CONSERVATION NEWS Apr-May 2024

Third Wednesday of the month:

General meetings: 17 April, 15 May, 1 pm, Caloundra Power Boat Club

Executive meetings: TBA

Executive:

President: Claire Brown

Vice-Presidents: Paul Smith

& John Roberts

Secretary: Jude Crighton

(Ph: 5491 4153)

Treasurer: Judy Burns (Ph:

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



Vale Kirsten Blake

Kirsten, our dedicated newsletter-despatcher, passed away in March after an illness of some months. A WPSQer for many years, Kirsten's energy was undiminished on her last Faunawatch outing in late 2023. A memorial get-together was held in perfect sunshine under a spreading Cottontree on the Pumicestone Passage on Tuesday 2 April, organised by her many friends from many social groups, including the U3A travel group, who recalled her stories of visits to North Korea and Iran. Jude spoke of Kirsten's contribution to WPSQ over many years, adding a new banksia blossom to the flowers scattered in Kirsten's memory.

Elections

With elections (ours and local government) done and dusted, we welcome back our Executive, with a farewell to Sue Aspland who has moved closer to family, welcoming in her place John Roberts in the second Vice-President position, and also Elaine Green, taking over the Minutes from Jenny Gursanscky who this year has other commitments.

President Claire Brown presented her annual report, highlighting our considerable involvement and achievements in 2023:

WPSQ Sunshine Coast & Hinterland Inc President Report 2023

I was privileged to have been elected President of our branch as we celebrated 60 years of working to protect and conserve at-risk species and habitats. And what a busy year it has been! Firstly, I would like to thank our hard-working Executive for their contribution and for all their guidance and assistance to me over the past year.

Sue Aspland stepped back from her role as Vice President during the year. We will miss Sue's direct involvement and thank her for all her input over the last few years; it has been invaluable. We hope to see Sue occasionally at our meetings and events and wish her well in her new home closer to family.

Additionally, I would like to take the opportunity to thank all our members for their commitment and time. There have been many 'Have Your Say' surveys, consultations, meetings, events and workshops on many and various issues and topics resulting in many hours spent by members researching and contributing to these activities.

Some of our key activities in 2023 have included:

Advocacy

Caloundra Transport Corridor Upgrade (CTCU) - Jude Crighton represents WPSQ on the TMR Stakeholder Interest Group.

Advance Dates

Caloundra Regional Gallery
Local Contemporary Art
Prize: Reflections on Here
and Now
Open until 25 May
Exhibition contains works
expressing environmental
concerns, and a wonderfully
expressive section of
Children's artwork.
(SCCouncil may not this year
support the WildHeart Junior
Art Prize)

Sunshine Coast Koala Forum: working together to protect Koalas 18 April, 4.30 to 7.30 pm, Venue 114, Bokarina A collaboration of experts from Griffith University, USC and Sunshine Coast Council. https://events.griffith.edu. au/event/3995b01e-829d-49a7-a4c2d70488aa94bc/summary?Re fid=SCKF&locale=en (cut & paste into your web browser if link fails to open in this column)

Maleny Wood Expo
4,5 & 6 May (including the Labour Day holiday on Monday)
Volunteers to look after our stall will be required for shifts of just a few hours on any day (with time to check out the native plant nursery and everything wood!)
Contact sunshine@wildlife.org.au.

Saturday 25 May
Mycological Society foray at
Ben Bennett Bushland Park.
Contact the Qld Mycological
Society:
info@qldfungi.org.au

Throughout the year there has been continued lobbying and advocacy for a 2-lane option rather than 4 for this proposed road through the southern sector of the Ben Bennett Bushland Park. Unfortunately, the preferred option has now been announced with the 4-lane option progressing to detailed design and planning. We continue to advocate for the minimum footprint and disturbance to the natural environment and despite requesting several times, the content of fauna and flora surveys conducted have not yet been released.

