



Richmond Birdwing Conservation Network Newsletter

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Richmond Birdwing Conservation Network

The *Richmond Birdwing Conservation Network* (RBCN) operates under the umbrella of *Wildlife Queensland*, publisher of this newsletter.

RBCN promotes conservation of the Richmond Birdwing butterfly *Ornithoptera richmondia*, its food plant, *Pararistolochia* spp. and butterfly habitats.

Membership of RBCN is open to anyone interested in the Richmond birdwing butterfly or insects of conservation concern.

RBCN encourages liaison between community members, catchment and landcare groups and government authorities.

RBCN Advisory Group

Richard Bull rmbull46@bigpond.com
Ian Gynther ian.gynther@ehp.qld.gov.au
Chris Hosking cjmhosk1@bigpond.com
Don Sands donsands2@gmail.com

Regional Coordinators

Keth McCosh (Scenic Rim)
mccosh48@bigpond.com

Richard Bull (Gold Coast-Tamborine)
rmbull46@bigpond.com

Dale Borgelt (Brisbane Region)
daleborgelt@bigpond.com

Why not receive your newsletter by email?

If you have access to the internet, please consider receiving your newsletter in colour by email. This will save us on printing and postage costs, money that can instead be spent on much-needed on-ground work such as purchasing and planting vines.

Email birdwing@wildlife.org.au to let us know your choice.

Editor: Ewa Meyer
Design: Karen Brock
Office support: Janelle Devery, Jenny Thynne



Cover image: Don Sands

Welcome to your new-look RBCN News

By Christine Hosking (outgoing Chair)

On Saturday 28 July 2012, the RBCN AGM was held at Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve in Maleny. The event was well-attended and the refreshments and lunch were delicious. Thanks to Ray and Pam Seddon for organising the venue and catering.

At the AGM, Ray and Pam were acknowledged for their tireless work and commitment to the RBCN since its inception in 2005. The Sunshine Coast Region of the Network has grown to a point where it is self-sustaining. This is what 'bottom-up' community conservation groups are all about and is what Ray achieved. The Seddons are taking a well-earned break to travel around Australia.

Conservation Volunteers Australia were thanked for their partnership with the RBCN and invaluable on-ground assistance providing volunteers to plant vines throughout southeast Qld.

A key item of the AGM was to inform the members of the change in the way the RBCN will operate. The Network has for two years been under the umbrella of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland (WPSQ). The decision made by the RBCN committee was to take this a step further by replacing the committee with an advisory group, and delegating day to day management and administration to the competent staff of WPSQ. This step was inevitable due to the success and growth of RBCN and the unsustainable strain on volunteer committee members, most of whom have full-time jobs.

The purpose of the advisory group is to agree the annual goals and priorities. By bringing together the set of diverse conservation knowledge and experience those goals will best advance the key purpose of the Network. Funds permitting, we hope to employ a part-time coordinator, who will develop and undertake the work program as agreed by the advisory group. Individually, people on the advisory group may also provide specialist consulting support to staff and volunteers on specific aspects of the work.

I look forward to the continuation of the Network's community involvement, from individuals to schools, bush care groups, and local government. The future survival of the Richmond birdwing butterfly looks bright indeed.

Corridor Coordinator Report: Tamborine Mountain/Gold Coast Area

Report by Richard Bull

Springbrook Mountain Community Association meeting, 13 August

I was invited to attend a meeting with the Springbrook Mountain Community Association at the delightful property of Peter and Barbara Eldridge near the highest point of Springbrook Road, set in native rainforest and traversed by a crystal-clear Creek. Objectives of the meeting were to discuss ways to increase numbers of food plant vines and encourage more birdwing butterflies to the area.



A large *P.laheyana* vine at Springbrook

The Springbrook Mountain Community Association members present were Barbara Eldridge (Chairperson), Clyde Dunlop (Secretary, Landcare Springbrook), Ebony Hall, Wildlife Ranger, Qld Parks & Wildlife, Loris Ash, Springbrook Wildlife Appreciation Group and Gwyn Beasley, Springbrook State School P&C.

The Eldridges had discovered numbers of *Pararistolochia laheyana* vines in regenerated rainforest on their property, some of which were 10-15m tall reaching into the canopy of supporting trees and were keen to supplement their numbers with vines grown from collected seed.



