

# WAMBALIMAN

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



## **THIS ISSUE:**

- new Executive 2023/24
- Branch activities
- walk and talk reports
- Central Branches Get-Together  
13-15 October 2023
- Black-breasted Buttonquail

**SPRING 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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**Facebook**

Peter Duck 0432 250 213

Branch Fundraiser  
CONTAINER DEPOSIT  
Code: C10192159

**Nature Walks**

**The committee**—John Williams, Frank Ekin,  
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Marlene Luce

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**Library Talks**

**Organised** by Diane Christensen

**Bookings**—FCRC website / Library

**Backyard Bioblitz**

**The committee**—Vanessa Elwell-Gavins,  
Scott Gavins, Tony van Kampen

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**Ruby** coryndennett1@dodo.com.au, 41234765

**Schools Program**

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***Contact Diane*** (as above)

**Fundraising**

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***Contact John*** (as above)

**Bundaberg CCAG** (contact Rodney Jones)

**Fraser Coast EAG rep** Paul Murdoch

**Rail Trail Advisory Group** John W / Tina R

**USC Partnership**

Vanessa Elwell-Gavins, Rodney Jones,  
Bruce Dick, Cassy Ironside

**Newsletter WAMBALIMAN**

Publisher: WPSQ Fraser Coast Branch

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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  
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](mailto:ggduckz@gmail.com)

### Submissions for the next issue are due by Friday 19 January 2024

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 of Queensland, Fraser Coast Branch unless specifically attributed to them.*

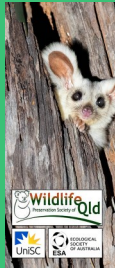
## What's On

### Branch General Meetings

Usually - 3rd Sunday bi-monthly 2:00pm  
Halcro St Community Centre, Pialba  
**Next one 19 November**

### Executive Meetings

Next one 29 October



Learn about the findings from Jess' honours project:

### **Using remote sensing to inform greater glider habitat mapping**

Friday 27th October, 3:30 – 4:30 pm

Where: Building B, Room 1.04 lecture theatre, UniSC, Hervey Bay

### WILDLIFE NATURE WALKS

SATURDAY 4TH NOVEMBER (+ BBQ)

## POINT VERNON—GEOLOGY

### LIBRARY WILDLIFE TALKS

FINISHED FOR THE YEAR



## BRANCH BREAK-UP

MID DECEMBER  
—TBA

### FRASER COAST BACKYARD BIOBLITZ

## Summer BioBlitz

weekend 13th /14th January 2024

Don't forget to LIKE us on

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

Check out our page on

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

## ***From the editor....***

There is little space for me to write again—there is just so much submitted for our newsletter! Thank you to the contributors of articles and photos. The CBGT last weekend was a success—great speakers, walks and camaraderie. While not reaching an audience beyond our WPSQ membership these gatherings provide friendship, information sharing and support with like minded people. 🌟**Jenni**

## **AGM 17 September 2023**

15 people attended our AGM at 2pm, 17 September at Halcro Street Community Centre in Pialba.

Peter Duck delivered a Power Point presentation to not only inform us of the ins and outs of iNaturalist but to showcase some of the extraordinary photographs that have been uploaded during our Backyard Bioblitzes in the past three years. Peter had examples of photos of birds, spiders, mammals, plants, butterflies and moths, reptiles, fungi and frogs. He talked about how species are identified, how specific projects work and stressed the value of iNat as an important tool for citizen scientists, how it is a valuable data base and identification tool, and how it is accessed by scientists.

It was decided that for the 2023/24 year we would have an Executive of 5. (We had 6 last year). Tina and Cassy did not stand for re election. Their contribution has been hugely appreciated. The elected Executive is President: John Williams, Secretary: Paul Murdoch, Treasurer: Pat Currie, Vice President: Kris Page and member: Bruce Dick. We welcome Paul as a newbie to our Executive and are excited with the skills he brings to the group. 🌟

*FC Branch Executive for 2023/4  
from left; Bruce, John, Kris and Paul (absent; Pat)*



## Branch Activity Report July –October 2023

### Meetings / gatherings

- Joint film screening with AP4CA of 'The Giants' at Hervey Bay for National Tree Day 30 July
- General meeting 20 August
- Annual General Meeting 17 September
- Central Branches Get-Together 13-15 October

### Grant applications

- Advice received that application "Koalas forever: targeted science & equipped communities" lodged under Australian Government *Saving Koalas Fund* was unsuccessful
- Expression of interest in being considered under the 2023-24 Volunteer Grants (Hinkler electorate) 4 September
- Expression of interest in being considered under the 2023-24 Volunteer Grants (Wide Bay electorate) 4 September

### Advisory Groups

- John Williams attended the Opening Day for FCBUG section of the Rail Trail 26 August
- John Williams attended the Mary to Bay Rail Trail Advisory Committee meeting on 7 September
- Paul Murdoch attended the FCRC Environment Advisory Group meeting on 12 September (the first meeting in almost 18 months)

### Library Talks

- Whales—18 & 25 August
- Birds of Arkarra—15 & 22 September
- Eastern Grey Kangaroos—29 September at Maryborough and Hervey Bay

### Walks

- 6 August – Mt Benarige (St Mary Forest)
- 2 September – Poona Wildflowers
- 1 October – Pir'ri Reserve

