

WILDLIFE DIARY

May 2014

Great Finds

White Bellied Sea Eagles, *Haliaeetus leucogaster* spotted a few times in Birkdale, the local bird life was not impressed. Great to see.

Goshawks also seen around Birkdale in multiple locations. Thought to be grey goshawks *Accipiter novaehollandia*.

Expo Gold in flower

It appears that the beautiful Expo Gold *Xanthostemon chrysanthus* which lines many of our streets in the Bayside area is set for another fantastic flowering season. Also known as the Golden Penda, this plant is closely related to bottle brushes and eucalypts and sports fantastic clumps of golden flowers. Interestingly this is flowering a little early this year and could be due to the cold weather arriving a touch early.

The Expo gold derives its name from Expo 88 in Brisbane. It was selected as the theme tree and was planted en-mass in flower presenting as a 'Sea of Gold' to show off Australia to all the international visitors.

<http://www.abc.net.au/queensland/stories/s1692654.htm>

Population Matters

The anticipated population growth in cities over the next 25 years will demand huge investments in energy, water, materials, waste, food distribution, and transportation, as the Earth Day Network acknowledges," says Ms Goldie. "Furthermore, the infrastructure for this will commandeer more and more scarce public and private open space. 'Green-ness' is hard to achieve with ever-diminishing open space. "It will be difficult enough, however, for industrialised countries like Australia to afford the necessary infrastructure and impossible for many poorer countries. "While urbanisation is not inherently a bad thing, rapid urbanisation brings with it political, social, economic and environmental problems, particularly in poorer countries," says Ms Goldie. "A lot of that is associated with the inability of the city government to afford the infrastructure that is needed to keep up with population growth.

Ms Goldie says some greening, such as planting more trees and gardens, is not expensive and can be achieved.

<https://www.population.org.au/articles/2014-05-01/mr-greening-cities-not-enough-ensure-sustainable-communities>

Great Walks

Eprapah Creek guided walk | Saturday 17 May, 9am to 11am|Eprapah Environment Centre, 424 Cleveland Redland Bay Rd, Victoria Point. Gold coin donation to Scouts | Spend the morning with Redland City Council and Eprapah education guides exploring the trails of lower Eprapah Creek. Learn about the area's unique flora and fauna and undertake fish and water bug activities, discovering this special local waterway. Contact IndigiScapes for more information on 3824 8611.

Did you Know?

Did you know how important Seagrass is? Here at WPSQ BB we love seagrass. Not only is it full of an amazing array of biota it is able to sink an incredible amount of Carbon Dioxide. Coastal seagrass beds store more carbon than the most dense terrestrial forests. *"83,000 metric tons of carbon per square kilometre, mostly in the soils below them. In comparison, a typical land forest stores around 30,000 metric tons per square kilometre mostly as wood"*

In a time when we are extremely concerned about our effect the climate and the impact which anthropogenic increases of atmospheric carbon have on the earth's greenhouse effect, protecting such valuable ecosystem services is more important than ever. How do we protect seagrass meadows? Foremost, we improve the health of our catchments. Nutrients and sediments pose the greatest threat to the shallow, light sensitive seagrass populations. Our meadows took a hit in the immediate aftermath of the floods back in 2011, and since the flood in 1974, there was a 1000ha loss of seagrass in Bramble Bay. Revegetation of riparian zones and effective management of industry's which facilitate erosion and nutrient releases are the best possible ways to improve the health of the bay and of seagrasses.

<http://takvera.blogspot.com.au/2012/05/seagrass-meadows-are-key-carbon-sinks.html>

Butterflies

Butterfly hibernation isn't quite the still, cryptic state of torpor found in other animals. Most hibernating butterfly species hang in clusters exposed among the foliage of selected trees, and on warm winter days they will fly about for short distances, perhaps visiting a nearby creek bank to drink before returning to their roost. The Common Crow is one of these and has long been known to form clusters numbering from about a dozen to a hundred or more around Brisbane and further north. Nowadays these clusters, though smaller than in the north, can be found as far south as Sydney.

They are an annual occurrence in certain areas and are most common near wet, rocky overhangs. When springtime comes around, the clusters disperse and the butterflies are off to an early start, ready to find food and breed while the eggs of other butterfly species are still hatching.

