

WAMBALIMAN

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



THIS ISSUE:

- Branch activities
- Walk reports
- Nature notes
- The Bilby
- Neighbourhood trees under threat
- A conversation with Dawn Williams

AUTUMN 2023

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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Library Talks

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Bookings—FCRC website / Library

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USC Partnership

Vanessa Elwell-Gavins, Rodney Jones,
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Newsletter WAMBALIMAN

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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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WAMBALIMAN

e-copy in colour and hardcopy in black and white

Let us know if you want the e-copy only.

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

Submissions for the next issue are due by Friday 14 July 2023

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 February, 16 April,
18 June, 20 August,
17 September (AGM), 19 November**

Executive Meetings

22 JANUARY 2023
DATES TO BE DECIDED IN—
MARCH, MAY, JULY, OCTOBER

WILDLIFE NATURE WALKS

MAY Sat 6th: FCRC Takura Conservation Reserve - graded paths in rainforest

JUNE Sun 4th: Clifton Creek Right Road, Brooweena (Wongi Forest Reserve)

JULY Sat 1st: Colliery Circuit, Churchill Mine area

WILDLIFE TALKS IN THE LIBRARY 1-2PM

Hervey Bay Library

April 21- Ruby Rosenfield *Fraser Coast Birds*

May 19- Chris Heckathorn (DES) *Conflict*

June 16- Lindsay Titmarsh

Life in the Mangroves at Tandora

July 21- TBA

Maryborough Library

April 28- Chris Heckathorn *Conflict*

June 30- Lindsay Titmarsh

Life in the Mangroves at Tandora

FRASER COAST BACKYARD BIOBLITZ weekends in 2023 remaining

Winter: 8-9 July

Spring: 14-15 October

CENTRAL BRANCHES GET-TOGETHER

August 19th and 20th 2023 (tbc)

Don't forget to LIKE us on

www.facebook.com/WPSQFraserCoast

Check out our page on

From the Editor....

I don't know how long BRANCHES GET-TOGETHERS have been going but I suspect a long time—predating electronic communication. It was an opportunity for branches to share information and discuss what issues they wanted the state body to pursue. The spirit hasn't changed too much but perhaps the need to disseminate information in these forums has diminished.

Nevertheless it remains a lovely opportunity to showcase some of our work with like-minded people. The last get-together involving our Branch was at Theodore in 2019 hosted by Upper Dawson Branch—a truly wonderful weekend. Covid and WPSQ's 60th celebrations intervened the last couple of years but we are ready now to host the CENTRAL BRANCHES GET-TOGETHER in 2023. Members will be sent a draft and asked for feedback in the next couple of weeks.

In the past, our Branch has had strong ties to Arkarra Lagoons and Wetlands. We were very involved in the campaign to see the Hervey Bay City Council purchase the lagoons and add them to the wetlands for preservation. More recently we paid for a seat to be located near the lagoons and helped with new signage. Five of our members are active *Friends of Arkarra*, meeting once a month to do bushland maintenance and learn more about our local environment. I am one of those members and I can say the meets are very enjoyable. Read about Dawn, the leader of *Friends of Arkarra* on page 22 and consider joining us on the fourth Saturday of each month. ***Jenni**

Dr Tim Thornton, former President and one of the founding members of the Friends of the Burrum River System Group Inc presented our Branch with \$6,000 at its 16 April general meeting.

The monies are part of the distribution of funds from FBRSG Inc following its closure after their 2022 AGM. Formed in 1999, Tim spoke to the gathering about its achievements after their first success in stopping a prawn farm on the Burrum River. (Also see last edition of Wambaliman page 16.)

Many of us have been recipients of the group's paddling events on the Burrum River System and the group's wonderful hospitality.



Tim Thornton (left) and our Branch President, John Williams.

Branch Activity Report January —mid April 2023



Meetings/ gatherings

- General meeting 16 February
- Executive Meeting 19 March
- General Meeting 16 April

Submissions

- Gatakers Landing Hotel - Our Branch is joining QCAT proceedings. (see p 7).
- To FCRC 13 April - Objection to the sale of a parcel of Council-owned land near the Mary River in Maryborough. At its December 2022 meeting, Council passed a resolution that land at Royle Street, Maryborough, described as Lot 1 on SP207975, go for tender.
- To FCRC 22 March - Objection to a motion being put to Council by Cr Jade Wellings. (see p 12,13)

Advisory Groups

- John Williams attended Rail Trail Advisory Group meeting 13 April

Library Talks

- *Migratory Shorebirds* by Don Bradley
31 March - Maryborough
17 March - Hervey Bay
- *Recycling* by Annie Newberry
24 February - Maryborough
17 February - Hervey Bay

Walks

- Saturday 4 March -
Old Rifle Range Road Council Reserve
- Sunday 2 April -
Denison State Forest, Mungar

Uni Partnerships

- Greater Glider field work by honours student planned for late Jan/early Feb
- Eastern Grey Kangaroo Project. Meeting via zoom 24 March with student, Branch reps and university staff.

Autumn Backyard Bioblitz

- 8 & 9 April. Have a look at some of the photos on our Facebook page and see report page 6.

