

CONSERVATION NEWS  
Dec 2023-Jan 2024

General meetings: Third  
Wednesday of the month:  
17 January 2024, 1 pm,  
Caloundra Power Boat Club  
(no meeting in December)

Executive meetings: TBA

Executive:

President: Claire Brown

Vice-Presidents: Paul Smith  
& Suzanne Aspland (retired)

Secretary: Jude Crighton  
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Treasurer: Judy Burns (Ph:  
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Committee Member: John  
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Our thanks to Caloundra MP  
Jason Hunt and staff for  
their kind support in the  
photocopying of  
*Conservation News*



We are most sorry to be losing our hard-working Vice-President **Sue Aspland** as she relocates temporarily to Brisbane and then to Noosaville to be closer to her family. Sue will continue to come to meetings when she can. Sue's knowledge of development legislation and Council operations and public education in relation to environmental matters has supported our work in so many ways, and we hope we can call on her experience into the future. Her observations and presentations on the Pumicestone Passage break-through have been invaluable.

We wish you well, Sue, in this next phase of your busy life.

## Updates from November Meeting, & Other Business

### Point Cartwright

The outcome of the Proposed Amendments to Local Laws at Pt Cartwright following Sunshine Coast Council approval of the Management Plan is yet to be voted on in a Council Ordinary meeting. Thank you if you responded positively to Council's request for support for these important regulations.

### Direct Sunshine Coast Rail Line, Sunshine Coast Public Transport project

To recap, Stakeholder Interest Group (SIG) input is limited to four public transport outcomes (no roads):

- The B2N Beerburrum to Nambour Rail Project
- The Direct SC Project - Direct Sunshine Coast Rail Line (CAMCOS corridor)
- The SCPT - Sunshine Coast Public Transport Project (Formerly Mass Transit)
- The East West Network (referred to as the bus network)

As our representative, Quentin attended the second TMR Environment SIG on 15 November and reports as follows:

'In general, the meeting was positive and productive with two new TMR staff members from the environment team present. A general update was received from Program Director Mathias Schlotterbach on the overall public transport strategy. From there, the focus of the meeting was on the **Direct Rail Project** with a detailed breakdown of engineering design, giving reference to environmental considerations along different lengths of the route. A question-and-answer session followed. Next addressed were some of the notable

## Advance Dates

**Christmas Break-Up!**  
Saturday 9 December at  
Currimundi (Kathleen  
McArthur) Conservation  
Park, 8 am for a walk in the  
park, then 9.30 am for  
morning tea

Join us for our final bring-a-plate-to-share celebration of our 60th year. Bring a chair also!

The walk should offer birds and flowers; maybe a Christmas bell.

**Date to be notified in 2024**  
Dr Hilary Pearl will speak on her PhD work on coastal Wallum habitats.

## Faunawatch Outings

**2024:**  
Second Wednesday of the  
Month Walks, 8 am at  
Maroochy Regional  
Bushland Botanic Gardens  
& Fourth Monday of the  
Month Walks, 8 am: venues  
for February & the new  
year to be advised.

**Faunawatch data in 1**  
second degree spaces as per  
state mapping is available  
via Paul from the state  
database WildNet:  
[https://www.qld.gov.au/en-  
vironment/plants-  
animals/species-  
information/wildnet](https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/plants-animals/species-information/wildnet)

environmental considerations and process expectations for the project, including EPBC referral (re Federal Government legislation and guidelines).

A general update and lively discussion ensued of options and outcomes in relation to **SC Public Transport Project** stations, vehicles and route connectivity considerations.

