

# WAMBALIMAN

The newsletter of the  
**Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland**  
**Fraser Coast Branch**



## THIS ISSUE:

- Branch activity reports
- Nature Walk report  
- Vernon State Forest
- Living with frogs
- Birdwatching at Utopia
- A microbat tale
- Conversation with Frank Ekin

**AUTUMN 2022**

**WAMBALIMAN since 1967**

In the language of the Butchulla people, who are custodians of land that includes the Fraser Coast, 'wambaliman' means 'to carry', and refers to the messages that the Newsletter is communicating.



**WILDLIFE PRESERVATION  
SOCIETY OF QUEENSLAND**

*known informally as*

**WILDLIFE QUEENSLAND**

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**Bookings**—FCRC website / Library

**Backyard Bioblitz**

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**EAG & MLES rep**—Vanessa Elwell-Gavins

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**USC Partnership**

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Rodney Jones, Bruce Dick, Cassy Ironside

**Newsletter WAMBALIMAN**

Publisher: WPSQ Fraser Coast Branch

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**WAMBALIMAN**

e-copy in colour and hardcopy in black and white  
Let us know if you want the e-copy only.

The Fraser Coast Branch of Wildlife Queensland acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and water in our region; to the east the Butchulla (Badtjala) People, and to the west, the Kabi Kabi (Gubbi Gubbi) People. We pay respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

# WAMBALIMAN



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## Contributions for WAMBALIMAN

We welcome contributions from WPSQ members and supporters. Articles can take the form of reports, observations of nature, anecdotes, quotes, humour and so on. Send contributions to:

[ggduckz@gmail.com](mailto:ggduckz@gmail.com)

### Submissions for the next issue are due by Friday 15 July 2022

The Editor reserves the right to withhold material from publication and to alter or correct any material which may include but not be limited to spelling, grammar or punctuation mistakes, or re-formatting to fit the space.

*Opinions expressed in Wambaliman are not necessarily those endorsed by the Wildlife Preservation Society Queensland, Fraser Coast Branch unless specifically attributed to them.*

## What's On

### Branch General Meetings

**Usually** - 3rd Sunday bi-monthly 2:00pm  
Halcro St Community Centre, Pialba

19 June  
21 August  
18 September (AGM)  
20 November

### Executive Meetings

MAY, JULY, OCTOBER DATES TBA

### NATURE WALKS

SAT 7 MAY— THE WILD  
SUN 5 JUNE—HUNTER'S HUT SF  
SAT 2 JULY—RAIL TRAIL

### WILDLIFE TALKS IN THE LIBRARY 1-2PM

Postponed due to Covid for the time being

### SPECIAL EVENT

**Exploring Nature on the Fraser Coast**  
**Saturday 9 July 2022**  
three walks to choose from!  
See page 6

### CENTRAL BRANCHES GET-TOGETHER

Possibly late August TBA

### FRASER COAST BACKYARD BIOBLITZ for 2022

Winter: 9-10 July  
Spring: 8-9 October

Don't forget to LIKE us on

[www.facebook.com/WPSQFraserCoast](http://www.facebook.com/WPSQFraserCoast)

Check out our page on

<https://wildlife.org.au/fraser-coast/>

## Editor's Note

Wambaliman Summer 2021-22 was the final issue proofread by Andrea Van Kampen.

Andrea and I worked together beginning in 2006 when Wambaliman was produced by Wide Bay Burnett Conservation Society (WBBCC).

In those days contributors to Wambaliman were WBBCC, and Hervey Bay and Bundaberg Branches of WPSQ. We printed the newsletter in the WBBCC Maryborough Environment Centre situated in the Maryborough Neighbourhood Centre. It would take us a good part of a day to print, collate, fold and address.

When WBBCC ceased operating the Fraser Coast Branch took over publishing Wambaliman. Andrea was not a Branch member but continued to proofread.

Andrea is irreplaceable as a proofreader. She not only picked up grammatical mistakes and typing and formatting errors, but could spot a misspelt place name, would sometimes query a fact, and could pick a mistake in scientific nomenclature—no easy feat when you consider all those Latin and Greek roots and oddities such as finishing species names in “ii” and so on.

When Rod Jones was Wambaliman editor he made it a personal quest to produce a draft Wambaliman so that Andrea could find no mistakes. He failed!

