

CONSERVATION NEWS

Aug-Sept 2021

Meetings

Third Wednesday of the
month, 1.00 pm

Meeting: Caloundra
Power Boat Club, 2
Lamerough Parade,
Golden Beach

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Vale Margaret Watson



Sadly, we have lost one of WPSQ's most loved contributors – and characters. Margaret had been ill for some time, and spent her last few days in Dove House in Caloundra, receiving palliative care.

According to her wishes there was a private cremation and her ashes are to be interred in a family plot in Sydney.

It does not seem long since Margaret gave up her basket of goodies that refreshed us all at evening meetings, or decided regretfully not to come along to weeding sessions at George Watson Park.

We hope soon to have a get-together of Margaret's WPSQ friends at Ben Bennett Bushland Park, to remember her cheerful self. We'll keep you posted about a date.

From the June & July Meetings

Sunshine Coast Wildflower Festival:

Check the dates and times here and get in quick for your bookings:

<https://www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/Environment/Education-Resources-and-Events/Wildflower-Festival>

and contact sunshine@wildlife.org.au for bookings.

Our thanks to Caloundra MP Jason Hunt and staff for their kind support in the photocopying of *Conservation News*

Advance Dates

Next meeting:

Wednesday 18 August, 1 pm at the Caloundra Power Boat Club, Golden Beach

Faunawatch Outings

Second Wednesday Walks
8 am at Maroochy Regional Bushland Botanic Gardens (COVID restrictions permitting)

(No walks in August due to our participation in the Wildflower Festival), then 15 Sept, 13 Oct, 10 Nov.

First Monday walks:

23 August, 8 am

Ben Bennett Park, Queen Street, Caloundra

Postponed in July for COVID concerns, fingers crossed for this time round at one of the most easterly conservation areas in the Sunshine Coast, with a mix of eucalypt and melaleuca forest giving refuge to a variety of species from its urban surrounds. There may be a few changes to the reserve into the

Shelly Beach to Moffat Beach Coastal Study

Subsequent to site walks with the BushCare, TurtleCare, Watson Park, WPSQ and other stakeholder groups, Council's Chief Strategy Officer Bill Hadrill and consultant Cathryn Chatburn have completed follow-up meetings with nine groups in all. The purpose of these sessions has been to present the results of the community survey and their analysis of the key issues arising from it and subsequent listening posts.

One of the last meetings, with the Tooway Lake Catchment group, was held on 14 July, with the group's concerns being the health of the lake/ICOLL, tree succession, education re natural values as well as First Nations' culture and local history of the area's lake, beaches, rocks and headland. An issue that affects all areas – safety on the coastal path where pedestrians and wheeled transport are increasingly in conflict – have implications for natural areas if widening occurs.

WPSQ, and we understand many of the other groups, made it clear during these meetings that they expected a further round of face-to-face engagement, where the results of Bill and Cathryn's investigations will be shared, along with the opportunity to hear from and question state and local government and other technical experts (in areas such as turtles, dune ecology and restoration) regarding the appropriate way forward in the management of the area. This engagement has been assured, with Bill Hadrill arranging a forum/workshop in late August, depending on the availability of experts, to bring together all stakeholders.

For updates on the Study, register on Council's link: <https://haveyoursay.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/shelly-beach-moffat-beach-coastal-study>

Friends of Moffat and Shelly (a group taking part in the Shelly-Moffat Coastal Study) has set up a Facebook page to share information on the progress of the study and, in the future, any issue of interest to Shelly-Moffat residents or those who would like to keep informed about the area and its management.

<https://www.facebook.com/friendsofmoffatandshelly>

The newly formed Caloundra Liveability Coalition/Forum (to amplify the voices of Division 2 community and environmental groups) has asked WPSQ for a letter of support for their communique about the consultation. This is to be provided.

Pumicestone Passage

A letter of support has been prepared for the submission by Take Action for Pumicestone passage to Minister for Transport & Main Roads and Council re speed limits on the Pumicestone Passage, although we have some reservations that the proposed limits do not go far enough.

Sue Aspland and Jude created a species list for the mangrove boardwalk at Golden Beach for the WED event cancelled due to rain. It will be used for a guided walk at a future date, and in

future so let's see what we can find.