Communication

- Facebook page and Webpage
- Wambaliman Summer 2022-23 issue distributed 25 January (electronic) and 28 January (printed copy)

Representation

- Rodney Jones attended Bundaberg's Community Conservation Advisory Group meeting 23 February. (see p 10)

Fundraising

- Please support our container deposit efforts. (page 2 for code)

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Trudi Tierney, Dennis B, Vicki Bressan, Gary Bressan

FRASER COAST BACKYARD BIOBLITZ AUTUMN 2023



Fraser Coast Backyard Bioblitz - Autumn 2023

APR 8, 2023 - APR 9, 2023

About

Members 4

Through the Autumn Backyard Bioblitz on the weekend of 8-9 April (night and day), the Wildlife Preservation Society of Qld Fraser Coast Branch encourages everyone to get to know the wonderful diversity of native plants and animals and other life forms in your own backyard (or any location of your choosing)

[Read More](#)

[Project Journal](#)

After a soggy Good Friday, our Autumn Backyard Bioblitz on Saturday and Easter Sunday, 8-9 April, was conducted in perfect conditions: exceptionally still and clear, with light winds.

As of Tuesday 11 April, some 432 observations of 277 species had been logged by 25 observers. The most prolific observer turns out to have been a visitor to the region from Brisbane, who probably was unaware he was participating in our project. Scott Gavins logged 104 observations of 39 species, so was again by far the most prolific observer from among our Branch members and friends. Some of his observations were of plants, with a good few ants, beetles, moths and other insects and other critters thrown in. He has been experimenting with different methods to photograph insects both at night and during the day, and has wildlife cameras set up to observe animals like the Yellow-footed Antechinus, which featured in the banner for the Autumn 2023 Fraser Coast Backyard Bioblitz project description on the iNaturalist Australia website (see photo above).

I managed 39 observations of some 28 species. I found butterflies to be particularly elusive on this occasion, with those that did show themselves choosing not to stay still for long enough to

have their picture taken. Birds also chose, in general, to go into hiding in Dundowran Beach. The ubiquitous Brush Turkeys took their time before four out of our fifteen residents showed themselves. My resident Crested Pigeons went into hiding for both days, but I was thrilled to be able to see and photograph a Pheasant Coucal (*Centropus phasianinus*). The garden and adjacent coastal reserve have been thriving after an exceptionally good season, so the bulk of my observations were of local native seedlings and flowers (for example, the Peanut Tree, *Sterculia quadrifida*) that are often too high up to see properly.

The most commonly observed species this autumn included the Peaceful Dove (*Geopelia placida*), the Australian White Ibis (*Threskiornis molucca*), the Rufous Whistler (*Pacycephala rufiventris*) and the Spangled Drongo (*Dicrurus bracteatus*), the Macquarie Turtle (*Emydura macquarie*) and the Australian Tiger (*Ictinogomphus australis*) - a dragonfly with four observations each. The birds aced it!!!

Thank you to all those members and friends who participated in our Autumn Backyard Bioblitz.

✿ **Vanessa Elwell-Gavins**

Fight to save Gatakers

Branch seeking to overturn grant of Commercial Hotel Licence at Gatakers Landing

Despite strong public opposition with more than 160 objections and clear evidence of serious adverse environmental impacts and a range of adverse impacts upon the local community, a decision was made late last year to provisionally grant a licence for a hotel at Gatakers Landing.

A small restaurant with a capacity of some 30 to 40 diners existed on the site but without any further development applications required, the new plans are for an additional 150 seating capacity as well as function rooms and licenced gardens and beach bar.

A local resident living in close proximity applied to the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT) to review (and hopefully revoke) the decision by the Commissioner of Liquor and Gaming Regulation. As our Branch originally submitted an objection to the licence application, we were able to apply to join the matter.

The Tribunal has agreed to our application to join the matter, which has provided access to an inordinate amount of documentation, including the Community Impact Statement (CIS) required to be provided by the licence applicant, Brisbane-based company Kiljoh Pty Ltd.

The CIS summarised that the granting of the licence “would likely result in minimal impacts of a negative nature, but that these impacts were mitigated by the nature and location of the applicant’s site”. And yet the report does not mention light pollution to nesting Loggerhead Turtles.

When considering traffic congestion the report says “A proposed initiative is to acquire an Army Duck to pick up guests at other locations....” This monster would of course operate from the adjacent boat ramp where Green Turtles frequently rest.

Our EAG rep Paul Murdoch has spent many hours sifting through more than 650 pages of paperwork (with many more still missing) revealing significant factual and legal errors, sloppy procedural processes and Council officers exempting a change from a low-key restaurant to a much larger hotel from the development assessment and environmental scrutiny required by the Planning Act. These have been highlighted in various submissions and searches already undertaken in preparation for a QCAT hearing.

At the same time the Branch has been lobbying, seeking to have the Council Planning Department determination to not require a change of use application from the new hotel venture reconsidered by Council, and trying to have State Government intervention. This may be a lengthy process, and to date has involved contact with the Environmental Defenders Office and Right to Information (RFI) searches seeking to obtain further Council documentation. A public campaign and further lobbying to apply increased pressure and oversight of Council has been proposed.

This protracted action is unfamiliar territory for our Branch, and successful or not, we can be encouraged we have done what we can to protect Gatakers Bay’s rich and diverse wildlife including nesting Loggerhead Turtles for future generations. ✿

Wildlife Nature Walks calendar 2023

MARCH Sat 4th: Old Rifle Range Road Council Reserve, Close to Hervey Bay,

APRIL Sun 2nd: Denison State Forest, Mungar - some tracks / some forest

MAY Sat 6th: FCRC Takura Conservation Reserve - graded paths in rainforest

JUNE Sun 4th: Clifton Creek Right Road, Brooweena (Wongi Forest Reserve)

JULY Sat 1st: Colliery Circuit, Churchill Mine area

AUGUST Sun 6th: Mount Benarige (and National Trail)

SEPTEMBER Sat 2nd: Wildflowers in Poona National Park

OCTOBER Sun 1st: Point Vernon - geology

NOVEMBER Sat 4th: Pir'ri Reserve, Booral Road.

