

Draft WPSQ Upper Dawson August Newsletter

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Gentle rain over two days in the middle of the month was most welcome, and the ensuing warm weather is already bringing shoots to frosted buffel and sprouting weeds in the hydrated soil. The predicted widespread smoke hasn't materialised yet, but there have been some pre-emptive burns. A bearded dragon has been seen basking, and I'm guessing other reptiles will be on the move soon.

At "Eurombah" for our quarterly meeting, we witnessed the delivery of a rain-collection device to hosts, Richard & Lindsay Moffat by Dr Matt Currell and student Monica Esmond from Griffith University. In conjunction with the property's official rain gauge, monthly samples will be taken from the collector and tested for isotopes so that it will be possible to trace the progress of this water in the Dawson Catchment, adding to knowledge of how the system works. (The "crown" is to keep wildlife from perching on the collector and adding other isotopes). Next we went to Tarana Crossing where Monica squeezed



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Water through a filter to be tested for eDNA to identify species of life to be found in the river at this point while Matt threw in a line to test the temperature, pH, salinity and oxygen levels. The scientists were on their way to Carnarvon to sample water in the uppermost reaches of the basin and later to sample spring water east of Taroom. On a previous visit, they had tested water above and below where "treated" coal seam gas

water has been released. They also tested for water quality, and found elevated quantities of boron. On the basis of this finding, the company has withdrawn its application to release "untreated" water during times of high flow. Reasons for differences between the invertebrate species found above and below the release point are not yet clear.

After many childhood memories of water swirling near the bank where we were fishing in the dark, and Dad advising that it was "probably a water rat", (and disappointingly not a platypus or at least a good-sized fish), I finally saw this elusive creature surface just after sunset among some weeds from which it swam across Castle Creek towards a coot foraging near the far bank. In the last of the western light, its coat was golden brown, and its movements graceful, leaving V-shaped ripples in its wake. I'm told its fur is wonderfully soft and water proof. No wonder it's now being given the less derogatory name "Rakali", which allows it to be valued in its own right, and not associated with the feral disease-carrying rats of the old world - another good reason to ban those enclosed yabby traps that can drown platypus, turtles and rakali, all of whom help to keep our waterways healthy. For pictures and more about rakali, see https://wildlife.org.au/news-resources/educational-resources/species-profiles/mammals/rakali/?mc_cid=50836bd725&mc_eid=ca534644b7

Please feel free to send your discoveries in our natural world, with photos if possible, to upperdawson@wildlife.org.au