Thank you Andrea for your contribution to Wambaliman over many years. I will miss your feedback each issue very much. ✿ **Jenni Watts**



**Winter 2018  
Solstice Sizzlers:**  
Chris Ballantyne,  
Noel Gibson,  
Carol Hawkshaw,  
and Sara Gerdsen.

It will sadden a number of members to hear of the death of long-time member Chris Ballantyne. While Chris played a pivotal role with Friends of the Burrum River System Group, he also made significant contributions to our Branch. Most notably, Chris and Tim Thornton successfully negotiated on behalf of the Branch the purchase of Arkarra Lagoons by the Hervey Bay City Council. This will remain a magnificent legacy and provides an encouragement to those of us still waging battles for the protection of Fraser Coast's natural environment. Chris never hesitated volunteering when asked, and regularly manned the tongs at our Bunnings sausage sizzles. We will long feel the loss of this gentle, generous, good-humoured friend. ✿

## From the Executive

I am writing this report in a campervan, slightly chilled by the crisp Victorian Autumn. While Jenni and I cherish absorbing ourselves in the lushness of our sub-tropical rainforests, and thrill at the wildflower show in the Wallum in Spring, one can only be impressed by the stunning kaleidoscope of colours of the autumn leaf display provided by the ubiquitous deciduous trees down south.

The Executive together with assisting members are well under way with plans for events that will involve our Branch over the next few months. Plans for the **Central Branches Get-together** (CBGT) are progressing. We have had positive responses from our friends in the Upper Dawson and Capricorn Branches. The planning subcommittee (Jenni, Jackie H, Diane and I) will be looking to finalise the program before our June meeting, so information can be distributed and bookings made.

In July our Branch contribution to **WPSQ 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations** will take place. Like me, I know many of you are proud to belong to such an iconic Society, which is Australia's most distinguished state-based conservation organisation. Our celebration will involve the community and showcase some of the activities our Branch does well. We already have around a dozen members committed to helping on the day, and we encourage all of you to get involved, either as a helper or attendee. Head Office has donated \$1000 to help us run the event.

The other aspect of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary that Head Office is planning is a publication celebrating 60 years of wildlife preservation in Queensland, like the one they produced for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Each Branch will contribute to the publication by providing a description of some of their achievements of the previous ten years. Vanessa has graciously volunteered to write our Branch's contribution. We also must **thank Vanessa** for offering to continue as our Environmental Advisory Group (EAG) representative, a role she had indicated she would step down from this year. We are fortunate she has decided to continue in the role. Vanessa's past contribution as an EAG rep has been valued and her knowledge and constructive thinking is well regarded.

Unfortunately, we have had an Executive member step down. Jacky Withy has reluctantly had to resign because of family circumstances. We thank her for her contribution. With six remaining Executive members we remain in a good position to effectively share responsibilities.

Finally, all the best to those candidates in the **Federal Election** whose platform clearly articulates a commitment to the long-term preservation of our natural environment and endeavours to protect our biodiversity without reservation or concession. ✨

By *Peter Duck*, President

**WELCOME TO NEW BRANCH MEMBERS**  
**Paul Murdoch and Elizabeth Carrigan, Will Price, Alan Logan**



From left, Cr Jade Wellings, Vanessa Elwell-Gavins and Dawn Williams, leader of the Friends of Arkarra. (Photo from FCRC Facebook)

### New signs for Arkarra

Members of our Branch worked with Tina Raveneau when she was with the FCRC to develop new signs for Arkarra. The project was not quite complete when Tina left the Council last September and it is only now that the signs have finally been installed. Originally the Branch was contributing toward the cost of the signs from the Joan Coultts bequest. However Council (with a change in personal) recently rejected the offer and have funded the signs. 🌟



## “Exploring Nature on the Fraser Coast” Saturday 9 July 2022

**finishing at Black Stump area, Gatakers Bay, Point Vernon**

Our Branch’s contribution to WPSQ’s 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations is an event on Saturday 9 July 2022 which comprises three nature walks/ children’s activities and BBQ lunch/speaker(s)/information gazebo. We have received \$1000 from Head Office to offset costs.

The walks will be of differing lengths and focus, culminating at a common point for a BBQ and speaker(s). Activities will be open to Branch members and the wider community. The event will be free.

Members of our Branch have a diversity of skills we can share with the wider community. If you can help with any of the activities please contact Peter Duck ([ggduckz@gmail.com](mailto:ggduckz@gmail.com)). Let’s make this a fun and successful day!

