



The COD Line

Habitat for COD means habitat for everyone

Kilcoy Creek has Friends ...

Scott Woolbank
Landowner, Conondale

The speed at which the developers were engulfing Samford where we lived in the late 1980s and early 90s was alarming. We started to look for another place to live that met our dreams. We searched from south of the border to north of Cooroy. Three years later we found our 'National Park' near Conondale on the banks of Kilcoy Creek.

I wanted to run cattle and we also wanted to have an environment where forest and wildlife could live in harmony. (I think as you get on in years you become slightly greener in your outlook.) We had a property overrun with weeds, a small cottage in need of refurbishment, no internal fences, and a native forest that had been unmanaged for a number of years.

A tall order you might say. My wife was sceptical but supportive. With a great vision and a lot determination, hard work and a dent to the pocket, we are slowly achieving our dream.

It very soon became clear that my vision for our portion of Kilcoy Creek was only one pebble in the scheme of things. What was needed was a vision for the whole of Kilcoy Creek.

I convinced a number of our neighbours that we needed a community effort to restore and maintain this beautiful creek. With the assistance of the MRCCC and Land for Wildlife, we developed a program to fence the creek and implement management programs

to return this creek to its original state. We have ex-city folk, cattlemen, artists, nurserymen and others all now committed to this aim.

After a years' work we became known as 'The Friends of Kilcoy Creek'.

As things developed, it became obvious we needed to pool our resources. By buying materials in bulk we were able to save considerable dollars.

We have approximately half the creek fenced from the Bellthorpe State Forest to where Kilcoy Creek meets the Mary River. The remainder of the property owners are now committing themselves to this vision and we are planning the final stages of the original dream.

... and a Project Officer

Dale Watson, Project Officer
Mary River Catchment
Coordinating Committee

Landholders are the key to the success of any Rivercare project. Without your cooperation, input and commitment, little to nothing could ever be achieved.

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Widgee's tagged cod pose further questions for researchers. Story on page 8.

[Photo by Bob Simpson]

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My new position with the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee is as project officer for the 'Friends of Kilcoy Creek Rivercare Project', funded by the Australian Government Envirofund and Caloundra City Council.

Kilcoy Creek is located in the renowned Conondale Ranges, home to several rare and threatened wildlife species including the Mary River cod, Conondale crayfish, eastern bristlebird and glossy black-cockatoo. In the *Mary River and Tributaries Rehabilitation Plan*, Kilcoy Creek is classed as an unprotected strategic link, with high recovery potential.

This project got off to a flying start with a 'powerplant' organised by a local landholder on 22 March. The Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee provided plants, tree guards and expert advice. Six hundred healthy locally grown native trees were planted, mulched and watered in. The day was deemed a success by all, and future plantings are already being planned.

As project officer, I plan to support the further consolidation of the Friends of Kilcoy Creek group by organising field days and social gatherings, as well as implementing on-ground Rivercare work involving riparian fencing, provision of off-stream watering points, revegetation and weed control.

For more information, contact Dale Watson on 0438 177 054.

Gympie Landcare develops own nursery

**Paul Marshall
Revegetation Officer
Gympie & District Landcare**

Up at Imbil, the current stage of planting along the Yabba Creek anabranch is nearing completion. Funded through the Envirofund and Cooloola Shire Council, and ably supported by WWF's Phil Trendell, it is another big step in the plan to revegetate the entire length of the anabranch.

Coordinated by Cooloola Shire Councilor and long-time horticulturist, Noel Ellis, this project has harnessed the efforts of the landholders, school students and the local community. Noel is also hopeful that our application to the Drought Recovery Round of the Envirofund for the next stage will be successful, which will mean a further 9 000 plants along the anabranch.

Other Gympie & District Landcare projects, such as the lower reach of Six Mile Creek and the Community Tree Planting on Clean Up Australia Day, called for 20 000 plants earlier this year. All this planting requires a lot of plants, and not just any plants. As we know, they've got to be the right plants in the right places, grown from locally col-

lected seed that comes from multiple parent plants.

Sourcing the right plants was such a problem for Gympie & District Landcare we were forced to follow the lead of Barung and Noosa Landcare groups and build up our own nursery. We were successful in obtaining funding from the Regional Assistance Program to cover 6 months' wages for a nursery coordinator, and we engaged two part-time coordinators, Peg Berrill and Steve Husband. We couldn't have hoped for more capable and enthusiastic workers.

After eight months of operation, and considerable investment in infrastructure, the Gympie Landcare Revegetation Nursery has succeeded in propagating over 18 000 plants and lifted the range of species to 150. A lot of effort has also been put into large-scale seed collection and into developing the record systems necessary to track each batch of seeds through the nursery. The initial labour force of Youth for the Environment trainees is slowly giving way to one of regular volunteers.

Contact Gympie Landcare on 5483 8866.