### Spring Backyard Bioblitz

- Weekend of 14-15 October – see some of the photos on our Facebook page and report page 12 WAMABLIMAN

### Uni Partnerships

- Greater Glider project—completion of project. Jess Evans gave a report which was available on Zoom (see What's On page 3 for Jess's presentation)
- Eastern Grey Kangaroo project—due for completion mid next year

### Communications

- Our Facebook page now has 1187 followers and posts over recent weeks have reached thousands. eg information for Spring Bioblitz reached 2,652 and the post promoting Poona walk 2,066.
- Wambaliman Winter 2023 distributed (electronic and hardcopy) 18 July

### Wildlife Matters – articles published

*Information not available*

### Legal matters (QCAT)

- review of grant of Gatakers Landing commercial hotel licence
- Directions Hearing – 31 July
- Deadline for applications to admit 'new' evidence – 2 September
- Deadline for submissions in relation to proposed new evidence – 22 September

✱*Paul Murdoch*

## WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Jen Stroh, John Grimes, Gavin and Yoke Pearson, Jim Wright

## *Branch Annual Report 2022-23*

The Fraser Coast Branch continued to fly the flag for wildlife and habitat preservation, education, and advocacy throughout this year. We have had several new members joining our Branch even though a couple of old members have moved away. We have continued to effectively undertake our wide range of activities. Our Branch has made a number of representations to governments and agencies at all three levels of government on matters of significance, with an increasing focus on opposing loss of essential habitat by development or other activities inimical to wildlife preservation.

**Branch membership** is in excess of 80 members which includes 8 family memberships and two organisations amongst the current membership. Our monthly **Nature Walks** continue to raise awareness of the natural environment across the Fraser Coast. This year's Nature Walks program introduced several new walks. They continue to be well attended by members and the broader community, giving our Branch an opportunity to inform about some of the wonderful natural areas of the Fraser Coast, and some of the challenges in preserving the unique wildlife that abounds.

Other successful programs including our seasonal **Backyard Bioblitz**, and monthly **Library Talks** in the Maryborough and Hervey Bay Libraries continue, with a high degree of membership and general community participation. The Branch's **Wildlife Matters** columns, written primarily by members, continued to feature in local papers including the Maryborough Sun, Hervey Bay Advertiser, Toogoom Chatter, River Heads Review and the glossy Fraser Coast Beacon magazine. Our quarterly **newsletter Wambaliman**, now in its 56th year, provides a very high quality record of and dissemination of Branch news and views.

### Events:

- WPSQ 60th Anniversary Celebration—Walk on the Wild Side event with more than 100 attendees, 3 guided walks of varying length, speakers and BBQ – a fitting marking of the occasion (9 July)
- Beach Nesting Birds presentation by Simon Kennedy (Birdlife Australia) (18 Sept)
- Hervey Bay Neighbourhood Centre's Sustainability Showcase – stall (30 Sept)
- Backyard Bioblitzes in Winter, Spring, Summer and Autumn

### Submissions:

- Federal Environment Minister in support of her decision to refuse approval for Clive Palmer's open cut mines in CQ;
- Gatakers Landing Hotel Application for Hotel Liquor Licence: i. Initial objection to hotel licence application; ii. Participation in Objectors Conference; iii. Further submission objecting to licence;
- Great Sandy Marine Park Draft Zoning Plan review – joint submission with AMCS;
- Toondah Harbour EIS;
- Fraser Coast Regional Council (FCRC) - Domestic Animal Management Strategy;
- FCRC – EOI for representation on Mary to Bay Rail Trail Advisory Committee;
- FCRC – objection to sale of Council-owned land on Mary River, Maryborough;

## ***Branch Annual Report 2022-23 continued***

- FCRC - objection to motion being put by Cr Jade Wellings re undermining of the existing Tree Management Policy.

### **Partnerships:**

- Greater Glider project – University of the Sunshine Coast;
- University of Queensland – funding radio transmitters;
- Eastern Grey Kangaroo (EGK) Project (USC) - Workshop by Nuala McLernon and Dr Beth Brunton and EGK community survey.

### **Advisory groups:**

- FCRC Mary to Bay Rail Trail
- FCRC Environmental Advisory Group
- Bundaberg Regional Council - Community Conservation Advisory Group

### **Representation:**

- Wide Bay Burnett Environment Council AGM
- Lower Mary River Land and Catchment Care Group's turtle monitoring group
- FCRC Community Grants Roadshow

### **Legal action:**

The disappointing news that despite the significant opposition from the Branch, Branch members and the local community in the Point Vernon/Gatakers Landing area to the proposal, a commercial hotel licence had been approved by the Commissioner for Liquor and Gaming Regulation led earlier this year to the Branch becoming involved in a legal challenge to that decision.

The proposed hotel is located close to a loggerhead turtle nesting site, close to green turtle habitat, near a shorebird wader roosting site and contains habitat containing squirrel gliders. The Branch joined an application by a local resident to the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT) to have the licence revoked. Lodged in January, the legal action has resulted in

- the Branch being recognised by the Tribunal as a 'party with standing' (ie entitled to challenge the decision);
- repeated representations to FCRC, who allowed the hotel application without a planning application or any environmental assessment or consideration.
- several pieces of advice being provided by the Environmental Defenders Office; and
- extensive documentation being obtained from FCRC through the lodgement of a Right to Information Act application.

