WILDLIFE DIARY

March 2014

Great Finds

Beach Curlew, *Esacus magnirostris* sighted at Amity Point on North Stradbroke Island

POPULATION MATTERS

It is the growth in the human population that is now considered the greatest threat to seagrass - Short and Wyllie-Echeverria, 1996.

What is RAMSAR

The Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) -- called the "Ramsar Convention" -- is an intergovernmental treaty that embodies the commitments of its member countries to maintain the ecological character of their Wetlands of International Importance and to plan for the "wise use", or sustainable use, of all of the wetlands in their territories.

Unlike the other global environmental conventions, Ramsar is not affiliated with the United Nations system of Multilateral Environmental Agreements, but it works very closely with the other MEAs and is a full partner among the "biodiversity-related cluster" of treaties and agreements.

Broad-leaved Paperbark

Broad-leaved Paperbark, Melaleuca quinquenervia are currently in flower. It's a tree utilised by many species from flying foxes to honey eaters. It's a coastal species found north from Botany Bay to Cape York Queensland,and also found in New Guinea and New Caledonia.

A medium sized tree to 15m or 20m in height with distinctive papery pale coloured bark. Leaves are lanceolate in shape , 3–7 cm long and up to 25mm wide, leathery leaves are arranged alternately with five distinctive longitudinal veins. Flowers appear towards the end of summer into autumn, they are bottlebrush like and white to cream in colour. Fruit is a small woody capsule much like a gum nut, arranged in a cylindrical pattern around the stem; it contains thousands of fine seeds.

Did You Know !

Did you know bait worming distribution maps based on 2011 and 2012 high resolution aerial photographs provide a snap shot of bait worming at that time? Aerial imagery reveals bait worming activity has since 2010 increased by 100% at Manly (9,628 m²) and Snipe Island (20,558m²). Bait worming has increased by about 500% (274,085 m²) at Lota/Thorneside since September 2009. The total increase in area exploited by bait worming activity since 2009 is approximately 30.7ha. Bait worming reduces seagrass biomass by about 50%.

Did you know that Individual mangrove species rarely occupy the entire tidal profile from mean sea level to the highest tide levels? Each species occupies a distinct part, defining its characteristic tidal position. Mangrove species have a special relationship with tidal inundation plus the frequency of wetting, and soil type. These influences commonly result in distinct bands of species ecotones that follow tidal contours, referred to as zonation.

Great Walks

A great place to see winter migrating birds are the mangroves, riparian corridors and rainforest patches like those at Mt Cotton – now under threat from a Super Quarry.

WWW

Mangrove Report for Moreton Bay
http://tinyurl.com/kl2rkoq

Save Toondah Harbour
http://tinyurl.com/lg9sdlg

http://tinyurl.com/kjm9ylw

Save the Mary River Turtle
http://www.wildlife.org.au/news/2014/maryriverturtle.html

Richmond Birdwing Butterfly
http://www.wildlife.org.au/projects/richmondbirdwing/

On the Move

Birds are on the move. The change in the season brought birds from the North and we are now seeing those same birds move North. Those like the Storm Birds - **Common Koel**, *Eudynamys scolopacea,* (eu, Gk, well,good; dynamis, Gk, power; orientalis, Latin, eastern) and the **Channel Billed Cuckoo**, *Scythrops novaehollandiae*. (Scythros, Gk, sullen faced) that arrived around September are now heading back to Indonesian islands of Sulawesi and the Moluccas and the Papua New Guinea mainland and islands of the Bismark Archipelago off its north eastern coast. Interesting to note that three subspecies are recognised: nominotypical *novaehollandiae* in subcoastal northern and eastern Australia, New Guinea and the Moluccas, *fordi* in Sulawesi and *schoddei* in the Bismarck Archipelago.