Partnership approach to Water Resource Plan

**Scott Buchanan
Project Officer
Natural Resources and Mines**

A partnership approach involving the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, community groups and scientific expertise is moving forward to develop a plan for the sustainable management of stream water resources in the region.

The Mary Basin draft water resource planning process was initiated in May 2002 by the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, Stephen Robertson. The plan area includes the catchments of the Mary, Burrum, Noosa, Maroochy

and Mooloolah river systems. The plan integrates the latest scientific and technical information to produce a framework providing for secure water entitlements, allocations for future growth, and stream environmental requirements.

Ten sector groups representing stakeholder groups within the catchments were formed early in the process. These groups meet regularly to learn about and contribute to the planning process. Meetings so far have looked at historical stream flow data, regulatory requirements in managing stream flow, and current condition assessments of waterways in the Mary and Burrum

catchments. The meetings, also attended by NR&M experts in relevant fields, have provided great opportunities for everyone to discuss issues and air concerns.

The next step in this comprehensive process is to initiate a social and economic assessment process. The sector representative groups will discuss this process and contribute to identifying important social and economic issues for assessment.

For further information contact Scott Buchanan at DNR&M, Gympie, on 5480 6226.

A Truly Sustainable Event

Mim Coulstock
Education Officer
Barung Landcare Association

Barung Landcare's eighth annual *From Chainsaw to Fine Furniture*™ Maleny Wood Expo is not only Barung's major educational event for the year, but also raises much needed funds to assist with running the Barung Resource Centre.

Winner of the Sunshine Coast Environment Council's 'Sustainable Ecotourism' Award in 2001, the Wood Expo offers local artisans working in sustainably harvested native timbers, recycled timbers and weed timbers the opportunity to showcase their work to more than 7000 people from all over SEQ. The region's best wood artisans come together to display their work in all styles from the finest fine furniture to rough bush furniture.

This event is truly holistic in its approach, demonstrating triple bottom line in practise.

Economically, the Wood Expo benefits Barung, local artisans and others involved in the timber industry, and offers fund-raising opportunities for other community groups. Blackall Range businesses benefit from the influx of thousands of visitors to the area throughout the weekend.

Environmentally, the Expo is the ideal opportunity to introduce people from a broad demographic and social background to the ethics of Landcare and Catchment Care. Sowing the seeds of concern for our isolated remnants, our threatened flora and fauna, and showcasing the repair work underway in the region has far-reaching ripple effects for the environment. The promotion of farm forestry as an economic and environmentally responsible solution to land degradation issues encourages diversity of farming practises while ensur-



ing a supply of our beautiful native timbers for future generations.

Socially, the Expo continues to draw in more and more of the local community. Many local businesses support the event through sponsorship, more than 150 volunteer shifts are filled by both Barung and community members during the event weekend alone, and the organising team become firm friends despite the pressure! The benefits of the Expo to the whole community become more apparent each successive year.

We developed an Expo Business Plan in 2002, which highlighted the need for the event to remain innovative to satisfy continually expanding visitor numbers. It also drew attention to the need for a paid coordinator and other specialists in event management. The Expo is currently run by a paid Coordinator with the dedicated assistance of a large volunteer sub-committee and support of the Barung Management Committee.

I truly believe that Barung's ethical motivation in hosting the Wood Expo is the reason for its current and future success. All profits from the event go towards maintaining the Barung Resource Centre, and to Landcare education and revegetation in the region.

This year's **Wood Expo** will be held at the Maleny Showgrounds on 3, 4 and 5 May, from 9 am to 5 pm daily.

The Wood Expo, now in its eighth year, has expanded to include:

- the Landcare Paddock, with displays on the viability of farm forestry and current environmental initiatives
- the Farm Forestry and Biodiversity Speakers Venue
- the acclaimed 'ArtisTree – a Fine Line' Exhibition, illustrating a value-adding solution to an increasing environmental weed problem
- the Down Under Pavilion, showcasing the timber heritage of the Blackall Range.

Half and full day tours, including the Barung Revegetation Tour, Eco-Housing Tour, Off-Beat in the Cononales Tour (with scrumptious Bushfood lunch), Bushfoods Liqueur Tour, Crystal Waters Permaculture Tour and different farm forestry tours each day, must be booked in advance.

Other Expo attractions include traditional woodcraft demonstrations, chainsaw sculpting and trade tools; mobile millers slabbing sustainably harvested trees into useable lengths; and free children's activities. Delight your tastebuds at the Bushfoods Café, sample unique Bushfood Liqueurs, or relax with a BBQ while listening to a great line-up of music and bush poetry.

This annual celebration of Australian native timbers is proudly supported by Caloundra City Council, Private Forestry Southern Queensland, the Caloundra Tourism Levy Board, and Sunshine Coast Newspapers. Entry is \$8 for adults, children under 16 are FREE, and on-site parking is \$2.

