

Welcome to 2026!

With the festive season now in our rear vision mirror, let's embrace what we love in our lives and reflect on the little joys (and big ones), successes and lessons of the past year. Our marvellous Mary River is what our Upper Mary Rivercare community revolves around. In our own special way, we are all passionate about protecting her, healing her and supporting her to thrive.

Sure, Rivercare's primary mission, supported by Seqwater, is protecting our sourcewater to achieve safe drinking water supplies for our communities, but we also love the beauty of our river and her tributaries, and the beasties who call her home. Isn't it nice that looking after these things also achieves our goal of safe water, or is it the other way around? :)

Mary certainly deserves our care and protection. Please stay safe around her, be vigilant to any threats to her and her inhabitants, and enjoy her many treasures and delights during the summer season.

Wishing you all joy and peace for 2026, the Upper Mary Rivercare team and MRCCC.

Yay for Landholders!

Our landholders are our community, and we are here to support you. We love hearing your stories and what motivates you. This issue, we introduce Helen and Chris Kirkpatrick...

Our Story - Chris and Helen Kirkpatrick (December 2025)

Moving from Tassie in 1988 was a great adventure as we had decided to settle in the quiet little fishing village of Mooloolaba. Over the next 30 years Mooloolaba transformed itself into a busy metropolis - with the traffic becoming manic!! In the end it got too much, and we decided to look for a tree change - spending our weekends driving around, looking at land.

We found a four-acre cattle paddock on Hilary Road, in a little place called Carters Ridge, and so we took another adventurous step and purchased it in December 2017, knowing very little about country life. It was the biggest backyard we have ever had, and another first was that we had Happy Jack Creek, a tributary of the Mary River, as our longest boundary. We were so fortunate to find a parcel of land at the end of a private road with no passing traffic, and we are spoiled with uninterrupted views of beautiful rolling hills and farmland.

We had heard about the Traveston Dam debacle whilst living in Mooloolaba and were greatly relieved when the project was ceremoniously canned. Little did we think that one day we would be living in this beautiful valley. We built our home in 2018, living in a caravan on our land while we built.

One of the first things we decided to do was to educate ourselves about how we could become stewards of the land, with the vision of one day leaving it in an even better condition, full of wildlife. We joined both Gympie and Noosa Landcare in 2018 and were amazed to find so many people in the valley who were determined to do the same. Land for Wildlife was another group we joined in October 2021, as we were determined to

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MRCCC office mascot, Neo



Helen and Chris proudly hold their UMRC gate sign

bring back many of the native animals which are losing their native habitat daily! We were surrounded with like-minded people and so became sponges for the information that was readily available, with great workshops on many topics.

In late 2023 we received an email from Noosa Landcare offering members the opportunity of free native trees as a job hadn't worked out and they would end up as compost. As we had plans to reforest our bottom paddock and thinking it would take us years in us being able to afford it, we jumped at the chance

and secured around 250 trees - all native and endemic to this area. We planted over the period of a few days - me digging the holes and Helen planting, watering and mulching as we went. We planted swamp mahogany, flooded gum, grey gum, red mahogany, rose she-oak and many more.

Thankfully the rains came that December, and over summer, and the trees have thrived! Today the trees are huge and rewarding us with the beginning of an amazing bushland.

In March 2024, we received an email from another keen Land for Wildlife member offering us free hoop pine. We were excited to get 12 of these trees to add to our growing bushland.



Helen planting tubestock in July 2025.

In December 2024 we bought another 250 trees from Noosa Landcare and planted them behind the growing forest. Lemon-scented gums, white cedar, kauri pine, white beech, blackbutt, and white mahogany, to name a few.

They too have done very well, although 2024 was quite dry and we did lose a few! The promised rains from Cyclone Alfred that year thankfully passed by us with minimal effect.