River Heads for break up BBQ. tbc



Our Nature Walks Committee love organising these walks and they have become one of WPSQ FC's most popular activities. Running since 2014 we aim to:

- Promote the objectives of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Qld.
- Enjoy healthy activities in natural surroundings and make new friends.
- Explore some of the amazing unspoiled natural areas in our region.

We alternate between Saturday and Sundays—to accommodate those who may have a regular commitment on either one of these days.

We try to alternate between easy and not quite so easy walks, and close and more distant destinations.

Our dedicated committee members keep looking for new places to visit, and this year we have three new walks in March, April and June

Wildlife Matters – November 2022 to April 2023

The Fraser Coast Beacon– lifestyle magazine

Nov – Dec: *More About Magpies* by Diane Christensen

River Heads Review & Toogoom Chatter

November: *Equestrian Park Walk* by Frank Ekin

December: *Lake Lenthall Walk* by Frank Ekin

February: *The Channel-billed Cuckoo* by Diane Christensen

March: *That Tocking Sound of Summer* by Diane Christensen

April: *Old Rifle Range Walk* by Max Hunter

The Maryborough Sun

November: *The Long and Winding Road: Second Stretch* by David Arthur

January: *The Long and Winding Road: Third Stretch* by David Arthur

February: *Walk to Lake Poona* by Ruby Rosenfield

March: *Is That a Carbon Credit I See Before Me?* by David Arthur

April: *The Aussie Rabbit – The Bilby* by Diane Christensen

✿Diane Christensen

University Partnership—Eastern Grey Kangaroo Project

Fraser Coast Branch's Eastern Grey Kangaroo project, hosted by the University of the Sunshine Coast and conducted by Honours student, Nuala McLernon, with a \$5,000 grant from the Branch, has finally kicked off this semester, and is expected to run till the end of June 2024.

Our Branch USC project advisory group members, Vanessa Elwell-Gavins, Rodney Jones and Cassy Ironside, as well as Branch members Peter Duck and Jenni Watts, held a Zoom hook-up on 24 March 2023 with Nuala and her supervisors, Dr Beth Brunton and Dr Gabriel Conroy.

There are two elements to the project: what is currently happening and evidence of displacement of Eastern Grey Kangaroos as a result of development; and a forward thinking component to try to improve outcomes for the kangas through better policies, better planning and better management.

Nuala is particularly keen to get any occurrence data she can from Branch members and friends, dating back as far as 2012 through to current, with count, date and address (or, if possible, GPS coordinates). This might be through written records or photographs.

Nuala is considering a community questionnaire, to be distributed online, to capture existing community knowledge. She is also hoping volunteers may be



willing to assist her with field surveys on a set day over a period of a few weeks.

She is also hoping to gather information from car insurance claims in the area from animal collisions, and from wildlife carers.

We had all been hoping that Nuala would be able to liaise closely Rodney Buchanan, who had been the Council's Natural Environment

Manager, but unfortunately Rodney left Council in mid March and it is not yet clear when or whether the position will be advertised.

Issues to be flushed out with Council include: the chance of uptake of recommendations by the planners, allies in Council and priority areas for focus and timeline for developments. It may be better for Nuala's project to focus on areas where clearing and development have not yet started or are in the early stages (such as Eli Waters/Dundowran, Kawungan, St Helens and Granville) rather than areas like Doolong Flats, Ghost Hill and Nikenbah where extensive clearing and some development has already occurred.

If you or your friends or family have information that might be useful for this project, please contact Nuala via email on npp001@student.usc.edu.au

✿ **Vanessa Elwell-Gavins**

Notes from the Bundaberg Regional Council's

Community Conservation Advisory Group meeting 23 Feb 2023

Chair, Greg O'Neill (BRC Operational Supervisor, Natural Resource Management) welcomed the 13 participants including Cr Wayne Honor (Parks & Gardens) and Cr Tanya McLoughlan (Waste & Recycling) who are regular attendees at meetings, and also visitors; BRC staff Tegan Flannagan (Natural Areas Officer), Carmen Bracken (One Million Trees Project Officer), and Kate Giles (EcoTourism Certification Project Officer).

Reports from representative groups

Maree McLaren advised that there were 194 turtle nests counted this year: 50 nests more than last year. A query by Heather Usher questioning whether turtle eggs should or shouldn't be relocated generated strong discussion. Meeting Chair advised that anyone with concerns regarding the removal of turtle eggs should be referred to Woongarra Turtle Watchers or Sea Turtle Alliance in the first instance, followed by Dept. Environment & Science.

John Gatley (Sea Turtle Alliance) raised concerns regarding the increase of visitor numbers on local beaches, and wants consideration to be given to long term plans to reduce impact on turtle nesting. Discussion was had around making changes to the Local Laws to better protect turtle nests. The Meeting Chair recommended STA approach Council, DES and BMRG to organise a meeting and discuss further. Greg O'Neill advised that 75% of respondents from a survey were in favour of closing Moore Park Beach to 4WD vehicles during turtle season. A trial vol-

untary closure to vehicles will be implemented at Moore Park Beach between dusk and dawn during the turtle nesting season, from 1 November 2023 to 31 March 2024. The project page can be accessed here: <https://www.ourbundabergregion.com.au/survey-on-4wdvehicle-night-time-beach-access-on-moore-park-beach-during-turtle-season>

Fox control has proven to be successful along the coast, with the first nest being dug up in four years being the work of a bandicoot.