Direct Sunshine Coast Rail Line, Sunshine Coast Public Transport project - Quentin Brown ably represents WPSQ on the Stakeholder Interest Group pertinent to the State Government's Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) Sunshine Coast Major Projects. Additionally, there have been several opportunities for members to provide feedback through 'Have your Say' and Information Sessions with the project team. It was pleasing to hear Quentin report that the project team appears to be aware of the environmental issues with the rail alignment and understand our concerns regarding minimising the footprint of the projects.

Draft Shaping SEQ 2023 and the Inter-Urban Break - WPSQ joined with Take Action for Pumicestone Passage (TAPP Inc.), the Sunshine Coast Environment Council (SCEC), Caloundra Residents Association (CRA) and other environmentally conscious organisations to form an Alliance in an effort to protect and preserve the Northern Inter-Urban Break (NIUB) between Caloundra and the northern boundary of Greater Brisbane. The Alliance and WPSQ made submissions to the *Draft Shaping SEQ* 2023 *Update* and participated in *'Have your Say'* consultations. The release of Shaping SEQ23 was not quite what we hoped for even though there were some gains to the NUIB through to Roys Road covering all the Government owned pine plantation on the western side of Aura South. Unfortunately, none of the private land has been included and the Halls Creek PFGA on the eastern side is still identified. Effectively we have Aura South (Halls Creek) and Coochin Fields as contentious issues in the NUIB.

Point Cartwright Reserve and La Balsa Park Masterplan 2021 - 2041 - Quentin Brown led our response to the draft masterplan including the need for recognition and preservation of 1000 m2 of littoral rainforest, acknowledging the Indigenous heritage and environmental significance and the biodiversity of the area. In a comfortable vote of 7 to 3, the Masterplan passed and was adopted at the August Council meeting. Not all the protections put forward by Quentin on behalf of WPSQ have found a place in the Plan, however, it is a more positive outcome than expected. Additionally, the amendments to local laws to enforce dog exclusion from defined areas at Point Cartwright Reserve was passed at the Council meeting in December.

Shelly Beach to Moffat Beach Coastal Study - the long-awaited outcomes of the Shelly to Moffat Beach Coast Study were presented to participating interest groups in April. A major outcome, with a focus on successful turtle nesting now and into the future, is a 40-metre transect trial across the Shelly Beach dune split into three zones. Cottontrees and their root systems will be removed in the seaward strip and replaced with foredune plantings, and managed in the middle section with other species planted to infill, and will be retained on the landside area to mitigate light spill onto the nesting beach. The Pilot Project received EPBC approval in September with works commencing after this turtle season in May 2024.

June: World Environment
Day (6 June), spread over a
month of activities
coordinated by the Sunshine
Coast Environment Council:
our activities to be planned,
and volunteers are welcome.

15 June, 2 pm
K'gari (Fraser Island
Defenders Organisation),
John Sinclair Memorial
Lecture by Dr Bob Brown:
Saving life on earth will
take civil insurrection,
Auditorium, Mt Cootha
Botanic Gardens; \$25.
Contact FIDO; book on
Evenbrite

National Threated Species Day, 7 September: Possible event at Aura Sunshine Coast Council Macropod Conservation Plan - on behalf of the branch, Elaine Green responded to the draft plan after discussion with Dr Elizabeth Brunton. WPSQ supported protection of macropods and their habitat through Council's planning processes and the maintenance and establishment of permanent wildlife corridors. The Macropod Conservation Plan was endorsed by Council in August.

Sunshine Coast Marine Turtle Conservation Plan - WPSQ responded in June, fully endorsing, and supporting the purpose of this excellent plan to stop marine turtle population decline and achieve a population increase by 2122 and the outlines implementation of strategies, actions and assessment. At the Council meeting in August, council endorsed the final Sunshine Coast Marine Turtle Conservation Plan.

Waste Management - WPSQ wrote to Council urging action on the roll-out of Food Organics Garden Organics (FOGO) waste collection and to allow bagged soft plastics to be placed in current yellow-lid recycling for collection as happens in other states. The Sunshine Coast Resource Recovery Strategy 2023 was released in August.

Submissions on Development Applications - thank you to Sue Aspland for all her hard work and research preparing our planning submissions throughout the year and to all members who have provided input into the various submissions.