Back in 2021 we noted that there was a body known as the MRCCC, a passionate group of extremely dedicated



The Kirkpatriks have been busy!

professionals who saw the Mary River as the lifeblood of the region, which extends from the Conondale ranges to the Great Sandy Strait. We have gained so much from attending the MRCCC AGMs each year and learning about all their projects. In February this year we were lucky enough to be visited by Alana Ebert and Kath Bennett from MRCCC who walked over the property and assessed our needs. They were instrumental in helping us gain insight into becoming the best stewards of our land.

They have been an amazing resource for us, assisting our vision in as many ways as they can, including a grant through MRCCC and Seqwater. We were successful in June 2025 and were able to get around 1000 trees, stakes and guards from Noosa Landcare, which we planted over several weeks, with many of them now already growing higher than the tree guards. They look to be thriving, even with a shortage of rain in some of the recent months. Our bottom paddocks are becoming wildlife corridors with kangaroos, wallabies, an abundance of birdlife - and hopefully koalas once trees have some height.

Good friends up the road also gave us 25 Silky Oak trees which added to our lot.

Now the bottom paddock has been planted out, we are slowly back to working on the riparian zone of Happy Jack Creek - getting rid of the invasive weeds, lantana, Chinese elm, Singapore daisy, blue top and cat's claw - luckily fairly small areas of them. So far, no Madeira vine but we remain vigilant. We have many weeping lillypilly, sandpaper fig, red kamala, bunya pine, vines, ferns, *Lomandra Hystrix* and sword grass - which we'll be adding to. We also have many HUGE Camphor Laurel, especially at the base of the creek, which we are placing



Helen, Alana and Chris during their 2025 property assessment.

strangler figs onto - to one day take over their growth. All smaller camphor laurels are removed.

Some of our creek has very steep banks - around seven metres - so a lot of plantings will go into the banks to restore. We constructed a very handy ladder which has made a huge difference in maintaining the banks as we go. (See Land for Wildlife - Nov 2023 Vol 17 No 4, page 5: [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.lfwseq.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/J019161-Land-for-Wildlife-November-edition_Web.pdf](https://www.lfwseq.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/J019161-Land-for-Wildlife-November-edition_Web.pdf)) very easy to construct!!

MRCCC has been a great positive influence on landowners in the area, especially the lands bordering the Mary River and its tributaries. We really enjoy spending time with like-minded people and are always wanting to learn more.

We've lost a few trees along the way but realise we can't be too protective as it's all bush!! It's lovely to see the wallabies lazing around under the trees that we have planted - we feel we are making a difference - one tree at a time!



Happy Jack Creek riparian zone.

Upper Mary Rivercare yearly update 2024-25

On Jinibara and Kabi Kabi country

In the fourth year of a five-year program, the 2021-2027 Seqwater- MRCCC Partnership continues to build on successes of the past three years, and grow collaboration among Mary River catchment landholders, organisations and community.

here's a summary of achievements for this year:

Key Upper Mary Rivercare program outputs for 2024-25

Projects implemented by landholders	19
Dairy projects engaged	9
Riparian fencing (length) (m)	6163
Area of riparian weeds managed (ha)	485.34
Trees planted (seedlings)	29 320
Cat's claw and Madeira vine bio-agents released (no. of insects)	15 500
Rivercare program participants in the program as at September 2024	52
Best Management Practice assessments conducted with landholders	7
Extension events (workshops, field-days, field-walks etc.)	14



Mary River fun facts

- The Mary Catchment is home to four Traditional Owner groups: Jinibara (headwaters), Kabi Kabi (central catchment to the Sunshine Coast), Butchulla (lower catchment to the Great Sandy Strait and K'Gari) and Wakka Wakka (western catchment).
- Originally known as Moonaboola, Numabulla or Mooraboocoola by Traditional Owners, Andrew Petrie and Henry Stuart Russel named it the Wide Bay River, which was changed to Mary River in 1847 after the wife of NSW governor Charles Augustus Fitzroy (Lady Mary Fitzroy).
- The Mary River is considered the most southern reach of saltwater crocodiles.
- Gold was first discovered in the Mary River at Gympie by James Nash in 1867.
- In some parts of the catchment, during major floods, the river can rise by more than 20 m.
- The Mary River catchment is 9595 m² and is 320 km long from Boorobin in the ranges near Maleny, to River Heads south of Hervey Bay.
- In the Mary Catchment, Seqwater source (water) protection activities include supporting best practice/ regenerative farming practices and waterway restoration including erosion repair, revegetation and weed management.