Meeting Point: Car parking is off Queen Street, 300 metres west of the Caloundra High School.

Dates for September, October and November to be advised.

the meantime please ask if you'd like a copy: (sunshine@wildlife.org.au).

Ben Bennett Bushland Reserve

Sunshine Coast Council has uploaded a YouTube fly-through of transport modelling in 2026 of the Caloundra Transport Corridor Upgrade (Omrah Avenue to Nicklin Way) showing the full scale of the proposed road:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rHdH_lTWtho

Council is offering four **community drop-in sessions** (please check for Covid restrictions):

Saturday 14 & Thursday 19 August, 2-4 pm Caloundra Shopping Centre (outside Rockmans)

Tuesday 17 & Monday 23 August, 3-5 pm, Caloundra Library (outside the entrance).

Our particular concerns are with the impacts on wildlife from fast-moving traffic and vehicle noise, and the loss of community benefit that currently flows from the easy access to the Park for local residents, and residents, staff and visitors of the aged care facilities and the hospital looking for some peace and quiet.

Here is the private community survey on this issue:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfTnj00Bu3Xe7fp43qzhVPWtCls9ejxalvEXhs_hly_4czAGQ/viewform

and the Facebook page of 'Value Caloundra', whose campaign for a scaled-down version of the road, with a lesser impact on the Park and the community, we support:

<https://www.facebook.com/valuelcaloundra>.

Have a look on the Friends of Ben Bennett Facebook page for details of a Super Community Day by South East Queensland Spiders on 11 September, as well as the latest postings on birds and plants.

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

Isabel Jordan Bushland Reserve

Consultants SMEC Holdings Ltd have been appointed to develop a new Caloundra Aerodrome Master Plan and the two-stage masterplan process has commenced.

We are in the process of setting up a meeting with the President of the Queensland Air Museum to explain our concerns in more detail (the President will have seen our Powerpoint, distributed with the Community & Aviation Forum Minutes).

A PDF version of the Powerpoint presented to the Community & Aviation Forum on 1 June is now available to view on our Branch page of the Wildlife Qld website.

Jillian Rossiter, part of the Management Team at the **Sunshine Coast Environment Council** is updating SCEC's list of Life Members: WPSQ has two long-standing members – Jill Chamberlain and Elaine Green.

Climate Emergency Declaration

It was discussed whether we should invite UCANSC (Urgent Climate Action Now Sunshine Coast) to our next meeting. They are working towards some joint action with other groups to coincide with the COP26 United Nations Climate Change Conference in November. It was felt that since we had already written to Sunshine Coast Council requesting them to declare a Climate Emergency, it was not necessary at this point, but that the Secretary would keep in touch with UCANSC. It was also agreed that it was not appropriate for our branch to make a separate Climate Emergency Declaration.

OSCAR is seeking a representative of WPSQ to attend their meetings at North Shore Community Centre. Please contact Jude if you would like to contribute; it would be great to have one of our northern members represent us.

Junior Wildlife Art Prize

A new committee for Friends of the Caloundra Gallery is to be elected at their upcoming AGM, and their ongoing level of commitment is unknown, so we will wait for the results and reassess the project before the next Art Prize committee meeting in September.

WPSQ's book

Image-finding and editing of WPSQ member Elaine Green's manuscript *The Sunshine Coast: conservation and development 1960-2020* is proceeding in line with deadlines for the indexer, designer and printer. A booking has been made at the North Shore Community Centre for the launch on Friday 12 November.

Faunawatch with Paul Smith

Paul reported that the SCC community partnership grant was acquitted in July.

From the beginning of June applications opened for the next round of partnership funds from council and Paul has submitted our application. The fauna list for the next surveys has arrived so the grant is expected to be approved; having the list early will allow spring surveys to commence in time.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions and concerns, the July Monday walk will happen on 23 August.

Stockland is reported to be wanting an Osprey nest-viewing platform in the Blackbutt forest at Aura. There was general disagreement with this idea at the July meeting.

See the side panel for Faunawatch outing dates.