The case remains on-going.

### **Finances:**

Unfortunately our major fundraising source via a weekly raffle at the Beach House Hotel in Scarness ended in December 2022 following a decision by the hotel's management. That activity had enabled us to raise substantial funds over a number of years. However, our finances received a very generous donation of \$6000 from the Friends of the Burrum River System Group Inc. Initially founded



## *Branch Annual Report 2022-23 continued*

in 1999, the donation followed the group's winding up at their 2022 AGM and was part of their distribution of funds. Founding member and former President, Dr Tim Thornton, presented a cheque and address to the Branch's April general meeting. We continue to raise funds (and improve the environment) through the Containers for Change scheme. The Branch intends to actively pursue grant opportunities as they arise.

### **Meetings, the Executive and communication:**

During the year we have held five Executive Meetings and six General Meetings, as well as our AGM on 18 September 2022. We get considerable positive feedback and genuine enquiries to our Facebook page. We have as at July 2023 1131 followers on the page. Our Webpage is updated regularly by Head Office.

The AGM in September had no nominations for the position of President, and we spent two months without a complete Executive. Despite this, it has been a very full and, I think, successful year for the Branch. I thank the Executive for their support and resolve through the year, and the entire membership for your continued and dedicated commitment to nature conservation.

✿ *John Williams, President*

## **Gatakers Landing Update**

The Branch's fight to reverse the grant of a commercial hotel licence to developers leasing Crown land at Gatakers Landing through the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT) continues. A mandatory Directions Hearing in relation to the application to overturn the licence grant, lodged in support of a local resident, was held on 31 July. The developer and their legal representative failed to attend.

The Tribunal allowed the applicants to make special application to have new evidence admitted, which had to be lodged by 2 September. Evidence correcting extensive misinformation contained in the developer's Community Impact Statement, which had been heavily relied upon by the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation, was submitted, along with evidence uncovered by a Right to Information application to Fraser Coast Regional Council which

allowed the use of the leased land to be changed from a low-key small restaurant to a massive commercial hotel without requiring a planning application or environmental assessment.

The hotel, if allowed to proceed, will have extensive well-lit outdoor bar areas close to a loggerhead turtle nesting site and other areas important to endangered animal and bird species. Other 'new' evidence submitted included emails between a Councilor on behalf of local residents and Planning staff, and emails between the developer and local residents in which the impacts were downplayed.

The Tribunal has deferred a decision on whether this new evidence will be admitted until a further mandatory Directions Hearing is held at a date still to be advised.

✿ *Paul Murdoch*



## Bundaberg Regional Council's Community Conservation Advisory Group (CCAG)



Report from the meeting 20 July 2023

### **Reports from BRC staff**

*Greg O'Neill –*

- Joint project with Griffith University Social Marketing on Reducing Light Pollution in Coastal Communities. Aim is to run several community co-design workshops and develop focussed marketing materials that will help encourage residents to take action to reduce lighting impacts to minimise glow along our coastal areas. Three community workshops will be held in October 2023.
- Council's Reef Guardian Action Plan 2023-2026 has been updated.
- Reef Guardian Councils Program – Activating Local Councils' Reef Action Plans. Council is preparing a grant application for funding of three infrastructure projects to improve water quality outcomes in local catchments and to improve waterway rubbish removal activities.
- Council approved a trial seasonal closure of Moore Park Beach to vehicles between dusk and dawn from 1 No-

vember 2023 to 31 March 2024. The aim is to reduce impacts on nesting marine turtles.

*Tegan Flannagan –*

- Provided an update on dune care at Elliott Heads and Kalina Beaches.
- Implementation of the Pandanus leaf-hopper treatment program.
- The NRM team has undergone fire training so that controlled burns can commence in BRC reserves.
- NRM staff have undergone freshwater turtle ID and nest relocation training with DES to assist in the freshwater turtle project. Staff also undertook rehabilitation of white-throated snapping-turtle nesting habitat with WYLD projects.
- Salvation Army Conservation and Ecosystem Management trainees have undertaken rehabilitation of the Saltwater Creek section behind Tom Quinn Centre.
- Rangers and IMPACT have been undertaking rehabilitation projects at Burnett Heads foreshore and Rifle Range Beach.
- Currently working on a new boundary fence and walking track at Gin Gin Nature Park.
- Sewer upgrade works at Barolin Nature Reserve within existing easement and about to hit the Turtle Trail section.
- Reef Together event – Reef Guardian school 20th anniversary plus Science Week celebration to be held on 14 August.

- Attended Elliott Heads community meeting to talk about dune care and weeds. Has already visited school to talk about shorebirds and turtles.
- Promoting participation in Australian Conservation Foundation's Platy Project. Staff are undertaking surveys and hoping to hold a launch event in late August/early September.
- A new turtle cage will be installed at Archies Beach in September, along with ramp anti-slip treatment.

### Reports from representative groups

*John Gatley* (Sea Turtle Alliance) –

- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority funded non-government committees to attend the first meeting.
- Since successfully reducing the foxes, the goannas have been raiding the turtle nests, eating 100% of the eggs. Unable to control/poison the goannas because they're a native animal. Trial-ing cane toad pheromones on the turtle nests to deter the goannas.
- Farmers have advised STA that this year will be a big fox problem.
- Disappointed with the Nielsen Park Redevelopment. No mention in report of low-glow lights or plans for lighting in regard to turtles nesting in the area. Expressed frustration that Council has previously supported turning off lights in the area. This should be set as a precedent for any new projects.
- STA raised the possibility of assisting with funding to replace the standard Ergon-owned street lights with low-glow lights in areas of Bargara close to sensitive beaches.