WPSQ responded to Stockland's referral under the EPBC Act of their proposed residential development at Aura South (Halls Creek). The detailed submission focused on Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES) re the Mt. Emu oak, the Wallum Sedge Frog, Remnant Wetlands and the Water Mouse, as well as the proximity of the proposed development to RAMSAR wetlands, Glass House Mountains National Park and the Moreton Bay Marine Park.

A submission was also written supporting Council's original condition for developers of multi-storey units at Buddina, which provides for light mitigation features in the units to preserve turtle-friendly habitat on the beach. The developer's application for material changes has not been approved. [Postscript: on appeal the application has been approved.]

Additionally, meetings and a watchful eye on the Coochin Fields proposed development at Coochin Creek and Twin Waters West continues.

Events and Education

Maleny Wood Expo - the Expo returned in April 2023 and a steady stream of visitors attended the WPSQ stall to engage in our history and present activities. Elaine Green's short talk covering 60 years of WPSQ including the background to conservation and development in her book *Piece by piece* was well received.

Wild HeART Student Art Prize and Exhibition was again supported by WPSQ with the opening of the excellent art exhibition attended by Claire and Jill in September.

Welcome to the Shorebirds - WPSQ joined with TAPP at the event in September to celebrate the remarkable annual return of migratory birds to the area, some flying as far as 12,000km from Alaska and Siberia. The free community event included education tents on how to help protect the shorebirds, face painting, art and craft activities for the kids and the outdoor screening of *Flyways*: *The Story of Migratory Shorebirds*.

Faunawatch Outings

Second Wednesday of the Month Walks, 8 am: at Maroochy Regional Bushland Botanic Gardens 10 April, 8 May, 12 June

Fourth Monday of the Month Walks, 8 am:

22 April: Meridan Environmental Reserve, Landsborough

Next to Meridan Hill, this circuit includes wet and dry sclerophyll forest along the creek line before changing to more open woodland.

Meeting Point: From Steve Irwin Way turn into Old Caloundra Road and drive 800 m to Hapgood Road. Turn right and parking will be at 120 m.

27 May: Lamerough Creekside Walk, Pelican Waters

A mix of paperbark and eucalypt along this riparian walk should provide a good mix of fauna species, and it will be interesting to see what is present along the eastern side of the Aura reserve and Blackbutt forest.

Meeting Point: Park at the northern end of Tweddell Drive (type in '100 Tweddell Drive, Pelican Waters' into your navigator.

24 June: Blackbutt Forest, Aura

In this interesting old forest on the southern coast, to

USC Environmental Student Prize - there were two recipients of WPSQ's bursaries this year, Sonnie Flores and Romney Edwards-Francis, for their respective investigations into the habits of the Red-tailed tropicbird, and Crocodile vocalisations.

The Wildflower Festival was once again celebrated in August and September and was again well supported by the community. Booked-out walks were held in Ben Bennett Bushland Park, Isabel Jordan Bushland Reserve and Kathleen McArthur Conservation Park with many participants signing up for our newsletters and making purchases of books. Thanks to all members who helped, particularly Sue, Jude, Helen, Dee and Jenny.

Workshop to review Branch Operations - following on from the member survey conducted in 2022, a member workshop was held in March to gain a clearer consensus on the way forward in our 60th year. Members agreed on the Mission and Vision statements, revising and updating language used but not diminishing its intent. It was generally agreed that more publicity is desirable, that the branch is committed to events and that a strategic planning day should be held each year to identify and prioritise issues. The branch Facebook has been reinstated with posts now being added on a regular basis

State AGM and Southern Branches Get Together - thank you to all who made our hosting of the State AGM at the State Recreation Centre at Currimundi in September such a success. Welcomed to Country by member Bridgette Chilli Davis, more than 40 branch members from across the state appreciated reports from our cobranches and head office. The guest speaker was John Birbeck; we celebrated our 60th year with cake and finished the day with a guided walk-through Kathleen McArthur Conservation Park.