To book EcoTours or for other information, contact Barung Landcare on 5494 3151 or at barung@sun.big.net.au



Community action at Widgee

Daniel Leo
Technical Officer
(Stream Management)
Department of Natural
Resources & Mines

After local residents (involved in the Mary River Cod Recovery Program) raised concerns about a bikeway across Widgee Creek, Department of Natural Resources and Mines (NR&M) officers investigated. It became apparent that the crossing was restricting water flow and inhibiting fish passage.

Widgee Creek has a native population of the endangered Mary River Cod, and this population has been enhanced by several releases of Mary River Cod fingerlings over the last few years. Mary

River Cod can migrate over considerable distances within a stream during their lifetime, and rely on other migratory species, such as mullet, for food.

The Department wrote to Kilkivan Shire Council (KSC) highlighting the Department's and local residents' concerns about the structure. Following this, KSC applied to NR&M for a riverine protection permit to undertake works within the bed and banks of Widgee Creek, to remove the existing structure and install a more fish-friendly crossing.

As part of the decision-making process, the application was referred to the native title representative group (notification under the Native Title Act) and DPI Fisheries for comments.

The new crossing, designed in consultation with KSC and DPI Fisheries, will result in lower water velocities over a shorter distance. Both these factors should make it easier for our native fish species to move upstream and downstream, providing them with greater opportunities to feed and breed.

Improvements to the crossing will occur because of the co-operation between KSC, DPI Fisheries and community representatives. All should be commended in taking this proactive approach to achieving significant environmental benefits while providing and maintaining public infrastructure.

If you require further information, contact Daniel Leo on 5480 6236.

Monitoring poses more questions

Bob Simpson
Fisheries Biologist
DPI's Agency for Food and Fibre
Sciences

Lately we haven't been able to devote as much time to monitoring the Widgee cod as we would like, but each sampling trip we can fit in reveals valuable snippets about how these hatchery-bred cod are doing and behaving in their first few years in the wild.

Last October we spent two days out in the Widgee area, trying to recatch cod that were tagged between 1999 and 2001.

We catch the cod using a small, portable electrofisher, then we identify individuals by waving a 'scanning wand' over the shoulder area of the fish. The wand can detect the tiny individualised PIT (Passive Integrated Transponder) tags that we have implanted into the shoulder muscle of 28 cod. Any untagged cod we catch are fitted with their own PIT tag, so the number of tagged fish is slowly growing.

All this high-tech stuff is great in theory, and it does work when we recapture tagged fish, but therein lies the problem.

Cod don't give themselves up easily. They hide in the deepest darkest cover

they can find, and seem to be particularly good at avoiding wand-wielding fisheries biologists.

Despite their elusiveness, we managed to come up with eight fish last time around. Five of these we only sighted for a few seconds before they overcame the initial shock from the electrofisher and made off into deeper cover, where we had no chance of following. At least we got a rough idea of the size of the fish, but we weren't able to check whether they were tagged.

The eight fish ranged in size from about 25 cm to 38 cm. That means they were all at least two years old.

So what about the fish that were released in 2001, which should have been around 12 to 20 cm in length? Maybe we were just looking in the wrong places, or maybe the drought conditions have been particularly tough on them and many have not survived.

Another possibility is they have become meals for the two- to four-year-old cod that seemed to be doing so well. If this is the case, we might need to rethink our approach of repeatedly stocking cod into the same areas, especially in smaller creeks where the newly released fish are most likely to come in contact with fish from earlier releases.

One of the fish we did manage to get into a net was particularly interesting. We released this fish in 1999, and then recaptured and fitted it with a PIT tag in 2000. Back then, it was 15 cm long and living under a huge old log beside a shady bank in a shallow part of the creek. Two years later and where should this cod be, but under exactly the same log. It had grown to 36 cm, and was looking in excellent condition.

Of course, being caught in the same place doesn't mean it hadn't travelled in the meantime. The radio-tracking study showed that while some cod stay in the one place for two or more years, others wander many kilometres up or down a creek, returning to a favourite spot to take up residence. Either way, this behaviour shows cod know the meaning of 'home'. If a particular area provides the food and habitat they need, they will either stay put or return after satisfying their wanderlust.

You can see that monitoring can raise as many questions as it answers. One thing we can say for sure is we are now catching more cod in our study areas than before the stocking program started, and that has to be a good thing.

For more information on the DPI's cod work, contact Bob Simpson on 3817 9590 or Bob.Simpson@dpi.qld.gov.au.

Project Platypus – Mary and Noosa River Catchments

Joel Bolzenius
Noosa & District Landcare

The platypus is officially listed as common but vulnerable, but its population in some areas has seriously declined due to environmental degradation. For example, recent surveys at the Curdies River in southwestern Victoria failed to record any platypus at all, even though the species was fairly common in the area in the 1960s.

