

Newsletter

September 2015

Next Meeting.

Friday 25th September at 7:30 PM

Our speaker this month is Doug Miller, who is a Volunteer digger & dinosaur bone fossil preparatory with the Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum of Natural History (AAOD) in Winton, is recognised as an Honorary Technician by AAOD. and volunteers for The Queensland Museum as a dinosaur fossil bone preparator. His presentation will show you what happens on a dinosaur dig. You will see the techniques used to extract the fossils, protect them and transport them to the AAOD museum. Once in the museum the fossils have to be cleaned so the palaeontologists can commence the long process of identifying the creature. He will also introduce you to some of the dinosaurs that have been found including Australia's most complete carnivorous dinosaur, Banjo.



GOING DIGIT@L

Have you considered receiving your newsletter by email?
If you would like to see the full colour version of the newsletter each month, please let us know by emailing wildlifebb@bigpond.com
It will save paper, envelopes and postage.

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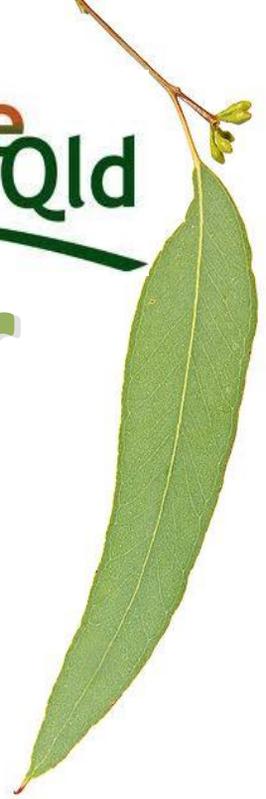
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Wildlife Queensland

AGM 2015

Our branch hosted the WPSQ AGM last weekend on Coochiemudlo over 40 delegates from various branches around the state came together to listen to reports from branches and head office on activities over the past year. A new council was elected and general discussions were held on finances, fund raising and the need to move from their current offices by mid-2016. Branch reports were positive, there was a wide variety of activities tabled involving the community and our members.

A common theme was the fact that many issues that are critical to the environment keep bubbling along for years without any clear resolution, we have the Super Quarry, Biomass plant, Gold Coast has issues around the Spit, Bundaberg seems to want emulate the Sunshine coast. Comprehensive reports produced by the branches will be available soon.

The morning session ended with an enthusiastic talk by Toby Hutcheon who is working with WPSQ and Boomerang Alliance to prosecute the recycling of single use plastic bags and a deposit container scheme. It would appear that this project is supported by the state governments of QLD and NSW to be up and running by 2017.

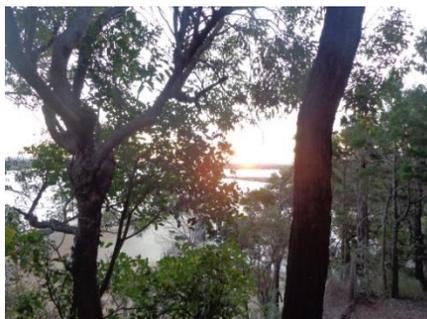
After lunch there were a variety of speakers, Vivienne spoke to one group about Coastcare on the island while downstairs David talked on the islands history. For those who felt able there was then a walking tour of the island, those who remained talked with Debra about Seagrass and Mangroves and then viewed Cicada award films from 2014.

Pre-dinner drinks were taken on the hall balcony looking down onto the foreshore highlighted by a fantastic sunset then it was an amble down to Red Rock café for dinner.

Whilst enjoying the “Island Feast” James Udy from Healthy Waterways gave us a comprehensive overview of the new scoring system being implemented for our living waterways which highlights the value to the economy and community that these ecosystems give.

Awards were presented to the Gold Coast for their critical intervention in saving “Swan Lake” from development and Bayside Branch for the Cicada awards, special mention was given to the perpetual award created to remember the untimely passing of Holly Bryant from WPSQ.

Special thanks to all our presenters, helpers, delegates and the island caterers that made this a memorable and enjoyable day in such a wonderful environment.



From the Executive Team...

Presidents Report

Recently there was an outburst by federal government and others over a court decision to overturn approval of the Carmichael coal mine in North Queensland. The blame was shifted on to "radical green groups who engage in vigilante litigation", although it was the failure to have a plan for two threatened species that caused the problem. Now there is a threat to repeal part of the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act to divest certain groups of their day in court. Community and conservation groups form a legitimate safety net to try and ameliorate many of the bad ideas that threaten our fragile environment; we are genuine with our concerns and see environmental destruction as unnecessary. I feel sure that most organisations do not appreciate the tag that has been given to them

and it will just strengthen their resolve to continue to highlight the inadequacies of planning and environmental laws. Climate change is real, July 2015 being the hottest month since records began and that is **radical!** History has shown that there is always a better way and consultation is always preferred to confrontation. We have a great speaker in September, Doug Miller, who travels around the world as an expert in dinosaur bone fossil preparation, it would be good if we could give him a "full house" on the night.