## SC Direct Rail

Most, if not all, of the issues raised by WPSQ members are being addressed in some meaningful fashion through design and impact mitigation measures. Most notably, extended lengths of the route – especially in low-lying environmentally sensitive zones – will use elevated rail on viaduct-style structures of piles and columns allowing natural environmental flows to traverse largely unimpeded. However, construction will create ground-level pathways that will need to be retained for maintenance access. Recognition and acknowledgement of threatened ecosystems was evident. EPBC referrals will be the first cab off the rank when the detailed business case is completed. The team seems well aware of ongoing concerns regarding environmental values. The avoidance of Lot 480 is a good example, and it was clear the environmental staff have been pushing hard to get innovative best practice solutions adopted along the length of the route. Some localised values were expressed to staff, such as a known endangered orchid just north of Caloundra Road. Staff were well aware of the presence of high value ecosystems captured by relatively recent endangered and critically endangered classification changes. While TMR have ecologists conducting detailed assessment at the moment, there was no indication of when an Environmental Impact Statement might be produced. Issues such as noise and vibration will be addressed through design and control measures.

There was no discussion of the rail route north of the Maroochydhore terminus due to planning and funding uncertainties.

## SC Public Transport

Public consultation is underway at the moment in relation to vehicle options and station locations. Conventional buses have been ruled out, and while the reasons were not adequately explained, suffice to say the decision seems to centre on inadequate certainty of timing and efficiency of carriage. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) or Light Rail are the only options being pursued beyond this point, and both rely on a ‘right of way’ principle. When asked to clarify if this would mean a dedicated carriageway, the answer was ‘yes’. Despite having numerous stations, there will be only two (maybe three) connection points to the Direct Rail line (Birtinya and Maroochydhore). Other east-west connections would need to be addressed through the bus network or active transport network however this was still vague. Queries were raised about the possibility of creating a mass transit route to the university, extending the proposed route to Nambour, and

### 60 Years

The link to *When the mind opens the flowers bloom: Kathleen McArthur (1915-2000) – Queensland wildflower artist, author, environmental educator and conservation advocate: a selection of paintings, writings and photographs* on the Wildlife Qld website is still a work in progress and will be sent out to members in due course.

providing a mass transit route to the airport. The project team did not rule these out.

Thank you to WPSQ members for your input, and especially to John Birbeck for sharing his time, knowledge and wisdom as we drove the full length of the Direct Rail route prior to the SIG meeting.'

**Transport & Main Roads is looking for public feedback and input into the Direct Rail and Public Transport proposals, with a closing date of 10 December:**

<https://www.yoursay-projects.tmr.qld.gov.au/sunshine-coast-rail-public-transport>

**To assist your submission, the Executive and Quentin have summarised these points:**

#### SC Direct Rail

- Design and construct to mitigate environmental impacts as much as possible with innovative best practice solutions employed along the route.
- Minimise impact by reducing footprint as much as possible including multi-storey carparking and stations rather than large ground level parking lots.
- In low-lying, environmentally sensitive zones, elevate rail on viaducts allowing natural environmental flows.
- Protect the remnant lowland rainforest located at the current Maroochy interchange.
- Protect Lot 480 (east of Caloundra airport) and re-zone to conservation/environment reserve (depending on whether it remains under state control or transfers to SCCouncil as has been suggested).
- Undertake an Environment Impact Statement to present options and justify proposed alignment, including assessment of construction and operational phases.
- Control water quality impacts during construction and operation.
- Mitigate dust, noise and vibration impacts during construction and operational phases.
- Provide buffers to threatened ecological communities and demonstrate measures to reduce edge effects.

#### SC Public Transport

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) or Light Rail are the only options being pursued with both options to rely on the 'right of way' principle, meaning a dedicated carriageway.

- Minimise 'hard' infrastructure ensuring fewest impacts.
- Ensure no loss of existing green or open space within the urban footprint as it is already well below satisfactory benchmarks now; all routes should fall within or adjacent to existing carriageways.
- Recognise that buses can be redeployed and routes added or changed whereas light rail is fixed.
- Even though Stage One is north of Birtinya, improved public transport south of Birtinya must be included in

Stage One to ensure education, buy-in and use of the system.

- Improved connectivity to heavy rail nodes is essential for high patronage.
- An integrated public transport strategy must demonstrate East-West links from population areas to key nodes.
- Routes to Nambour, the airport and the university should be considered as mass transit routes or show strong connectivity.