*Pam Soper* –

- Raised concerns about trees on pri-

vate land being bulldozed due to development. What can be done to protect the remaining remnant vegetation on privately owned land? Greg provided a brief overview of the current State Planning Policy and development application process as it relates to remnant vegetation. A copy of State Planning maps for Childers and Gin Gin sent to Pam and Rodney Jones.

*John and Joy Bieresteker* –

- Concerned with the alignment of a proposed walking track through the beach side of the lagoon at Moore Park Beach near the Holiday Park, and potential impacts on waterbirds.

*Rodney Jones* –

- Was contacted by ABC Wide Bay regarding the issue of interference to migratory birds by drone activity. Fraser Coast Regional Council has implemented a Drones Innovation Hub and are investigating a drone strategy. Rodney requested that Bundaberg Regional Council initiate something similar. Teagan to investigate designated zones in regard to National and Marine Parks and the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA).
- Requested Terms of Reference for this CCAG and a review of group membership. Greg advised that the group would continue in its current format until after the Local Government election in March 2024. New Councils usually review all existing advisory groups and their functions.

✿ *Rodney Jones*

**The next CCAG meeting will be held in October. Please forward items you wish to be raised at that meeting to: Rodney Jones mycozip@gmail.com**

## ***Migratory Birds and Drone Activity\****

\*see Rodney Jones' article page 10



*The Eastern Curlew is extremely vulnerable to disturbances.*

*(photo used by the ABC supplied by Chris Barnes)*

***It's flown here from Russia, then is disturbed by humans. How drones are threatening the Eastern Curlew.*** Read this 11 August report at:

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-08-11/australian-shorebird-eastern-curlew-threatened-by-drones/102709096>

An article titled ***Drones are disturbing critically endangered shorebirds in Bay, creating a domino effect***, by Joshua Wilson, PhD Candidate University of Queensland, looks at the effect drones are having on our shorebirds. Find his 14 July article at:

[Drones are disturbing critically endangered shorebirds in Moreton Bay, creating a domino effect \(theconversation.com\)](https://theconversation.com/drones-are-disturbing-critically-endangered-shorebirds-in-moreton-bay-creating-a-domino-effect-198444)

### **Mary River Turtles**

Tiaro Landcare in conjunction with researchers from Charles Darwin Uni have had a paper published in the *Austral Ecology* journal (2 August 2023) – a great summary of research that has been driven by the Tiaro community over the past 20 or so years.

One of the authors is Tiaro Landcare's Marilyn Connell whom many of you would know or at least heard speak. The paper ***Saving the endangered Mary River turtle: Enhancing conservation outcomes through community engagement*** can be found at [Austral Ecology - Wiley Online Library](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/aec.12744) (enter key words)

### **Native medicinal and edible plants**

New Branch member, Jen Stroh, is a naturopathic health practitioner and educator and President of the Indigenous Plants for Health Association Inc.

The IPHA publish a quarterly newsletter featuring native medicinal/edible plants articles on cultivation, book reviews, events information, research updates and so on. The most recent newsletter #22 features many plants found in our local area. A link to some past newsletters can be found on their website.

<https://indigenousplantsforhealth.com/iph-inc-newsletters/>

## FRASER COAST BACKYARD BIOBLITZ SPRING 2023



Wildlife Qld  
Preservation Society of  
Fraser Coast

Fraser Coast Backyard Bioblitz: Spring 2023  
OCT 14, 2023 - OCT 15, 2023

About

Join

Explore the wonderful diversity of native plants and animals in the Fraser Coast and Wide Bay region in your own backyard - or a place you'd like to explore - during the Spring 2023 Backyard Bioblitz on the weekend of 14-15 October 2023. This is part of a series of seasonal Backyard Bioblitzes coordinated by the Wildlife.

Read More >

Project Journal

Explore observations from this Spring 2023 Backyard Bioblitz by clicking on this link: <https://inaturalist.ala.org.au/projects/fraser-coast-backyard-bioblitz-spring-2023>

The weekend of 14-15 October 2023 was exceptionally busy for the Branch. It was the date for the Central Branches Get-Together where attention was given to our Backyard Bioblitz program and the iNaturalist website. We also had several opportunities to make and lodge observations. It was also the weekend chosen for the Spring 2023 Backyard Bioblitz. What had felt like a 'double booking' for me turned out to be a great opportunity to spruik both iNaturalist and our Backyard Bioblitz program to a new audience of members and friends from Fraser Coast Branch as well as Capricornia and Upper Dawson Branch.

By 19 October, 28 observers had lodged 447 observations of 318 species. Importantly, a number of our members dipped their toe in the Backyard Bioblitz (BB) water for the first time, as did several of our visitors, who were inspired to participate because of the possibilities offered by iNaturalist and our BB as a 'citizen science' program. It does not matter how common a species is, nor how 'good' your photograph, the aim is to ensure there is suf-

ficient in your observation for the object to be identifiable. Nor does it matter whether your 'backyard' is 100 acres or a tiny balcony, or indeed your bathroom, wardrobe, gutters or under your house. We can learn something useful from every observation, wherever it is, and whatever it might be.



