

CONSERVATION NEWS

April-May 2020

Meetings

Third Wednesday of the month, 1.30 pm

Bribie Room, Caloundra Library Support Building (at rear of the Library), Omrah Avenue, Caloundra

Executive

President: John Roberts

Vice-Presidents: Jill Chamberlain, Paul Smith

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While human society adapts to social distancing and isolation under the threat of Covid-19, WPSQ will continue to look out for the wildlife that finds its habitat and survival threatened here on the Sunshine Coast.

We have particular concerns that the 'pilot study' currently being enacted at Shelly Beach (removal of Cotton Trees around the toilet block) might be extended to north Shelly Beach, where these trees on the forefront and rear of the dunes provide light shelter for nesting Endangered Loggerhead Turtles.

AGM

Our AGM in February successfully saw our Executive re-elected. Our auditor, Vicki Davies, has volunteered her services for another year. Margaret Watson retired from her position as Hospitality Convenor, and it was decided that as our meeting room and afternoon time slot aren't conducive to lingering over a cuppa, the position could lapse. The meeting expressed its heartfelt thanks to Margaret, who has produced all sorts of treats from her laden basket over many years. The position of Publicity Officer remains unfilled, but takers are welcome!

President's Report 2019 with John Roberts

I welcome members to our Annual General Meeting and to this new year, 2020. Firstly, and as always, I wish to thank the Executive Committee members for their contributions to our organisation. My thanks go to Jude Crighton, Secretary, who has been an enormous support to me. Thanks also to Jill Chamberlain, Vice-President, who continues to write excellent submissions to save our local environment. Judy Burns does an outstanding job of keeping our financial records, and Paul Smith, also a Vice-President, continues his fine work in Faunawatch. Special thanks to Jenny Gursanscky, our invaluable Minutes Secretary, for recording accurate and comprehensive minutes, to Helen Kershaw who produces our informative bi-monthly newsletter, and Kirsten Blake, who ensures printed issues of the newsletter are mailed to institutions and to our non-email connected members; each gives great support to the Executive Committee. Monthly General Meetings held at the Caloundra Library Support building continue to be well attended, and our paid membership now stands at 63.

Advance Dates

Unfortunately, the **Maleny Wood Expo** in early May has been cancelled, and **World Environment Day** and the **Noosa Festival of Waters** in June may also be affected.

Protected Areas Matter: *Protected areas and the future of wildlife conservation – threats and opportunities.*

Postponed for now, this one-day symposium at Mt Cootha Botanical Gardens, Brisbane should proceed later in the year.

<https://wildlife.org.au/protected-areas-matter/>

Faunawatch Outings

Any cancellation of outings due to Covid-19 will be notified by email.

27 April, 8 am: Upper Coochin Creek Environmental Reserve, Lapwing Circuit, Beerwah. Reaching from Tower Hill to the west, along Upper Coochin Creek to the Beerwah high school bushlands and train tracks to the east, this remnant old growth & riparian zone can produce over 55 species of birds. **Meeting Point:** Lapwing Circuit next to the reserve esplanade.

In the year ahead there is much to do on issues that have occupied us this past 12 months. Before I speak of these I would like to recognise that 2019 and the early part of 2020 was a horrific time for Australia. Since September more than 18 million hectares of Australia have burned – an area larger than Portugal and more than 14 times the area burnt in California in 2018, historically that state's most destructive year for wildfires. The destruction of our country's land and biodiversity is hard to comprehend. An estimated 1.25 billion native animals have been lost and some species may have vanished forever. Scientists fear long term damage to many sensitive ecosystems, and regeneration will take many years. And, of course, the subsequent widespread flooding caused further disruption and damage.

I am confident that Australia and Australians will recover from these events as we always do. These natural devastating events (some would say unnatural because of climate change) really bring out the best in the people of Australia. The spirit of mateship and of looking out for each other is immense, inspiring and unparalleled.

Thankfully, with the exception of the fires at Peregrian Springs, the Sunshine Coast escaped the widespread damage experienced in other parts of Australia, but many challenging issues remain in 2020. Some we have been dealing with over previous years, but during 2019 new issues emerged that our organisation is now actively addressing.

Ben Bennett Bushland Park, Caloundra

The proposed linking of the Nicklin Way/Caloundra By-Pass to roads at the southern end of the Park is proceeding at pace. The purpose of this proposal is to alleviate congestion at the roundabout junction of the By-Pass with Caloundra Road. The January Council meeting passed a motion to purchase or resume the properties required for the widening of existing roads. The construction of the new road passes through a portion of Ben Bennett, endangering both flora and fauna. WPSQ members and the Friends of Ben Bennett Park are working to preserve these remnant coastal rainforest and fauna habitats by ensuring measures are implemented to minimise the size of the construction zone and thereby the damage. It is understood that the new road and road connecting to Third Avenue is to be funded by the State and no such funding has been yet approved.