Once again, a big thanks to you all for your continued support to protect and conserve at-risk species and habitats. Whilst our work can be challenging, it is also encouraging to read positive community sentiment being reported from the Consultation Program for the new Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme.

One thing nearly all respondents agreed upon is the need to further consider impacts of growth and development on the natural environment, particularly impacts on habitat and the need to continue to improve the region's resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Conserving the Sunshine Coast Heathlands

Dr Hilary Pearl's slide presentation is now available on the Wildlife Qld website:

https://wildlife.org.au/about-us/our-branches/sunshine-coast-and-hinterland-inc

Also on our branch page, find Faunawatch walks, meeting dates, issues of *Conservation News* and how to join.

Updates from the February & March Meetings

Council Elections

All candidates were asked to respond to our questionnaire on environmental issues, with responses received from some. The elected mayor and divisional councillors will be contacted with our congratulations and our concerns for strong policy and action on environmental issues.

date we have identified 130 species, including 90 birds.

Meeting Point: Meet in the car park next to the playground and dog park towards the end of Eden Drive, Aura.

Shelly Beach to Moffat Beach Study

Council is planning for the works approved by the EPBC to commence from 1 May, with the timing for the dunal work dependent on tide and weather conditions. We have been assured by Council that the illegal walkway will be closed from 1 May. Council's Turtlecare Tent on 2 March provided passing members of the community with information on the hatchling season now drawing to a close, with mostly positive interactions. The first of new public education signage re the goals of the Study, with QR codes for more detail, are appearing.

The final report from the Study, and Educational Resources on Marine Turtles are at:

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

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

Independently of the Council/state government project, from March to September Energex is upgrading the underground power network between Industrial Avenue and West Terrace, with some vegetation clearing expected. Jude, as our CTCU CIG representative, has sought further information.

The next SIG meeting will be in July after the final design has been released. There is still no sign of the promised results from the Environmental Impact Study.

State MP for Caloundra, Jason Hunt, is under pressure from Council for the state to fund the gap left by the withdrawal of federal funding from the CTCU.

Many thanks to Jenny for organising this year's Clean Up Australia Day event in the Park, with 20 rubbish-gatherers. Jude and Dee had a closer (on the path) encounter with the tree snake spotted swimming in the pond at the recent Faunawatch outing.

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

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

Common Myna birds

Currently, Sunshine Coast Council's Feral Animal Control program has no funding over and above the current Myna trapping program and public education. Following our request for advice a recent meeting of the Wildlife Qld Council confirmed that they and the Invasive Species Council does not regard the Common Myna as a priority species.

Maleny Wood Expo

The Expo is coming up fast on the Labour Day weekend of Saturday to Monday, 4-6 May. Our stall is booked, and a call is out for volunteers to help over the weekend (email sunshine@wildlife.org.au or contact Jude). Jo has kindly

Correspondence

Sunshine Coast Council has provided information on their planned 'cool' burns, incorporating local First Nations' input, in the Caloundra region including the Jill Chamberlain Reserve and the concrete pathway section of the Isabel Jordan Reserve. Dates are dependent on ground conditions and weather.

offered her felted art work for a raffle, and we hope to have another framed Kathleen McArthur print.

World Environment Day

SCEC's big event, historically held on a day in June, continues as a disbursed collection of multi-group activities over the month. We may hold another Shelly Beach information stall, also share a marquee with TAPP and other groups at another event to be determined, or hold a possible Faunawatch or Bushwatch walk. If any members have an idea to celebrate WED, please get in touch.

Federal Government Urban Rivers grant

An application has been completed by Take Action for Pumicestone Passage for a Federal Government Urban Rivers grant to restore water quality at a site (Reserve 1000 and Lamerough Creek West that connect with the Pumicestone Passage). Results of the grants are not expected until July. WPSQ and BushCare volunteers could be involved.

Glossy Black Conservancy

We will contribute \$150 to the Conservancy's appeal for donations to a fund with a goal of \$3400 for training of Citizen Science Nest finders in the Noosa region, relating to ongoing habitat clearing.