'Project Platypus: Mary and Noosa River Catchments' aims to ensure the health of platypus populations in the Sunshine Coast region for many years to come, by

- safeguarding bank stability
- improving riparian vegetation
- maintaining/improving water quality
- generating awareness in the local community.

The first stage of this project is a survey of platypus sightings (see article this page and enclosed *Sighting Report* form). The project is NOT about platypus research (e.g. tagging, trapping).

The presence (or absence) of platypus indicate the general health of the waterway, in turn reflecting the sustainable productivity of adjoining land. Any threat to species at the lower end of the food chain will undoubtedly threaten the continued survival of this higher order predator.

To construct burrows, platypus need stable streambanks, ideally supported by healthy corridors of vegetation on both banks. Indigenous vegetation, replanted, revegetated or remnant, benefits many species from the bottom to the top of the food chain. Dead leaves and woody stems and branches are an important food source for many of the aquatic invertebrates on which platypus feed.

Even though platypus spend much of their time out of the water breathing air, water quality is very important for their health. It has also been found that low

oxygen levels which are the result of weed infestations (eg. weeping willow) have resulted in the local loss of a large portion of macro-invertebrates (caddis fly and may fly larvae) which are a vital food source for the platypus. Camphor laurel is known to cause similar detrimental effects to water quality so it is assumed that platypus populations are affected in the same way.

A key to the success of most projects is community support. This can only be achieved if the community realises the project's purpose and potential benefit to the long term future of the region.

This project has greatly benefited from help and support provided by Nature Search, WildNet, Rhythms of Life, Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee, Noosa Council, Gympie & District Landcare, and The Australian Platypus Conservancy.

For more information on the Platypus Care program, visit the official website www.platypus.asn.au or email Joel Bolzenius at Noosa & District Landcare@futurescentre@spiderweb.com.au

Hatchery news

Darren Knowles
Hatchery Technician
Noosa & District Community
Hatchery

Hatchery operations have once again slowed down after another very successful breeding season with close to 60,000 Mary River cod fingerlings being released.

Once again the hatchery ran into a few problems with space, or should I say, a lack thereof, for the rapidly growing, aggressive fingerlings. This season the increased food demand in such a confined area led to problems with disease.

Options for overcoming this problem include increasing pond space by removing some of the pine trees adjacent to the hatchery, or using in-pond floating troughs made of oyster mesh, or perhaps even constructing large outdoor concrete raceways, such as those used in the trout industry.

During this quieter period we are looking to increase our broodstock numbers again. If you know of any possible broodstock, please call the hatchery on 5442 5341. We will work out a procedure for replacing broodstock in the wild by restocking with fingerlings.

Have you ever seen a platypus?



Along with being one of Australia's most unique animals, the platypus is also one of the most difficult to survey and monitor.

If you or your family have ever seen a platypus on your property or elsewhere in the Mary or Noosa catchments, you can make a real contribution to platypus conservation by completing a Platypus *Sighting Report*, enclosed with this issue of the *CODLine*, and returning it to Joel Bolzenius, Noosa & District Landcare (details on the form) by **30 June 2003**.

To get a better handle on how platypus are faring in our area, a new community-based project – *Platypus Care* – is relying on people to share where they've seen the animals, recently or in the past.

We realise many people are concerned about publicising where platypus have been seen. We acknowledge this concern and will strive to ensure that exact locations of platypus sightings are not released to the general public. The data received will help to identify areas for linking and restoring platypus habitat.

MARY RIVER



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MRCCC Resource Centre

53 Tozer St (PO Box 1027) Gympie 4570

Phone 5482 4766 Fax 5482 5642 Email mrccc@qldwide.net.au

MRCCC Rep contributes to the Water Resource Planning process

Jim Buchanan
Horticulture Sector Representative
and MRCCC representative on
the Mary Basin WRP

At the MRCCC we have lobbied hard for improved community consultation in the Water Resource Plan (WRP) process for the Mary Basin, following dissatisfaction with community consultation for the previous Water Allocation and Management Plans (WAMPs).

A rather interesting exhibit at the WRP Technical Advisory Panel meeting in mid-2002 was an aerial photograph of the Mary River taken in recent years, with an overlay showing original property survey lines from approximately 1870-1900. It showed how much the river has changed in just over 120 years.

Yes, European settlement has caused some of the change, but even without it the river would have changed naturally. It really brings it home that the river is a living, dynamic part of our natural heritage which will continue to change naturally. We should accept this change while at the same time trying not to upset natural equilibrium.

A Life Member of the Gympie Historical Society, I am keenly interested in the history of Gympie and district. Many people today do not realise early settlers in this area were obliged to clear their selections or forfeit them to the crown.

I am a partner in Sandowne Pineapple Company, a family business established over 20 years ago. The family has farmed at Goomboorian since 1911 and today operates one of the largest pineapple farms in Australia. Our company has been exporting horticultural produce for many years and was at the

forefront in developing Quality Assurance programmes, farm mapping, and produce-tracing programs from 'paddock to plate'.