Gold is still found around Gympie.



Gympie flood 2022, Albert Park.



River bank repair project: before and after.



2025 Workshop and extension events highlights

Showcasing Best Land Management & Autumn Pasture Management Practices Beef Grazing Field Walk, Conondale, 8 May 2025

Autumn is the time for planting legumes and planning for winter feed - forage budgeting. During this well-attended workshop, participants were treated to expert advice and practical observation of how a well-managed pasture can support optimum feed for grazing animals, and minimise degradation to the land. The benefits are healthy livestock, healthy land and, by extension, healthy waterways... not to mention the hip-pocket savings on not having to buy in supplementary feed .



May Pasture Field Walk and Forage Budgeting workshop.

Upper Mary Rivercare Introductory Workshop, Kenilworth, 24 July 2025

On a spectacular winter day, Upper Mary Rivercarers gathered for our 2025 Introductory Workshop. Seasoned program participants welcomed new members, sharing their knowledge and experience at Michelle and Bruce Wilson's property, overlooking the magnificent Mary River.

MRCCC staff outlined the Upper Mary Rivercare Program, underpinning knowledge about the river, the species that call her home, and all the details they will need to begin, and continue, their stewardship journey. Perhaps the most valuable part of the Program, is the community that is growing and strengthening in our family of landholders. Our landholders are passionate about the Mary, coming together to support and encourage good land and waterway stewardship within the catchment.

The next Introductory Workshop is planned for the middle of 2026.



A picture-perfect setting for the 2025 Rivercare Introductory Workshop.



MRCCC's Ollie and Nathaniel talk about unique, endangered and vulnerable wildlife in the catchment.



Participants finish the day with a river walk-and-talk to see the theory in action.

Fencing Along Waterways Workshop, Including Fencing for Flood Resilience, Carters Ridge, 28 August 2025

Thursday 28 August was yet another perfect winter day when a large group of landholders gathered at Carters Ridge to learn from each other about riparian fencing and resilience, especially during flooding.

This was a special workshop in that it was land-holder and contractor-led, with MRCCC staff facilitating. The information delivered was grounded in experience, knowledge and tips gained by our presenters first-hand, all of whom passionately shared what they knew with all the attendees generously.

Such a delight to be part of our growing Rivercare Community.



Riparian Fencing workshop in August, led by landholders and contractors.



Upper Mary Rivercarer and Water Watcher, Jeanette McGuire.

Waterwatch program update

For more than 24 years, the MRCCC Waterwatch program has relied on dedicated citizen scientists volunteering their time to collect valuable water quality data throughout the Mary River catchment. This extensive monitoring provides detailed baseline information on the physical and chemical characteristics of waterways, alongside assessments of riparian and instream conditions. Volunteers also record observations of aquatic fauna such as platypus and turtles, document the presence of water weeds, and report on general river flow conditions.

Currently, nearly 80 volunteers are actively sampling at 103 sites across 81 waterways within the Mary River Catchment. As a result, the MRCCC's Waterwatch database continues to expand, offering members, stakeholders, and the broader community a comprehensive record of water quality across the catchment. The program is generously supported by Noosa Shire Council (NSC), Sunshine Coast Council (SCC), and Gympie Regional Council (GRC). Fraser Coast Regional Council has recently funded the purchase of a new water testing kit.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all Waterwatch volunteers for their time, dedication, and support over the past year. Special recognition goes to our long-term volunteers who have consistently contributed to the program and continue to advocate for its importance, including Garth Jacobson and Leslie and Craig Hansen, our Waterwatch delegates on the MRCCC General Committee. A sincere thank you and acknowledgement



The Walk-and-Talk team on day one of the 2025 Mary River Catchment Crawl in October, including Jinibara, Kabi Kabi and Butchulla Rangers.

to our retiring volunteers who have also contributed to the success of the Waterwatch program and wish you all the very best for the future.