### **walk 1 Beach hike to Gatakers - shuttle for drivers back to cars**

meet 8.00am, start 8.30am, finish at 11.00am for shuttle

### **walk 2 Gatakers-Parraweena Park-Eli Point-Gatakers 3.2 km circuit**

approx. 9.30am-11.15am

### **walk 3 Mangroves at Eli Creek approx. 1km**

approx. 9.30am-11.00am then drive to Gatakers

## Branch Activity Report January –April 2022

### Meetings/ gatherings

- Executive Meeting 29 January 2022
- General Meeting 20 February 2022
- Special Executive Meeting 19 March 2022, to consider Branch's application for WPSQ 60th Anniversary Celebration (see page 6)
- General Meeting 10 April 2022

### Submissions

- Branch wrote to each FCRC Councillor individually outlining case to reject Material Change of Use and Reconfiguration of Lot development on Ibis Boulevard (Eli Waters). A motion was presented at the March Council meeting to reject the Development Application. The motion was supported by 5 Councillors but fell one vote short of being passed. At least we are starting to see some movement in the right direction. The application is yet to be approved and will be reconsidered by Council after further discussion.

### Walks

- The March Nature Walk was eventually cancelled after postponement, rescheduling and venue change, with wet weather being the culprit.
- The April Nature Walk—a new location in the Vernon State Forest (see page 10)

### Talks

The Library Talks remain suspended for the time being.

### Autumn Backyard Bioblitz

The Autumn Backyard Bioblitz was conducted on the weekend of the 24-25 April. Early results show there was 192 observations 19 observers.

### Central Branches Get-together

Details will be finalised in June. Late August is shaping as the probable time for the CBGT.

### University of the Sunshine Coast Projects

We have signed amendments to the original Honours Project Agreements. The \$4000 already paid to USC will be redirected to the Greater Glider Project starting Semester 2 this year. The Eastern Grey Kangaroo Project will be deferred until the University has a suitable applicant.

### Alan Peebles Memorial Service

Four Branch members attended Alan Peebles Memorial Service at Peebles Rest in the Pir'ri Nature Reserve on Friday 11 March.

### Communication

Our Facebook page has 852 followers. Our webpage, Wildlife Matters articles, and the quarterly release of Wambaliman continue to inform and educate about natural history and wildlife protection.

- Wambaliman Summer 2021-22 was distributed early February 2022

### Fundraising

- Your contribution to our container deposit fundraiser is much appreciated
- The regular Beach House raffles conducted by John and Pat continue to boost our coffers. The prescribed mechanics of the raffle have changed this year, meaning that the profit from the raffle is affected by the number of tickets sold, which can vary according to the patronage on that particular day. It has been decided that the proceeds of one raffle each month will be donated to Wildlife Rescue Fraser Coast, and that the proceeds of one raffle each two months will go ANARRA Wildlife Rescue. The proceeds of the remaining raffles will go to our Branch. 🌟

## Report on Environment Advisory Group meeting

I attended a meeting of Council's Environment Advisory Group (EAG) on 5 April, chaired by Councillor David Lewis, on Tuesday 5 April in Maryborough.

Disappointingly, the EAG's resolutions from the last meeting (July 2021) have not yet gone to Council. We recommended the Environmental Coordinator (Rod Buchanan) should submit them as a 'recommendations report' for the next Council meeting. The financial recommendation is now urgent as the 2022-23 Budget planning process is underway.

### **Development and the environment**

There is still considerable tension in Council between maximising development and protecting the environment. However, some progress has been made in that Council representatives considered environmental issues are generally 'accepted' by Council where there are no constraints on its activities, particularly development. Communications with Councillors and key staff should emphasise that failure to protect environmental values has both social and economic ramifications and generates future costs which the community and/or Council inevitably must pay. Building in flood prone areas, or failing to take information about coastal hazards into consideration in approving developments is no longer acceptable and could lead to Councils being liable and culpable. The EAG suggested that the Environmental Coordinator should organise a visit to Noosa Council for Councilors and key staff, to see how Noosa Council manages its environment.

**Fauna management** Council has engaged an environmental planning consultant, Daniel Willis from Catalyst Three, to develop a fauna management policy with a view to minimising impacts

on fauna (including breeding sites) from Council activities and development. The hope is to 'lock in' good management practice so developers have no option but to comply.

### **Matters of Local Environmental Significance**

The Environmental Coordinator provided an update on developments following a meeting of a MLES community advisory group in February (which I also attended on the Branch's behalf). MLES will be applied across the whole Council area, not just in 'development areas'. A pilot 'corridor' project is underway in the Bunya Creek catchment. Regional ecosystem mapping has been completed. Rod undertook to supply us with his presentation and briefing notes from the Strategic Planner responsible for the MLES project and planning scheme review.

### **Takura Environmental Levy property**

The property has been closed to the public since a safety incident last year. It is expected to be opened again after the end of the financial year, once the house has been removed, the access road upgraded and a walking track installed.