*Vanessa 'practising what she preaches'. That's her in her shower recess photographing some poor little critter sheltering in the corner.*

Scott Gavins again confirmed his reputation as our most dedicated iNaturalist observer. He added 115 observations to his already impressive tally of over 20,000 observations. He has now recorded an impressive 1,925 species on his (40-acre) property east of the Bruce Highway between Bauple and Tiaro. Some of these include the southern-most or northern-most record of species, or are species as yet undescribed, or have led to visits from PhD candidates from the US, or are being used in information brochures to demonstrate the difference between exotic and invasive species and his recording of local native species. His Spring Bioblitz observations include many insects, spiders, birds, frogs, reptiles and plants.



The most observed species this Bioblitz was the Eastern Bearded Dragon (*Pogona barbata*), followed by Australian Brush Turkeys (*Alectura lathami*), Lewin's Honeyeater (*Meliphaga lewinii*) and the Peanut Tree (*Sterculia quadrifida*). Other interesting observations for me over the weekend included: a pair of White-breasted Sea Eagles, soaring on a thermal above Dundowran Beach, a family of Radjah Shelducks (*Radjah radjah*) at Arkarra Lagoons and our wonderful orchids (*Cymbidium madidum*), which are having an exceptionally fine flowering year.

✿ *Vanessa Elwell-Gavins*



*Radjah Shelducks (left, photo by Ruby) and a Nankeen Night Heron (right, photo by Vanessa) were spotted and much admired on our CBGT walk at Arkarra Lagoons.*

Branch member, Cecile Espigole has just co-authored a paper with Leo Joseph titled **Northern range limits of Plumed Frogmouth *Podargus ocellatus plumiferus* with notes on other species in Bulburin National Park, Queensland** which has been published in Australian Field Ornithology journal (current edition, Volume 40 2023 pp220-224) <https://afo.birdlife.org.au/afo/index.php/afo>

Appendix 1 of the paper is an extract from **WAMBALIMAN** April-June 1984 showing a couple of articles by WPSQ honorary life member and member of our Branch, Eric Zillmann.



## Central Branches Get-Together (CBGT) Hosted by our Branch—13-15 October



## ***Central Branches Get-Together (CBGT) Hosted by our Branch—13-15 October***

48 people, including five Upper Dawson Branch members and one Capricorn Branch member attended the Central Branches Get-together on the weekend 13-15 October 2023. Sara, past president of our Fraser Coast Branch who now resides in Brisbane also joined us. Current president John and other past presidents attending were Vanessa, Peter, and Carol. There were 10 apologies, including Pam, formerly a mainstay of the Bundaberg Branch.

It was a privilege to have Ann and Viola, the two most recent WPSQ Margaret Thorsborne Award recipients, with us. Also, Andrew, State Council member, who gave updates on WPSQ State matters including the success of the special projects.

40% of our Fraser Coast Branch members attended at least one session on the weekend and 24 members were involved with cleaning, baking, shopping, displays, billets, running walks, speaking and so on. Two absent members, Alan (of Wongi Fairy Bell orchid fame) and Scott (iNaturalist extraordinaire) had their presence felt as they were referred to by our speakers.

We met at 5.00pm Friday night and the last walk for the faithful few, finished around Sunday at 6.00pm. We based ourselves at the Sea Scout Hall on the Esplanade in Torquay. We had displays on the migratory shorebirds, turtles, and Branch activities.

Speakers included Don and Lesley with a presentation on Shorebirds, Tony with a talk entitled *Solving Botanical Myster-*

*ies – Documenting the Distribution of Fraser Coast Plants*, and Tina filling in the gaps with information on our local fauna species. Vanessa then spoke about our Branch's seasonal bioblitzes and demonstrated how to use iNaturalist.

Walks and events included a short walk on the foreshore and boardwalk, beach/mangrove walks, a vine forest walk, observations of a high tide migratory shorebird roost, lagoon and wetlands walk, and a sunset boat trip.

We had the opportunity to dine together for two dinners, two lunches, and morning and afternoon teas. There was great camaraderie and some seriously worthwhile information imparted. For some of our Branch members this CBGT was an opportunity to return the wonderful hospitality we had in Theodore in 2019 at the last CBGT. **★ Jenni and Peter**

### ***For the record:***

#### ***Attendee numbers for different events***

- Friday night - dinner & Shorebirds presentation – 30 people
- Saturday morning – speakers & walk – 34
- Lunch at the Sea Scout Hall – 35
- Saturday afternoon - Branch reports & resolutions – 18
- Late afternoon beach/ mangrove walk – 6
- Late Saturday - Milbi sunset eco tour - 7
- Saturday night - Dinner Torquay Hotel – 16
- Sunday morning – high tide migratory shorebird roost site – 20
- Sunday morning (at same time as above) - vine forest walk – 13
- Morning tea at Arkarra Lagoons and walk – 30
- Lunch at the Sea Scout Hall - 25
- Sunday afternoon (repeat of Saturday's mangrove walk) – 6



## Mount Benarige - Nature Walk 6th August

Mount Benarige is no alpine peak, but it provides a splendid challenge for local bush walkers. More particularly, for the nature walkers, it is the site of many different habitats.