The current 'Sandowne' property is on highly erodible country and soil conservation has been a top priority. Environmental management costs the company \$25 per tonne for all pineapples produced. Our company has been involved

in large soil conservation trials in conjunction with DPI Soil Conservation Branch. Further trials on plant mulching have proved very successful. Recently trials tracing the movement of nitrates in soils have commenced.

Jim Buchanan has represented the Horticulture Sector on the MRCCC for the last two and a half years and was Chair from 2000-2002.

The MRCCC today

More than a decade down the track from its inception, the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee (MRCCC) has a considerable suite of achievements to its credit as it continues to represent a wide range of sectors involved in catchment management.

With a continual focus on community consultation, the MRCCC has produced the *Mary River Catchment Strategy*, *Mary River & Tributaries Rehabilitation Plan*, and the revised *Mary River Catchment Strategic Directions* document.

These publications promote, through the community and interested sectors, a common view of a sustainable and productive catchment and have provided a framework for significant on-ground catchment management activities.

The MRCCC is an advisory body. The catchment management concept is one of influence, establishing networks and taking on a responsibility to work together for a common good.

Delegates on the MRCCC represent these community and industry groups and government agencies:

- Beef/Grazing
- Dairying
- Education
- Environment
- Extractive Industries
- Farm Forestry
- Fishing
- General Community (lower Mary)
- General Community (upper Mary)
- Horticulture
- Irrigation
- Sugar
- Landcare (lower Mary)
- Landcare (upper Mary)
- Local Government (upper Mary)
- Local Government (middle Mary)
- Local Government (lower Mary)
- Dept of Environment
- Dept of Natural Resources & Mines
- Dept of Primary Industries
- State Development

If you would like to contact the delegate representing a sector on the MRCCC, call the MRCCC Resource Centre on 5482 4766 for contact details.



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MRCCC Resource Centre

53 Tozer St (PO Box 1027) Gympie 4570

Phone 5482 4766 Fax 5482 5642 Email mrccc@qldwide.net.au

Living with threatened species in the Kenilworth-Belli community

Eva Ford
Project officer
Mary River Catchment
Coordinating Committee

Two endangered frog species – the giant barred frog (*Mixophyes iteratus*) and the cascade treefrog (*Litoria pearsoniana*) – and their habitat are the targets of MRCCC's new *Living with threatened species in the Kenilworth-Belli community* project in Belli, Cedar, Gheerulla, and Walli creeks near Kenilworth.

These species are good indicators of stream and streambank health and are important components in the food chain. Frogs such as these need rainforest vegetation along permanent/semi-permanent streams, ideally with overhanging and crevassed banks. Overhanging riparian vegetation is also desirable.

As project officer, I will be

- looking for potential frog sites and conducting surveys to determine the local distribution of these species
- measuring and monitoring water quality, working with Waterwatch
- offering assistance to property managers to repair riparian areas, through weeding and tree planting, and to maintain them in the long term in an effort to extend the frog's range and improve the quality of streams
- getting together a group of people interested in participating in frog surveys and frog ID workshops, and in improving frog habitat at Pioneer Park on Gheerulla Creek and the park at Belli Creek Crossing No. 1.

Please contact me if

- you suspect you have frog habitat on your property and/or would like to improve degraded riparian land
- you would like to register as a volunteer for frog surveys or land improvement works
- you would like an information flyer on identifying the two target frogs
- you would like to report frog sightings, or have taped frog calls you would like analysed.

For more information, contact Eva Ford on 5482 4251 or 0408 749 162.

M'boro Waterwatch

Lee Field, new Waterwatch Coordinator for the Maryborough area, will be establishing a community Waterwatch network supported by Maryborough Shire Council and the MRCCC.

Contact Lee Field on 4121 6546.

Community Waterwatchers on alert

Over the past 12 months we have been setting up Waterwatch networks, with the help of landholders, throughout the catchment to collect valuable water quality information.

The Upper Catchment Community Waterwatch Network has been collecting monthly water quality data for seven months. This network is composed of 14 landholders collecting water quality information from their local waterway.

As well as the main stream of the Mary River, the following creeks are currently monitored: Obi Obi, Walkers, Policemans Spur, Kilcoy, Little Yabba, Booloomba, Lobster, Walli and Skenes.

Each landholder uses the group's water testing equipment, and then passes it along to the next landholder in the scheme. The equipment is calibrated monthly, and the information (from

datasheets) is then entered on the Waterwatch database.

Since the commencement of the networks, valuable information has been collected during the drought and when it finally started raining, contributing valuable 'first-flush' data from when the creeks started flowing.

We now have Waterwatch networks for the Amamoor-Gympie area, the Maryborough area and the Munna Creek sub-catchment. We plan to commence a Kilkivan Waterwatch Network in the near future.

MRCCC's Waterwatch has also been assisting Tiaro & District Landcare Group with their Waterwatch Network.

