

WPSQ Upper Dawson May Newsletter

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The second cold snap in 2024 hit once more on a Sunday morning, and may last longer than the previous one which was gone next day when the wind dropped and returned us to pleasant weather with occasional patchy showers, keeping trees and grass growing after the summer rain.

For this reason, it will be good to learn from National Parks and Fire Services staff at our meeting on Saturday 25 May how they plan for the likely heavy fuel load after winter. It's good to know that our taxes help provide staff to manage our parks and wildfires when both these tasks are bigger than can be managed by community effort alone.

During the month, Jo Wearing emailed news from their property in Northern NSW, where cane toads are now invading *"marked here by our finding three dead black snakes within a few days"* and bringing back memories of their time in Taroom *"where cane toads arrived much the same time we did, had devastating impact on many species for about 10 - 15 years and then the balance seemed to shift again. We noticed for example, goanna and snake sightings increasing again, and rabbit numbers, which had increased in the previous 10 years, declining. Meanwhile the broilgas, that were regulars, continued to visit, so perhaps were not impacted."*

If you'd like to contact Bruce & Jo, I'll be happy to pass on your contact details if you text me on 0427 504 560, or email upperdawson@wildlife.org.au

Some of us will be familiar with the Bush Stone Curlew who silently 'freezes' when disturbed during daylight, and is well camouflaged in the greys and browns of the earth, stones, and branches among leaf litter or in dry grass. Within a few months of property clearing required by the government near Theodore in 1945, their once common mournful night call grew silent as foxes and cats followed settlers into the cleared land. This bird and its mate have survived to take up residence on a remnant forested ridge where they eat insects.



The milder weather has seen the return of the migrant grey fantail, seen flitting and chirping among the middle canopy of the scrub. A few fairy wrens have also ventured out on the grassy edges of the road. As they need both spiny bushes and soft native grasses for their nests, they are becoming increasingly rare as land is cleared and coarse grasses grown.

May has been the month for 'shooting stars' as Halley's comet races by and bits of debris burn up briefly in Earth's atmosphere. The Dawson Valley is a little far north for sightings of the Aurora australis as 'sunspots' erupted from the sun, and shot the skies further south with swirls of colour, impacting some communication systems.

Our group is planning a stall at the Theodore Centenary Celebrations 29-30 June where copies of the "Birds of the Dawson" may be purchased and signed by the author, soft toys featuring local native animals will be on sale, and if you have a photo or wildlife story to share, please stop by and we'll be very happy to add your contribution to science's knowledge of the bio-diversity of the Dawson Valley. There'll be a guided bird walk along Castle Creek at 8am Sunday 30th on which we won't guarantee a platypus sighting, but you never know!