Platypuses in Obi Obi Creek, Maleny:

Notes by member Bruce Zimmer who attended a talk in Maleny on 19 May by Neil Andison, in a series of talks sponsored by Barung LandCare:

For nearly all of us, the Platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*) is one of our most iconic native mammals. Its numbers have decreased greatly since European settlement, but it survives in several of the river systems of eastern Australia, and those of us living in the Sunshine Coast hinterland are fortunate to have a small local population living in the Obi Obi Creek. I count myself lucky to have seen these amazing little creatures locally on several occasions, most within the Maleny town limits.

Neil has found more than a dozen individuals, including some juveniles, living in the Maleny reaches of the Obi. He's learned to recognise individuals by their unique facial and bill markings. We all know that Platypuses, like the equally amazing Echidna, are Monotremes, mammals that lay eggs rather than give live birth. But few of us know much about their feeding and mating habits or reproductive cycle.

Platypuses spend about 12 hours each day feeding on small shrimp, yabbies, worms and larvae. When

Response with Jill Chamberlain

Mass Transit Intergenerational Forum: Jill attended the Forum, with her table of participants noted as the one having the greatest range of age levels! There were a good number of Year 11 students from various schools, and Jill found it interesting to hear their thoughts on transport and how difficult it was for them to get around.

Jill prepared WPSQ's submission to Council on the Mass Transit project, and detailed our preference for a low-key, low-cost option rather than the extremely expensive Light Rail Mass Transit option with its attendant long lead-in time and disruption during construction:

Jill spoke of '...a dedicated bus corridor/busway adjacent to the kerb...enabling buses a clear run through traffic, thus avoiding congestion and delays at traffic lights', especially with synchronized signals. Frequency could be increased, and smaller buses used off-peak. 'Feeder services from nearby suburbs to the Mass Transit route by smaller buses could be considered.'

'Kerbside bus lanes will make it more convenient and safer for families with prams and small children, the elderly, and disabled persons to board the bus, avoiding having to cross the road to access "stations".'

The option for trackless trams could also be considered, 'though it is our understanding that, due to weight concerns with the heavy rubber tyres, the road surface would need strengthening'.

Workshop

Report on Council's workshop on Beach Profiling, Coastal Processes & Whale Strandings for BushCare volunteers, 27 July, with Council's Principal Coastal Engineer Georgia Keeshan and Senior Environmental Project Officer Raeleen Draper.

The workshop was attended by several WPSQ members who also participate in BushCare activities.

These senior Council staff showed a deep knowledge of their responsible areas and a willingness to engage with questions concerning beach protection in particular, and maintenance of natural processes.

Raeleen's discussion on the disposal of dead marine species (from turtles to whales) washed ashore or sighted offshore focused on ways of reducing the costs of removing dead animals and keeping the public 'sweet' re the intrusion of smelly carcasses on 'their' beach, while balancing this with the need to keep dead animal material in the food chain for scavengers, including raptors and sharks. As there are no

underwater they close their eyes, ears and nose, so don't feed by sight or smell. Instead, they prod the stream bottom with their bills, which possess extremely sensitive 'electroreceptors' that detect electric fields generated by the muscular contractions of their prey. Working in conjunction with these are 'mechanoreceptors' that detect touch; these are also located in the bill.

Platypus mating ritual involves some rough foreplay. Using his bill, the male grabs the female by the tail, and swings her around a few times prior to mating with her. The reason for this is unknown, but it seems to work! Mating happens in autumn, with gestation and raising the young over the winter months.

The male takes no part in raising its young, whereas the female's behaviour is remarkable. She digs a new burrow into the bank, above water level, up to 20 metres long. She blocks it off with earthen plugs – possibly to protect against predators and rising waters, or to help regulate humidity and temperature. She fills the nest at the end of the tunnel with fallen leaves and reeds as bedding. To help sustain herself while holed up in the burrow, she stores food as fat in her tail. Only rarely does she leave the burrow to feed. On return she pushes past the plugs, squeezing

marine park off the Sunshine Coast, Councils are responsible for disposal.