### **Respecting our natural environment**

(this new 'brand' is referenced out of the Corporate Plan). Jacinta Padgett reported on:

- A review of the CEP to see what is working and what might need to change.
- The need for better alignment between the natural areas team and the work of volunteers.



- The style guide has now been approved by Council. Four brochures for residents (Foreshore Reserves; Bushland Reserves; Urban Lakes and Urban Waterways) have been completed.
- A consultant has been appointed to do an update/revamp of the Coastal Gardens guide, which will focus on 'greening' private properties using an ecosystem/habitat approach and an updated species list.
- They are still looking at how to get their messages out to the broader community but have been happy with the success of their 'coastal' activities in March.

**Policies** Council has approved a revised Tree Policy which protects a lot more than the old policy (including, for example, trees on road reserves) and provides a hierarchy of assessment where tree removal is supposed to be the last resort. Council has also approved a Bushfire Management Policy. The next policy will address illegal vegetation management. Illegal encroachment is significantly more common than tree poisoning.

**Greening Fraser Coast** (100,000 Trees Program). This became a 'street tree'/urban heat mitigation program. Rod is preparing a paper for Council in

May on how to improve the 'green' outcomes from this program by following the 'no net biomass loss' principle.

**Open Space Strategy** This will enable Council to know what reserves they manage (currently this information is not coordinated!), and the extent to which open spaces might have significant environmental values that need to be protected. Using GIS tools, this strategy will enable prioritisation of open space and reserves based on ranked environmental values and level of risk. This could drive revegetation/regeneration work.

**Mary River Flood Recovery Plan** is being put to Council for endorsement.

**Environmental planner** Cr Lewis has written to Gerard Carlyon, Director Development and Community, about the need for an in-house environmental planner. The environmental planning consultant has already reviewed six development applications.

**Next meeting** I've asked for the next meeting to discuss the planning scheme review and the need for better DA scrutiny, to improve the alignment between the planning scheme and outcomes of current developments. ✨

**Vanessa Elwell-Gavins**  
Branch EAG representative

***WILDLIFE MATTERS-Budding wildlife writers needed!***

Our Branch is a regular contributor to several local publications including the glossy magazine **The Fraser Coast Beacon, and The Maryborough Sun.**

Members are invited to submit articles for consideration by our editorial team. For a copy of the criteria or information contact Diane or Ruby (see page 2)

**We were wrong!** - on page 11, Wambaliman Summer 2021-22

The photo of the orchid was incorrectly labelled as *Cymbidium sauve*. It was in fact *Cymbidium madidum*. Thanks Alan Logan for picking this up.

## Nature Walk—Vernon State Forest 3 April 2022

We have had a fabulous wet season on the Fraser Coast, but at a terrible cost in the flooded areas of Maryborough, Brisbane and Lismore.

It has been a period of superb vegetation regrowth on Fraser Coast. Reconnoitring the Vernon State Forest, Noel, Max and I were astonished to witness the vigorous leaf flush on the trees and the increased density of understorey shrubs, consequent upon the recent rain.

The leaf flush reflects what is going on the soil subtending the root system. Amongst scientists, the richness of the biome within soil has been known for a long time. This knowledge is permeating out to the environmentalists and horticulturalists. The recent wetness has stimulated the fungi, bacteria and viruses to dissolve chemicals from rock, sand, soil and organic matter to be more available to the plants. This tree root absorption of nutrients stimulates plant growth.

The Vernon State Forest is a stream catchment. In February, many of the tracks were several hundred millimeters deep in water, and others were running fast, all feeding into Beelbi Creek. On the day of the walk, severe erosion was evident.

Our ever patient botanists, Jenni and Peter, fielded innumerable questions on plant life, such that the western section of the walk took 2 hours rather than the anticipated 35 minutes. At least 50 plant species were identified. This stimulation of interest is a measure of success.



At the beginning of the walk we saw the delicate pink pea flowers of the Austral Indigo. Then Flat-stemmed Wattle provided a bright yellow splash of colour. In the wetter areas a favourite was the low growing mauve Koala Bells. The area showcased the typical Eucalypt forest vegetation. There were Ironbarks, Queensland Peppermint, Grey Gum, Yellow Stringybark and Brush Box. The most common Eucalypt was the Spotted Gum with its smooth and dimpled pinkish trunk. The bird-watchers were delighted to see Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters.

There was a long morning tea break at the halfway point. Some walkers returned to their vehicles at this stage.

The eastern section of the walk, tackled by about half of the initial party, had some steep dried-up riverbed gullies. Max, equipped with rope, assisted us to scramble across these adventurous sections.