Barbara inspects a large *P.laheyana* vine

Barbara was concerned seedling *P. laheyana* in tubes and small pots grew extremely slowly with high mortality, as did young vines planted in their bush area.

It was suggested this may be remedied by planting seed directly into 150mm pots to minimise stress from rapid temperature and moisture changes experienced in tubes. Several large vines inspected in their bush area had fruit and I was told they were very slow to develop and subject to depredation by insects and birds.



Bag protects *P. laheyana* fruits from birds & insects

Enclosing the fruits in a muslin bag was found to be the most effective way to protect them and wire netting guards were used to protect young plants from brush turkey damage. Despite the altitude (800m), several *P. praevenosa* planted on the banks of the creek on their property were growing well and appeared to be tolerant of the low winter temperatures of the location.

Richmond birdwing butterflies were observed in the area only occasionally and it was hoped vines planted on adjacent properties and at the local school would bring them to the area in greater numbers.

Tamborine Skywalk

The first butterflies emerged from pupae following rain on 18 and 19 September. The pupae were from the captive breeding project being conducted by QPWS at David Fleay Wildlife Park investigating inbreeding depression.

Planting Day Forestdale 9 September 2012

Richard Bull report
continued

A forest rehabilitation planting day, organised by Murray Swales of the Logan Water Alliance, took place at Paradise Road, Forestdale adjacent to Oxley Creek and part of the Karawatha Corridor.



Councillor Laurie Smith (right) plants vine with RBCN's Richard Bull.

Photo courtesy Logan Water Alliance.

Ten *Pararistolochia praevenosa* vines were planted at the site and 30 given to volunteers to take home and plant.

My function was to select and prepare planting holes before planting commenced and each hole was provided with a wooden stake and cord to a suitable branch in an adjacent tree for the vine to climb.

Planting holes had dolomite and SR fertilizer added before planting and all vines watered in, with contractors scheduled to irrigate all plantings until they became established.

Approximately 70 people attended the function and children had a supervised activity making 'birdwing butterfly masks' which were very popular with the little ones. They all knew what a birdwing butterfly was and were keen to plant a vine at their home.

The location adds a valuable addition to establishment of corridor plantings between Brisbane western suburbs and southern Richmond birdwing colonies such as Tamborine Mountain.

Possible inbreeding depression in Tamborine Mountain population

by Richard Bull

In January 2012 a resident of Tamborine Mountain contacted me when she found a deformed male Richmond birdwing butterfly struggling amongst the leaf litter near the base of a *Pararistolochia praevenosa* vine in her yard. Despite being assisted onto a plant support it was unable to inflate its crumpled wings and died several days later.

While it is possible the butterfly may have lost its foothold and fallen to the ground when it emerged from the chrysalis, passing that crucial period when the wing stumps must be hung downwards in order to inflate correctly, photos of the insect strongly suggest it had a genetic deformity.

Deformities of this type frequently appear in inbred populations, usually when a colony has become isolated through loss of habitat and corridors along which interchange of fresh genetic stock cease to be functional.

Over the last 100 years, rainforest which once covered all the upper slopes and undulating top of Tamborine Mountain plateau has been cleared to the extent that only one small patch of <2 ha of old growth forest remains on the plateau and a few remnants in inaccessible gullies on the steep escarpments. All accessible forest was logged and the plateau cleared and grassed for dairy pasture around 1890-1910 depriving Richmond birdwing butterflies of natural habitat and of course their food plant. Present rainforest patches along most of the creeks rising on Tamborine Mountain are all re-growth and very few natural old growth *P.praevenosa* vines have been found.

Recent plantings of *P. praevenosa* on Tamborine Mountain have been substantial as a result of strong local interest in recovery of Richmond birdwings, but butterfly numbers do not seem to reflect the abundance of their food plant and inbreeding depression may be the reason.

Birdwings in Eumundi this Spring - despite the drought!

My first female appeared in the garden on 1 September while a second female was seen on 3 October, feeding on white bauhinia, despite being very dry up here at Eumundi since mid July. It also appeared later that day in the garden next door.



Image: (ex Max Major) of Richmond Birdwing Butterfly on flowers of Australian Red Cedar at North Arm, near Eumundi, on 16 October

On 14 October, I watched a female as she was laying eggs on a vine above our old orchid house. Most of these vines now grow up through the roof into the overhead canopy where there are stacks of soft leaves, so she would not have had a problem finding quality leaves suitable for the larvae. My only problem was seeing the product of her efforts, the vines were too high!