Raeleen works with Noosa and Gold Coast Councils, shark-control contractors, Sea Life, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and Griffith University regarding solutions for disposal such as towing carcasses out to sea (there's only a 10% chance of a stranded whale being kept alive), and methods of recording changes in sea mammal diets with climate change, the source of entangled fishing lines, and how whales decompose in the environment (sand filtering leachate, or out at sea) and associated shark satellite tagging. Current Council policy is that Raeleen's unit can bury animals of up to 2 metres. Any change in policy has to be underlined by proven processes, and there is no funding until those processes are proven, which speaks for itself.

Burial of whales, if not on beaches, can involve wrapping and removal for land waste disposal, and Raelene is keen to respect First Nations People and investigate culturally-sensitive burials with Jindibara and Kabi Kabi people.

Georgia spoke of new work being done as a result of Council's Coastal Hazard Adaptation Scheme or CHAS (legislated and supported by the State Government with grants to identify hazards arising from climate change and determine mitigation of the effects). Council has refined the state's maps of sea level rises with digital modelling and came up with options of 'retreat, upgrade or rebuild' for infrastructure such as water supply and sewerage.

Beach erosion will be defined as the effect of two storm-related events: increased wave action due to wind stress and the 'inverse barometric effect' when low pressure causes tide levels to rise above the Highest Astronomical Tide.

'Beach units' will be established to determine tasks and timeframes to implement CHAS plans. Monitoring of coastal processes over time (Coast Snaps) at Moffat Beach, Yaroomba South, Coolumb North are in place. Attendees suggested that Shelly Beach be included, considering the current community focus on this area.

Due to the current high cost of beachfront property, Council has no plans to buy back private assets affected by climate change impacts; 60-m setback is prescribed although there is little coastal land left for development. The increasing cost of insurance due to the increased frequency of extreme weather events is now seen as a factor in influencing the type and rate of development.

There is also more pressure on developers from state and federal governments and councils regarding lighting (appropriate for nesting turtles) and terminal protection on private property and avenues of retreat. Regarding 'terminal

water from her fur, so keeping the burrow dry. The female lays usually two small leathery eggs that have developed inside her for one month, and incubates them by curling around them for about ten days before they hatch, blind and hairless, to feed on her milk. Lacking nipples, the mother oozes milk through pores in her skin, where it collects in folds in her abdomen and is lapped up by her young. By about four months, the young platypuses have developed enough to emerge from the burrow.

The conservation status of Platypuses is 'Near threatened', with the main threats being human-caused loss, fragmentation of habitat and decline in habitat quality. Another factor is the continuing use of 'Opera house' traps to catch crabs and yabbies; any platypus unfortunate enough to enter one can't then get out, and drowns.

Andison, a retiree who's made it his mission to study the local platypus population also conducts guided walking tours (Platypus Whispers) four days a week at dawn and dusk, along the town reaches of the Obi Obi.

protection', for example a rock wall in front of a house on a beach will cause cavitation on either side of the wall; residents are responsible for persuading neighbours to allow additional rock walling along their shared side boundaries to prevent this, or build rock walls across *all* front boundaries. 'Avenues of retreat' is interesting: we learnt that the rock wall in the wings at north Moffat is there to protect the roadway (and access for a few houses) not the Norfolk pines trees. The predicted breakthrough of Bribie Island (moving west for millennia and thinning) with particular impact on Diamond Head on the mainland is also covered by state-approved plans for creating rock walls as well as the lower-impact soft engineering solutions of dredged wider beaches and mangrove planting.

Georgia spoke of the upcoming revision of the Shoreline Erosion Management Plan, which will determine vulnerabilities from a study of coastal processes. Dunal buffers are vital, and width not height of dunes is the significant factor contributing to success in erosion control, with implications for maintenance. Discussion ensued on sand migration patterns, with the coastal flow of sand from the rivers of New South Wales tipping over the top of Moreton Island and travelling offshore north to a point off Shelly Beach where the flow splits, most of it heading further north and some moving south past Kings Beach and down the western coast of Bribie Island to the Spitfire Channel opposite the southern end of Bribie Island. Georgia spoke of the wide range of sand type and size on Sunshine Coast beaches, and that any sand nourishment must be an appropriate match. An attendee from Alexandra Headlands enquired about prospects for strengthening the dunes in that area and Georgia was quick to say that sand and vegetation were the focus rather than walls. Georgia and Raeleen also commented on the pros and cons of rock walls and geotextile bag walls, with microparticle and nanoparticle breakdown from the latter, and rock walls potentially providing better habitat for wildlife. A Catch-22 really.

