

CONSERVATION NEWS
Feb-Mar 2024

Third Wednesday of the
month:

AGM: 21 February 2024;
General meeting: 20 March,
1 pm, Caloundra Power
Boat Club

Executive meetings: TBA

Executive:

President: Claire Brown

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

Secretary: Jude Crighton
(Ph: 5491 4153)

Treasurer: Judy Burns (Ph:
5441 3913)

Committee Member: John
Roberts

Minutes: Jenny Gursansky

Newsletter Editor: Helen
Kershaw

Contact:

P O Box 275, CALOUNDRA
Q 4551

email:

sunshine@wildlife.org.au

Faunawatch Coordinator:
Dr Paul Smith

Ph: 5443 8315; email:

faunawatch@wildlife.org.au

Our thanks to Caloundra MP
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their kind support in the
photocopying of
Conservation News



Elections

This month is our AGM, when all executive positions are declared vacant. We are always looking for fresh new (young or old) faces and ideas!

Nomination and proxy forms are attached in your newsletter email (ensure your membership is current).

In this election year for **local and state government** we need to further pinpoint the issues concerning the impact of increasing human population on the Sunshine Coast and Hinterland natural environment and take our concerns to our elected members.

The Executive, with member input, is preparing a questionnaire for mayoral and councillor candidates in the Sunshine Coast Regional and Noosa Councils elections in March, and hope that this will also be useful in interrogating candidates at open forums organised by the Sunshine Coast Environment Council and OSCAR. Nominations close on 13 February.

In the questionnaire, candidates will be advised how their responses will be used – on our website, social media, and distributed to membership: keep an eye on our Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100067149263194&mibextid=9R9pXO>

The community organisation OSCAR has links to candidates on their website:

<https://www.oscar.org.au/governance/elections/council-elections-2024/>

Dr Hilary Pearl presentation on our heathlands

Our short AGM will be followed by a **30-minute talk with visuals and question time by the Coast's own heathland expert Dr Hilary Pearl**. Hilary last year completed her thesis *DNA barcoding to enhance conservation of Sunshine Coast heathlands* at the University of the Sunshine Coast, and her talk will be drawn from this work:

Conserving the Sunshine Coast Heathlands

'In one of the fastest growing regions of Australia, the Sunshine Coast, the pre-European mosaic of wetlands, heathlands, woodlands, and rainforest has been transformed into an urbanised landscape. This study developed out of concern for the continued losses, and fragmentation of heathlands in the region.

Advance Dates

21 February, from 1 pm
Our AGM will be followed by presentations from **Dr Hilary Pearl** on her PhD work on coastal Wallum habitats, and **Faunawatch Coordinator Dr Paul Smith** on camera trapping results on Land for Wildlife properties.

3 March
Clean-Up Australia Day, 8-10 am
Meet at Ben Bennett Bushland Park at the West Terrace entrance (southern end of the park). Jenny has kindly organised our participation (let your friends and family know too). Visit the Clean Up Australia Day website to register.

Future date
Bunya tree die-back seminar

May
The Mycological Society forays at Ben Bennett Bushland Park, and the Jowarra section of the Mooloolah River National Park.

Faunawatch Outings
Second Wednesday of the Month Walks, 8 am:
14 February at Maroochy Regional Bushland Botanic Gardens

Fourth Monday of the Month Walks, 8 am:
26 February:
Ben Bennett Bushland Park, Caloundra. Meet at the Queen Street entrance.

The Sunshine Coast heathlands matter; they contain endemic and endangered species, areas of peat, and people have been deeply connected to them for millennia. This study used new tools to assess their diversity and distinctiveness, determine factors which correlate with the variation in their diversity, and assess their conservation status, including their extent, fragmentation, and connectivity. This is a story of hope: within the matrix of heathlands remaining on the Sunshine Coast, opportunities exist using careful planning, to protect their overall diversity and distinctiveness into the future, with the targeting of specific locations, and with the engagement of the local community.'