For more information on Community Waterwatch networks, contact the MRCCC on 5482 4766.

Cod return to the Obi

John Cutmore
Landholder, Obi Obi Creek

When I was a young boy my parents, aunts and uncles would tell me stories of the Mary River cod in Obi Obi Creek: of catching three cod weighing 12, 18 and 25 pounds in just two hours' afternoon fishing, of the pool called the 'cod' hole in the scrub above where Baxter's Creek joins the Obi and how that was the place to go if you definitely didn't want to go home empty-handed.

The numbers of cod must have dwindled during my infant years and I guess I was eight before I saw my first cod, an eight-pounder my Aunt caught in the pool at the western end of our farm. This seemed to excite her no end, but it didn't mean a lot to me at the time.

My desire to catch a Mary River cod myself was fuelled some seven or so years later, when I was 15, watching my uncle catch a cod that tipped the scales at 39 pounds.

Little did I know I would have to wait another 44 years to realize this ambition, until last December when I caught one of approximately four pounds in the very pool my aunt's fish came from all those years ago.

Their reappearance in this pool is not by accident. I was with Bob Simpson four and a half years ago when he released 800 fingerlings there. The first of these

was caught there two years ago, weighing about eight pounds. Five have been caught in the same pool since November 2002. As far as we can tell, these are not all the same fish (varying sizes) which would indicate the released fingerlings have grown and bred.

In recent weeks I've been told of a further two cod of seven and three pounds, caught in two different pools two kilometres downstream from our farm.

Happily all these fish have been released.

Since the construction of Baroon Pocket Dam, we have seen the arrival of silver perch, yellowbelly and bass (which I have always thought would be rival predators to the cod), as well as the almost complete disappearance of mullet and the summer weed mullet would feed on.

Late in 2002 the mullet suddenly reappeared (which I believe is due to a new fishway on the Mary River Barrage) as did the weed. The weed returned I think because of the drought release of water from Lake Baroon (some 3000 Megalitres on top of Obi irrigation releases) over a three month period. I do not remember seeing the water so clean and clear for many years.

The Manager at the dam tells me that by accident the timing and temperature of this release was perfect for fish breed-

ing. This makes me wonder if a larger environmental release at the RIGHT time would do more for the creek and the fish than a lot of smaller releases over a twelve month period.

My family has lived on this bit of land for some 90 years (my Grandfather paid 745 pounds for it). It seems I will be the last Cutmore to farm it, although fourth and fifth generations still live on the property. We have used the Obi Creek for recreation, food, stockwater and irrigation for all these years.

We have seen changes, not all of them good, but even if man had never turned up here there would still be changes. It just wouldn't matter so much if one side of the creek gained a bit of land and the other side washed away because nobody would be losing anything.

The dam has affected the creek somewhat by taking the peaks off floods. This tends to let the smaller tributaries run out more easily and deposit gravel in the main creek, which was primarily a boulder bed stream. In spite of the dam, the arrival of other fish species, farmers and people generally, I believe the Obi Obi Creek is in a relatively unspoiled state.

It is gratifying to think that, with a little more help, the Mary River cod seems about to make a remarkable comeback, thanks largely to a dedicated band of people who have bred and released these fish over the last few years.

What's moving the mullet?

Andrew Berghuis
Fisheries Biologist
Queensland Fisheries Service,
Bundaberg

The old fishway on the Mary River Barrage used to pass some mullet but passage was restricted to larger fish, so the number of fish able to ascend the barrage was restricted. The new fishway has allowed smaller mullet to ascend and so logically there should be more opportunity for mullet to move upstream.

However the barrage is not the only factor: for example, the number of mul-

let juveniles that survive varies from year as does the number of adults that are able to breed. So while the upgraded fishway certainly assists in the rehabilitation of mullet and other fish species, it is only one piece of the jigsaw.

The environmental release from Baroon Pocket dam may have contributed to the presence of mullet in the lower part of Obi Obi Creek because mullet respond strongly to water flow.

On 40 sampling days between January 2002 and April 2003 at the fishway on the Mary River Barrage, we have captured:

- over 140 000 fish from 13 to 1300 mm in length
- 32 species of fish
- almost 6000 mullet from 17 to 463 mm in length
- 11 juvenile barramundi from 11 to 216 mm in length.

In one 6-hour sample during the March 2003 flood flows, over 12 000 fish (mainly bony herring) were captured using the fishway.

The fishway sustained some minor damage in the latest flood. Repairs are currently underway.

Cod restocked in ancestral streams

Bob Simpson
Fisheries Biologist
Department of Primary
Industries

Last year saw another top effort from the cod breeding team at Lake Macdonald Hatchery, with nearly 60 000 Mary River cod bred and released into the wild.

To call it a team effort is probably not completely accurate – most of the expertise and long hours involved in tending to the fish and keeping them fit and healthy until they're big enough to be released comes down to the hatchery manager, Darren Knowles.

