is unusually large. For example, the dependence of Australian wildlife on tree hollows is twice as great as in South Africa, and 3 times greater than in North America.

The message from this is clear - if we value our animals, we need to look after our old trees. While most of these are obviously in outlying areas, cities also have a responsibility.



The Boobook Owl breeds in hollows in old trees along Kedron Brook

Locally, most of our old trees lie along the creek flats, where they were left by farmers as shade for cattle. Kalinga Park, Shaw Park and Grinstead Park are examples.

On the other hand, our few remaining bushland areas (like Sparkes Hill) are quite devoid of old trees - a result of logging in the early days of settlement.

This subject will be explored in more depth at a public talk to be given in March by Mr Noel Chopping.

Noel Chopping is a past president of the Queensland Division of the Society for Growing Australian Plants, and is currently vice-president of that organisation. He has spent many years studying gliding possums and their relationship with old trees. He is also a master photographer, and his slides will form the basis of his talk.

See you there.

Frank Box

A Public Talk by Noel Chopping

Save the old trees - they could be our homes

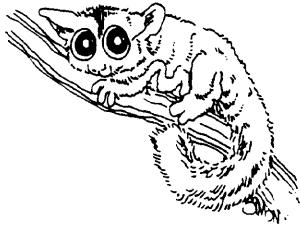
Wednesday 15 March
7.30pm

Grange Progress Association Hall
Cnr Wilston Rd and Daisy St, Grange

Admission: Free

POSSUMS

For the past two years a ring-tail possum has lived in a nestbox in a eucalypt in our garden. Its activities has been closely watched by the family. We have all become familiar with her routine and enjoy her antics.



We have found many advantages in having native animals in the garden. They make ideal pets as they feed and look after themselves. However one of the surprising outcomes of having a possum is that the tree in which it lives has benefited.

Two years ago, the tree had a somewhat straggly appearance - rather typical of Australian plants. It now looks a lot bushier and healthier, with more new shoots and greatly improved flowering. I believe this is due to the possum feeding on the new shoots and effectively pruning the tree. The bits and pieces of tree on the lawn each morning are evidence of this.

I guess we shouldn't be surprised by a tree and a possum having a mutually beneficial relationship.

Colleen Crosthwaite

FROGS

I recently collected some tadpoles from a broad, shallow pond in Grinstead Park, one week after the rains started. Many of them had made amazing growth (8mm+ in the body alone).

Usually it takes 3 to 4 months for a tadpole to turn into a frog, but these seemed set to make the transition in record time.

Could it be the temperature? The

shallow pond would heat up quickly, and the long grass would provide ample food to support fast growth. Can anyone comment on this?

Doxiadis

FERAL FLORA

Last October my wife and I were fortunate to spend several days on Lord Howe Island. About 1³/₄ hours flying time from Brisbane, it is only 11km by 2.8km at the widest point.

Lord Howe possesses an ideal climate, sandy beaches, a reef-enclosed lagoon, and is listed as a world heritage site. Only a tiny portion of the island is developed - small pockets of housing, an airstrip and some roads and cow paddocks. The rest is pristine.

Or so I thought. On our first walk, however, we discovered that the local vegetation is rapidly being infiltrated by asparagus fern. The rangers are actively attempting to contain the spread, but it is obvious that prevention is the only real answer.

If an isolated island like Lord Howe can be degraded by garden escapes, and especially with a population of only a few hundred, what hope is there for Brisbane's bushland?

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One way to assist is to keep garden remnants away from the bush. It is so easy for one discarded plant to end up spreading completely through native bush.

Greg Smith

HELP SAVE THE BUSH

The GreenBrook Association comprises a group of volunteers interested in bush regeneration.

The structure of the organisation is as loose as one could get - no membership fees, no application forms, no office-bearers, no meetings except fun ones, no minutes. In short, no hassles.

To get involved, simply turn up. A mug for billy tea is all you need to bring. Next meetings are -

9 Apr / 28 May / 9 July

Meet at the Blandford St entrance to Grange Forest Park, at 8.30am.

Bob Devine



SUPPORT LOCAL PLANTS

The Brisbane City Council and Greening Australia recently published lists of local native plants for each suburb.

Covering ground covers and grasses, low shrubs, medium shrubs, small trees and tall trees, the lists are an attempt to pick those local species most suitable for gardens.

Perrotts now have a special section devoted to these plants, which specifically targets the suburbs along Kedron Brook.

Available from Perrotts Nursery, Elkhorn St, Enoggera