"There's an incomparable rush that comes from finding dinosaur bones. You know you're the first person to lay hands on a critter that lived 80 or 90 million years ago". Jack Horner

Helium balloons not a hit - August 2015

A promotional give-away of helium-filled balloons by the LNP and Channel Seven at the 2015 Royal Brisbane Show has shocked and angered conservation groups, including Wildlife Queensland.

"This is madness," said Toby Hutcheon, Wildlife Queensland Campaign Manager for Plastic Waste. "After all the publicity this year about the dangers of plastic packaging and helium balloons polluting the environment and killing wildlife, it's appalling that the state opposition is still deliberately adding to our plastic pollution problem."

"To make matters worse this is happening at a time of year when prevailing winds will blow any helium balloons from the city towards Moreton Bay," said Hutcheon. Studies by the Moreton Bay Research Station have found that 30 percent of sea turtles in the bay die as a result of plastic ingestion - eating discarded products such as plastic packaging and balloons.

Surfrider Foundation Sunshine Coast, which removes tonnes of rubbish from local beaches annually, has also slammed the promotion which spokesman Craig Macintyre said simply compounded what was already a massive problem.

"Nothing of that sort of product breaks down in the environment," he said. "It just breaks up and is a real threat to wildlife. Organisations like ours then have to pick up the mess." Renate Hottmann-Schaefer, Protect the Sandgate Waders founder, pointed out that what goes up must come down. "They kill turtles and birds," she said. The LNP's stall at this year's Ekka, manned by volunteers and MPs, distributed thousands of balloons during the 10-day show. Wildlife Queensland has written

to both the state government and the LNP seeking their agreement to prohibit the use of helium-filled balloons at public events, and will lobby for the prohibition of these balloons at all public events as part of the state government proposed plans to restrict plastic packaging. As a result of lobbying by WPSQ and Boomerang Alliance, the state government has announced plans to investigate a container deposit scheme and options to restrict plastic packaging in Queensland. Wildlife Queensland is urging the LNP to support these initiatives and help address Queensland's plastic litter problems. "A first step would be to prohibit the release of helium-filled balloons at all public events in Queensland," concluded Hutcheon.

<http://www.wildlife.org.au/news/2015/HeliumBalloonsNotHit-August2015.html>

THE MOST DANGEROUS SPECIES OF THE OCEANS!!!



To save Australia's mammals we need a change of heart

June 12, 2014

Twenty-nine Australian land mammals have become extinct over the last 200 years, and 56 are currently facing extinction. These losses and potential losses represent over a third of the 315 species present at the time of European settlement.

We recently published the [first review](#) of all Australian mammals, finding that Australia has the worst rate of mammal extinctions in the world, and the situation isn't improving thanks to feral predators such as cats.

In response, Environment Minister Greg Hunt has proposed investing in research for a [cat-killing disease](#) as a form of biological control. But while biological control will be part of the solution, it is not the silver bullet. The real solution will have to involve a change of heart

Not a thing of the past

Most Australians know of and regret the extinction of the thylacine — but few recognise that this one extinction is symptomatic of a much more pervasive loss. Twenty-eight other mammals have become extinct since 1788, and we suspect that few would know their names, let alone of their loss. It's still happening. In 2009 the [Christmas Island Pipistrelle](#) (a tiny bat) became extinct, and the [Bramble Cay Melomys](#) may have suffered a similar fate recently, thanks to neglect.

These species are or were not obscure marginalia or predestined for oblivion. Instead many were common and played important and irreplaceable roles in our country's ecology. These species were part of the fabric of this land. The Australian mammal fauna is the most distinctive in the world: 86% of our 315 land mammal species are found nowhere else.

Since the 1840s we've lost mammals at the rate of one species per decade.

On current trends, there will be many more extinctions of Australian mammals in the next one or two generations: we found 56 land mammal species (more than 20% of our land mammals) are now threatened with extinction. Out to sea the situation is a little less bleak, but more opaque. Of 58 species reported from Australian waters, six are threatened but 35 are considered Data Deficient — they may or may not be in trouble, but we don't have enough information to be sure.

Feral cats the greatest threat

It may sound all doom and gloom — and in many respects it is — but it's important to note that conservation can work. Both [Gilbert's potoroo](#) and the Bridled nailtail wallaby have been brought back from the brink through dedicated effort. So how do we go about saving the rest of Australia's threatened mammals? Some consider this an [economic question](#) — with X amount of dollars, we can save X number of species, but which ones? This is the argument of medical triage, a sharp prioritisation that directs funds only at the most savable and valuable species.

But this is a defeatist mentality. To advocate for species' extinctions by choice or through disinclination is unconscionable. Triage was born on the battlefields of Napoleonic Europe, where life and death choices had to be made in minutes. It is an inappropriate analogy for biodiversity conservation. A better analogy is with the education system. Our society accepts the obligation that all children should be schooled, and recognises the benefit to society from that premise. So too with conservation: we should recognise the obligation to attempt to safeguard all species. In a nation as affluent as ours, this can and should be a realistic objective.