The rest of us who occasionally poke our noses in to the hatchery to give a bit of assistance might try and claim some credit where we can, but the truth is that without Darren's knowledge and hard work, there wouldn't be much to claim credit for. The last few seasons have proven that Darren's approach to cod breeding and rearing is right on track.

As in previous years, the 2002 cod fingerlings were released at a number of sites around the Mary River catchment and other parts of south-east Queensland during November and December.

For the first time, a batch of 3000 cod were sent down to the Coomera River in the Gold Coast hinterland. Cod used to occur in the Coomera River, but to the best of our knowledge the population died out many years ago. The plan is to release small numbers there over the next few years to try to establish a breeding population.

Some of the best stretches of the upper Coomera are hidden away in areas owned by the Army, so the cod should be well protected against any anglers with sinister intentions.

Likewise, the upper Logan and Stanley Rivers have been restocked with cod over the last couple of years to try to kickstart new populations where they were once plentiful. Dams like Wivenhoe, Somerset, Hinze, Cressbrook and North Pine also received a share last season, although many of us would like to see more cod go into these big waterbodies.

It might be possible to increase future cod releases into dams, but at the moment the priority is to make sure that sufficient numbers are going into the more natural rivers and creeks where we know cod will breed and where we have the best chance of seeing some sort of natural balance restored.

Around 60 percent of the cod produced at Lake Macdonald last year were released back into streams and dams within the Mary River catchment. Around three-quarters of these went into either the main Mary River between Kenilworth and Tiara or dams including Lake Macdonald, Borumba and Baroon Pocket. We concentrated more on these bigger waterbodies than previously because the extreme dry conditions meant many tributary streams didn't have enough water to make stocking viable.

An upper Mary landowner expressed concern that we were wasting our time stocking so many cod when much of the Mary system was in poor condition because of the drought. That was a big concern to us, and we tried to restrict releases to areas where there appeared to be enough water to give the fingerlings a good chance of survival.

Ideally we would have held over until conditions improved, but unfortunately that wasn't an option. With so many little cod eating the hatchery out of house and home, we had to find the best water we could and cross our fingers the cod could hang on until the rain finally came. With any luck the February rains weren't too late and gave the cod a chance to find the food and habitat they need to thrive.

5 years' work helping reverse 50

Fred Goeths
Landholder, Kenilworth

When I tried to explain to my children what the Obi Obi and Coolabine Creeks on our property were like when I was young, it brought into focus the extent of structural and environmental change that has occurred in these watercourses in the last 50 years.

To my children it seems like a fairytale, that we swam in a 100 metre swimming hole where there is now a gravel bed, or that my grandfather, who selected here in the 1880s, would catch a cod or two on a Sunday, to break the monotony of a corned beef and damper diet.

To redress the degradation of the creek banks and water quality issues caused by dairy animals, we began a program in

1997 to fence off the creek banks, swamp and marshy areas, utilising electric fencing and supplying reticulated water to all paddocks. The work was completed in 1999 and the stock now have no access to the streams.

The outcome on the small Coolabine Creek is a clean creek bed and high quality water with minimal bank erosion from floods. Obi Obi creekbanks are now covered in vegetation and suffered no losses from erosion during floods.

From a perspective of preventing erosion and improving water quality, the fencing programme has been very successful. However our experience has shown us we should have designed the fences to allow animals limited access at certain times of the year to control the weeds, grass and rubbish that has over-

taken the protected area. When designing such a system, the cost of ongoing maintenance also needs to be addressed.

My involvement with the Lower Obi Obi Water Advisory Board for many years has raised my awareness of water quality issues for the environment, irrigators and domestic water users, and further, that there is a lack of water quality analysis data information for our area.

In 2002 I began participating in The Upper Mary Community Waterwatch Monitoring program and now test water quality monthly, because I believe accurate data is essential when considering water allocation and quality issues that will have a significant impact on the future of our area and our children.

Battling Cabomba

Phil Moran
Project Officer
Lake Macdonald Catchment
Care Group's Cabomba Project

From humble beginnings around 1991, the water weed cabomba now covers up to 70 percent of Lake Macdonald's surface area. It has choked out almost 100 percent of the native aquatic plants that previously occurred in the lake. Up to 100 tones per hectare has been harvested by Noosa Council's Aquatic Weed Harvester. Swimming is now banned in the lake, boating activity is difficult, and water treatment costs have risen.

A common aquarium plant, cabomba was possibly introduced by someone emptying an aquarium into the lake.

Cabomba also occurs in the Hinze Dam, Ewen Maddock Dam, as far north as Townsville, and south to Kempsey in NSW.

Working on the LMCCG's Cabomba Project, Conor Neville and I have been propagating and reintroducing native

aquatic species, namely *Vallisneria nana* and *Hydrilla verticillata*. With few precedents to follow, our learning curve has been more like a cliff!