Sunshine Coast Direct Rail

With funding an issue, the state government has announced that it will commit to progressive delivery of the rail corridor. The first stage from Beerway to Caloundra will see 19 km of rail — more than half of the corridor — constructed by 2032, subject to a matched funding agreement from the federal government.

The project corridor is available to view online: https://www.yoursay-projects.tmr.qld.gov.au/direct-sunshine-coast-rail/proposed-corridor-refinements

Coochin Fields (in the Inter-Urban Break)

The proponents and Sunshine Coast Council have been arguing the definition of use of the land identified in the development application. Amended plans were submitted on 21 February with the 5100 m² permanent and roofed structure removed. Council has agreed to extend the period for the application to comply with an Action Notice until 26 March, further extended to 4 April.

Faunawatch

Further to the December Aura Stewardship Group meeting at which a 'Fauna Watch' page was mooted, and subsequent discussion, Aura has agreed not to use the name on their new Sustainability & Community website. Paul is, however, looking into the supply of fauna lists for this website.

Following research by Claire, the Executive has decided to register the name Faunawatch as a trademark (rather than a

Weeds don't sleep 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, from 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 (Moffat Headland/Shelly Beach): 1st Friday (Thursday if Friday is a public holiday)

Golden Beach (sites vary): 2nd Thursday

Tooway Lake/Hardie Buzacott Reserve: 2nd Fridav

Shelly Beach Foreshore: third Saturday

And in the Nambour area:

Petrie Creek Bushcare: 7 am start in summer, 8 am in cooler months: Contact Co-ordinator Norm Morwood: 0409 63 99 44 Florabunda Pocket (Woombye): 1st Saturday

Namba Creek (Nambour): 3rd Saturday

Gulung Gung (Nambour): 4th Wednesday

Enquiries also to sunshine@wildlife.org.au

business name which does not provide the same protection); this is a 7-month process, and requires a fee of \$250 for 10-years' intellectual property rights.

Paul's quote for a Healthy Land & Water grant to continue surveys on the original four sites at Aura plus the Blackbutt forest and four visits over the year have been submitted.

The Aura Stewardship Group is planning events on **National Threated Species Day**, 7 September, and depending on a possible clash with the Wildlife Qld AGM, our branch will consider running a Wildflower Festival Walk in the Aura Blackbutt Forest and nearby wetlands.

The Environment Levy Partnership grant mid-term report has been submitted.

Judy's report on the 14 February Faunawatch outing at Maroochy Gardens:

'Eight Faunawatchers went through the Fern Glade and round the lagoon, while one went off on a longer walk round the Upland and Western Tall Gums tracks, finding an Imperial Hairstreak butterfly (identified later by Rob Kernot from a photo) on an Acacia.

The birds were quiet and not as numerous as usual, but the butterflies were active; the cicadas were noisy, with Robyn identifying Razor Grinder, Black Prince and Brown Bunyip.

Last year in cicada season, one of our regulars quoted the last line from Christopher Brennan's Fire in the Heavens: "...the cicada's torture-point of song" — so apt when the Razor Grinders are in full "voice".

In total there were 33 birds, 16 butterflies, a cane toad, five spiders, three cicadas, and one each of a damselfly (a Redtipped Shadefly), ant (Golden-tailed spiny ant), bee (a Leafcutter), as well as an Eastern water dragon.'



Image: Imperial Hairstreak butterfly, by Glenn Burns

The response from the State Minister for Education to a petition to remove artificial turf (recognised as an environmental nasty) from school grounds, can be considered positive:

February 2024

Regarding Petition No. 4008-23 in relation to the use of artificial turf in school grounds.

The Queensland Government remains committed to providing appropriate services and facilities to enable the optimal delivery of curriculum and to promote a safe learning environment in all schools. The Department of Education's *Equity and Excellence: realising* the potential of every student strategy and the Infrastructure for Learning initiatives are aligned with the Queensland Government's Climate Action Plan and targets. Priority initiatives are underway to reduce our environmental impact to create sustainable and climatepositive environments through contemporary design, renewal and maintenance that builds climate resilience and embeds environmental sustainability. A key *Infrastructure for Learning* initiative is the review of the Department's Design Technical Specifications and Standards. This includes considerations relating to the installation of artificial turf. The review outcomes will be incorporated into future iterations of the document. The review is expected to be completed by the end of 2024.