### Shelly Beach to Moffat Beach Study



‘Now you see it, now you don’t’: the recent blue sign (above) announcing closure of the informal beach access path has been removed. The stumbling block to work proceeding is a petition to Council requesting formalisation of this path, tabled by Cr Landsberg and seconded by Cr Johnston at the Ordinary Meeting of 16 November. The petition, with 160 signatures, is to be referred to the CEO ‘to determine appropriate action’.

WPSQ has expressed in writing to Council and Councillors its great concern that an *approved* outcome in the extensive and extended Shelly Beach-Moffat Beach Study to close the path to protect and enhance this area of nesting habitat for endangered marine turtles – with EPBC and State government approval – could be in jeopardy. In part the letter states:

‘We would like to point out that the petitioners’ assertion that the pathway has been in place in its present form for over 40 years is misleading, and attach a timeline of the history of the area, in the hope that you will better understand why the ongoing restoration of the dune is so important.’

While the main works under the pilot project cannot now begin until after the turtle nesting season (30 April next year), planting of local species between the fence and the concrete



Good Reads

*TOXIC: the rotting underbelly of the Tasmanian salmon industry*  
by Richard Flanagan  
Penguin Random House  
Australia, 2021

I've always felt a bit uneasy about eating farmed Tasmanian Atlantic salmon but with so many other environmental issues to worry about this was one I hadn't really investigated. Visiting the Caloundra library recently, this book was on display, and being a Richard Flanagan fan, I thought I'd give it a go. Well, my eyes were opened! Richard writes from a very personal point of view his family having had a shack on Bruny Island for more than 25 years. His description of the wonders of D'Entrecasteaux Channel are exactly as I would imagine an island with so many World Heritage sites would be and matched some of my memories of Tasmania from when I'd visited in the past. But this was before 2005 when Tassal took over a small salmon farm 1.5 km across the water from his shack. With 270 endnotes this book has been very well researched. Richard presents evidence from the very start when salmon farmers were told that the waters around Tasmania were too warm for this northern hemisphere fish to live successfully. They went ahead anyway and so more and more

coastal walkway will provide a dunal buffer and enhanced light horizon for turtles and shade for walkers.

**Ben Bennett Bushland Park/Caloundra Transport Corridor Upgrade (CTCU)**

Funding for the Transport & Main Roads Nicklin Way to Third Avenue section of the project is up in the air, with State Government arguing the toss with the Federal Government. On 5 October WPSQ members attended a meeting in the park with Senator Larissa Waters, organised by other community groups. Jennie Curry for the Caloundra Residents Association and WPSQ spoke to Channel 7 news reporters. On the Senator's suggestion that we refer the observed threat from the Nicklin Way extension to Sub-tropical Lowland Rainforest to Federal Minister Pliberseck, we have followed up on this, as well as referring the Federal funding component to Minister King as part of the Federal review of infrastructure projects. The next CTCU SIG meeting is 4 December, and to date the requested environmental reports have still not been supplied by TMR.

Wallum expert Dr Hilary Pearl attending our November meeting asked if the wet heathland would be impacted by the proposed road, and it is clear that hard infrastructure will have an effect.

We appreciate the support of Alexandra Moreno, Kathleen McArthur's daughter, who has shared with us her protest to Sunshine Coast Council about the road, and highlighted the contradictions in our car-driven communities:

*Esteemed Mr Jamieson,*

*In Prep 1 at Caloundra State School I learned how important trees are for the air we breathe, and if you cut the trees down, the rain won't come.*

*Blissfully unaware of Climate Change, and Australia per capita the most polluting of all countries, the young cannot wait to get behind the wheel, with our councils obliging by making roads through our nature reserves.*

*Ben Bennett Park is a Nature Reserve for the people and other creatures of Caloundra. It is not reserved for motor vehicles of any sort. The human animal has a pair of legs for walking: they were not made for pressing pedals on the floor of a vehicle.*

*Both the clearing of trees and motor vehicles are components of climate change.*

*Sincerely,*

*Alexandra Moreno*

A fungus matching a holotype (a described and classified sample) has been found in the park.

