

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED TO BRING BACK THE RICHMOND BIRDWING BUTTERFLY

The Richmond Birdwing Butterfly is now extinct from two thirds of its range. On the Sunshine Coast, it occurs from Eumundi to Mount Mee. There is a small area on the Gold Coast and another in northern New South Wales. It is thought the butterfly may have become extinct at Kin Kin Creek in the last 2 years. Work is being done to establish corridors of the butterfly larval food plant (*Pararistolochia praevenosa*) or, as they are commonly known, Birdwing Butterfly vines.

The Richmond Birdwing butterfly is classified by the EPA as vulnerable and the larval food plants as rare. On the Sunshine Coast this vine is now only found as far north as Kin Kin. Vine numbers in the wild continue to decline due to clearing of sub-tropical rainforest in northern New South Wales and south-east Queensland and prolonged drought, causing suitable habitat to become more fragmented.

Stations of vines are being established on public land and Neighbourhood links are being created on private land. A neighbourhood link is established by planting a minimum of 30 vines within 1 km². This can be done on small blocks of land with homeowners planting one or two vines per property.

Butterflies are valuable indicators of the health of local bushland, with some species dependent on only one particular native plant as food for their caterpillars.

In 1870 data indicated Birdwing butterflies were seen in their thousands in Brisbane streets. Decline of the butterfly began after

about the 1930's and led to the marked reduction in distribution and extinction of some local populations.

Residential estate development, quarrying, farming and forestry are seen as the main reasons for the decline in both density of the butterflies and increasing fragmentation of its habitat.

Another threat to the butterfly larvae is *Aristolochia elegans*, or Dutchman's pipe vine, which attracts the butterfly to lay eggs on it, but poisons the caterpillars when they feed on the leaves.

Unfortunately this vigorous exotic vine originally from Brazil, was cultivated as an ornamental garden plant, but like numerous others has escaped and spread into bushland.

HOW YOU CAN HELP!

Become a member of the Richmond Birdwing Recover Network. Membership is \$10.00 per year and includes 4 newsletters per year.

Register your interest in becoming involved in creating a neighbourhood link of vines in your area.

For more information, email Eva Ford at MRCCC at mrcceva@qldwide.net.au or telephone her office on 54824766.

Eva will supply all the information and forms necessary to become a Neighbourhood link co-ordinator.

Once a member of the RBRN you will be supplied with the names of authorised suppliers who have vines ready to plant out new.

Vines are only \$6.00 each and are approximately 1 metre high.