Regarding ICOLLS, most of the catchments of our five on the Coast have been meddled with to such an extent that they can no longer function naturally without impacts upstream, eg, on canal developments at Kawana – salt-water Lake Kawana is refreshed from pumping from the Mooloolah River and water is released through canals to the south into Currimundi Lake. All the same Council tries to ensure minimal damage to ICOLL surrounding environments, although we pressed our point about the extent of sand moving and grooming (the latter described as being for public safety) at Moffat Beach.

Dredging was discussed, with the only work undertaken in the Pumicestone Passage being in the navigation channel well clear of seagrass beds, for beach maintenance. Dredging in the Maroochy River is a circular process: sand taken from the

The National Parks & Wildlife Service cool burn at the Currimundi (Kathleen McArthur) Conservation Park has produced a flowering of Grass trigger plants (*Stylidium graminifolium*), with tall spikes of pink flowers.

A prescribed burn on Saturday 31 July at Aura appears to have gone ahead as a cool, patchwork burn. Stockland's goal is long-term rehabilitation of the conservation zone; there were plans to protect wildlife during the burn, but we understand there was no spotter present.

A Fox den in Watson Environment Park, Shelly Beach has been reported to Council. Foxes have been recorded ranging from Tooway Lake to Shelly Beach. It is some years since foxes were removed from the Watson Park area.

sides only of the islands in the river mouth (preserving roosting habitat for birds) is pumped onto Maroochydore Beach and then finds its way back into the river mouth on the northerly coastal sand migration path.

Raeleen spoke of the Shorebird Monitoring Action Plan which will continue and incorporate data from the Qld Wader Study Group and Healthy Land & Water re migratory birds in the Pumicestone Passage, and reported on a massive decline of birds on the Maroochy River North Shore, although Goat Island numbers are still high. Other aspects of her job include monitoring of jellyfish (there are 17 species in our waters, some of which can induce Irukandji-like symptoms, but they are not lethal), Bull sharks in canals, seagrass and seaweeds. Importantly, there will be a revision of the Marine Turtle Action Plan to guide actions in the next 10 years.

In conclusion both speakers urged attendees and our associated groups to use the CHAS as a basis for input into the upcoming Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme:
<https://www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/Development/Planning-Documents/New-Sunshine-Coast-Planning-Scheme>

Bush Hands e-news for the conservation minded: Sunshine Coast Council offers interesting articles on environment-focused topics such as the latest conservation techniques, volunteering opportunities, upcoming events, plant and animal profiles, land management advice, updates on Council's environment programs and projects and more. If you'd like to subscribe (it's free) go to the Council website:
<https://www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/Environment/Education-Resources-and-Events/Bush-hands-eNews>

Those proliferating plastic milk bottle lids

In good news for assiduous milk bottle lid collectors at the southern end of the Coast, member Jenny Gursansky has had a word with the Happy Turtle Cafe at Happy Valley. The owners have agreed for the café to be a collection point, liaising with Ocean Crusaders as the main collectors, and ultimately reducing plastic in landfill.

<https://oceancrusaders.org/recycling/>

<https://thehappyturtlecafe.com.au/>

<https://www.facebook.com/visionaryoceanwarrior/posts/the-ocean-crusaders-caps-crusade-operates-in-se-queensland-and-receives-up-to-30/841838656587301/>

Birds with Phil Bender

The Buln-Buln, also known as the Mallee Ringneck (*Barnardius zonarius*) is a spectacular parrot from the drier areas of the country – and aren't some of us out there now, or hope to be soon?

The brilliant flash of blue and green set against the red sandy dirt and pale blue saltbush as they fly by is one of the best birding experiences you can have. Buln-Buln's forage for grass seeds, acacia seeds, blossoms, nectar and fruits on the ground and amongst foliage. Sometime insects and larvae are also consumed.

Often observed drinking at dams and from bores, these birds are always wonderful photographic subjects.