I would like to thank you, the principal petitioner and every person who signed the petition for their advocacy for Queensland state schools.

Yours sincerely,
Di Farmer
Minister for Education and
Minister for Youth Justice

The March Gardens walk went well with 33 bird species, however the butterflies didn't come out in force as they did in the previous month. Judy noted that 'highlights were the many honeyeaters, including scarlet and dusky honeyeaters, feeding in several flowering *Elaeocarpus grandis*, and lots of Macleay's Swallowtails and Blue Triangles', as well as 'excellent views of two White-headed Pigeons'.

The Monday walk on 26 February at Ben Bennett Bushland Park 'netted' 21 butterfly species, including a Yellow Albatross and a Yellow-striped Flutterer, as well as 42 birds and in and around the brimming pond about 20 Eastern sedgefrogs and a Common tree snake swimming in pursuit of those frogs.

In persistent drizzle, the Monday walk on 25 March at Jill Chamberlain Reserve at Little Mountain enticed a hardy four attendees, however a reasonable tally of birds was made under the shelter of the trees.

Following the upcoming Monday 22 April Faunawatch walk in the Meridan Environment Reserve walkers have been invited by Suzanne Wilson of the Mooloolah River Landcare to have morning tea and an optional nursery tour at their site close by on the Steve Irwin Way.

The next Faunawatch walks will be on the 2nd Wednesday (10 April, 8 May, 12 June) at MRBBG, and 4th Monday (22 April, 27 May, 24 June) at various venues (see side column).

Support the Queensland Department of Agriculture & Fisheries' proposal to ban opera-style traps for recreational fishing, and end the drowning of trapped platypuses:

https://daf.engagementhub.com.au/recreational-fishing

Eastern Curlew (*Numenius madagascariensis*)

I have been thrilled to see the migratory shorebirds this season though saddened to know how endangered they are. I'm also continuing to grind my teeth at the number of dogs allowed to wander off leash onto the beach and sandbanks despite the increased number of signs on footpaths and posts! — some even without an owner in sight.

Notes from the Qld Wader Study Group:

Migratory habits

The Eastern Curlew leaves Australia for northern Russia, Kamchatka and Alaska in March and through April. They return to our shores during August and September. Interestingly a large percentage of Curlew (30%) stays in Australia during the breeding season.

Breeding

Breeds in the Arctic in north eastern China, Russia and Alaska.

Status

Though seemingly common in south eastern Queensland 90% of the world's population of over 30,000 birds occurs in Moreton Bay and the Great Sandy Strait.

East Asian-Australasian Flyway Population: 38,000

Birds with Robyn Pugh



Image: Eastern Curlew preparing for its long flight north on the northern Pumicestone Passage sandbanks. Image Robyn Pugh

With the fate of RAMSAR wetlands in Moreton Bay in the balance as the Federal Environment Minister makes her decision on the massive Toondah Harbour development proposal on 23 April, see below for detailed information on the Eastern Curlew:

https://waders.org.au/about-waders/shorebirdidentification/waders-regularly-seen-in-australia/eastern-curlew/ and:

https://apps.des.qld.gov.au/species-search/details/?id=1843#

For a timeline from the **Environment Defenders Organisation** on the Walker Group's proposal, see:

'Walker Group published its final EIS on 30 November 2023. The Minister must now decide whether or not to approve the proposed development. The timeframe to make that decision has been extended to 23 April 2024.'

https://www.edo.org.au/protecting-toondah/

Birdlife Australia offers an online form to request Minister Tanya Pliberseck to reject the proposal:

https://www.actforbirds.org/savetoondah

And there is a **Change.org petition** still gathering signatures:

https://www.change.org/p/tell-the-australian-environment-minister-queensland-government-to-save-moreton-bay-stop-toondah-harbour-development