Whitsunday Catchment Landcare

Newsletter

December 2023 - January 2024. Editor: C. Campbell

www.whitsundaylandcare.org.au | 0483 811 229 |

Central QLD Coast Landcare Network

A partnership for the natural resource management of catchments in the Central QLD Coast Bioregions.

COORDINATOR:
Christine Peterson
coordinator@whitsundaylandcare.org.au

FIELD OFFICER:
Kayla Simpson

CONTACT US FOR INFORMATION:

- Natural Resource Management
- Land Management Plans
- Native Plants
- Environmental Weeds
- Volunteer Activities

BECOME A VOLUNTEER:

Come seed collecting; learn to identify native plants; how to propagate them; improve your environment; enjoy the outdoors in a fun, social setting.

If you're interested in doing your bit for the environment and socialising with like-minded people, we offer coordinated activities on Tuesday & Thursday mornings and more. Contact us!

WCL Management Committee:
Frank Millar, Chair
Jacquie Sheils, Secretary
Cath Campbell, Treasurer
Dale Mengel
Canegrowers rep. John Casey
WRC rep. CR. Gary Simpson
One Community position vacant

WCL is a community not-for-profit group, relying on grants & donations to assist with works such as revegetation.

We are a registered charity; donations of $2 or more are tax deductible. To make a

Make a Donation
Using the secure engine of GiveNow.com.au

WCL staff and committee would like to wish you all a merry Christmas and a safe festive season.
The office and community nursery will be closed from 22/12/23 to 01/01/24, reopening 02/01/24.

Coming Up

Thursday 7th December: Conway Beach, 8:30 am
End of Alans Rd, Conway.
Friday 8th December: Wilsons Beach, 9:30 am
Meet in playground/picnic area car park
Monday 11th December: Don River Mouth 10:30 am
Meet in car park far end of Queens Beach at Don River Mouth Esplanade.
Tuesday 12th December: Queens Beach 11:00 am
Meet at playground/picnic area carpark, Queens Beach
What: **ReefClean Marine Debris Monitoring** - Setting up transects and collecting/recording marine debris. General beach cleanup. See page 2.

When: **Thursday 18th January;** 9.00 am to 12 noon
Where: **Dingo Beach** (end of Olive Street)
What: **Beach scrub rehabilitation and seed collecting -** Join us to help continue our long term works to rehabilitate this wonderful patch of beach scrub. Second breakfast at Dingo Beach shelter sheds.

Please contact Christine at coordinator@whitsundaylandcare.org.au or on 0483 811 229 for more details for each day, to let us know you are coming along, or if you require a lift to the sites as there may be room in the WCL vehicle or carpooling opportunities with other volunteers. Please let us know if you are happy to offer others a lift. As for all our field activities please wear closed in shoes, sun safe clothing, hat, and sunscreen. BYO water bottle and snacks. WCL will supply water refills and some light morning tea.

Landcare Nursery Open for Plant Sales
EFTPOS available. 33 Kelsey Creek Rd. Tuesday & Thursday mornings 9am to 12 noon and the 1st Saturday of each month. Gift Vouchers Available - **Organise Christmas gifts for a gardener you know**. Open Saturday 02/12/23. Closed 26/12/23 to 01/01/24.

Community Nursery Volunteer Activities
Where: 33 Kelsey Creek Rd
When: Tuesday & Thursday mornings 9am to 12 noon.
What: Plant propagation, native seed sowing & preparation, nursery maintenance tasks and a great morning tea with a fantastic bunch of volunteers. *Volunteer Activities will pause from 26/12/23, resuming 09/01/23.*

WCL receives support from the following organizations:

Reef Catchments · Whitsunday Regional Council · Canegrowers Proserpine · Australian Government Department of the Environment · Queensland Government