John thanked Council for their support against changes to the Town Plan and the request to increase building height regulation. John also commended Council's auto-light project to reduce glow along the foreshore.

Maureen Schmidt generated discussion on recycling of soft plastics, and suggested an educational program on what can be recycled. Cr McLoughlan informed the group that Council is a collector, not a recycler. Maureen to discuss further with Cr McLoughlan.

The continued threat of Cat's Claw Creeper was discussed. Meeting Chair recommended member groups lobby BMRG to apply for funding to undertake a project, or to contact DES.

Heather Usher noted an increase in environmental weeds at Barolin Nature Reserve. Cattle have been removed from the Reserve, and Heather requested that Council develop a weed control strategy for the period of change from the grazing weed control strategy.

Rodney Jones raised concerns regarding conservation in the broader context with regard to the mature vegetation that is continually cleared for housing development. Rodney asked if Council had any means to change the planning scheme to show more protection for native flora and fauna. The Meeting Chair suggested that interested parties like WPSQ Fraser Coast appoint a person from the group to monitor Council's development application database (PD Online) and to then alert the group of sensitive developments that may require action. Meeting Chair also recommended the group to contact developers directly and encourage them to be more environmentally considerate. He also encouraged the group to have discussions with their divisional Councilors to voice their concerns.

Reports from special guests

Carmen Bracken (One Million Trees Project) presented an overview of the project, including progress of 121,000 trees planted to date. It is the aim of BRC to reduce Council's emissions to net zero by 2030. Planting within Council's Waste Facilities had been successful and would support the native wildlife that have been spotted (bandicoots at Qunaba). Planting in the Childers Waste Facility to be considered. On BRC public land, 500 trees have been planted at Central Park, and 275 trees at Sanctuary Park. The voucher system allows two trees (or shrubs) for urban and 250 available to landholders.

The CCAG questioned whether Council had considered establishing more revegetation sites rather than creating 'open park space'.

Rodney Jones questioned if there will be a commitment made by Council to maintain the works of the revegetation project. Carmen advised that review is ongoing, but the team is hopeful the program would be further supported.

Kate Giles (Tourism Sustainability Officer) spoke. The Ecotourism Certification Project is a global-wide program with criteria of over 90 categories, including culture and tradition, wildlife conservation, waste and recycling and more. Since getting involved in early 2020, Bundaberg Regional Council is currently certified in the mid-range and is the second region within QLD to obtain this certification and the fifth nationally. The program will aim to encourage sustainable tourism across the region.

Tegan Flannagan (Natural Areas Officer) gave an update on activities of the team. Two points relevant to WPSQ are that cattle are out of Barolin Nature Reserve and will not be continued as a management option; weeds may temporarily increase over the transition stage to different management techniques. Also, platypus surveys will be undertaken in September in conjunction with the Australian Conservation Foundation.

The next CCAG meeting will be held in May. **Rodney Jones* (Branch rep)

It should be noted that Fraser Coast Regional Council's Environment Advisory Group have not met in over a year!

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD TREES

A reverence for trees in Europe dates to prehistoric times. The word “druid” means “knower of the oak”. To the Druids, the natural world was sacred; humans weren’t though – the Druids practised human sacrifice!

And some of us in our childhoods, had favourite trees that we could climb, sit, look down upon the rest of the neighbourhood and read or just daydream. Though my childhood was in southern California, my two favourite trees were Australian: a wattle and a White Cedar. The latter – away from its Australian insect pests – was a large tree with spreading branches that tempted children to climb. In the Autumn, the foliage became butter-yellow before falling to the ground.

But apart from providing beauty and exercise for children, trees can also help save our planet from getting cooked (and drowned!).

Firstly, roadside trees shade the bitumen road and can lower the ambient temperature by 4°C. We all feel the instant cool in the air when we step from the blazing sun into a shady pathway.

Secondly, if we have shaded roadways and walking tracks, people would be encouraged to walk or cycle to their destination. Result: there is less use of fossil fuel-consuming vehicles – not to mention healthier people and communi-

ties. Councils need to include shaded cycle ways and footpaths in their requirements for developers of housing estates.

And thirdly and most importantly, trees fix carbon. Mankind has cleared half of the earth’s forests. Some of the carbon trapped in those trees has been incorporated into soil carbon but much of it has been released into the atmosphere as CO₂.

There is an urgent need to stop chopping down trees. This was recognised by the COP26 with the Glasgow Declaration on Forests last year. 141 countries have pledged to end forest loss and land degradation by 2030.

Planting new trees is also effective but an existing forest has many positive environmental values!

Forests are excellent at purifying water for human consumption. Forests help generate rain. Forests stabilise the soil and reduce erosion. Trees provide shelter in the winter and shade in the summer for livestock.

Last but not least, our unique and much-loved native birds, and other animals depend almost wholly on natural vegetation. Give your favourite tree a hug!

✿ **Carol Bussey**

This article was sent to the Toogoom Chatter and River Heads Review for publication in 2022.

NEIGHBOURHOOD TREES under Threat!

Peter Duck representing our Branch made a presentation to Council 22 March regarding Jade Wellings' motion to amend the current Tree Management Policy. Mike Moller, representing WBBEC, also spoke against the motion. Many Branch members made written submissions.

Jade had amended her original motion by the time of the Council meeting. Essentially the motion called for a concept forum to consider aspects that needed to be reviewed. From there the Council staff may be required to review the Policy. Cr David Lewis and Cr Zane O'Keefe both spoke very well against the motion, but the amended motion was passed 9 votes to 2.