The vegetation was surprisingly different. But it was the irrepressible Cass who excited us with the fossils

which the reconnoitre team had unwittingly trodden on during earlier explorations. Julie too was captured by Cass's infectious enthusiasm for fossils.

This was a new walk for our group and so convenient to Hervey Bay, protected, rather than destroyed, by motor bikes. ✨

*by Frank Ekin*

*Blue Trumpets*



*Yellow Stars*



*Fossils*



*(photos by Cass)*

### **Excerpt from PRESS RELEASE, 12 April 2022—Federal funding provides ongoing help for ‘brushies’ with a new conservation network planned**

Wildlife Queensland is delighted to announce that we have successfully secured a grant funded under the Commonwealth Government’s ‘Environment Restoration Fund Threatened Species Strategy Action Plan – Priority Species’ program to help recover populations of the nationally vulnerable Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby (*Petrogale penicillata*) across the South East.



The \$198,375 sum allocated to Wildlife Queensland will be a major boon for Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies, which our team has already been supporting using member donations from our 2018 Christmas appeal. More recently, our part-time Project Officer Hannah Thomas has also been working with local landholders and the Logan City Council, setting infrared wildlife cameras to survey for the species around Mount Perry.

Funds will help establish a dedicated Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby Conservation Network and website (similar to that for our existing [Quoll Seekers Network](#), [Queensland Glider Network](#), [Richmond Birdwing Conservation Network](#) and [PlatypusWatch](#)).

## Living with (many) Frogs



We first became aware of frogs taking up residence in the pots near our front door about 10 years ago. At the time I was leaving for work quite early in the morning and most of the frogs were either heading home across the driveway or already in the process of squeezing themselves into the crevices between the pots. We tend to use a lot of self-watering pots placed inside slightly larger ceramic pots which prevents cane toads from accessing them while allowing the frogs the necessary space to enter, as well as providing sufficient protection from predators.

Most of our frogs are Green Treefrogs. Eva Ford from MRCCC has identified several others from recent photos including the Bleating Treefrog, Emerald-spotted Treefrog, Broad-palmed Rocketfrog and Northern Laughing Treefrog.

There is something endearing about these creatures, especially the Green Treefrogs. I have even observed some people who would not normally take an interest in wildlife show their caring side when it comes to these creatures – perhaps it is their ‘smiley’ faces as they peek out from their shelters that you immediately feel you want to protect them. My husband John was quite happy to take on the role of directing traffic when I left for work each morning due to concerns of frogs being run over. I doubt the same level of empathy would extend to our resident scrub turkeys when they decide to build yet another nest out of his recently spread mulch!



*Somehow frogs are able to squeeze between the two pots making for a safe habitat.*

Fast forward to retirement when you can take more interest in your surroundings. We noticed more frogs were living in the adjoining breezeway and herb garden – those in the herb garden had the same living arrangements as mentioned due to the pots, but the ones in the breezeway were simply living on the walls which soon attracted tree snakes during the day. Worried about the predation, and we needed to paint this area following repairs, John set about making a ‘frog hotel’ using various sizes of plastic pipes secured in a pot of river stones. The plan was to entice them out of the breezeway into the nearby fern garden which we felt would be a more appropriate environment and which would also allow us to paint the area.

The frogs however obviously preferred the overhead cover and made no attempt to relocate. Next step was to make another hotel for this area only this time we used joiners on all the pipes whilst also placing smaller pipes inside some of the larger ones. This was more successful with several choosing this model. This created another dilemma however as we did not feel it was right to attempt to move the Hotel as those living inside would most likely return to the breezeway.

In the end our breezeway is still unpainted, and we have frogs living in pots, the hotel, behind fixtures and with a couple remaining on the walls. A large python has also recently moved into a nearby shed which is a concern knowing they will be on its radar when they are out hunting at night. But I guess giving the frogs the best opportunity for survival is all we can do in the balance of nature. ✿

***by Val Hampson (Photos by John Hampson)***

Branch members Val and John live on a small acreage at Takura. They are regular attendees on our Nature Walks.



*Val and John have built the ideal luxury frog hotel which sits in their garden.*

## The Utopia Experience—a birdwatchers outing

It is not surprising that some of the Maryborough Birdwatchers are also members of Fraser Coast Wildlife. On our most recently scheduled bird watching expedition we went to the privately owned community property of Utopia, near Mount Walsh. It was a fine, sunny day.

As we drove slowly into the property, we flushed a party of Apostlebirds (about twelve!) who flew up from the ground and into a nearby tree, and who was waiting for us on the road just inside the gate, but our host with the most, Tony Baylis. He greeted us and directed us to the meeting place near to his house, saying that the large meeting place at the bottom of the property had been ravaged by the flood. As we approached the meeting place we were greeted by a party of White-winged Choughs.