Faunawatch on Land for Wildlife

And there's more! Our **Faunawatch Coordinator Dr Paul Smith** will present visuals from camera 'traps' on Land for Wildlife properties surveyed in the past year, along with his report for the year.

Updates from the January Meeting, & Other Business

Point Cartwright

The Amendments to Local Laws at Pt Cartwright following Sunshine Coast Council approval of the Management Plan was voted on in a Council Ordinary meeting, the outcome ultimately requiring a compromise due to the Local Law Amendment process, and accessibility and equity issues with the planned off-leash area being on the beach. The result was an 18-month sunset clause allowing access for off-leash dogs on a section of the beach and rocky shores on the north of the headland. However, the Management Plan will prevail on its

Correspondence

- Cr Maria Suarez (Environment portfolio) announced significant in-situ signage on the Marcoola dunes following deliberate wide-spread poisoning of vegetation.
- We congratulate Sunshine Coast Council for their initiative in purchasing the wave pool development site west of Coolum and incorporating it into the Blue Heart.
- Sunshine Coast Council's Resource Recovery Strategy was released in November last year with the goal of zero waste to landfill by 2041:

<https://www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/Council/Planning-and-Projects/Council-Strategies/Sunshine-Coast-Waste-Strategy>.

expiry. In the interim Council will work on a new strategy for establishing adequate off-leash dog exercise areas across the whole Sunshine Coast local government area. Opposition to reduced access at Pt Cartwright continues from the dog lobby, however there is also support for the changes from dog-walkers and other users of the area.

Shelly Beach to Moffat Beach Study

The role of the November public petition to Council (to leave the illegal walkway open) in the delay of the commencement of the Pilot Project until 1 May was open to vigorous debate at a discussion with Council staff on 11 December. Organised by TurtleCare and BushCare volunteers and attended by WPSQ members and interested community members, staff assured the meeting that the pilot project will go ahead, that it has funding in the current budget, that some processes are in hand, and that the project could have positive implications for state, national and world-wide endangered species protection. In the interim Council will further educate the public in the requirements for optimal turtle nesting on Shelly Beach.

Our role will be to support Council staff and monitor Council meetings for any threats to the project's not commencing on 1 May.

Full details have now been posted on Council's Shelly Beach to Moffat Beach Coastal Study website:

<https://haveyoursay.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/shelly-beach-moffat-beach-coastal-study>

Council's report on the Pilot Project (refer in particular to Chapters 6 & 7):

<https://www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/Council/Planning-and-Projects/Infrastructure-Projects/north-shelly-beach-pilot-project#:~:text=Community%20engagement,to%20inform%20the%20study%20outcomes>.

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

At the SIG meeting on 4 December, following the announcement that Federal funding for the Stage through Ben Bennett Park has been withdrawn, the attendees were informed that TMR is looking for State and Council funding to make up the gap.

Our letters to Federal Environment Minister Pliberseck about the threat to the Lowland Rainforest, and to Minister King about the costs, have been acknowledged. The project is likely to trigger an EPBC Act referral. Detailed design continues, with an expected deadline in mid-2024, when the last SIG meeting is to be held. A summary only of the environment reports was provided, except for a flora list with no protected plants identified. A fauna survey is not yet

**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, commencing at 7.30 am or 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 also to sunshine@wildlife.org.au

available. Offsets raised their dubious head, with a draft offset assessment and delivery outlined.

Council's demolition of properties on Oval Avenue has commenced. Clearing along the drainage line has been attributed to Energex (re maintenance of high-voltage power lines).

Further to our member Alexandra Moreno's letter to Council on this issue (included in the previous *Conservation News*), Alexandra has shared their reply, which in part states:

'In Section 2, a Multi Criteria Assessment (MCA) was undertaken for the first phase of the design. A reduction to the project's impact on Ben Bennett Bushland Park was achieved with the inclusion of retaining walls on part of the new road between Nicklin Way and Third Avenue. The transport link will utilise the already cleared Energex powerline corridor as much as possible. The project team has also met with members of the Bennett family to discuss the project.