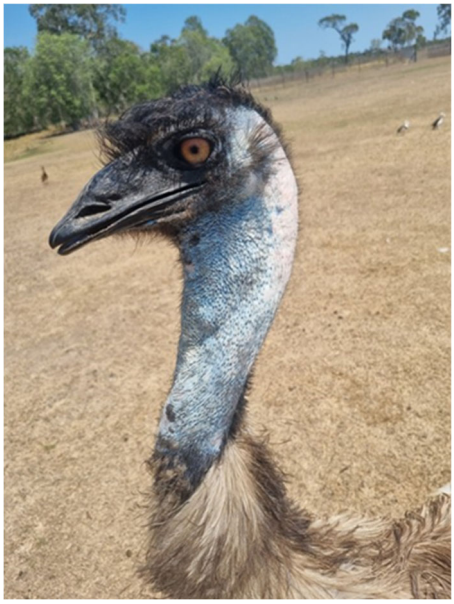
Reef Assist Staff Training Day, Kayla Simpson

At the end of October, I was fortunate to attend a Crocodile and Snake Awareness training session at Bredl's Wildfarm thanks to Reef Catchments. In addition to staff from the aforementioned, our surrounding Landcare groups including Sarina Landcare and Pioneer Catchment Landcare also travelled to Bloomsbury for the event.

The aim of the training was to gain a better understanding of snake and crocodile behaviour, erase some common misconceptions about them and how to properly manage the risk they pose in our everyday work. With the weather warming up and snakes getting on the move, the information provided to us was timely - WCL staff frequently work in natural habitats where animals such as crocodiles and snakes must be considered.

Aside from the scaly Saurians, I particularly enjoyed getting close to some of our native (and not-so-native) animals kept in captivity on the property. There were plenty of wallabies, kangaroos, geese and goats and a couple of wombats and cockatoos. I even got a cuddle with a very clingy baby koala!

Thanks again to Reef Catchments and Bredl's Wildfarm for the great day out.



ReefClean Volunteer Opportunities

Kayla will be conducting our quarterly ReefClean Marine Debris Monitoring in early December at Conway Beach, Wilsons Beach, Queens Beach and the Don River mouth as part of our work with Tangaroa Blue Foundation. We are looking for 2 – 4 people to join in to formally record marine debris along designated transects followed by a general beach clean-up. Some sorting of collected items may occur at our community nursery afterward. So, if you have a spare few hours on either day listed on page one, we'd love to see you.

What's Showing

Common name: Veiny Whitewood

Scientific name: *Atalaya rigida*

Family: Sapindaceae

Description:
A small upright tree with smooth bark, usually 5-8m tall.

Leaves: Mature leaves are hairless and rigid with a hard texture, young growth is hairy. Leaves are alternate, compound, divided into 2-8, rarely 10, leaflets, which can be alternate or opposite, entire, ovate to elliptic with an asymmetrical base, 10-14.5cm long by 5.5-7.5cm wide. Both upper and lower surfaces of leaflets yellowish-green and smooth or with sparse hairs underneath, reticulate venation very conspicuous, rachis tip extends beyond the last leaflet.

Flowers: From September to November, sometimes to January. Conspicuous terminal panicle of small white flowers 25-38cm long by 24-33cm wide. Individual flowers have 5 slightly hairy sepals and five obovate petals which are hairy on the outside.

Fruit: A single seed with an oblong, wedge-shaped wing, known as a samara, 3cm long, clustered in pairs or threes and hanging in conspicuous, large blonde clusters.

Above: Leaves and flowers
PHOTO: Peter Alden

Right: Fruit cluster
PHOTO: CP

Propagation: Grows readily from seed.

Notes: Occurs from sea level to about 500m altitude, in vine thicket and open forest between Bowen and Gympie. Described in 1981, it is considered rare, but is locally common.