Interesting also that Australasian species all confine their migratory movements east of Wallace's Line. The most likely factors restricting migration to the region are climate and habitat. The open forests and arid habitats of Australasia are absent from south-east Asia, so there is little, if any, selection promoting extra-regional migration. Wallace's Line is a boundary between the Oriental and Australian faunal regions, proposed by the 19th-century British naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace. The line extends from the Indian Ocean through the Lombok Strait (between the islands of Bali and Lombok), northward through the Makassar Strait (between Borneo and Celebes), and eastward, south of Mindanao, into the Philippine Sea. Although many zoogeographers no longer consider Wallace's Line a regional boundary; it does represent an abrupt limit of distribution for many major animal groups. Many fish, bird, and mammal groups are abundantly represented on one side of Wallace's Line but poorly or not at all on the other side. http://www.britannica.com/bps/user-profile/4419/the-editors-of-encyclopaedia-britannica

Migratory waders and Storm birds heading North means species to our South and Mountains to our West will soon arrive.

A small bird with a big heart (figuratively speaking) is the **Silvereye**. See video: http://ibc.lynxeds.com/video/silvereye-zosterops-lateralis/bird-foraging-tree The **Silvereye**, *Zosterops lateralis* is mainly migratory, travelling large distances, particularly along Australia's east coast, where movements of up to 1600km have been recorded. Southern populations, especially 'lateralis', exhibit clear migratory patterns, regularly traversing Bass Strait in early autumn and extending as far as Rockhampton, Queensland, by May. In eastern Australia, seasonal movements increase with latitude; hence northern races such as 'vegetus' rarely migrate large distances. Instead, they are mainly sedentary or display regional nomadic movements in response to fluctuating food supplies. In Western Australia, silvereyes ('chloronotus') are also primarily nomadic. This race travels inland when coastal food sources diminish and return to utilise spring flowering species, rather than displaying innate migratory movements. In comparison, numerous individuals of the south-eastern mainland races regularly move north during winter and are replaced by the Tasmanian race as they advance north. Most migrate at night following established routes and visit particular sites in consecutive seasons. Some pairs and individuals will not migrate and certain silvereyes migrate in some years but not others

Another winter visitor en masse is the **Eastern Spinebill**, *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*. See video: http://ibc.lynxeds.com/video/eastern-spinebill-acanthorhynchus-tenuirostris/bird-feeding-nectar-first-flying-then-perched This species is a honeyeater found in south-eastern Australia in forest and woodland areas, as well as gardens in urban areas. It is around 15 cm long, and has a distinctive black, white and chestnut plumage, a red eye, and a long down curved bill. This species is dependent upon nectar and is a known short distance migratory honeyeater. During May to August this species build up fat reserves, an adaption that meets the greater energy consumption needs occurring during low temperatures and needed for migration. Migratory wader birds are similar, reducing the size on non essential organs and transferring the same to wing muscles. Another migratory honeyeater is the beautiful **Scarlet honeyeater**, *Myzomela sanguinolenta*. While this species is a resident in the north of its range it is seasonally migratory in south, with movements associated with flowering of food plants.

Another small inquisitive bird incredibly also a migratory species is the **Grey fantail**, *Rhipidura fuliginosa*. This bird travels north in winter but there is also an altitudinal movement with birds also moving to lowland forests in winter. It is thought the effects of climate change may influence the timing of seasonal movements by the Grey Fantail. Grey Fantail has been divided into ten separate races, five of which occur in Australia with the remainder in New Zealand and the South Pacific islands. Its redder looking cousin the **Rufous Fantail**, *Rhipidura rufifrons* is also migratory. This species has bright red eyebrow and rump and is found in rainforest, dense wet forests, swamp woodlands and mangroves, preferring deep shade, and is often seen close to the ground. During migration it may be found in more open habitats or urban areas. This species is strongly migratory in the south of its range moving north in winter and virtually disappearing from Victoria and New South Wales at this time.

Probably one of the more attractive migratory birds is the **Noisy Pitta**, *Pitta versicolor*, In winter this bird will move from the mountains to the lowland forests with rainforests as does the **Rose-crowned fruit dove**, *Ptilinopus regina*,

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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Wildlife Preservation Society of Qld Bayside Branch
P.O. Box 427 CAPALABA Q 4157
bayside@wildlife.org.au
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