*Artanema fimbriatum*

We eventually returned to the meeting place and had lunch. Tony suggested that if went to the dam we might see some waterbirds. John knew a short cut which involved walking to the nearest road, crossing the road and going down a thickly vegetated steep slope. Everyone went at a different pace with John charging down at a cracking pace followed by Tony (van K) and me. We were the only ones lucky enough to see

After we settled, Tony took us for a walk down to the big shed, which was a sad, decrepit shadow of its former self. While at the shed two King Parrots screeched and flew off! On the walk down we saw hundreds of Koala Bells (*Artanema fimbriatum*) all flowering en masse, and among the birds we saw a couple of female Cicadabirds, a Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, a Brush Cuckoo and a Black-faced Monarch. We also saw a few occurrences of a native passionfruit in flower (*Passiflora aurantia*).



*Passiflora aurantia*

the Variegated Wrens. Coryn caught up with us and we kept going while Tony waited for the others to catch up. Coryn and I slowed down as we approached the bottom of the slope, trying to negotiate all the water that had collected. It was near here that I encountered a very tiny, beautiful damselfly and tried, and eventually succeeded, in getting photos. It is a Red-tipped Shadefly.

Once at the bottom of the hill, by which time our shoes were waterlogged, all we had to do was climb up a short hill to meet the road and continue onto the dam. The others caught up and as we approached the dam, we saw many Red-backed Fairy-wrens amongst the grassy vegetation, and then Pacific Black Ducks at the dam.



*Brown Thornbill*

There were a few other tiny birds at one spot, where I photographed a Brown Thornbill.

Other birds we saw were a Spanged Drongo, Brown Honeyeaters, Lewin's Honeyeaters and Dusky Honeyeaters, a Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Leaden Flycatcher, Torresian Crow, Rufous Whistler, Silveryeyes, Double-barred Finches, Eastern Yellow Robin, Red-browed Finch, Striated Pardalote, Pied Currawong and Laughing Kookaburra.

Although, (as Tony suggested), we looked for Black-breasted Button-quail, we didn't find any. All in all it was a most enjoyable day! ❁

***photos and text by Ruby Rosenfield,***

Ruby is a Branch member and Coordinator of the Maryborough Birdwatchers.



**Above:** As part of Find-a-Frog in February there were a number of workshops run by Eva Ford from MRCCC. The group photographed above attended an information session followed by a spotlight outing at Toogoom.

**Left:** In February Birdwatchers of Hervey Bay celebrated 25 years with a shared morning tea at Arkarra Lagoons. John Knight (pictured) has been at the helm all that time. John recently turned 90.

## The Microbat That Could Tread Water

One of our hose connectors is a bit worn, so to catch the drips we placed a tub under the tap. This water is used to fill a watering can. Living on a bush acreage, there is no town supply connected to the property, so water is a precious resource.



The other morning, I saw what looked like a cane toad floundering in the water. On closer inspection, I realised it was a bedraggled microbat that was using its wings to stay afloat, rather like a human treading water.

Knowing that it is unsafe to handle bats, I reached for a flowerpot and scooped out the microbat. Once the water had drained away, I tipped the little mammal onto the ground at the base of a Native Jasmine so it could recover in the semi-shade. After a few minutes, the microbat settled in its fork. I hurried inside to find my camera, but sadly, on my return, the bat had flown away. I was left wondering what species it was, as I only saw dark brown, wet fur.

There are 23 species of microbat on the Fraser Coast. However, they are not easy to observe as their presence is fleeting. They are not to be confused with the much larger flying foxes, the night pollinators and seed distributors.

Tiny microbats are insectivorous, consuming up to half their body weight in one night while nursing females can eat up to 4500 insects. These bats are important in the ecosystem as they control insect populations; essential in agriculture where insect damage is so costly.

In suburbia, they are instrumental in controlling mosquitoes.

Microbats use echolocation in locating food. Sounds are emitted from their nostrils and

through the mouth. These soundwaves, mostly inaudible to the human ear, travel through the air bouncing off distant objects. When the prey is located, the sound vibrations increase to 100 pulses per second from 10 per second emitted whilst bats cruise. The frequencies range between 14000 to 100000 hertz well above the levels of the human ear (20 to 20000 hertz) producing a beam of sonar to 'read' the surrounds.

From the returning signal, the microbat can judge the location of the prey and its shape, size and movement. Some moths have devised a protective defence like having furry wings that do not reflect soundwaves, or by them emitting their own soundwaves in return, confusing their predators. In response, bats quickly adopt erratic flights to deceive the prey.