Examples of several vegetation types are to be found. There are three river catchment gullies, natural revegetation in selectively logged areas and areas apparently undisturbed.



*Max talks about the towers at the summit*

All our nature walks arouse ponderings on what Fraser Coast forests may have looked like over the millennia. Indeed, Max's talk at the Colliery Circuit in July mentioned the vegetation three hundred million years ago which subsequently turned into coal. But in a very much shorter time frame, the Mount Benarige walk demonstrated an example of environmental destruction in recent decades. This example resulted from the modern exploitation of the natural environment. In the 1950s, and reasonably enough, a bulldozed track was driven up to the top of Benarige in order to construct a fire watch tower on the summit. As the forestry work diminished and the need for the fire watch tower ended, the track was left unmaintained. Now there is severe erosion in places, resulting in deep excoriation of topsoil and excavation of deep trenches along former wheel tracks on the route to the summit.

There were several bird watching expeditions to Mount Benarige in July; so a good number of species have been identified. There is widespread habitat for diverse bird species, and very often identification is by bird song rather than by sighting.

The botanists benefited from the diverse natural environments. Strangely the soil in places was quite sandy and many of the plants were typical of those found on the coast, including Wallum Phebalium, Coastal Banksia, and Beach Acronychia. These plants happily share the immediate environment with plants like Mountain Mat Rush, known from montane areas, and to add to the eclectic mix we found classic rainforest species like the Yellow Pear-fruit and the Flagellaria vine. The summit also yielded examples of plants rarely seen by the avid botanists. This list included the extremely rare, yet to be classified, *Samadera* sp. "St Mary", *Pityrodia salviifolia* with its extraordinarily scented leaves, along with *Capparis canescens* and *Hibbertia oligodonta* (first described in 1991), both rarely seen on the Fraser Coast.

Not only were the botanists rewarded by finding unusual plants, but the rest of the group were most interested in Max's presentation on forest department fire towers. Max detailed intriguing design details of fire towers and how compass bearings were taken. On a reccy Max and Marlene exercised their fossicking skills to reveal the former tower footings and tie downs for the stays.

This walk has been explored by our Fraser Coast Branch several times since being first being introduced as a nature walk in 2016. Each visit unearths new discoveries botanical, avian and historical. ✿*Frank Ekin*

## Poona Wildflowers - Nature Walk 2nd September



The Spring walk attracted a good attendance keen to learn about the Spring flowering – which we call the Wallum Wonderland. Poona offers a great opportunity to study Wallum ecosystems and the intersection with wetlands and mangrove mud flats.

To begin, Peter gave an informative talk on Wallum country, explaining that the Wallum had been heavily affected by clearing for farming before it was realised the soil is unsuitable for European style farming. Housing development took over Wallum country particularly on the Sunshine and Burrum Coast and then later, more Wallum was cleared for forestry, particularly Cooloola to Maryborough. Housing development continues apace.

Following Peter's introductory talk and then an appreciation of Jenni's huge commitment to the natural environment, first in Gippsland, Victoria, and latterly on the Fraser Coast, the group split up into two main groups, one following Jenni focusing on the vegetation bordering on the Poona Road and then on along the first few hundred metres of the powerline easement. The other group followed Peter onto the recently slashed powerline easement.

Despite the recent slashing, Spring flowering asserted itself with blooms of boronia, bauera, vanilla lily and Black-eyed Susan. There were dense patches of these plants giving a purple hue to the recently slashed easement.

Those people more intent on walking further followed Max and were marshalled by Marlene. Leaving slashed areas and the Wallum the walk proceeded into woodland, stands of melaleuca and on to mud flats with mangroves. At the most distant point on the walk there was a freshwater wetland bordered by enormous trees; many covered with Monkey Rope vine. The final stage of the walk was through waist high grass.

After two and a half hours of botanising and/or walking, the group moved to the start of the Poona Walking Tracks at the end of Outreach Avenue for morning tea. The walkers were left to their own devices to follow the well-marked Poona walking track and the botanists followed Jenni, Peter, and Tony on a second intensive and lengthy botanising session. Some botanists did not leave until late afternoon.

There was a major emphasis on botany on this walk, exploration of various ecosystems and a couple of lonely but absorbed bird watchers. As Wallum is such a major feature of the Fraser Coast, a similar outing will be considered at Maroom for 2024.

✿ **Frank Ekin**



*Purple Flag (Wild Iris), Guinea flower & boronia. Photos by Helen*



*Wedding Bush and white heath. Photos by Peter*

The second bus trip was for our Branch of Wildlife, and we went to Tuan, Poona and Tinnanbar. The display was excellent. However, a trip down a week later saw some flowers past their peak, but others just coming on... to mention a few.. wild iris, vanilla lily and swamp boronia. In the past 6 years we have taken approx. 500 people to see the wildflowers, and that's not including the number of Camera Club trips we have led to the area. *Ref Wambaliman July/August/September 1986.*



## *Pir'ri Reserve - Nature Walk 1st October*



*Lisa, from the Booral Community Association Inc spoke passionately to our group about what an environment levy can achieve.*

The Bureau of Meteorology has been warning us of the arrival of an El Nino event with dry and hot weather. So, it was a pleasure to have a comfortably warm clear day for the walkers to visit Pir'ri Reserve, on River Heads Road, and to enjoy the tall dense regenerated forest and healthy understorey.