Isabel Jordan Bushland Reserve

The Caloundra Air Museum has released a 16-page plan outlining its hopes to secure a 30-year peppercorn lease of neighbouring land - the Council-owned Isabel Jordan Bushland Reserve alongside Caloundra Road. Isabel Jordan, a former WPSQ member who passed away some years ago, was extremely active in various community groups. Her namesake Reserve is one of the few

25 May, 8 am: South River Park, East, South River Drive, Mooloolah Valley

After another 2 years of re-growth since our last visit, it will be interesting to see what species have moved into this area.

Meeting point: By the playground on South River Drive, Mooloolah

22 June, 8 am: Girraween Reserve, Wallum Lane, Noosa Heads

Last year's survey was so successful with 52 bird species and 20 butterflies we hardly got out of the car park, and April's walk provided 45 birds in the rain. Hopefully this time we will make it to the walking track and also spot a Glossy Black Cockatoo.

Meeting point: Park at the end of Wallum Lane, Noosa Heads, next to the water treatment plant.

27 July, 8 am: Mooloolah National park, Milieu Place, Birtinya

This is a great walk through the eastern section of the Mooloolah National Park, mainly on boardwalks through the mangroves and wallum.

Meeting point: Park at the end of Milieu Place.

Second Wednesday Walks (8 am) at Maroochy Regional Bushland Botanic Gardens on 8 April, 13 May and 10 June.

remaining pieces of Wallum Heath south of the Maroochy River and is a wildflower sanctuary. The Sunshine Coast Regional Council is currently reviewing the Museum's proposal and we hope that they will reject it. If not, and Council proposes some sort of offset, that would be unacceptable as there is no appropriate land of equal value.

Representatives from our branch have met with Division 1 Councillor Baberowski and property management staff to strongly express our concerns.

Shelly Beach Cottonwoods

The proposed removal of the native Cottonwood trees at Shelly Beach continues to be of great concern as their removal would further threaten the nesting of the already Endangered Loggerhead Turtles. Following the release of the \$70,000+ Cottonwood Tree Study completed by Place Design Group for Sunshine Coast Regional Council, Council indicated that they will commence so called 'pilot projects'. These involve the trimming back and removal of Cottonwood Trees at two locations at Shelly Beach carpark. [This work commenced on 24 March, with tree removal at the rear and side of the toilet block. Ed] What new knowledge is expected to be gained by this taxpayer-funded action is subject to some doubt. WPSQ requested a meeting with Environmental Officers to discuss the practical implications of the Report's findings, which raised more questions than answers, not all of which have been satisfactorily addressed.

Several WPSQ members are actively involved in actions to ensure that the Cottonwoods at Shelly Beach and other locations remain intact to protect habitat of the Loggerhead Turtles.

Halls Creek and the Inter-urban Break

Halls Creek is a 1,278ha Stockland landholding on the southern edge of the Sunshine Coast. The site extends southward from the Caloundra South (Aura) Development and is adjacent to the Pumicestone Passage. It is Stockland's intent to develop Halls Creek as a new residential area similar to Aura. The threat of negative environmental impact on the Passage and the interurban break is self-evident. Runoff from the site into the Passage and further loss of habitat would be the result.

The Sunshine Coast Regional Council has always opposed development at Halls Creek in favour of the Identified Growth Area (IGA) of Beerwah East and they have been making strong submissions to the State government in this regard for years. Bearing this in mind it was disappointing to learn, at a meeting with an SCRC Councillor held in early February, that the State Government has recently approved expenditure of \$650,000 for a study to explore a proposed eastern duplication of the Bruce Highway, making a Halls Creek development much more viable. We shall await the outcome of the Study.

Ban straws

Wildlife Queensland Head Office is urgently inviting members to respond to the **State Government's initiative to ban plastic straws, plates, cutlery and stirrers:**

Here is the link (respond by email, letter or take the quick survey, **by 15 April**):

<https://www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au/gi/consultation/7354/view.html>

(Works best in Google Chrome)

Wildflower Walks and Other Events

Of course, there were several events that were supported and enjoyed by our members last year. During the 2019 Sunshine Coast Wildflower Festival in late August we again had the pleasure of hosting two walks in each of Ben Bennett Bushland Park and Kathleen McArthur Conservation Park, and this time also in Isabel Jordan Reserve. Many thanks to all members who participated, and in particular, Sue Aspland and Jenny Gursansky for contributing their extensive knowledge to the species lists. Jenny also organised our successful effort on Clean Up Australia Day in Ben Bennett Bushland Park. We also ran our annual information stalls at the three-day Maleny Wood Expo in early May, at Sunshine Coast Environment Council's World Environment Day at Cotton Tree in early June and the Noosa Festival of Waters in late June. For the first time WPSQ had a stall at Sunshine Coast Council's Conservation and Coastal Forum in August. Thanks again to everyone who helped out at these events, which are an important opportunity to interact with members of the public and other conservation groups – they raise awareness of the issues we consider to be important and preserve the memory of Kathleen McArthur and those who carried on her work.