A few days after my discovery, a single microbat flew overhead at dusk. I wondered if it was my rescued bat which 'trod water' in our tub. This is now covered with strong wire mesh, in place until the time we install a new hose fitting. ✿

*by Sara Gerdson*, Branch member, with additional writing by Diane Christensen. Source: Echolocation in Microbats, Patrick Fink 2007.

A version of this article appeared in the *Toogoom Chatter*, the *Outback City Express* and the *River Heads Review*, 2021



## *A conversation with Frank Ekin*



Having a cuppa and chat with Frank over two hours in preparation to write this article left me totally overwhelmed and in awe of this man who has so many different facets in his life. Frank repeatedly pointed out that his life is a total partnership with his wife Alice, whom he constantly credited for this and that and deferred to for recall of events and facts or to keep him on topic. Thus, the chat was really a conversation with both of these enthusiastic environmentalists.

Frank and Alice are relatively newcomers to our Branch, having joined a few years back. However, they are no strangers to environmental organisations, and are life-long learners when it comes to the natural world. Alice is a valuable member of the Botany Group, often typing up the plant lists after a field trip - no easy task as it requires spelling all those botanical names. Frank and Alice have also been members of Birdwatchers of Hervey Bay for about 20 years, often hosting the group when they lived on a property at Teddington, just out of Maryborough. In recent years Frank's inherent social justice values have also morphed into environmental activism. On several occasions he has fronted Council as an individual with a case for preserving and enhancing our natural areas.

Frank is currently very active in our Branch on the Walks Team. His preparation is impeccable, with repeated recceys, and he is known for his entertaining and informative homilies in the field. He also does a great job writing up the outings for Wambaliman. This means that I, as the editor, need to make some difficult choices on those occasions when I need to edit Frank's articles due to space. Last Wambaliman, for example, I was disappointed to leave out this emotive observation Frank made about the 2021 walks: "The same site re-visited has different interests to offer on each visit. Once one has trained one's eye and has piqued one's interest in botanising, birding, insect life, fungi or simply the appearance of the bush, then the walks have achieved one of their purposes." Frank's enthusiasm and vision is hard to ignore.

Frank and Alice arrived for a cuppa armed with two tomes. One was Thorburn's "British Birds" Vol IV (published 1918), which includes many coloured plates of

exquisite paintings, each faced by a thin tissue layer. Frank owns the four volumes, which belonged to his beloved grandfather. The other very large book at the table was entitled “Book of British Birds”. This field guide belongs to Alice. Her pencilled notations on many pages were made in the early '70s and document where and when she had seen a species.

Frank and Alice both grew up near Belfast in Northern Ireland. Frank appears to have had a relatively relaxed childhood, largely unaffected by the sectarian turmoil in Northern Ireland at the time (Alice and Frank both came from Protestant families). One of his earliest memories is walking home from school and being in awe of the enormous flocks of metallic sheened starlings against the skies of Belfast. His mother loved the outdoors, and he was taken camping. At 14 he learned to play the bagpipes and since then has piped in various magnificent locations all over the world.

Alice's family had a rural property some “10 mile” from the city. She saw herself as a country kid and loved to go out walking. Her father knew all the bird calls and passed his birding passion onto Alice. It was Alice, then, who had Frank out walking and birdwatching over a long five-year courtship, while Frank completed his medical studies in Dublin.

Alice and Frank married, started a family, and purchased 9 acres out of Belfast to build a house. A visit to Northern Ireland by the then QLD Health Minister Llew Edwards, who was seeking trainee medical specialists to

work in QLD, changed their lives dramatically. They thought they would give it a go for three or so years. Initially Frank was sent to Prince Charles Hospital for two years and the family settled in Brisbane. But they longed for a less hectic lifestyle, and they were on the lookout for an opening in regional QLD.

When Frank's parents visited they all did a trip along the coast. The parents were the ones who brought attention to the huge distances in QLD and put in doubt a move to Cairns or Mackay. When they got to Maryborough, Frank's dad commented that the town was “sufficiently old and rickety” to remind one of Ireland. Frank and Alice admired the old buildings and rural atmosphere, and so that's where they moved.

In Maryborough Frank and Alice set up a medical practice, Alice doing the business side and Frank as a Cardiothoracic physician in private practice. Frank also worked sessions at the Maryborough Base Hospital. The three Ekin children grew up in Maryborough. In the '80s, Frank and Alice purchased 100 acres at Teddington where they planted an orchard of Avocado and Custard Apple trees, put in four dams, and later built a house.

