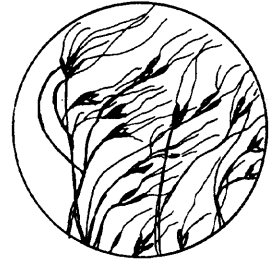




BUSH NEWS

from the Natural Areas of Kedron Brook & Environs



No 33, Winter 1997

GreenBrook Association

MULLET IN THE BROOK

Some of the largest fish to occur in the middle reaches of the brook are not freshwater fish but sea mullet. And these are not just tiny juveniles; some of the mullet that died in the poisoning incident last October measured up to 300mm.

As with freshwater eels, mullet possess the remarkable ability to move at ease from the saline environments of the ocean to the upper reaches of our freshwater creeks.

In fact, they spend the bulk of their life in the freshwater reaches of coastal rivers, moving to the estuaries and inshore waters only during the spawning season. They are thought to spawn adjacent to the surf zone of ocean beaches. In southern Queensland, spawning occurs from March to July.

Young mullet first enter estuaries when about 25mm in size, where they congregate in schools of a few hundred individuals. From this time on they may stay in the estuaries or move up into the freshwater reaches of creeks.

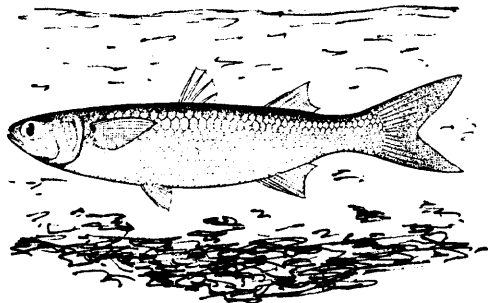
Sea mullet feed mainly on algae when in the brook. They reach maturity at about three years, and the 300mm specimen referred to at the start of the article would have been ready to spawn.

The family of fish to which mullet belongs is widespread throughout the world and has always played

an important role in fishing.

Sea mullet is widely regarded as a second rate table fish, since it possesses a strong, oily flavour. Nevertheless sea mullet is a significant component of the local fresh fish market and is the most common fish purchased from take-away 'fish and chip' shops.

The bulk of our sea mullet, however, is exported. The roe from females fetch relatively high prices in the Japanese and Taiwanese markets, and there is a growing market for frozen whole mullet in the Middle East.



In the larger watercourses such as the Brisbane River, sea mullet mix with the freshwater or pinkeye mullet, which migrates to coastal waters in late summer to breed. According to the Queensland Museum, however, the only mullet found in Kedron Brook is the sea mullet.

At the time of European settlement these fish were apparently so abundant that they could be scooped up by hand; one 1825 report spoke of large quantities of fish caught by hand in the shallow pools where Victoria Bridge now

stands, and these were most likely sea mullet.

Certainly they were an important food for the Moreton Bay aborigines, who used several different methods to catch them.

In coastal areas, if a shoal of mullet was spotted offshore they would enter the water and begin splashing with their spears. As if in answer to a call, dolphins would appear and drive the shoal towards the waiting nets and spears of the natives. The dolphins appeared unafraid of the natives, swimming among them and even accepting large fish offered on the end of a spear.

In creeks and rivers, semipermanent fish traps were established. A line of stakes or bushes was created in a shallow section, and in which two or three openings were left. Some natives would stand on the downstream side of the openings with nets or spears, while others would drive fish towards the trap.

The fish were usually eaten roasted on coals. They were scaled and the entrails removed after the fish was partially cooked. When an abundance of fish was caught the aborigines would wrap them tightly in a rope twisted from soft grass and hang them from trees. In this way they could be apparently be kept sweet for two weeks or more.

David Walters

FROG SURVEY

There is still no explanation for the worldwide decline in frog numbers.

One problem which is contributing to this is a lack of good data - what were the numbers before, and what are they now? In this area, Brisbane is no better off than anyone else.

To start to address this the Brisbane Frog Society, with the assistance of the Brisbane City Council, is conducting a 12 month survey of frogs in the greater Brisbane area.

Training in frog identification will be provided in September. To assist with the survey contact Natasha Taylor or David Stewart on 3378 8605.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT

What is the tallest tree in the world? The *Californian Redwood*, of course, you respond.

Other countries also have enormous trees. The *Kauri* trees of New Zealand are gigantic, and so are the *Fitzroya* of southern Chile.

Curiously, all of these are conifers or *Gymnosperms* - plants that bear their seed in cones. This is an old group of plants, numbering about 500 species worldwide.

Conifers are gradually being replaced by the flowering plants, or *Angiosperms*. About 250 000 species of flowering plants are known, ranging from grasses to the elaborate orchids.

Now, what is the tallest **flowering** plant in the world?

Would you believe ... the humble Eucalypt! And not too far behind



the conifers, either. The tallest Redwood stands about 110m, while the tallest Eucalypt, a Mountain Ash in Tasmania, reaches 98m.

The Eucalypt, however, has it all over the conifers as regards rate of growth. While the Redwood takes 3000-odd years to reach the sky, the Mountain Ash gets there in a mere 400 years.

Greg Smith

INDIAN MYNAHS INCREASE

A flock of 50-60 Indian Mynahs was recently seen near Grinstead Park. These are introduced birds that arrived in Brisbane within the last decade, and are building up numbers fast. They are of concern because they breed in tree hollows, and therefore compete with our parrots, dollar birds, pardalotes, etc.

Please report any signs of use of hollows to the Editor.

MILESTONES

Consultants for:

- *Organisational Change*
- *SAP*
- *Change Management*
- *Training Design & Dev't*

Contact: Jeni Neary

Ph-3856 4771 Fax-3856 4702

SUPPORT YOUR PARK

Battling with weeds in urban bushlands is a never-ending job. One method used by other groups, and which we are trying again, is to spread mulch.

Mulching the bush is hardly natural, nevertheless it has been successful elsewhere in breaking the weed seed cycle.

Unfortunately it seems to take forever. It is not heavy work, just slow, and needs to take place in parallel with planting and the control of large weeds. If you would like to help, our next working bees are on:

20 July / 17 August / 19 October

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

Bob Devine

PLANT OF THE MONTH

Eucalyptus 'Summer Red'

Most local gums are too big for a garden. This one is a hybrid of two spectacular flowering gums - *E. ptychocarpa*, long a Brisbane favourite, and the West Australian *E. ficifolia*. It has also been grafted onto a hardy root stock. Size 5m x 3m.

Available from
Perrotts Nursery,
Elkhorn St, Enoggera