References:
Plants of Capricornia, R. Melzer and J. Plumb, Belgamba 2011.
QPWS Forest Management Information Sheet Edited 2001, compiled by A. Borsboom and J Wang, Resource Sciences Centre DNR 1997

Above: Winged seed, called a samara *PHOTO: CP*

INTERESTING WEB SITES:
https://www.inaturalist.org/
Native Animals, Insects, Birds:
www.whitsundaylandcare.org.au
http://www.wildlife.org.au/magazine/
http://www.aussiebee.com.au
www.**birdsinbackyards**.net
www.australianmuseum.net.au/reptiles
http://birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlife-mackay/activities-mac
Native plants:
http://ausgrass2.myspecies.info/content/oplismenus
https://www.anbg.gov.au/cpbr/cd-keys/rfk/
https://www.eucalyptaustralia.org.au/
http://sgaptownsville.org.au/
www.facebook.com.au/sgapmackay

Wetlands
http://wetlandinfo.ehp.qld.gov.au/wetlands/ecology/components/flora/mangroves/mangrove-moreton.html
Feral Animals: feralflyer@invasiveanimals.com
https://alumni.uq.edu.au/cane-toad-baits
Feral plants:
https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/biosecurity/invasive-plants-animals/plants-weeds
www.weeds.org.au
www.environment.gov.au ›Biodiversity ›Invasive species › weeds
www.iewf.org/weedid/index_by_reserve.htm
www.anbg.gov.au/cpbr/herbarium/
https://www.vision6.com.au/em/mail/view.php?id=1769275019&a=17056&k=a87f8df

Plant Pest Hall of Fame– Myrtle Rust

iNaturalist– GUM TREE GUARDIANS– Citizen Science Project

Help Australian Scientists to monitor the spread of myrtle rust in Australia. This project has been generously funded by Eucalypt Australia through a Dahl Fellowship.

Myrtle rust is a disease caused by the fungal pathogen Austropuccinia psidii, affecting trees within the family Myrtaceae. This family includes over 330 genera, including our iconic Eucalyptus and Melaleuca just to name a couple!

The disease is typified by the appearance of yellow spores on susceptible plants with symptoms appearing on young plant tissue such as leaves, stems, flowers, and fruit. Multiple infections can lead to severe defoliation and plant death. The spores produced by the pathogen, are easily spread to other plants through the wind or by human movement on clothes or transportation of infected material.

The data obtained from the project will provide valuable data for both researchers and conservationists alike. This data can serve myrtle rust research in many ways.

Firstly, it can used to identify new species of Myrtaceae susceptible to the pathogen that have not already been identified. Further, if myrtle rust is detected in a new location (on any species), it will allow for Myrtaceae species in those areas to be tested for their response to the pathogen and seed collected for conservation.

The identification of myrtle rust in a new locations will also inform researchers of the spread of the pathogen, also aiding conservation efforts.

Contributing to the Gum Tree Guardians project is easy! Once you have created an account on iNaturalist Australia (https://inaturalist.ala.org.au/signup), you're ready to start uploading your observations.

Please remember, myrtle rust spores spread very easily. If you observe myrtle rust on any Myrtaceae species, it is important that you DO NOT TOUCH IT to avoid spreading it to other trees or areas.

Take several close up image of symptoms. This is usually yellow spores which can appear on leaves, stems, flowers, or fruit.

Take an image on the whole plant if possible to assist with identification and to show the surrounding environment.

Upload observation to the iNaturalist platform using your phone or web browser. If possible, include the plant it was identified on in the comments section.

Myrtle rust observations will automatically be added to the Gum Tree Guardians project and a guide is available to make uploading as easy as possible: https://inaturalist.ala.org.au/pages/getting+started

Happy observing!

Created by: myrtle_rust_martino - September 29, 2022

Above: Myrtle Rust on leaves PHOTO: QLD Business

Source: iNaturalist

Above: Myrtle Rust on leaves PHOTO: Wet Tropics Management Authority

Trouble in Paradise: Scrub Itch!