Below is the script for the bulk of the presentation, which is restricted to 3 minutes.

Our members are extremely concerned by the changes being considered. When considering this motion you need to consider the following:

- Trees growing on Council land are **public assets**
- These trees are part of the **valued natural asset** of the whole Fraser Coast
- They provide food and homes for our wildlife and form part of critical wildlife corridors
- They are essential to efforts to mitigate the effects of a warming climate

The preamble in the Council's current Public Tree Management Policy sums this up...*"Public trees within Council controlled land are considered a natural asset of the Fraser Coast Regional Council and contribute to the well-being of the community and the natural environment"* and the *Greening the Fraser Coast Strategy* that this Council agreed to in 2021 further highlights the importance of trees on public land. The strategy is designed to *"mitigate heat islands"* and *"increase habitat and food sources for native animals"*.

Our Branch would like to make specific reference to the following:

- The existing policy allows for tree removal and trimming. Our Branch express no issue with points 1 and 3 of the notice of motion. We observe that

these sensible steps are part of current practice by Council staff. Safety issues and infrastructure protection are being accommodated under the existing policy.

- As you know we already have a **culture of tree poisoning and illegal removal** by residents, whether it be to enhance views, to rid their gardens of competition for light and nutrients, to increase usable space for vehicles, or simply because someone doesn't like a tree (or trees in general). To implement something which has the **potential to legitimise tree clearing on public land for selfish motive** is not acceptable.

- The cruel irony with the removal/pruning of trees on public land that we see occurring currently is that in most cases **residents have purchased their properties aware of the surrounding mature trees**. These existing trees are often part of a unique streetscape.

- The wording of the four points identified in the notice of motion starts with **"resident ability to remove trees"** and implies that residents could have a right to have a tree removed from council land even when council officers deem it not necessary. **A tree policy which allows residents to determine the fate of public assets must surely be unprecedented in Australia**✳

Our Aussie Rabbit: the Bilby



Due to widespread conservation efforts and the widespread exposure of *Save the Bilby Fund*, our children are learning that this cute, bluish-grey, furry marsupial is becoming the Australian equivalent of the Easter Bunny.

At a quick glance, you could probably say the Bilby and the rabbit appear similar, but really they are very different.

Bilbies are native to Australia. Prior to white settlement, they occupied 70% of the continent, and were of great significance to indigenous people; culturally, featuring in Dreamtime stories, and as a food source. That was before rabbits were introduced by Europeans making food for the Bilby more difficult to find. Now, more than a hundred years later, the Greater Bilby (*Macrotis lagotis*) is regarded as vulnerable surviving in semi-arid, isolated areas: the Tanami Desert of the Northern Territory, the Great Sandy and Gibson Deserts, parts of the Kimberley and Pilbara and the Mitchell Grasslands of South-west Queensland. Loss of habitat by stock grazing and predation by foxes and feral cats have significantly depleted populations. The Bilby population is now estimated at 10000.

With such harsh conditions, the Bilby has to be regarded as incredibly tenacious and adaptable. Having a reasonably small size, similar to that of a cat – maximum measurements: males 55cm long and females, 39cm - and living in the hottest areas of the continent, its features are paramount to its survival. Even though their eyesight is poor, this defect is compensated by acute auditory and olfactory abilities. Long, upright ears assist in dispersing heat; strong forelimbs with sharp claws dig tunnels 2m deep and 3m long (used for daytime protection and reused constantly). Its long pointed snout forages along the soil surface for food while its long tongue flicks up grass seeds. It has a long, black, white-tipped tail that is held upright as it runs, similar to that of a hare. To see these “desert flagpoles” adds considerably to the Bilby’s appeal - one could even say, “quirkiness”.

It is an omnivore eating termites and their larvae, worms and insects as well as the bush onion, fungi and grass. The three long-clawed toes (two unclawed) on each of the forelimbs enable it to dig effectively for buried food and in the construction of burrows.

Bilbies roam their maze of tunnels throughout the day, choosing different ones for shelter. Bilby habitat is easy to identify, as along with burrows dug by the bases of tree trunks, shrubs, grass tussocks and spinifex, the surface soil is scattered with 25 centimetre-deep holes, which has been dug up. This action is beneficial to the landscape. The soil is aerated allowing for seed dispersal and germination.

Bilbies breed between March and May. They are prodigious breeders due to their polygamous reproduction habits. Dominant males mate with many females. A female Bilby becomes sexually mature at five months and after a gestation of 12 to 14 days, she gives birth to two joeys. Four litters a year are produced. As females have pouches, they are classed as marsupials. Like wombats and Koalas the pouch opens backwards, avoiding sand pollution from digging. The undeveloped young, born tiny, naked and blind, suckle on her eight teats for between 11 and 12 weeks after which they are ready to live on the mother's food resources until 15 weeks when they migrate outside the burrow. Adults have been known to live to over seven years in captivity and to ten years in the wild.

The Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC) is very active in ensuring our Bilbies will not become extinct. The Mount Gibson Sanctuary which is surrounded by a feral-free boundary, has been a safe habitat for around 600 Bilbies, sourced from various zoos around Australia to guarantee a wider gene pool. The AWC in conjunction with the NSW National Parks Service has future projects planned in the Pilliga

and Mallee Cliffs National Parks to protect threatened mammals like the Bilby, Numbat and the Western Quoll.

In South-western Queensland, there is Carrawinya National Park of 2500 hectares. The Bilby sanctuary was opened in 2001 facilitated by *Save the Bilby* funds. The specially designed fence was compromised by the 2011-2012 floods, allowing predator access. In 2019, six more Bilbies were added to the population, with eight more added in 2022. The ultimate aim is to enable these vulnerable mammals to live outside the fence which makes predator eradication essential.

