

# WILDLIFE DIARY

## October 2014

### Great Finds

It's not every day you get to witness such an aussie cliché. But residents of a central NSW suburban street got to live the dream as it were. "Two large kangaroos were filmed brutally battling it out in the suburbs of New South Wales, in a bouncy brawl lasting more than five minutes" (news.com)



<http://www.news.com.au/technology/science/boxing-kangaroos-filmed-having-it-out-in-suburban-street/story-fnjwkt0b-1227081916200>

### Teddies on the Move

Koalas are coming into the peak of their mating season. A number of our furry locals have been spotted around the Redlands. Their dulcet tones can be heard well into the night if you're lucky to live near their favourite places.

### Common Crow, *Euploea core*

A species easily recognised by its dark brown wings that are spotted white along the margins. The male's forewing have a bow-shaped hind margin, female's are straight. The adult butterflies only have four normal legs, as the first pair of legs is not fully developed (typical of Nymphalidae). The larvae (caterpillars) are orange-brown. The pupa is shiny, reflecting silver to gold.

### Trees in flower

Silky Oak, *Grevillea robusta* (Family Proteaceae) is a species that occurs in northern New South Wales and southern Queensland from near the coast to about 150 km inland. It is now relatively rare in its natural state. The latitudinal range is 26-30° S and the altitudinal range from near sea level to 1100 m. (QLD, NSW). It can be found around the Redlands and Bayside area particularly in gardens. It's currently in flower and attracts all kinds of wildlife, particularly birds. As Tim Low points out it's a species that has been translocated. The northernmost specimens of silky oak registered with the Queensland Herbarium are from garden escapes at Gladstone and Theodore, which is much hotter and drier than the places this subtropical rainforest tree naturally grows.

### Did you Know?

#### They're Back!

Koel's and Channel-billed Cuckoos have returned from Indonesia and Papua New Guinea for mating season.

Cuckoos are incredibly sneaky breeders. While the male distracts a host pair, the female lays her eggs in the host nest. The harsh ahk-ahk-ahk calls you can hear are part of the ruse. When the chicks hatch, they are raised by the host birds and when old enough make the journey back to Papua and Indonesia.

Koel's operate in much the same way, except their young kick the other chicks and eggs out of the nest ensuring their own survival.

Channel-billed cuckoos are often called storm birds given their arrival at the start of the storm season. So here's to another wet season!

### Great Walks

#### *Walking on the Isle Side*

#### **Stradbroke Island North Gorge Walk**

An impressive headland walk located at Pt Lookout. A great place to see whales, dolphins and the infamous 'Blow Hole'. Access is from Moolomba Road at Point Lookout, opposite Fishes Café, which indecently is a great place for breakky.

#### **Bribie Island Buckley's Hole Conservation Park**

Take a look at more than 190 species of shore birds at the southern end of Bribie Island. Access via Tulley Street, Bongaree

#### **Coochiemudlo Island**

Coochie offers a beautiful day away from the hum of the suburbs. Walk around the island and through the Melaleuca Wetlands at the north east corner of the Island. Access via the ferry at Victoria Point.

### Web Sites

<http://aussiebirdcount.org.au/>

### **Get involved with the aussie backyard bird count!**

Join thousands of people between 20 — 26 October to take part in the Aussie Backyard Bird Count — BirdLife Australia's nationwide bird survey. All it takes is 20 minutes in your backyard, or favourite outdoor space, local park, beach, forest or paddock, to be a part of this exciting event!

## Tasmanian Devils; the answer to our feral cat problems?

There is presently some talk about introducing the iconic Tassie Devil to mainland Australia in order to combat the destruction which feral cats have on our native wildlife.

### **Tasmanian Devils could soon be released into a mainland national park to compete with feral cats.**

The Victorian Government is considering releasing the animals into the state's Wilsons Promontory National Park in an attempt to re-establish an ecological balance between feral cats, foxes and native wildlife.

Scientists say a bold management approach such as this is needed to save threatened species as a lack of large predators on the Australian mainland has allowed feral cats and foxes to decimate native wildlife populations and threatened species.

Feral cats have been in Australia for more than 100 years but mammalogist Professor Tim Flannery said their devastating impact on native wildlife has grown since recent pest management programs have decreased fox populations.

"As we have started to drive down fox populations by using bait... the next largest predator, the feral cat, has popped up because it [has taken] advantage of an ecological niche that has opened up for it," he said.

Reintroducing top predators into the food chain is seen as an emerging frontier in environmental management throughout the world.

The strategy was also explored by Professor Flannery in his book *The Future Eaters*, published in 1994.

"The reason I chose the Tasmanian devil and the Komodo dragon is that they are large Australian native predators that still survive on offshore islands... the thought was that [if reintroduced] they will start interacting with the mesocarnivores - the foxes and feral cats - and start perhaps having some impact," Professor Flannery said.

"The [Tasmanian] devil is a scavenger; it may take food from feral cats or foxes at certain times of the year that may limit their reproductive success, it may compete for nesting spaces and take their young."

*Extract from <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-10-12/tas-devils-to-prey-on-feral-cats-holder/5806242>*

However as with all introductions, we need to proceed with caution. We have had many disasters in the past and few success stories. But there is validity to the argument that we are at the very pointy end of the stick and need to act fast. Tim Flannery predicts the loss of a further four to five species in the next couple of decades as a direct result of feral cats (ABC Online).

A further benefit of introducing the Devil into the mainland is ensuring their own survival. There is a risk that these devilishly cute creatures could be extinct in the wild by 2025 (The Conversation).

One excellent reason is that there is a genuine risk that devils could become extinct in the wild by 2025, as a result of devil facial tumour disease (DFTD). A mainland population would act as a large, wild insurance population, outside of Tasmania where DFTD is present.

Currently we spend a lot of money managing foxes on mainland Australia through baiting programs. But are we going to do this forever? Devils may provide a 24-7 predator control service, free of charge.

It is not often we can achieve win-wins in conservation, but helping prevent the extinction of the Tasmanian devil by re-establishing a mainland population, and restoring desperately needed ecosystem function to habitats, may just be the best conservation win-win waiting to happen.

*Extracts from <http://theconversation.com/should-we-move-tasmanian-devils-back-to-the-mainland-16388>*

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



Published by  
Wildlife Preservation Society of Qld  
Bayside Branch  
P.O. Box 427 CAPALABA Q 4157  
[bayside@wildlife.org.au](mailto:bayside@wildlife.org.au)  
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