Once detailed design is completed, being mindful of the park's location and environmental sensitivities, construction will be performed under the relevant environmental conditions and an Environmental Management Plan which will consider local flora, fauna, cultural heritage and potential construction impacts.

While the ultimate CTCU alignment of the corridor is final, through the ongoing design process, the project team will continue to reduce the impacts of the corridor whenever possible and safe to do so.

The new intersection is considered an essential project to meet the forecast traffic demand at opening in 2025/6 and over the next 10 years, with infrastructure benefits to cater for our growing population, business and tourism. The project is also consistent with the community's vision to get people out of cars and into more sustainable modes of transport, including walking and cycling, in-part, by providing a new separated two-way cycle track and pedestrian pathways.'

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

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

Common Myna birds

Sunshine Coast Council's biodiversity policy, which includes control of feral animals, is under review. We will assess the outcome in relation to the Common Myna bird. Currently, Council supports residents who wish to trap and dispose of the birds on their property themselves with traps and euthanasia equipment. Populations and distribution of the birds have increased in the last 10 years, and any push to eradicate them has become more difficult, along with the ethical issues. Removing nesting opportunities (palm trees, for example) could be a useful approach.

Federal Government Urban Rivers grant

Following a recent field excursion by several Executive members, WPSQ will support an application by Take Action for Pumicestone Passage for a Federal Government Urban Rivers

Membership?

We are seeking the support of the many interested folk who receive *Conservation News* but may not have considered a membership (and others who have overlooked an expiry – so easy to do).

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 would like to join, or 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 or register on the website:

<https://wildlife.org.au>

All memberships are paid to Head Office, and funds are disbursed to branches.

grant to restore water quality at a site that connects with the Pumicestone Passage. The walk was attended by Sunshine Coast Council catchment officers who recommended rehabilitation of a manageable site behind Caloundra City Private School – a large lake suitable for frog habitat and adjacent to filtering forested land, with minimal weeds compared to other sites under consideration at Reserve 1000 next to Pelican Waters Blvd and the Bells Creek Riparian Zone. The lake is an artificial body of water with a chequered history as a sewage holding pond in the early days of Caloundra. TAPP is preparing the application, closing on 13 February.

Treasurer's Report

Judy presented the Report for our financial year, with useful sales of books and donated toys, Kathleen MacArthur cards, plus income from membership fees, donations and grants (including the \$50,000 Sunshine Coast Council Environment Levy grant). We supported the Maroochy Gardens Children's art prize and bursaries for environment students at USC, and purchased a Square to capture card-only sales at our events. Save Yaroomba has returned our donation of \$200 to their in-the-wings campaign after Sekisui sold the land parcel to another developer, whose plans for housing on the site – while still extensive – are on a smaller scale and (currently) do not include the high-rise elements considered to be the most environmentally intrusive.

Faunawatch

At a December Aura Stewardship Group meeting attended by Paul and John the concept of the new Aura Sustainability & Community website was presented, and input requested. As one of the features mooted is a 'Fauna Watch' page, we have requested a meeting to discuss the choice of an alternative name that would avoid confusion. Paul will apply for a grant for a new survey to be funded by Healthy Land and Water.

The next Faunawatch walks will be on the 2nd Wednesday (14 February) at MRBBG and 4th Monday (26 February) at Ben Bennett Bushland Park.



Sunshine Coast Council's Adopt a Street Tree program allows you to request free trees for planting on your footpath, cooling the locality and improving your own environmental amenity:

https://oursc.com.au/environment/branching-out-street-trees-cooling-our-communities?utm_campaign=9b847b9acf-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_11_22_2023_16_36_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Weekly+OurSC+Headline&utm_term=0_03209358ec-9b847b9acf-253965616

Mulga Parrot (*Psephotus varius*)

Also known as the Many-coloured Parrot, this delightful species never fails to deliver the wow factor. Distributed through the semi-arid mallee, mulga and saltbush areas it is never found far from water. The Mulga parrot is reasonably common in far western Queensland, and this male was photographed near Lake Bindigolly having a rest and a preen in the middle of the day.

Birds with Phil Bender