The vines in the orchid house are growing in huge pots and all have been fertilized and watered. I have now lots of flowers developing on the vines and will watch for signs of fruit development.

I also checked our large trellis and found 2 eggs there that will be monitored. However, I am concerned for these, as last year all the

larvae disappeared from the trellis and I believe they were removed by ants.

I ran into Steve Hooper some time ago and he said he had seen a male birdwing at his property at Mt Eerwah. I also had a phone call from a chap who lives at North Arm, between Eumundi and Yandina. He has seen up to 8 adults in the one day this spring near where he planted vines around a trellis area at the back of the house.

Last season he had lots of larvae on these vines but was worried the numbers far exceeded the carrying capacity of the vines, so thinks there must be other wild vines in his forest and neighbours nearby in Yandina. On this property there are large red cedars, black beans and Quondongs so the rainforest sounds to be good quality.

On 15 October, I found a newly-hatched larva on our trellis vine. WOOHOO.

A Simple Trellis Recipe

by Dale Borgelt

Here is a simple idea for constructing a trellis to support Birdwing vines. It is easy to make and very low cost, just the ticket for anyone wanting to encourage Birdwings to visit their garden.

Imagine what a difference it would make to butterfly populations if every garden in Brisbane had just one trellis.....so go on, give it a go!

Once you've built your trellis we'd love to hear from you and, even better, receive a picture of your handiwork to include in our next newsletter.

Recipe starts overleaf

This cheap but effective method uses star pickets, bamboo poles and plastic cable ties.

One bay requires:

- 2 x 1.8m star pickets
- 5 x long bamboo poles for verticals
- 3 x bamboo poles > 1.7m for horizontals
- Cable ties (eg 300mm and 200mm)



Cable tied bamboo construction of simple trellis.

Photo: Dale Borgelt

Now you can start:

1. Set in the ground two 1.8m star pickets about 1.5m apart to make one bay
2. Lash a long vertical pole firmly to each star picket using plastic cable ties.
3. At upper, mid and lower points of the star picket attach the horizontal bamboo firmly to the star picket + verticals using cable ties.

You now have a stable frame for attaching further vertical poles and cross-members. None of the bamboo goes into the ground at all.

Using cable ties, secure at least 2 vertical poles within your frame which will be the support for your vines to climb. Add more poles to suit your taste in design.

The vines do not make much use of horizontals in the early stages, so add further ones to suit your taste and stability. You can, for example use thinner bamboo, rope or string.

(NOTE: to add another bay, place another star picket 1.5m away and repeat pattern, 2 bays ideal for 4 vines)

If you are stuck for Christmas present ideas, why not build a trellis for your family or friends and give them something that will bring them joy for years to come.

Any questions? Contact: daleborgelt@gmail.com home ph 3374 1035

In Brisbane, planting continued over winter

by Greg Siepen

During winter, over 180 vines were planted by Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) in the Brisbane area. Groups of 25-40 vines were planted on both private properties and Brisbane Council lands to establish self-maintaining clumps of vines that will help re-establish the Birdwing butterfly's return to the depleted Brisbane area.

CVA has been tremendous in organising many volunteers to go out to the specially selected sites and plant the vines. All the vines have been grown by Gary Einam and each is about two years old.

'Any smaller and they won't survive because of their delicate roots', Gary said.

The vines were provided to the Network by CVA under a previous grant.

About 75 vines were planted at the Girl Guides Kindilan Centre at Redland Bay which can later be used in outdoor environmental education for the guides to obtain badges. They add to those grown on Lois Hughes property and the state land at West Mount Cotton and will form a suitable stepping stone for butterfly movement. Unfortunately, some of the bamboo stakes linking the vine to the nearest tree have been removed. Twine now links them.



In association with The Hut Environmental and Community Association and Cubberla-Winton Catchment Group, volunteers from Johnson Controls planted about 40 birdwing vines around Moore Park.

CVA volunteers in front of RBCN banner

25 vines were planted in the Brookfield area to complement the other groups of vines planted during Autumn by CVA volunteers. Each of the vine plantings required regular watering to get them through the dry Spring we experienced. The recent rains have been of great assistance. The vines will be watered for about 12 months until the fine roots become established.

