

President's note

It seems we may be suffering the effects of the “super El Nino”. A reasonably moist spring (at least compared with the previous few) has been followed by what is, so far, a very dry summer. The upside is the huge number of honeyeaters seeking relief in the local birdbaths. Here on Harland Rd, in the wet sclerophyll forest, there are the usual Lewin’s Honeyeaters and (since Cyclone Oswald) Bell-miners, but the summer brings White-Naped, Yellow-faced and Scarlet Honeyeaters. This year they have lingered well after the flowering of the Stringybarks and Brushboxes. Maybe they are waiting for the explosion that is the coming Bloodwood flowering. Flocks of White-Naped, interspersed with a few Yellow-faced and the odd Scarlet, spend most of the day, it seems, taking baths. Bullied by the Miners, and to a lesser extent the Lewin’s, they wait for them to leave the baths before diving back in. The Eastern Spinebill, a local year-round resident like the Lewin’s and Miners, is more discrete but, like all honeyeaters, won’t go a day without a good dip. Oddly enough, though Mt Glorious village is only 500m away as the honeyeater flies, the White-checked Honeyeaters, common there, never seem to visit.

Where Have All the Dingoes Gone?

We haven't heard the dingoes calling lately. They have been part of the mountain environment all the time that we have lived here but not now.

Because dingoes have been in Australia for approximately 4000 years they have become an integral part of the country as a top order predator. They control feral pests such as foxes and cats whereas native animals have adapted to their presence.

One likely reason for their decline in this area is the use of rat baits and the relatively recent addition of an ingredient called Brodifacoum.

This is a highly lethal anti-coagulant poison that has replaced Warfarin in some brands of rodent poisons. Warfarin is based on a plant chemical called Coumarin found in many plants such as lavender, apricots, clover and cinnamon that acts as a plant-protecting agent but happens to be toxic in high doses. It is used medically to prevent blood clots.

Brodifacoum is called a second-generation anticoagulant and can remain toxic for several months. Any bird, goanna, dog or dingo that might eat an effected rat will also die of the poison. So it is also very dangerous for pets, and is obviously dangerous to use round children.

The antidote is a course of Vitamin K over several months, as Warfarin and Brodifacoum interrupt the action of this vitamin in the liver. Without vitamin K blood becomes thin and animals haemorrhage to death.

The best way to deal with the problem of the little creatures that want to invade our houses and build nest in our cupboards and chew holes in the woodwork and munch on our apples and bananas is to trap them and take them for a long ride into the bush. They are probably bush rats, antechinus or melomys – all little native forest dwellers.

MEPA can supply Elliott traps. These traps that researchers use don't kill the animals. Ring 32890093 or 32898175

Maggie Scattini

Editor's Note: A local, with experience in pest animal control, offers the following additional advice: If you have to resort to bait for rats (and it should be only after all else has failed) then use only a multi-dose anti-coagulant. Then the chances of secondary poisoning are mostly nil. There are at least two that are available over the counter Racumin and Ratsak NOT Ratsak one shot, check the active constituent on the packs. If it contains Warfarin or Coumatetralyl then it is ok. Leave everything else on the shelf.

Book Review – *Warrior*

Recently published by Libby Connors, *Warrior: A Legendary Leader's Dramatic Life and Violent Death on the Colonial Frontier*, documents the life and death of indigenous local warrior Dundalli, a Dalla warrior of the tribes of the Blackall and D'Aguilar Ranges. This wonderful book lays out the first contact history through Dundalli's life and describes the early colonial history of our local region. With much greater understanding by us whitefellas of the intricacies and sophistication of indigenous culture here in South-East Queensland, Connors is able to redescribe this early-contact period in a way previously unknown. She documents the initial phase of welcoming strangers to the Dalla lands according to their customs of hospitality and accommodation.

It soon became apparent that the new trade-goods that these whites brought could confer special benefits on those tribes who could acquire and subsequently trade them. So some sought to make strong alliances with these incoming visitors to enhance their own political power in the region. But as conflict over land-use and women grew, and the legally required responses of tribes to such "injustices" were carried out, the political and social systems of the tribes began to clash with those of the incoming colonials – neither understanding the complexities of the other's systems and patterns of behavior. The initial period of accommodation with whites soon gave way to escalating violence as misunderstanding and suspicions fuelled fear on both sides. Dundalli was charged with leading negotiations, initially friendly but eventually catastrophically violent, especially after the notorious 1842 Kilcoy poisoning of local aborigines. Aboriginal law required retribution, and Dundalli was the imposing leader who was chosen to spearhead the campaign of "just punishment" of whites.

His end was predictable, sadly. After a campaign that lasted more than a decade and which instilled great fear in the colonists, Dundalli was hung in

Brisbane in 1853. But in tracing his life, Connors documents a greatly misunderstood period of our local history, and gives a fascinating insight into the habits and minds of those who called these hills home for millennia.

Know Your Natives

Forest Lobelia (*Lobelia trigonocaulis*)

A creeping herb with broad, heart-shaped, toothed leaves and blue flowers in summer to autumn. I once grew this in a pot on a cane shelf on the outside wall near the front door where it grew into a little curtain dotted with blue flowers. It tends to die back in winter and would probably need replanting the next year.

Editor's Note: This plant can be purchased from some local nurseries. Try Kumbartcho Nursery - 3264 3953 - or the Paten Park Native Nursery (formerly Greening Australia Nursery) - 3300 6304 - at The Gap.

Another Attractive Local – Smooth Helicia

One native tree in our garden that has benefited from extra light after "Oswald" is *Helicia glabriflora* (Smooth Helicia). This small tree, suited to an average garden, belongs to the same family as *Grevilleas*, *Banksias* and *Macadamias*. It's a bird attractor, particularly to the Lewin's Honeyeater, having nectar-filled, pale yellow flowers in spikes to 10cm long. The ovoid fruit is deep purplish-blue to 15mm long. The shiny, dark green leaves can be entire or coarsely toothed. Another attraction is its long flowering period - ours has been in bloom for months.

Sue Phillips

Do your block!

Free bush care service

Would you like some assistance managing bushland on your block? Advice on weeds or advice on planting local native plants in your garden?

MEPA has a free service offering advice and information (supported by MBRC)

Contact Maggie - 3289 8175 or
Dominic - 3289 0093 or
Email: askmepa@yahoo.com.au