Faunawatch

Faunawatch, which is WPSQ's major project, is a community-based fauna monitoring initiative with expert scientific input. It has a strong relationship with the Sunshine Coast Regional Council and receives substantial funding from Council's Community Partnerships Program. Despite extremely dry weather affecting wildlife, successful surveys were carried out in Land for Wildlife properties and Aura.

Faunawatch nature walks were again led by Coordinator Paul Smith on the second Wednesday of the month at Maroochy Regional Bushland Botanic Gardens and on the fourth Monday of the month at various natural locations.

Jill Chamberlain's Submissions

Vice President Jill Chamberlain continued to support the environment and the protection of wildlife on behalf of WPSQ by authoring many submissions:

- Koala Habitat Belmont firing range: Objection to expansion of the firing range into Koala habitat
- State Government's Offsets review, Department of Environment and Science: Laws need tightening and local concerns need to be taken into account
- Twin Waters West Godfreys Road housing development: 171 lots, business and commercial, sports and recreation areas causing flooding, displacement of kangaroos

Clive Palmer's Waratah Coal

The date for objections to the Land Court re Palmer's application to the State Government for a mining lease over the **Bimblebox Nature Reserve** has been moved to **3 April** due to a technicality regarding the application lodgement. The Bimblebox Alliance, represented by the EDO, is seeking donations to support a legal challenge.

<https://www.edo.org.au/farmers-against-galilee-coal-mine/>

- Abbots Rd, Woombye 120 residential lots: vegetation clearing, displacement of frog species through filling of dams
- Illuka S, Buderim Palliative Care centre: concern over bushfire. Application withdrawn by applicant
- Application for extension of Stockland precincts: DMIP Stockland applying to Govt in order to be able to develop further precincts
- McIlwraith St, Moffat Beach: impact of drainage from proposed new buildings into Watson Park
- New Peachester Rural Fire Brigade Station: vegetation clearance, possible flooding of site
- Twin Waters, extension of dwellings inside complex: effect on adjacent conservation park and lighting on nesting turtles
- Wises Farm mixed use: clearing of 50m natural vegetation buffer with habitat tree hollows, for 'superior' 6m buffer of low vegetation to enable more residential lots.

Thank you, Jill.

So, that is the year that was and, as you can see, there are plenty of challenges for us in the coming year. As in the past we will be working hard to ensure, to the best of our ability, the protection of our Coastal Wildlife and Flora. Welcome all to 2020.

From the Meeting

Early founding member **Judy Nelson-Gracie** has again contributed a generous and substantial donation. Greatly appreciated, it will allow continued smooth running of the branch, and the opportunity to replace our worn-out display boards.

We participated in World Wetland Day at Aura on Leap Day, Saturday 29 February. Sponsored by Healthy Land & Water, there were talks, plantings well-attended by residents, and Linsey Pollack frog music. At our stall it was most heartening to talk to a number of local youngsters who saw their future careers in the natural sciences.

Clean Up Australia Day brought together a small group (it was good to welcome ex-Councillor and ex-SCEC President Kerry Jones) keen to tidy up the bottom end of Ben Bennett Bushland Park. We received advice on recycling from Rachel of Envirocom and have expressed our thanks to her and Sandie for all their help. We also ran into the Mycological Society folk making the most of the damp conditions.

Faunawatch with Paul Smith

At the AGM Paul presented the Faunawatch annual report, detailing the 304 species recorded during Council-sponsored and Aura surveys. Numbers of species, particularly of reptiles and

Our Faunawatch surveyor Scott Burnett is Scat Man!

When Nature calls, Scat Man answers. Find out why a Wombat's poo is cubed like a dice.

<https://www.terramater.at/productions/scat-man/>

(Works best in Google Chrome)

frogs, were down due to dry conditions in the trending 'bust' cycle. However, in the first sighting in 30 years, Potoroos were seen, and are perhaps more common than thought. Strong relationships continued with SCCouncil and Health Land & Water who funded the surveying.

Faunawatch walks attendance was down in the hot weather. Considerable short-term threats are the retirement of our expert reptile specialist, Tony Bright, and implications for the success of another three-year grant proposal to SCC at the end of our third year of funding in June. Another shift is in the greater take-up by others of digital recording of fauna observations via online databases and phone apps.

