

**Murder in Hervey Bay – With apologies to ‘Cluedo’.** Upper Dawson WPSQ Newsletter.

**Who stabbed the pipi? (*Plebidonax deltoides*)**



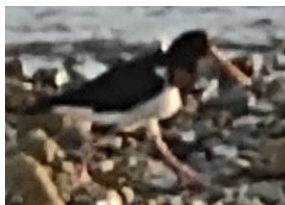
Could it have been Viola in the sand dunes with a telescope?

Or one of the birds she was watching flying and landing on the shore – A tern? - (Crested, Lesser Crested, or Little Tern) with their dagger-blade bills, who seemed to take it in terns to fly off, then return to shore?

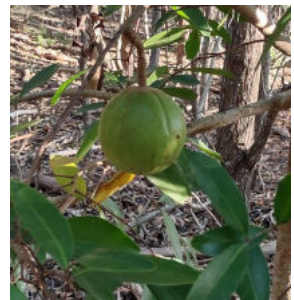


Or some with a shorter thicker beak on the beach – A plover? (Pacific golden, Red-capped, Sand, or Greater Sand Plover), including a sand plover sitting on two eggs in the dunes a few metres from the ‘scope?

Could it have been an Oyster catcher or a Beach Stone Curlew camouflaged among rocks?



I’d think fallen fruit from a Cannon- > Ball Mangrove would more likely have shattered the shell, though perhaps the Stilt Mangrove’s slim torpedo-shaped propagule might penetrate more easily.



Apparently, none of these were guilty. The murderer was actually that innocent - looking Moon Snail (*Naticadea*) that creeps along the sand in which the pipi is buried, slides over it, drills a hole, injects its own digestive juices into it, then sucks the innards out of it. Gross!! However, the pipi is not entirely without resources. If it feels the snail approaching, it can fling out a pair of flipper-like arms/legs from near its hinge, and sand-swim away to outrun the single-footed moon snail’s steady pace.

These were some of the wonders of the shores of Hervey Bay when Loraine, Viola, Timothy, Lara and I joined members of the Hervey Bay Branch of Wildlife Qld, along with a representative of the Capricorn Branch 13-15 October. Loraine and I first enjoyed a windy morning watching a young male whale practise back-flips while his fifteen-metre mother was feeding quietly nearby. A calmer Saturday allowed me to take a cultural cruise in a glass-bottomed boat to Round Island where I saw the Oyster Catcher and Beach Stone-Curlew foraging among rocks at low tide, while the First Nations guide lit a fire on the sandy lee side of the triangular island using driftwood that burned very warm and without much smoke, a pleasant warmth after the cool of the windward side.



He also showed us where a Sooty Oystercatcher had laid its two eggs on the sandy ground above high tide among some sparse grass and vines. On the return trip, he showed how the didgeridoo is played. We learned from a member of Birdlife that many shore birds lay their eggs on sand in the open, depending on camouflage for protection, but very prone to being disturbed and trampled by humans, eaten by dogs, foxes, or pigs, and run over by beach or dune drivers. We heard how turtle hatchlings can confuse the lights of beachside homes or towns with the moon light toward which

they instinctively run for safety in the ocean. The Hervey Bay Branch is concerned that a secluded beach retreat has applied to become a 'tourist hub' with long hours liquor licence on a quiet cove where turtles come to lay their eggs and quite near a roost for the shorebirds mentioned above, who must rest between tides so they can feed when sand and mud banks are exposed at low tide.

Keeping the natural values of the Bay when tourism projects are proposed is a challenge for the Regional Council and the Wildlife Branch. Their wildlife guided walks are very popular, with both locals and tourists joining in. It was a great weekend. Thanks to Hervey Bay for great hospitality.

After our AGM and Wetlands presentation on 28 October, **our next meeting** is scheduled for 17 February 2024 with venue to be decided. If you would like us to visit your place to enjoy native birds, plants, butterflies or lizards, please contact us on [upperdawson@wildlife.org.au](mailto:upperdawson@wildlife.org.au) or ring 0427 504 560. *Ann Hobson, Secretary.*