Keep in touch with wildlife in the park via the Friends of Ben Bennett Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/friendsofbenbennett>

artificial interventions have been required to allow the industry to continue. It appears that the salmon industry is almost a law unto itself with very little regulation. The farms have increased exponentially in many areas around Tasmania in the last 20 years. The people of Tasmania have had to endure the pollution of their fresh water supply, the constant 24/7 noise and lights associated with the large boats and machinery and the destruction of their environment and loss of the serenity and lifestyle that was once theirs. It is unbelievable that the salmon industry is planning to expand even more in the near future. No-where else does intensive industrial farming have so little accountability.

Penguin compares Flanagan's expose of the salmon farming industry to Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, when she took on the pesticide industry in the 1960s.

With Tanya Pliberseck currently considering whether the demise and potential extinction of the Maugean Skate in Macquarie Harbour is due to the salmon farming industry there, it is timely to get acquainted with the facts so eloquently presented by Booker Prize-winning author and Tasmanian Richard Flanagan in *TOXIC*.

Jenny Gursansky

### **Aura South (Halls Creek) EPBC referral**

The EPBC decision on the referral for Aura South is that it is a controlled action with assessment by Public Environment Report (PER). We will monitor the date for the PER release. The next Aura Community Reference Group meeting is Friday 1 December.

### **Coochin Fields Development Application**

The Comiskey Group, owners of Eaton's Hill and Sandstone Point Hotels, have submitted a Development Application to hold outdoor music festivals and other events on a site at the eastern end of Roys Road adjacent to Pumicestone Passage. Claire, Jenny and John have joined TAPP members and others on site visits and confirmed that there are numerous environmental issues. We need to follow up on whether there has been an EPBC referral, and if not, WPSQ could refer. An earlier DA to establish an 'eco-resort' on a separate part of the site was rejected by Sunshine Coast Council, but has been appealed.

Comiskey may be encouraged to plant on the boundary and in other areas to mitigate negative effects on birds and other wildlife. Noise, drones and run-off into the Passage are further issues. WPSQ will follow up whether the proposal could be a controlled action, with Federal member Andrew Wallace or State member Jason Hunt referring it to the EPBC. We could undertake a wildlife survey of the national park near to the site's boundary.

### **Wallum Heath Interpretative Signage**

Working with Dr Sue Davis, Dr Hilary Pearl has sought WPSQ's written support for a grant application to install interpretative signage at significant Wallum heath locations on the Sunshine Coast. A successful result will lead to initial workshops on content, focusing on Currimundi (Kathleen McArthur) Conservation Park, and WPSQ will participate.

### **Wallum Study Group**

Author of *A field guide to native plants of Bribie Island and nearby coastal areas of south-east Queensland*, Allan Carr addressed the meeting and explained that the Wallum Study Group, a part of Native Plants Australia, would fold due to lack of member input. Hilary Pearl kindly offered to take over the WSG and it will now be based on the Sunshine Coast rather than Bribie Island. With remaining WSG funds Allan has produced a fold-out brochure of local wildflowers, presenting a boxful for our wildflower walks. His revised field guide will be available next year.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Pending the activation of a new **Save Yaroomba** campaign (following developer Sekisui's lodgement of a new application), our donation of \$200 to their campaign to raise \$60,000 has been received but will be kept in hand and returned if not required.

**Weeds never sleep:  
weeding opportunities  
continue in 2024**

Join a BushCare group near you, including **Roving groups** to cover – in the Caloundra area – Sharyn Bonney, Ben Bennett, Jill Chamberlain reserves and more. Check out the Council's BushCare website.