Update on birdwing vine ‘happenings’ in Redlands

by Lois Hughes (summarised by Chris Hosking)

There have been many encouraging things to report from Redlands. The most recent is the ongoing negotiations with Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service concerning the planting of birdwing vines on recently acquired properties in the district. Fifty vines were planted on the 65 acres property adjoining ours on one side, and Venman’s National Park on another, at west Mt. Cotton. This was the result of ongoing consultation with QPWS rangers and RBCN members.

The rangers have enthusiastically embraced the concept of using the creek areas as butterfly corridors, in conjunction with their project of planting koala food trees on the flats and hillside. An abundance of butterfly host plants grow along the creek, including the vines *Passiflora aurantia*, *Parsonia straminea* and *Flindersia* and sandpaper figs.

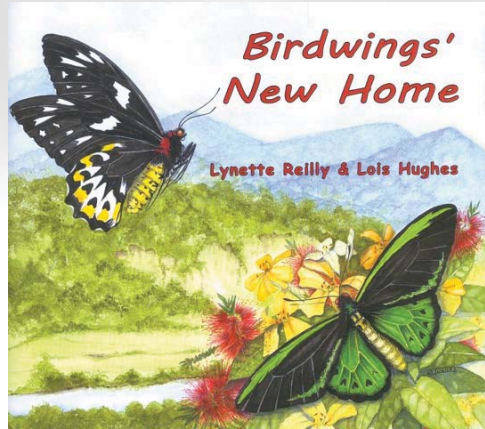
Of course the really exciting news was the sighting of a female Richmond Birdwing butterfly at Thornlands, only 7 kms from here and of a male at Redland Bay. My dream has been to have a breeding colony on our property; the dream is getting closer!

Lois has been planting birdwing vines in her area for many years.

Please contact the WPSQ office if you would like an electronic copy of Lois’s full report.

Lois is also a talented artist, whose work includes providing the illustrations for the children's story book *Birdwings' New Home* by Lyn Reilly.

The front and back cover illustrations in this newsletter are also another example of Lois's beautiful artwork.



Birdwings' New Home is available to purchase from the WPSQ office for only \$15 or online at www.wildlife.org.au/store/merchandise.html

It would make a great Christmas gift for your young relatives!

Sunshine Coast Corridor Coordinator Needed!

Thank you to Ray Seddon for his wonderful work on the Sunshine Coast for the RBCN. His departure from this role leaves an opportunity for a new volunteer Corridor Coordinator.

If you are interested in assisting the work of the RBCN on the Sunshine Coast please contact us on birdwing@wildlife.org.au

Electronic newsletter

If you have access to the internet, please consider receiving your newsletter in colour by email. This will save us on printing and postage costs, money that can be spent on much-needed on-ground work such as purchasing and planting vines. Email birdwing@wildlife.org.au to let us know your choice.



Image: courtesy Lyn Lamble

Conservation of Small Animals: Recovery for the Future Workshop - 12 October 2012

Article by Don Sands and Alina Zwar

The Richmond Birdwing Conservation Network in conjunction with Landcare Australia recently held a workshop at the Future's Centre in Pomona. Organisers - Greg Siepen (RBCN-WPSQ) and Phil Moran (Noosa Landcare Group) introduced the speakers and chaired the meeting. The focus was on the formulation and operation of recovery plans and recovery teams for threatened small animal species in Queensland and revising 'threats' as the priority and basis for their listing, as discussed in the 'Back on Track' workshops in 2009.

Cr Tony Wellington opened the workshop and welcomed participants with impressive insightful thoughts "...species living now are the survivors – most species having died out as a result of evolution..., they show the need to have recovery plans, strategies and actions in place to assist our threatened species (ones not well adapted to humans) to survive."



The key-note speakers and issues they addressed included:

- Dr. Don Sands (RBCN) used 'The Richmond Birdwing Recovery Plan' as a catalyst for recovery plans and described the umbrella groups that hosted the project since 1992 (by CSIRO), how the plan was developed in 1996 and progress made by the community towards addressing various threats.