On 6 April this year, the Federal Government promised \$5 million to work toward better survival outcomes for Bilbies from bushfires and predation and to work more closely with First Nations People.

Conservation groups like the AWC and *Save the Bilby Fund* will ensure a future for this unique Australian icon to save it from extinction. The conservation projects with their breeding programs epitomise the powerful symbols of Easter: birth, renewal and hope. But remember, Bilbies do not lay eggs. Not even the Easter Bunny can do that!

✿ *Diane Christensen*

A version of this article was submitted to the Maryborough Sun for publication in April 2023

Footnote: There is a recently released phone app to assist motorists to save mammals and their joeys that have been hit by cars. It is available nationwide and is called *Wildlife Rescue*. The contact for your closest located carer will be available.

Denison State Forest - Nature Walk 2nd April

Had the Nature Walk been scheduled for the first Saturday rather than the Sunday 2nd of April, we would have hoped that the threatening cloud and dampness in the air was an April Fools joke, (given events of last year). The dampness remained, but not enough to discourage 27 walkers from visiting the Denison State Forest.

Marlene mapped out a good circuit track. The walks team did four reconnoiters of this new walk. This was well advised as there were three instances of “near lost” and one significant trip and fall. The walks team ensure that each team member is familiar with each walk in terms of the route, the hazards and the points of interest. Essentially the walks team do these reconnoiters for their own pleasure, they are entirely voluntary, so are done at their own expense, but do like to ensure that the walks are well defined and do not have worrying risks.

On the day the walkers enjoyed an easy walk through a formerly logged forest. The forest floor was covered in low regrowth free of animal and human tracks. Largely, the walk was a fine example of natural forest regrowth. There was evidence of ‘roos, and probable lace monitor traces on trees. Several unidentified burrows excited interest as did a couple of hollowed out large ants’ mud nests.

Few birds were sighted, but bird song identification suggested 24 species.

Interestingly, the most commonly identified bird on the reconnoiters and on the



Photos by Helen Cory



walk was the White-throated Treecreeper.

The high pitched and musical calls of the White-throated and Fairy Gerygone, and the Scarlet Honeyeater, were the commonest calls heard. As is often a difficulty there was a call which may have been the Eastern Yellow Robin or the White-throated Treecreeper; having sighted the latter does not mean the call that was heard was its call.

The small group of botanists clearly did well, identifying 54 low growing plants.

Amongst the interesting features pointed out by Marlene were examples of felled spotted gum trees sprouting from and even embracing the cut stump. Alongside a large fig tree was a young one which had germinated 2m off the ground but had already grown roots down and anchored itself firmly in the ground.

The peace and tranquility of the forest was broken by some noisy vehicles on the Mungar Road. Despite this intrusion the walkers enjoyed the peace and tranquility of being in a recovering natural environment. Also intruding, but to a lesser degree than the vehicles, was a high “giggle and chatter factor” testifying to the pleasure the walkers enjoyed. **Frank Ekin*

Old Rifle Range Road Council Reserve- Nature Walk 4th March

An early start tailored for the insomniacs in the group. Actually once you are on the go, being up and about at 5.45am is rejuvenating. The hard part is making the mental effort to get out of bed, and it is just as easy to pack the night before and to select one's apparel for the day.

This is a new walk for the Nature Walkers and attracted about 30 people to the wilds of Hervey Bay. The walking area is accessed off Booral Rd via Barrenjoey Rd and Justin Rd to reach Old Rifle Range Rd which took us to the parking area opposite the Archery Club where there is plenty of roadside parking. The weather was intermittently sunny and overcast and periodically threatened rain, which did occur on two very brief occasions only and nobody really got wet. The birdwatchers have used this area for several years now and have identified 88 bird species. There was plenty to interest the botanists as well and we had to wait on several occasions for them to catch up.

The area of interest is roughly A-shaped with the apex at the corner of the Archery Club and there are three long-wise tracks with three cross paths which give the opportunity to shorten the walk. The plan was to do a full cir-

cuit to examine the ephemeral wetlands typical of the Bunya Creek and Saltwater Creek catchments. The walk is essentially flat with an overall variation of about one metre and the walking surface is basically sandy bush track with a couple of wet areas where small rocks have been dumped by the council to improve access. The perimeter walk is 7.5 km.

The Reserve is owned by the Council and, being on Old Rifle Range Rd one could reasonably expect, with a bit of research, to confirm the fact that there used to be a rifle range at this site. Sadly there is no such record. Council could not help me but someone is still looking for information. I thought that the archery field may have been the original rifle range, but the Archery Club had no knowledge of one. Likewise I thought that the Rifle and Pistol Clubs in Churchill Mines Road may have had some original involvement.... no joy.

Next I checked army records which looked promising but the best I could find was the rifle range on Fraser Island which was built for training the Z Force soldiers during WWII. The irons are still in the fire on this one as I am determined to get the history sorted out. Since the forest at this site is small and juvenile with no large trees I suspect

that this may have been the rifle range with the shooters firing from butts at the Archery Club end and shooting towards the base of the "A". All will be revealed.

Being the first walk of the season people were raring to go. There were still people signing on and listening to the briefing whilst the enthusiasts took off. It took about 200m to catch them and sedate them down to the point where I could LEAD (what else does a leader do). There were the faster walkers and the botanists so we elected to form two groups to save too much hanging around waiting. The outward walk was along the archery fence line and then followed the track next to the power lines where the tree canopy was adjacent to the track and provided plenty of shade. We then turned right along the bottom of the "A" where again we had plenty of shade with agricultural land to our left and tree canopy to the right.