The large turnout of walkers bespeaks a widespread interest amongst us all in the natural environment and the pleasure to be had sauntering in natural areas such as Pir'ri Reserve.

Decades ago, sections of Pir'ri Reserve were a pineapple farm. The size of many of the trees suggests that they are really very old. At the start of the walk was a display of Council's 2007 plant lists and the bird species list of 123— identified by the Birdwatchers of Hervey Bay over many years.

For the small group of dedicated botanists, armed with their hand lenses, books, check lists, and unhurried hours, the reserve is ideal. For the others the reward was to have walked all the track and become aware of the botanical wealth of the reserve in general.

Similarly, for bird watchers; it's an idle saunter. Their preferred habit is near

silence. 12 species of bird were detected by their song despite disturbance by the pleasurable chatter and giggles of those more intent on enjoying each other's company in a very beautiful place.

The narrow tracks allowed for only single file, though the track opened out at Sandra's Corner and Alan Pebbles' Rest. The track then led onto Matheson Road and 1km further on the walkers re-entered the Reserve, completing a circuit arriving back at Pebbles' Rest.

Morning tea was enjoyed in this small clearing and good use was made of the benches built by Alan Peebles at the time that he and Sandra marked out the tracks and the rest area.

The main purpose of the walk was to introduce the Reserve to those who enjoy the natural environment and generally promote it. Walkers were well pleased that former Council environmental levy monies were spent on acquiring this site and opened to the public in 2015, for all ratepayers to enjoy.

The object lesson is that town planning should include such areas of natural environment.

✿ **Frank Ekin**

## Black-breasted Button Quail at Takura



*Above: A still taken from trail-camera footage of the Black-breasted Button-quail at Takura Environmental Reserve.*



*Photo: ABC*

Recently we captured pictures of a Black-breasted Buttonquail in a dry rainforest site in one of our council reserves, the Takura Environmental Reserve.

On looking through some of my old bird books, buttonquails were listed next to quails, however, on reading, they are surprisingly not related at all. In fact, buttonquails are more closely related to rails and waderbirds. Unlike quails, buttonquails lack a fourth toe extending backwards on the foot. They were once known as hemipodes (meaning half foot) which would be due to them lacking the hind toe. This “lack” may have been the reason they were also once known as lesser quails, but also bastard quails, which, in turn, may have been how the name buttonquail evolved (I’m willing to be corrected about this though).

For us in South-East Queensland, the two buttonquail species we would most likely encounter would be the vulnerable Black-breasted Buttonquail (*Turix melanogaster*), occurring in closed dry rainforest with a good mulch layer, or the Painted Buttonquail of more open situations. For those of us who frequent the forest, the tell-tale sign left by both buttonquail species is the “dinner plate” sized platelets they leave after feeding by standing on one leg and spinning around, using the other leg to scratch outwards while foraging for seeds, fruits, insects and other arthropods. Quails, however, don’t have this habit of foraging.

Another characteristic that some folk associate with buttonquails, is that, on a surprise encounter, the buttonquails prefer to run away, rather than fly away. This tends to differ in the true quails. Even though buttonquail tend to choose to escape on foot, they can fly. In fact, it is believed that the Black-breasted Buttonquail moves from one patch of scrub to another quite regularly; especially the females, as they actively look for males who have prepared a nest. The female buttonquails fight for territory, and look for other partners while the males incubate the eggs. This is reversed in the case of true quails. ♦ **Jim Johnston**

*Jim is currently the coordinator of the FCRC Community Nursery*

Nuala McClernon, animal ecologist, presented a summary of her ongoing research on the Eastern Grey Kangaroo (*Macropus giganteus*) in the local area.

EKG have social structures, are pentapedal (5 toed) and can attain 2 metres in height. They are herbivores, grazing on native and introduced grasses. Despite being declared a protected species, they are hunted, illegally shot and subject to commercial harvesting for food.

In addition, they suffer greatly due to encroaching human development and are probably the least cared for as far as native wildlife management goes. This latter is mainly because of their size and their fear of human behaviour and treatment towards them. They tend to bolt very readily when threatened, falling prey to accidents, particularly along vehicle passageways.

As a species, they have low reproduction rates and are slow growing in utero with gestation at 36 days but attachment to pouch teat for approximately 290 days. Maternal lactation continues for 18 months or more after the joey spends time out of the pouch. There is a high mortality rate in the first few days during this time.

Globally, all wildlife is threatened by urban development due to habitat loss, fragmentation and isolation, disease, malnutrition and inbreeding.

Kangaroos are more at risk because they need a large area to access necessary nutrition. Rapid human development causing geographical and vegetation change has a very detrimental ef-

fect on EKG, as is the case in the Wide Bay area. Data on the populations and movement patterns of kangaroos in this area has been collected for years and in 2015, a survey indicated an approximate 42% in population decline and in 2022, a survey indicated a further 47% decline since 2015. Mortality rate is estimated at 90%.

What can be done? Attempted mitigation of vehicle strikes which injure and kill kangaroos is ineffective. Data collected through Citizen Science projects has helped shed light on the plight of the kangaroos as development has occurred in the Hervey Bay and Maryborough regions. In a recent count, 31 contributors spotted 665 EKG at 112 locations.