Here are some monthly sessions closest to southern-based residents, most commencing at 8 am, with weeding and planting for a couple of hours followed by a welcome morning tea and chat:

**Currimundi (Kathleen McArthur) Conservation Reserve:** 1st Wednesday (run by National Parks & Wildlife)

**Watson Environment Park (Shelly Beach):** 1st Friday (Thursday if Friday is a public holiday)

**Golden Beach (now at Bells Creek):** 2nd Thursday

**Tooway Lake:** 2nd Friday

**Shelly Beach Foreshore:** third Saturday

**Enquiries to**  
[sunshine@wildlife.org.au](mailto:sunshine@wildlife.org.au)

**Sunshine Coast Council's Healthy Coastline Management Plan & Shoreline Erosion Management Plan: Consultation re Currimundi to Pumicestone Passage, re**

- environmental, liveability, & infrastructure values
- managing impacts from social and recreational use, population growth, and coastal hazards

Helen attended a Stakeholder Engagement session on 12 October 2023 on behalf of WPSQ as well as the Watson Park and Tooway Catchment Care Bushcare groups. Other representatives were there from groups with similar environmental and social concerns. This was one of four sessions from the north to south of the SCC jurisdiction and extended from Currimundi to the southern end of the Passage (Currimundi groups participated in the Pt Cartwright to Currimundi session).

Council environment staff were receptive, and points of concern were keyed onto a large map to assist planning. Following next year's local government election participants will be asked to comment on the draft prior to wider public consultation and further work by Council staff.

- *SCC Environment & Liveability Strategy* is the overarching document
- Council is working on a population increase in the next 18 years to 500,000
- Council's *Coastal Health Report 2023* provides baseline data & will be used to track the work of the HCMP & SEMP; to be reviewed in 3 years

The **HCMP** is the 'how' document for management now and into the future:

- **environment:** ecosystems; biodiversity; management of impacts; invasive species; water quality; threatened species including shorebirds & turtles; litter
- **liveability:** parklands & open spaces, access, sport & recreation, cultural values, domestic animals
- **built:** car parking, active & other transport, stormwater assets, coastal hazards

The **SEMP** is an operational plan, usually good for 10 years, and the 2014 version is currently up for review. It aligns with State legislation (needing DES approvals) and is separate from the *Coastal Hazard Adaptation Strategy (CHAS)*:

<https://www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/Environment/Rivers-and-Coast/Coastal-Management/Shoreline-Erosion-Management-Plan>

Re the Pumicestone Passage: Council is also running workshops with State departments, universities, Marine Services Qld and National Parks & Wildlife Service. Continuing community advocacy for natural values is most important.

WPSQ member Jackie, wearing other organisational hats, suggested that all stakeholder groups be brought together in due course to break down any potential barriers.

Council's feedback via email on 6 November was positive:

- *That being locationally specific in identifying coastal and waterways values is imperative - generalised coastal management interventions in many cases will not work given the depth and breadth of complex and changing diversity along the coast.*
- *Of those coastal values identified for each zone, each must be deeply considered and understood, and that the lived historical knowledge of the community and key stakeholders who use these places and spaces is vital to achieving this.*
- *That the creation and integration of any future built form - from lighting through to structures and pathways along the coastline should carry deeper consideration and plans for the environmental impacts each may cause, for flora, fauna and the ecosystems in which they exist.*
- *That accessibility and 'successful' shared spaces along our coastlines and waterways is important, and increasing uses and user groups should be well researched and considered in the formation of the draft management plans.*
- *That we have a valuable opportunity at this moment in time to reset our understanding, and planning for the management of our important, unique, and super-special attributes of the Sunshine Coast - such as our littoral rainforests and nudibranch populations, etc - via the development of these plans and the tools and tactics we utilise to manage them.*
- *That your local knowledge via engagement can tell us so much more, in addition to scientific reporting and analysis, and should be treated as not just important, but imperative to the success of the future plans.*

Questions raised re Watson Park and Tooway/Moffat:

- How will Council address the proliferating informal walkways to Shelly Beach/rocky foreshore from the Watson Park Environment Reserve Coastal Path on the southern flank of Moffat headland; and
- How will the results of the **Shelly Beach-Moffat Beach Coastal Study** re Tooway Lake and Moffat Beach be integrated into the revised SEMP and new HCMP.