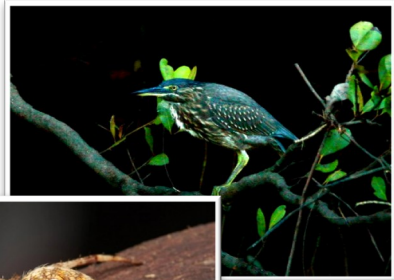
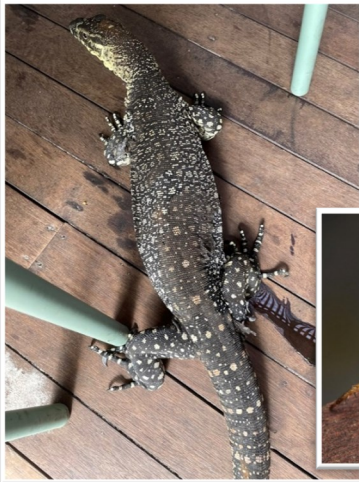
Morning tea was partaken of about half-way along this section, but sadly the caterers did not show and we had to make the best of what we had brought.

The site for this repast was brilliant as there are two fallen tree trunks parallel to each other with room for the entire group to sit and chat. After about 20 minutes the botanists arrived as did the rain, but this was only light and brief and we were soon on our return trip back to the cars. This took a trail through the forest where we had almost full shade and encountered several wet areas on either side of the trail. These are supplied by overflow from property dams along their back fences but there was no obstruction from these.

I think everyone enjoyed their morning and found plenty to interest them.

✱*Max Hunter*

Nature Notes



Photos from the Autumn Backyard Biolitz.

Left: Lace monitor by lana_waller, Above centre: Salsa (an orb-weaver spider) by nmain, Above right: Striated Heron by Ba77y



At left: Sadly this beautifully coloured little bird was found dead. But the finding has sparked some questions. Found by Julie McKinley in Parraweena Park in Point Vernon this Noisy Pitta seems to be out of its range.

It is usually seen in rainforests although it will inhabit scrubby areas and mangroves. Christine, Alice and Cecile, members of the Hervey Bay Birdwatchers were contacted for their knowledge about this bird locally.

In the 25 years the group has kept records there is no recordings for the Noisy Pitta in the Gatakers / Parraweena area. The birds have been recorded for the Takura Conservation Park, Takura and near Mungomery's Vine Forest at Dundowran Beach. A bit further away Noisy Pittas have been observed at Teddington, out of Maryborough and Bymien, near Rainbow Beach. Alice remembered that Tina had found one in the Hervey Bay Botanical Gardens.



Above: Ruby Rosefield photographed this Purple Line-blue butterfly in the O'Regan's Creek Conservation Park, near Toogom. This butterfly uses our local wattles as a host plant. At rest it looks fairly plain but the blue on the upper wings is revealed when it flies.



Above: Helen Cory photographed these fungi on the Denison State Forest Walk (page 16).

These locations all have mature rainforest, much more dense and protected than Parraweena Park. Nevertheless the Park is regenerating well and maybe in time will support a more diverse range of birds, although foxes, cats and dogs are big problems.

The seasonal movements of Noisy Pitta from more elevated locations to the coast are well documented. "John Knight used to say, as it got colder they would come down from the mountains!"

A delightful natural experience

I have a favourite destination. It takes some planning to get there, and the plan takes shape with excited anticipation. The destination is Lake Poona, a perched lake in Cooloolo National Park.



Azure Kingfisher—photo by Ruby

Perched lakes are formed in coastal dune landscapes when organic matter such as leaves, bark and dead plants are deposited over time and are slowly cemented together to form a crust. This layer begins to slow down the infiltration of water, trapping it to form a lake which can be many metres above sea level.

Early Christmas morning my partner and I, and Marlene, fellow Branch member and enthusiastic bush walking friend, took the drive from Maryborough to Bymein Picnic Area, located in lush coastal rainforest, and began the 4.2km walk. I had enticed Marlene in advance by telling her that the Christmas orchids would be flowering. We spotted the first one soon after we started and many more after that. As we walked, we saw that the sides of the path were lined with flowering native violets (*Viola banksii*) and in the distance we heard the call of the glorious rainforest bird, the Wompoo Fruit-Dove.

The forest had a scattering of emerging and mature Queensland Kauri Pine trees and many other lush rainforest species. The track gradually steepened. *It takes a moderately fit person to complete the walk to the top.* The walk from the top towards the lake was a gentler undulating track and what a surprise we got when we eventually arrived! With all the rain south-east Queensland had had over the last year the lake water had seeped through the surrounding sand and much of the vegetation surrounding the lake was now completely under water!

We watched Brownwater Skimmer dragonflies on the lake edge (these dragonflies are rare and are only found around the shorelines of acid lakes) and enjoyed tasty snacks. We spied a beautiful Azure Kingfisher hunting over the water. Lucky I got some photos! We were able to walk along the track on the upper side of the lake where we met a few other happy and relaxed walkers. Eventually we made our way back to the picnic area and sat at the tables taking in the surrounding forest, hearing a Catbird in the distance.

It is a sublime walk for those who appreciate nature at its finest. Unfortunately though, the integrity of Cooloolo National Park forest is currently threatened by imminent ecotourism developments within the Park.

✿**Ruby Rosenfield**

This article was submitted to the Maryborough Sun for publication in January 2023



“Many photos later her job was done.”