- Professor Tim New (La Trobe University) presented the theoretical background and structural approach to recovery plans and the composition of recovery teams.
- Dr. Tanzi Smith (Mary River Catchment Coordination Committee) described a recent 'ecological community' project and its recovery plan, to recover five aquatic species in the Mary River.
- Dr. Ian Gynther (Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, Queensland) gave two presentations on recovery plans for the Richmond Birdwing, focussing on the in-breeding depression as a major threat, and the Recovery Plan for the Coxen's Fig Parrot.
- John Birbeck and Dave Burrows (Sunshine Coast Regional Council) described the various protection and tenure categories available to landowners and how they contribute to the recovery of local species. They also highlighted the fact that in their area, 60% of remnant ecosystems occur on private lands and the Council is providing grants to assist in conservation and enhancement of these native ecosystems.

The final session driven by a group discussion addressed the following topics:

- How recovery planning can be put into practice including the need to review and monitor a species' progress
- Should a recovery plan be developed for all threatened species (currently only 50% of have a plan)
- Listing a species does not mean it can be recovered or threat abatement strategies identified
- Should we concentrate on single species or groups?
- Local governments can play a significant role via community engagement and provide financial support to assist with on-ground works
- There is a need for intergenerational transfer of knowledge and experience
- There is a need to develop legislative and policy definitions and descriptions for species that have responded well to recovery plans (i.e. downlisting)

- Recovery plans, strategies and actions require community support, participation, along with scientific underpinning of the processes
- There is a need to develop a template for a Recovery Plan

Overall the day was a great success at re-invigorating all involved in recovering threatened species and ecosystems.

However due to fiscal restraints at all levels of government, some delegates expressed there was no need to continue listing species as threatened due to the lack of funding allocated to recovery plans.

Further workshops are planned and a comprehensive report is being prepared along with a CD containing the presentations.

Dr Ian Gynther, one of the workshop's presenters and RBCN Advisory Group member.



HELP!!!

To all our wonderful members, readers and contributors, we need your help.

The economic climate being what it is, we need to think more laterally about how to supplement our funding so that we can keep up the good work that our volunteers do and expand the habitat that our butterfly so desperately needs. To this end we are asking for your help and advice.

There may be someone out there who has fundraising experience and good ideas that you would like to share, or better still activate! Maybe you, or someone you know, would like to assist with a fundraiser which would double-up as a publicity event for RBCN.

For those of you who have contacts in the corporate world or are employed in environmentally-conscious workplaces, please consider asking your manager about sponsorship of the Richmond Birdwing Conservation Network - or one of Wildlife Queensland's other programs featured on the website: www.wildlife.org.au

These programs can be tailored to provide conservation opportunities for corporate volunteers in their local areas.

Please give this request some thought, and email us if you can think of any ideas or contacts.

Don't be shy - if you can help we need you NOW!

Contact Lynette by email on birdwing@wildlife.org.au or leave a message on 3221 0194 (Wildlife Queensland office).

Many thanks to new volunteer, Lynette Lee, for assisting with sourcing articles for this newsletter as well as her enthusiasm for our fund raising events. Ed.

Help save paper and money - switch to an electronic newsletter now! Tell birdwing@wildlife.org.au



RBCN T-shirts

Support your network by buying a t-shirt. Shirts are \$10 plus \$5 postage and packing. (sizes m, xl and 2xl only).

To order yours, contact us on 07 3221 0194 or birdwing@wildlife.org.au

Permit to propagate

Just a polite reminder that anyone propagating the Birdwing Butterfly Vine, *Pararistolochia praevenosa*, for dispersal or sale, is required to hold an 'Authorisation to Propagate', issued by the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection.

If you intend to collect specimens of this vine or its seed capsules, you will need to apply for a separate 'Scientific Research and Educational Purposes Permit', issued by the same Department.

Thanks! Don Sands.

Happy Holiday Season!

Thank you for your support over the last year. The Richmond Birdwing Conservation Network has had some incredible achievements this year that we could not have undertaken without your support.

We hope you've enjoyed reading our newsletter, and look forward to another fruitful year in 2013!

Best wishes, the RBCN Team



Membership of RBCN

\$15 per annum payable to "WPSQ-RBCN".

All correspondence should be sent to:
The Secretary
Richmond Birdwing Conservation Network
c/- Wildlife Queensland
95 William Street
Brisbane QLD 4000

Or you can pay online:
www.richmondbirdwing.org.au



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Contributions for next newsletter due 1 February 2013.



Illustrations: Lois Hughes

female



male