Without realising it at the time Frank demonstrated good practice by mowing between the orchard trees but leaving some long grass to ensure plentiful insect life and consequently good fruit set. Surrounded by native bush, the place was a fauna and flora refuge. Some 150 bird species were identified on the property. Frank remembers with fondness seeing the tiny brightly coloured Mistletoebirds when they first

arrived, and the combative antics of kites high in the sky. Over the years they saw and heard some more uncommon birds: White-throated Nightjar, Powerful Owl and Marbled Frogmouth. When the opportunity arose, they registered their property with Land for Wildlife.

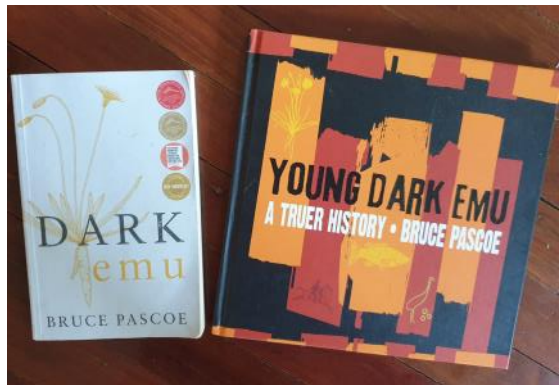
In 2018 Frank and Alice sold the property, finally fully retired, and built in Urraween. In a short time, they have

recorded 80 species of birds on their suburban plot on the outskirts of Hervey Bay. Frank and Alice continue to make incredibly valuable contributions through their involvement in environmental organisations, bushwalking, birding, and expanding their native plant recognition skills. And most importantly, by sharing their knowledge about and delight in the natural world.

✿ *by Jenni Watts*

### **Book Review**

## **Dark Emu by Bruce Pascoe**



“If we look at the evidence presented to us by the explorers and explain to our children that Aboriginal people *did* build houses, *did* build dams, *did* sow, *did* irrigate and till the land, *did* alter the course of rivers, *did* sew their clothes, and *did* construct a system of pan-continental government that generated peace and prosperity, then it is likely we will admire and love our country and land all the more” - BRUCE PASCOE

Like **The Biggest Estate on Earth by Bill Gammage (2012)** which explodes the myth that pre-settlement Australia was an untamed wilderness revealing the complex, country-wide systems of land management used by Aboriginal people, **Dark Emu (2014)** challenges conventional thinking as it analyses diaries of early explorers and colonists and other historical writings and drawings.

**Young Dark Emu - A Truer History (2019)** a junior version of **Dark Emu** for readers 10+ is beautifully presented and illustrated for children.

This link was recommended by a Branch member. It may be of interest to some.  
<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bigideas/the-wilderness-myth/13837440>



The objectives of Wildlife Queensland are to:

- (1) preserve the fauna and flora of Australia by all lawful means;
- (2) educate by all means possible all sections of the community, particularly the young, in understanding the principles of conservation and preservation of the natural environment;
- (3) discourage by all legal means possible the destruction, exploitation or unnecessary development of any part of the natural environment;
- (4) encourage rational land use and proper planning of development and use of the natural environment and management thereof.

### Want to join Wildlife Queensland?

<https://wildlife.org.au/shop/membership/membership-3/>

\$30 Individual

\$45 Family / non-profit group

\$20 Concession

\$12.50 Youth

*Once you have joined Wildlife Queensland you may elect to be assigned a Branch such as Fraser Coast.*

Wildlife Queensland and its branches are not wildlife rescue or care organizations.

However, we thank you for caring for our wildlife and

if you wish to report sick, injured or orphaned wildlife contact:

RSPCA Qld on 1300 ANIMAL or preferably contact a local rescue service.

Our local services have the expertise and will eliminate delays in taking action.

**WILDLIFE RESCUE FRASER COAST** contact through Facebook page

**ANARRA** (Gympie region) Phone 5484 9111

**WILDCARE** (operates from Pomona) Phone 54272444

For snakes **CJM WILDLIFE SERVICES** 0409474440

**TURTLES IN TROUBLE FRASER COAST** Phone 0493242903

For marine strandings ring the QLD Government Wildlife Hotline 1300 130 372

### Branch logo and shirt options

• *The original colour and design chosen was a “Bizcool” – all acrylic – Wasabi coloured polo \$24 and an extra \$6 if you want a pocket. (from Morgans)*

**Other options include:**

• *“Claremont” 95% cotton shirt in apple green is available from BullAnt Designs in Pialba - \$30 with the logo.*

• *get the logo on any shirt for \$9.50 at Morgans Sewing & Embroidery in Pialba.*

**Branch shirt for sale: brand new, small - medium \$25 Ph. 0418 884 917**