The 13th March had been stormy and many people that were coming for a walk made sudden cancellations; only three of us headed off to walk the Maryborough Showgrounds circuit. Council have cleaned up and more scout activities have happened than when the Nature Walkers completed the circuit in 2022. We had time for play.

Soon we had enjoyed watching the bird activity on the lake. We discussed the weeds near the large mowed area before the brief climb to near the bitumen road. Then what is happening! This poor turtle looks stuck. It has made lots of scratch marks but can't get up the final hurdle to flat land. It is exhausted. The turtle doesn't have the energy to even try to get away from us. Should we pick it up?

But then on far closer inspection we realised we were witnessing something that most will never see. Our lady turtle was laying eggs. Some were already in the hole she had dug. Her eyes were glazed and she seemed hypnotised, unaware if we were friend or foe or even there. We were able to see her cloaca stretch and drop each egg into the hole she had prepared to hold the clutch of about 10 eggs.

Many photos later her job was done. The *Chelodina expansa** carefully covered and patted down her nest. Then she turned around without glancing back, before making her way slowly toward the safety of the water.

✿ **Marlene Luce**

*commonly called Broad-shelled Turtle

Left: Marlene and flowering Christmas orchids at Cooloola National Park photos by Ruby



A conversation with Dawn Williams

Dawn Williams is a strong advocate for our local natural environment. She is one of those people who is tucked away making a valuable contribution without much fanfare. Although not a member of our Branch she is well known to many of us through various local community groups, including team leader of *Friends of Arkarra*.

Dawn lives in Dundowran Beach on a largish house allotment. She and her husband built a beautiful pole house to Dawn's specifications about 25 years ago on her retirement and move from Victoria. She wanted a garden. Friends graced her with Jacaranda and Poinciana seedlings and other typical subtropical garden plants. Dawn was grateful and those trees are now mature specimens. But Dawn was more interested in growing the local natives and supporting the local wildlife.

Over the years Dawn has filled every nook and cranny in her yard. Yep. All of it. No grass. Tall trees, mid storey, ground covers, epiphytes in trees. Plants of all sorts everywhere. While most of the tall natives were planted the garden is now self-sustaining. If what the birds, ants or wind brings in survives, is beneficial and not weedy – it stays.

From the veranda one hears the bird-song and sees the fluttering butterflies as a Brushtail Possum is sleeping peacefully in a dilapidated nest box. She tells me when she moved to Dundowran Beach there were few houses, and she would watch Brolgas dancing



on the grassy areas off Sempfs Road.

As Dawn raised her three children as a single mum and worked at a paid job, she had little time for self-interests or community engagement. She did the usual serving in the school tuckshop and helped on committees. It was only when she retired – she finished work on a Monday in Melbourne and by Friday was in retirement on the Fraser Coast - that she suddenly could pursue some latent interests.

Dawn is a well-known figure amongst the Hervey Bay Garden Club fraternity. She has served on their committee, written their newsletter for a time, and for many years managed the club's extensive library of books and reference material.

Twenty years ago Dawn read about the plight of the flying foxes at Toosan Toosan Creek and so found herself on a committee with community and Council representatives which saw the colony protected and public education programs implemented.

For those who know Dundowran Beach, two outstanding jewels in the natural environment crown are Arakarra Lagoons and Wetlands and, Mungomery Vine Forest. Dawn attended openings of both of these reserves around 2004/5 and even by that stage was well involved in revegetation and bush management in both places.

For many years Dawn weeded in the vine forest. Despite a very enthusiastic group, work was abandoned as volunteers found themselves suffering terribly with scrub itch. Dawn still sits on the management committee.

Dawn is the current leader of *Friends of Arkarra*. The group meets monthly and does bush maintenance work around the lagoons and wetlands. Dawn can't remember how long she has led this group – but it's at least 13 years! Before that she was working there as a volunteer and was one of the original

group who revegetated around the lagoons after Council purchased them adding to the existing wetland reserve.

Friends of Arkarra is a group of volunteers working under the Council's Community Environment Program (CEP) within the Natural Environment team of Council. Being a team leader requires a fair bit of responsibility including managing the volunteers and what work they carry out, keeping records and liaising with Council. There are signs, tools, first aid kit and so on to lug around. One must be proficient on email, well organised and be accountable to Council.

Dawn is also a member of *Friends of Parraweena Park* in Point Vernon (another CEP group). She always arrives with her trusty garden fork ready and willing to dig out a stubborn root of Siratro or loosen soil around an Asparagus Fern crown to remove it. And she admits that the fork is also a good prop to steady her especially when she is working on a slope. Dare I say at this point that this remarkable person will turn 80 this year!

Dawn says she is a doer and is not afraid to get her hands dirty. She certainly lives this. Dawn would love to see you at *Friends of Arkarra* working bees – the fourth Saturday of the month 7.30 -9.30am, then afterwards at the tea gardens for coffee and natter with a great bunch of volunteers.

✿ **Jenni Watts**

Want to join friends of Arkarra?

go to Council's website and follow the prompts for an application to be a volunteer
[Community Environment Program – Fraser Coast Regional Council](#)



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 Phone 5484 9111

WILDCARE (operates from Pomona) Phone 5427 2444

For snakes **HERVEY BAY SNAKE CATCHERS** Phone 0476 226 747

TURTLES IN TROUBLE FRASER COAST Phone 0493 242 903

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 (from Morgans)
- get the logo on any shirt at Morgans Sewing & Embroidery in Pialba.

Branch shirt for sale: brand new, size 14 \$20 Ph. 0418 884 917