**Hoped-for outcomes from the new and revised Plans:**

Maintenance into the future of the environmental health of ICOLL Tooway Lake and its catchment and associated beach and rocky foreshores and ocean functionality, considering sea-level rises and weather impacts; public education in natural processes; better accommodation of increasing recreational use.

Detailed points raised for consideration:

**Public transport routes across Tooway catchment**

- existing bridge with roadway extended into lake on both shores restricts water flows, leading to poor water quality



### **How's your membership?**

Your membership fees (\$12.50 - \$45) allow for the smooth running of our branch and Head Office. The scientific expertise that defines WQ's excellent submissions to government comes from passionate volunteers, but equally from dedicated paid part-timers who provide the administration and state-wide communications to all branches via the website and Facebook.

**If you haven't received an emailed or posted reminder from Head Office about an overdue membership, please give them a ring (07) 3844 0129 or email [wpsq@wildlife.org.au](mailto:wpsq@wildlife.org.au). All memberships are paid to Head Office, and funds are disbursed to branches.**

west of bridge; under-bridge walkway inundation requires lake to be 'let out' to sea if not naturally opening

- future Light Rail (or alternative) location, impacting water quality and existing reserved vegetation, and public amenity (noise, visual pollution)

### **Coastal walkway**

- rule out walkway on northern shore of Tooway Lake as the shore is too vulnerable to erosion, and constructed walkway would be visually intrusive
- conflicts on southern walkways among pedestrians, bikes and electric vehicles; lay-by alternatives

### **Rock walling on north Moffat Beach**

- a state-approved plan, with implementation 'in-the-wings' to respond to future weather events, could end the last natural sand dune on Moffat, affecting Loggerhead turtle nesting and beachgoer amenity; sacrifice Norfolk pines (sufficient fall-back area to west) as an alternative, as noted in the SEMP?

### **Tooway Lake ICOLL function and shoreline**

- updated Council ICOLL management plan; release date?
- make the Tooway Perched ICOLL and its dynamics a feature of interest to Moffat Beach visitors
- manage public interference (inadvertent or otherwise) in shorebird activity and other species' functioning within lake, beach and sand layers, rocky shores, headland and ocean; education in natural values and how the ICOLL functions (QR codes on strategic locations; Council enforcement); reconsider need for 'sand grooming' by Council
- manage erosion of sand 'spit' on southern bank from foot traffic and damage to vegetation (fires & shelters); education of users, where restricting access to revegetation areas has not worked (fencing of BushCare planting removed and plants overrun)
- preserve catchment vegetation (remnant Wallum) and wildlife (especially roosting flying-foxes) in Hardie Buzacott Environmental Reserves, by ensuring restricted access (ie, no 'made' pathways for pedestrian or vehicle access); Council Management Plan for these reserves?
- prevent weed encroachment into environmental reserves and other catchment natural areas such as Chris Byerlee Park; education of residents in effects of dumping garden waste, and value of native species

### **First Nations culture and early European history**

- investigate archaeological and historical locations; education (QR codes on strategic sites)

### **High-use public park areas**

- implement succession planting in parks, with trees failing due to age and visitor misuse resulting in less shade and wind mitigation; increase plantings to improve amenity; Parks & Gardens to work with Environmental Services re suitable local species and locations

### **Visitor vehicle parking**

- impacts on local residential streets and pedestrian safety; consider shuttle bus alternatives on weekends and public holidays

### Lighting

- impact on nesting turtles; install turtle-friendly lighting and pedestrian safety lighting alternatives

Further local experience concerning walkway safety from increasing and unregulated bike and e-bike traffic, preserving shorebird and other rocky habitat lifeforms, and poor dog control were provided by WPSQ member and Tooway BushCarer Rhys.

### Faunawatch

Paul reported that the Sunshine Coast Council Environment Levy Partnership grant of \$50,000 is now available to continue data gathering on Land for Wildlife properties. The next Stockland Stewardship group meeting at Aura is 1 December.