Nuala is keen to receive input via email; [Frasercoastkangaroos@gmail.com](mailto:Frasercoastkangaroos@gmail.com). Photos of faecal deposits and sightings of kangaroos, dead or alive assist research.

There is ongoing recommendation and calls to council for appropriate action, particularly in the provision of adequate habitable vegetation corridors for management of all wildlife but also using kangaroos as an umbrella species for all wildlife management. Nuala presented layered maps drawn up for koala habitats and sightings where the similarity to kangaroo habitat and corridor requirements were almost identical. These will be conveyed to council with recommendations from her research.

We look forward to the report and findings of Nuala's current project, due for completion next year. \***Jackie Henrion**

## Whale Watch at Hervey Bay—August Library Talk

The August Library Talks were presented by Marian Bennett from Fraser Coast Libraries. Marian is an avid whale watcher and keen photographer.

Whale Watching in Hervey Bay commenced in 1987. It was not until 1962 that whaling was outlawed in Queensland. In view of that, we are lucky indeed that they have recovered, trust and forgiven us enough to return to local waters and the Great Sandy Strait. Whale watching is carried out by many companies in Hervey Bay with tours travelling to Platypus Bay near K'gari for optimal viewing of whales.

During migration of the **Humpback Whales** along the east coast of Australia, whales travel to warm northern waters to give birth and then stop in Hervey Bay waters on their southern migration to enjoy the warm, relatively shallow waters of Platypus Bay.

The mothers sometimes lift their calves on their back if feeling threatened. Calves will stay with their mothers for approximately 12 months, feeding from mother's milk. Calves use this time to master the skills needed to survive the migration and will often be seen breaching or tail slapping while in the calmer waters of Hervey Bay. Most female Humpbacks breed every 2-3 years and the males do not stay after mating, leaving the females to nurture and defend the young.

Although whales do not generally feed at all while on their journey from Antarctica to north Queensland waters, they have been seen in recent years opportunistically feeding off the coast of Eden in NSW. Usually, they do not feed until returning to Antarctic waters.

The whales have a white belly with a

ventral grooved stomach. Calves are light grey in colour when born. Humpbacks are a baleen whale and have two blowholes. Females weigh up to 35 ton and the males up to 25 ton.

In our local whale season, the sub adults are usually the first to appear on their southern journey. They tend to be very curious of boats (called mugging). Typical behaviours include:

**Spy Hop** is a behaviour that allows the whale to raise their eyes clear of the water. This often occurs during muggings as they are curious creatures with very good eyesight. This posture involves head up and fins outstretched. The pectoral fins are also used to slap the water surface; the reason is not known but it may be for communication.

**Breaching** behaviour occurs more frequently in windy, rough ocean conditions; whales breach turning into the wind. A deep dive during breaching behaviour can be an indication of another breach.

A group of 1-5 whales is called a 'pod' and generally more than 5 is called an 'affiliation'. When pods merge with one another the behaviours can often change.

**Head Lunge** is sometimes seen as a threat behaviour as it is often performed by male escorts, but it has also been observed in females with calves. It could be due to passing sharks.

Male Humpbacks have been seen to rake other males using the barnacles on their chins during chase pods when



competing for breeding rights. Males will also trumpet, blow bubbles, back arch, and ram other males during the chase to intimidate the competition – a chase pod generally moves very quickly and erratically. Male Humpbacks are the only ones that sing.

Marian has taken many superb photos of whale behaviour and managed to identify some individuals, matching up the tail flukes on Happy Whale, a worldwide project for whale identification. All round a great talk and superb photos.

✿ *Jackie Henrion.*

## BOOK REVIEW

### **The Song of the Dodo: Island Biogeography in an Age of Extinctions**

By David Quammen, 1996 (don't be fooled the book is still highly relevant)

This book is the most wonderful read - it's an adventure of physicality, geography, spirit and intellect. The author David Quammen takes you on exotic biological expeditions into the wilds in search of amazing creatures. While discovering the creatures you also discover the scientists who are studying them.

Quammen is such a fantastic storyteller. He takes complicated topics such as adaptive radiation, trophic cascades and island biogeography and weaves a story around these, so you begin to understand these concepts, as you delve into what the burning questions field biologists ask as they progress their struggle to understand how life works. You stand with a scientist/collector as they experience their 10th miserable week on an island, collecting specimens, their feet are rotting, they are hungry, and weathered, and they keep going. Oh, and I cannot not acknowledge his use of humour; David Quammen is a funny man.

A central theme of the book is extinction, which he defines as "ecosystem decay." And how relevant a topic is extinction for we are now experiencing the

age of the sixth mass extinction, this time due to human action. Quammen delves into extinction using island biogeography.

Quammen starts here because, "Islands are distinct from mainlands in that they represent simplified, exaggerated versions ... of exactly those evolutionary processes that occur on mainlands." Insularity, immigration, fragmented habitats, population viability, minimum reserve size, and contemporary extinction questions such as, "What generally brings about extinction among small populations?"

This book's content has the potential to depress you. However, one of the most appealing dimensions of Quammen's book is the hope and even joy he brings. We meet people who achieve the impossible, who bring a species back from the brink. The incredible tenacity, dedication, creativity in the application of practical measures, intellect, rigour and love of these scientists. Nature is asking us to step up.

You won't be able to put the book down once you start reading!

✿ *Jane Gray*



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 5527 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**