It is tempting to regard these overwintering clusters as yet another sign of climate change – and they may well be – but a simpler explanation is that urban areas tend to be warmer during winter because of heat stored in concrete and radiation from homes such that quite a few

suburban areas no longer experience winter frosts (deadly to butterflies). It is from these frost-free areas that the butterflies find their overwintering spots and they are still absent from frost-affected areas. Mind you, it could be just a matter of time before frost itself becomes a distant memory.

http://australianmuseum.net.au/Uploads/Documents/28828/Explore_35_1_online.pdf

How do we know what we don't know?

The answer is We don't!

With particular respect to wildlife, new species are always being discovered. One newly described mammal is the Silver-headed Antechinus, *Antechinus argentus*. This species is presently found in an exclusive area in Kroombit Tops National Park, 400km North West of Brisbane and 60km South West of Gladstone (Baker et al., 2013).

Previously mistaken for the yellow-footed antechinus (*A. flavipes*) and then the buff-footed antechinus (*A. mysticus*), the Silver-headed antechinus was named after re-analysis of specimens and capture of new individuals along the escarpment (Baker et al., 2013). Describing this species has taken intensive surveys totalling more than 5080 trap nights (nights multiplied by number of traps) and considerable effort by Parks personnel, biologists and volunteers over the past few years. In spite of this, only 13 individuals of *A. argentus* have been captured from within a 3km radius (Baker et al., 2013).

Considering the effort made to find just this one species, there is likely to be so many more species out there that we just don't know about. Science is about new discoveries, and in science the most certain we can be, is that we certainly don't know everything, much to the disappointment of those of who specialise in knowing everything...

South East Queensland continues to experience rapid growth of human populations and the subsequent urban sprawl poses significant threats to our native wildlife and moreover the ecosystems as a whole. Redlands and Ipswich Shire Councils have the lowest remaining natural habitat remaining (McAlpine et al., 2005). With a target of an extra 21 000 dwellings in the Redlands between 2006 and 2031 (RCC, 2014), there needs to be careful thought into where these houses go.

The only way to learn more is to do more research and research is not merely restricted to the white coat laboratory work. Research is also on the ground, community involved and can be as simple as using your phone to log where a curlew or Koala is (see links below). Our Technology is getting better each year and if we make the most of it, everyday people can make a significant difference to our knowledge base.

As a research scientist, albeit a very new one, I understand the importance of learning new things and the world is so big and wonderful there is so much more to learn, whether it is a new species of invertebrate or describing string theory. Therefore we need to be particularly careful about what we are destroying in our natural environment. A precautionary principle and adaptive management is the best possible approach to effectively managing our environment.

So our advice then is to keep a record of things you see and when you see them, who know you must just identify a new habitat for a species or a new species entirely.

Report a Curlew sighting - <https://curlewwatch.wordpress.com/report-a-curlew-sighting/>

Report a Koala sighting - <http://indigiscapes.redland.qld.gov.au/Animals/Koalas/Pages/Report-a-koala-sighting.aspx>

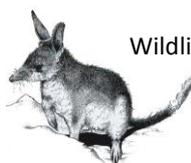
Baker, A. M., Mutton, T. Y., and Hines, H. B., 2013, 'A new dasyurid marsupial from Kroombit Tops, south-east Queensland, Australia: the Silver-headed Antechinus, *Antechinus argentus* sp. nov. (Marsupialia: Dasyuridae)', *Zootaxa*, vol. 3746, no. 2, pp. 201-239.

RCC, 2014, 'Redlands Housing Strategy', Redland City Council, <http://www.redland.qld.gov.au/PlanningandBuilding/Planning/Strategies/Pages/Redland-Housing-Strategy.aspx>

McAlpine, C. A., Callaghan, J. G., Rhodes, J. R., Mitchell, D. L. and, Possingham. H. P., 2005, 'Conserving Southeast Queensland Koalas: How much habitat is enough?', Proceedings of the SEQ Biodiversity Conference 2004, Vol. 2, pp. 11-7.

Never doubt that a small, group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

- Margaret Mead



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