See Advance Dates for Faunawatch walks. While Covid-19 may prevent gatherings for a number of months, Faunawatchers will be notified by email closer to the time of each outing.

At the March Monday outing at Koala Park at Rosemount the highlight was two Square-tailed Kites that are possibly nesting in the park. Ann Moran identified 235 plants including two she hadn't seen there before.

The Nature Conservancy

On 29 January Jenny and Jude attended the National Parks Association enviroforum at Noosaville. Guest speaker was Brisbane's own Dr Hugh Possingham, Chief Scientist for The Nature Conservancy, a global organisation of 600 scientists working across 72 countries.

Founded in the United States in 1951, The Nature Conservancy has become one of the most effective environmental not-for-profits in the world with more than a million members:

<https://www.nature.org/en-us/>.

Hugh told us that he became interested in conservation as a teenager when one of his favourite local bird-watching sites was destroyed for development. He is first and foremost a passionate birder.

Hugh spoke about The Nature Conservancy's combination of scientific research with economics to benefit not only the environment but also the associated communities. The Conservancy employs interesting methods to entice communities to change their practices. For example, reverse auctions were set up in the Central Valley in California where farmers were asked how much they would need to be paid to retain water in their fields for migratory birds over winter; banks were persuaded to reduce some of the foreign debt in the Seychelles in exchange for some marine area protection; greatly improved air quality in small communities in India resulted from the purchase of small

Weeds never sleep!

But unfortunately our regular morning weeding sessions at **Watson Park** and at **Kathleen McArthur Conservation Park** have been cancelled for the time being due to the Covid-19 virus.

seeding machines removing the need to burn stubble before planting.

In Australia one of many Conservancy projects is restoring shellfish reef ecosystems. The organisation is working with Noosa Council to restore oyster reefs in the Noosa River and with other organisations in Pumicestone Passage.

<https://www.natureaustralia.org.au/>

<http://restorepumicestonepassage.org/>

Hugh was inspirational and positive about the future of our planet. His take-home message was that we could all do something:

- Write angry letters to your local member.
- Eat less beef (especially from cows fed on corn or other crops that humans could eat).
- Choose a threatened plant species and try to save it.

For more information about Noosa Parks Association and the enviro forums: https://noosaparks.org.au/noosa-parks-enviroforum/?mc_cid=5091bbb8fb&mc_eid=35db415906

Thanks to Jenny for this report.

April/May

Branch founder **Kathleen McArthur** writes of 'Iris days' in her entry for April in *The Bush in Bloom: a wildflower artist's year in paintings & words*, Kangaroo Press, 1982:

'Our Iris Days have now begun in earnest. These days deserve that capital 'D', when all the plants are rich with purple. On other days few are found'. (p 40)

Kathleen's Iris is *Patersonia sericea*, with its three-petalled purple flowers in dark brown to black silky bracts. This tufting herb to 50 cm likes coastal sandy soils and dry heaths. Perhaps Kathleen's April was cooler than the continuing warm weather we are having; as yet there are no blooms on the patches of Irises at George Watson Park.

To look forward to, May is Banksia month 'when our five local species are blooming together'. These are *Banksia robur* (Kathleen's Green Banksia, or the Broad-leaved Banksia) now finishing its blooming; *Banksia oblongifolia* (Kathleen's Rusty Banksia, or Dwarf Banksia) still in full flower; *Banksia integrifolia* (Kathleen's White Honeysuckle, or Coastal Banksia) a tall tree with a prolific flowering continuing for months; *Banksia aemula* (Wallum Banksia), laden with large cream candles that 'old age gives...a head of shaggy grey hair out of which protrude the bi-valve seed pods, opening like grotesque mouths from which imagination created the bad Banksia Man who frightened the gum nut babies of *Snugglepoot and Cuddlepote*'. The fifth May bloomer is *Banksia collina* (Golden Candlesticks). (pp 49 & 59)

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike (*Coracina novaehollandiae*)

These beautiful birds are not strikingly coloured, but are always in impeccable plumage, with not a feather out of place.

They inhabit open forests and woodlands and are nomadic and to a certain extent migratory.

Known as 'Bifcus' amongst the birding community (an extrapolation of their initials BFCS), they hunt for insects with a perch-and-pounce strategy and will also take some fruit. I have observed them in the company of Yellow-eyed Cuckoo-shrikes, Fruit-doves and Figbirds eating small ripe figs.

Their nickname is 'Shufflewing', derived from their habit of refolding their wings several times upon landing.

The Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike is a fairly common bird, but always a thrill to see.

Birds with Phil Bender