This year, we were delighted to welcome new and returning participants to the Waterwatch program. It has been a privilege to meet new volunteers and reconnect with existing ones. Waterwatch continues to grow through participation in community events alongside the MRCCC Bug Club and Upper Mary Rivercare programs, strengthening local engagement and environmental stewardship throughout the catchment.



The headwaters of the Mary River at Conondale.



MRCCC Chairman Ian Mackay points out where the above photo was taken

Jinibara Peoples Aboriginal Corporation (JPAC) have been an active member of the Waterwatch Upper Mary network for the last three years, regularly sampling sites on the Maleny Plateau, the Stanley River and Neurum Creek. Jinibara Country encompasses the Upper Mary River, including Obi Obi Creek, which originates on the Maleny Plateau and is an important tributary of the Mary River Catchment.

This year, funding from the Office of the Great Barrier Reef (OGBR) in the place-based project provided support for JPAC to establish their own Waterwatch program allowing expansion of sample sites. Through this funding, Jinibara received dedicated water quality monitoring equipment and assistance from MRCCC to develop a six-site sampling run within the upper Mary River Catchment.

Waterwatch worked closely with Butchulla, introducing Traditional Owner groups to sampling, data sheet design, calibration, and riparian and instream health checks.

The Australian Citizen Science Council survey is helping us reflect on the strengths of long-term citizen science, with steady responses and interviews now being analysed to shape the future of Waterwatch. Additionally, we have been out and about collecting film snippets for our movie. If you would like to feature please contact us ASAP.

Excitingly, the Gympie Regional Council Waterwatch Report (2018–2025) has been completed, with results analysed and maps created.

Looking ahead, we hope to welcome more volunteers and give the Munna network a fresh reset. Thank you to everyone who makes Waterwatch such a valuable program for our community and waterways!

Waterwatch welcomes Keishia to the team. Keishia brings a wealth of knowledge and skills and has hit the ground running. Keishia's role will be assisting with the many parts of waterwatch, field sampling, mapping and calibration. Welcome aboard Kieshia.



2025 Catchment Crawl Day 1 Team Walk-and-Talk



2025 Catchment Crawl Day 1 Team Tribs: Alana, Brad, Nicole, Shona, and Jude

FIND A FROG



IN FEBRUARY

Leap into February and find a FROG!

Get ready all Citizen Scientists for
'Find a Frog in February' 2026!

Everyone can help build the collective knowledge of
our beloved native frogs that share our world.

Look for frogs, record their call, take photos and send
your information in to the FFF team at
findafrog@mrccc.org.au

Or, if you prefer an App – join iNaturalist or FrogID.

Record sheets, instructions and useful information are all
available at mrccc.org.au/frog-in-february/

Watch the introductory frog webinar available at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=81jQoJUZgXA&t=15s>



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*Good company, spectacular setting, fabulous day, heaps of great
information and advice... what more could we ask for? Oh! Great
food!*

The Upper Mary Rivercare Program is delivered by the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee with funding support from Seqwater. Visit www.mrccc.org.au/projects/upper-mary-rivercare-program/ for more information on the Program.



Upcoming workshops, events and activities planned for 2026

- February: Find a Frog in February 2026!
- February 4: MRCCC General Meeting
- February 5: Platypus workshop in collaboration with Sunshine Coast Council
- Mid- to late-March: Weed management in the Mary - Rivercare meets Roving Restorers
- Easter: Forage budgeting grazing workshop
- Moy Pocket cat's claw vine management: 26 March, 7 May and 11 June
- Fire risk management (around May)
- Rivercare Introductory Workshop and Soil health (June-July)

Note: dates and details to be confirmed. Call the MRCCC office on 07 5482 4766, or email kym.burnelljones@mrccc.org.au, to register your interest for any of our events-workshops-meetings and we'll be in touch with details as they become available.

Contact the MRCCC Resource Centre

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