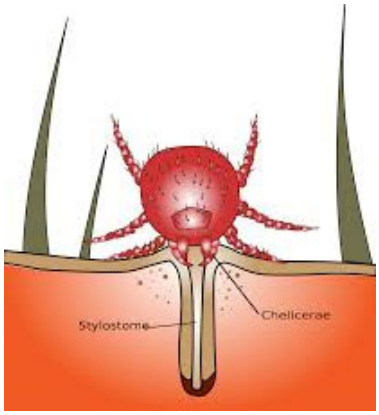
Most of us know from experience what Scrub Itch is, but what actually causes it?

The culprit: a 6-legged Trombiculid mite larva. PHOTO: D. E. Walter & C. Meacham UQ

The culprit is the larval stage of a small orange-red mite called a Trombiculid. They belong to the same invertebrate order as mites and ticks (Acarina) and are found in many places around the world. They are called various things, some of the printable ones are: Harvest Mite, Chiggers or Velvet Mites.

In Australia it seems that we are dealing with a number of species; mite diversity is high and the information is limited. Larval Scrub Itch mites parasitise native mammals, so mite distributions are patchy, concentrated in areas of high traffic, where lots of mammals pass through vegetation. Even Platypus are not safe: they seem to have their own brand of Scrub Itch mite! In the tropics, some Scrub Itch mites can carry Scrub Typhus. See a doctor if you get symptoms of fever after Scrub Itch bites.

Scrub Itch mites usually breed when the ground temperature is regularly above 16 °C, laying eggs in soil or vegetation. After a couple of weeks the egg develops into a 6-legged feeding larva, which is 0.2mm long, red in colour, and fast moving. Barely visible to the unaided eye, these larvae climb up onto low-growing plants and wait. When a warm-blooded animal comes into contact with the plant, the larvae drop onto the unsuspecting host and then the fun begins.



What is actually going on to cause THAT itch.

Once on board, the larvae migrate to areas where it is easier for them to penetrate the skin. In humans, this means areas where the skin is moist and tender; usually under the seams or elastic of clothing in locations such as the armpits, pelvic region and on the legs under socks or gaiters.

Once they are at their destination, the larvae pierce the outer skin. They don't actually burrow into the skin, rather they make a hole in the skin called a stylostome, surrounded by hardened skin cells, and inject digestive enzymes into this tube. They then feed on the fluid produced.

Since it takes time for all of this to happen, there may be a delay of up to 48 hours before symptoms appear. The feeding enzymes cause the irritation and swelling; in humans the worst itching is often after the mite larva has already dropped off (after all, unlike the wildlife, most of us wash regularly!). If you have had scrub itch, I probably don't need to describe the intensely itchy red bumps that follow.

Normally, after they have fed for 3-5 days on their natural host, the larvae will detach, drop off and metamorphose a few times, eventually becoming eight-legged adult mites. These are predators that feed on tiny insects and their eggs, as well as plant material. They usually live unnoticed in the soil; sometimes they are disturbed by gardeners.

Prevention is the best solution. Scrub Itch mites are said to be more active in warm, moist conditions, and locals can often tell you where they are more common, but avoiding them is difficult unless you just stay at home. Luckily the mite larvae can be kept at bay using insect repellent on your skin and clothing anywhere the mite is likely to climb on board. The active ingredients DEET and Permethrin work well. Other suggestions of varying practicality are; wear a broad-brimmed hat, avoid tight fitting clothing, try not to brush against the vegetation and do not sit on the ground. One person I know swears by just wearing insect repellent, loose overalls, boots and a hat, and *nothing else*. After all, who would know?

If you have been bitten, then relief can eventually be found in either the Apothecary's Scrub Itch Lotion, or Scabies cream. The latter was shouted to me by a helpful young Pharmacist in a crowded Airlie Chemist (my first Scrub Itch experience). If the itching is really severe, then medical advice might be necessary.

The 8-legged adult Trombiculid mite that you may find in the garden. PHOTO: Alan. R. Walker

References
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trombiculidae
http://jmvh.org/article/rickettsial-diseases-of-military-importance-an-australian-perspective/
http://www.environment.gov.au/node/13896