### Judy reports on Faunawatch walks at Kawana Forest walk, Meridan Plains and the Maroochy Regional Bushland Botanical Gardens

At Kawana Forest in October, the river walk was closed as UnityWater (waste water infrastructure) was working there, so we went around the forest circuit (pleasantly shaded and cool, and thankfully almost entirely mosquito-free) followed by morning tea in the adjacent park. The two sites yielded 58 birds, 5 butterflies, and 3 not very noisy species of cicadas, identified by Robyn as Flourey Baker, Black Tree-ticker and Red Tree-ticker.

Bird highlights included a Tawny frogmouth, a White-faced heron on a nest, an Olive-backed oriole on a nest, lots of Rufous fantails, Rose-crowned fruit-doves (see Phil's photo below) calling but elusive, and three different cuckoos: Shining bronze, Channel-billed and Fantail.'

'The November walk at the Gardens incorporated the Sunshine Coast Big Butterfly Count. We spent most of our time in the Fern Glade where there were lots of birds, and in the main lawn area. There were few insects, though we did see two female Richmond Birdwing butterflies. Cane-toad tadpoles dominated the pond near the golf course, with one lonely Eastern sedge frog nearby; there are not many sedges left for these frogs, which used to be so numerous here.

Highlights on and near the dam were three Australasian grebes, an Azure kingfisher, and a first for our lists – a Buff-banded rail. Three cuckoos were heard: Channel-bill, Shining bronze and Fan-tailed.

One of our group went further afield on the Western Tall Gums walk and heard a wallaby bounding away in the wet sclerophyll forest and saw Variegated fairy wrens. It's always a pleasure to visit this tranquil spot.'

**The last walk of the year at South River Drive Park near Mooloolah** netted 67 bird species, including a small group of White-throated needletail swifts overhead. Rob spoke of the diminishing numbers of these migratory birds as their forest habitat in Siberia is logged. Their blood contains extra haemoglobin to allow exceptionally high migratory flight, and their speed is calculated at over 100 km/hour. Feeding on the wing, they consume insects carried upwards in storm fronts.

Other birds included a Spoonbill and a Latham's snipe resting near a small dam near the pathway along the Mooloolah River, and a group of treetop-feeding Topknot pigeons (see Phil's photo below). Robyn identified three Cicadas by song – Brown Bunyips, Black Princes and Floury Bakers, as well as an Elegant snake-eyed skink.

The next Faunawatch walks will be in February, at MRBBG on the 2nd Wednesday, and at a site to be notified on the 4th Monday.

#### Lichens

Be informed through this excellent 1-hour You Tube presentation *The Wonderful World of Lichens*, with Vanessa Ryan of the Queensland Mycological Society:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oa7vYEOTQzI>

Best wishes to our Members & Friends  
for Christmas & the New Year



Christmas Bells (*Blandfordia grandiflora*)  
watercolour by Kathleen McArthur



**Topknot Pigeon**

*(Lopholaimus antarcticus)*

This pigeon was recently observed in a flock of up to 50 birds coming and going in smaller groups to feed in a fruiting fig in my area. Flocks locally once numbered in the thousands before the destruction of sub-tropical rainforests, but I was so happy to count fifty plus. Two birds had been also carrying nesting materials around but I couldn't see where they were building. They are strong fliers and travel considerable distances to forage for favoured fruits.

**Rose-crowned Fruit-dove**

*(Ptilinopus regina)*

These gorgeous little pigeons were also in the same fig feeding alongside the Topknots, Koels, Barred and Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes, Orioles, Figbirds, Lewins Honeyeaters, Catbirds, King Parrots, Currawongs but unfortunately not Wompoos. Despite their bold colours they disappear amongst the foliage and can be difficult to observe. Once detected they have a knack for leaving the tree on the blind side as soon as your eyes are averted.

Although very different in size and shape, these two birds share some common features. These are bifurcate feathers on the breast area and a pigment mark in the eye where the pupil appears to 'bleed' into the iris.

These are two stunning local birds that never fail to impress.

**Birds with Phil Bender**