We started out growing the aquatic plants in peat pots, in ponds built next to the Noosa Landcare's Riparian Nursery. This did work, but we stumbled on another method which has proven far more effective. We tie a number of plants to a moulded concrete block, or 'bomb', which allows the roots to sit just above the substrate rather than being buried, as with the peat pots. We've had excellent results with this technique, which makes planting quick and easy, and with planting 'communities' rather than individual plants.

We've also checked out who's eating the native aquatic plants. While fish do graze the plants, it appears the real predator is the purple swamp hen.

As this project winds down, we have gained considerable knowledge and data which will be used to combat cabomba here in Noosa and all over Australia.

Noosa Council, LMCCC, NDLG, MRCCC, and particularly, Tom Anderson, from the Alan Fletcher Research Institute, have all contributed to this exciting project. Under Tom's particular brand of stewardship, we have also had a lot of fun.

Dung Beetle Project a success

Graeme Elphinstone
Dung Beetle Project Leader
DPI's Agency for Food and Fibre
Sciences

DPI's two-year project studying dung beetle populations has confirmed the vital role the beetles play in controlling buffalo and bush flies and revitalising Queensland soils.

Dung beetles work to bury and desiccate cow pats, removing potential breeding sites for the buffalo fly and worm parasites that harass livestock. A single cow pat can produce over a thousand flies in short order so the beetle's ability to bury new pats in less than five days greatly regulates and restricts fly numbers.

The beetles reduce nutrient run-off into waterways by burying the dung below the soil surface, and the dung and associated tunnel network help to aerate the soil and recycle valuable nutrients.

Native dung beetles used to dealing with modest marsupial-sized dung were overwhelmed by the arrival of cattle in Australia. In the 1970s and 1980s, CSIRO introduced 29 exotic species of dung beetles, mostly from Africa. Until this project, final distribution of these exotic dung beetles in Queensland had never been fully surveyed and studied.

The project had been very successful in increasing the awareness of the role of dung beetles in burying dung, having significant impacts on the breeding of buffalo and bush flies and securing environmental benefits across Queensland.

COD contacts

*Mary River Catchment Coordinating
Committee Resource Centre*
53 Tozer St (PO Box 1027)
Gympie 4570
Ph: 5482 4766 Fax: 5482 5642
email: mrccc@qldwide.net.au

Waterwatch
Ph: 5482 4766 or 0408 745 840
email: mrccc@qldwide.net.au

Waterwatch, Maryborough
Lee Field
MRCCC Project Officer
Ph: 4121 6546

Friends of Kilcoy Creek
Dale Watson
MRCCC Project Officer
Ph: 0438 177 054

*Living with threatened species in the
Kenilworth-Belli community*
Eva Ford
MRCCC Project Officer
Ph: 5482 4251 or 0408 749 162

*'From Chainsaw to Fine Furniture
Expo'*
Barung Landcare
Ph: 5494 3151 Fax: 5494 3141
email: barung@sun.big.net.au

*Riparian vegetation removal permits
and water licences*
Mark Perry, DNR Gympie
Ph: 5482 2555 Fax: 5482 9278
email: Mark.Perry@dnr.qld.gov.au

Hatchery operations
Darren Knowles
Gerry Cook Fish Hatchery, Cooroy
Ph: 5442 5341

Research, restocking, fish ladders
Bob Simpson
DPI Fisheries, Deception Bay
Ph: 3817 9590 Fax: 3817 9555
email: simpsovr@prose.dpi.qld.gov.au

FISHWATCH 1800 017 116
free call 24 hrs to report illegal fishing

Unfathom the Words

Anne Oliver, Maleny

How many words can you make out of the letters in 'Mary River cod'? Use only these letters, and use them only once in each of your words. (We made 35 words out of 'Mary River cod' — how many can you find?)

M A R Y R I V E R C O D

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Break the Code

Anne Oliver, Maleny

Do these sums, then check the code chart for the letters that match your answers. Write your answers as words to reveal the hidden gem of the river.

$6+7= \underline{\quad}$ $5-4= \underline{\quad}$ $9+9= \underline{\quad}$ $5 \times 5= \underline{\quad}$

$3 \times 6= \underline{\quad}$ $5+4= \underline{\quad}$ $30-8= \underline{\quad}$ $10-5= \underline{\quad}$ $12+6= \underline{\quad}$

$5-2= \underline{\quad}$ $5+10= \underline{\quad}$ $12-8= \underline{\quad}$

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z

The COD Line

is hosted by Barung & District Landcare Group.

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MARYBOROUGH
CITY COUNCIL



WORKING FOR OUR FUTURE

MARY RIVER



CATCHMENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Editor, *The Cod Line*

Eve Witney
PO Box 755
MALENY QLD 4552
Ph: 5494 4005
Fax: c/- 5494 3141
email: ewitney@campac.net.au

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MALENY QLD 4552

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