But to do so we have to [target our resources](#) at the right problems.

READ MORE: <http://theconversation.com/to-save-australias-mammals-we-need-a-change-of-heart-27423>

Wildlife: An Australian Extinction Crisis

Australia is one of the most important nations on Earth for biodiversity. In fact, Australia is one of only 17 “megadiverse” nations and is home to more species than any other developed country. Most of Australia's wildlife is found nowhere else in the world, making its conservation even more important. 87% of our mammal species, 93% of reptiles, 94% of frogs and 45% of our bird species are found only in Australia. Sadly, however, Australia is facing an extinction crisis. Australia has the worst mammal extinction rate in the world: 30 native mammals have become extinct since European settlement. To put this in a global context, 1 out of 3 mammal extinctions in the last 400 years have occurred in Australia. More than 1,700 species of animals and plants are listed by the Australian Government as being at risk of extinction. Around 30% of our surviving (non-bat) mammal species are threatened with extinction. The primary factors causing this loss of wildlife include:

Feral cats and foxes. For example, feral cats kill an estimated 75 million native animals every night across Australia.

- Feral herbivores including pigs, goats, rabbits, donkeys, horses, camels, buffalo and feral cattle.
- Changes in fire regimes, especially an increase in the extent and severity of wildfires.
- Clearing native vegetation.
- Weeds.

See more at:

<http://www.australianwildlife.org/wildlife.aspx#sthash.1oPMaimT.dpuf>

State land framework facing change - August 2015

It is no secret that the administrative framework for the management of state land in Queensland has been under review for many years and certainly since the Bligh government. On 30 July 2015, Hon. Dr Anthony Lynham, Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, announced that proposed changes to stock route legislation are the first tranche of a suite designed to simplify and modernise Queensland's state land administration framework.

Dr Lynham said legislation would be developed in consultation with AgForce and the Local Government Association of Queensland for introduction to parliament early next year. He further added that government would continue to work with drovers, graziers, Indigenous groups, conservation groups, AgForce and councils to modernise the state's 20th century framework.

Wildlife Queensland has been briefed on the ongoing initiative with the current focus on changes to stock route legislation. Correspondence has been exchanged with the Minister, and from the broad information provided at a briefing and a later telephone conservation, it appears the legislation will be a step in the right direction.

Given their considerable conservation and cultural heritage values, the desire for enhanced management of our stock routes - a unique, vast network, about 72,000 km in length and occupying 2.6M ha linking across landscapes throughout the state - goes way back. The desire turned into action in July 2008 when a unique grouping of like-minded organisations, scientists and drovers from Queensland and New South Wales joined forces. The Queensland chapter elected to pursue a different direction than their colleagues down south and developed a log of claims to sharpen the focus and direct the attention of the government.

In late 2012, it was thought that a battle within the war had been finally won when the Bligh Labor government introduced a bill into parliament. In broad terms, the legislation addressed many of the concerns and issues raised in the log of claims, though there was a need for improvement in several areas: accurate mapping of the primary stock routes, accurate data on actual use, and a more effective compliance and enforcement program. However, the bill progressed no further than its first reading. When the Newman

government came to power, enhanced stock route management affording increased protection of biodiversity and cultural heritage was not on the agenda.

Albeit a broad outline, a firm commitment has been given by the current government that Queensland's stock route will not be disposed of or further fragmented - a real positive from Wildlife Queensland's perspective. WPSQ agrees with Minister Lynham's statement that "stock routes will remain primarily a vital source of pasture for travelling stock" but further understands that the objective for conservation of natural and cultural values of the network will be enshrined in legislation.

Wildlife Queensland is not necessarily opposed to local Councils managing the stock routes provided it is done in accordance with the state-government-generated management plan for the entire network enforceable by regulation as contained in the earlier bill.

Furthermore, Wildlife Queensland supports local Councils receiving funds, provided they are used to manage the stock routes, improve pest and weed control, protect the environment and reduce fire risks. While Wildlife Queensland supports the 'user pays' concept, other sources of funding than those associated with the grazing industry must be explored. Wildlife Queensland would not be opposed to the use of public funds for the protection or maintenance of public good values.

Stand-alone legislation for the Stock Route Network is supported by WPSQ. The previous bill certainly addressed legislative change. It included a revised classification of the network with an increased focus on pasture management and retention for travelling stock. Land condition, biodiversity cultural heritage and the capacity to adapt to climate change were to be better managed. A transparent process was to be used to classify stock route components into a three-tiered system with more effective control on grazing. The expansion of the membership of the Stock Route Assessment Panel in order to address management of all values of the network was welcomed; however, some aspects of the operation of the panel were of concern.

READ MORE at:

<http://www.wildlife.org.au/news/2015/StateLandFrameworkFacingChange%E2%80%93August2015.html>

Restoring and conserving nature in the Anthropocene means changing our idea of success

R K Kpof, M Finlayson and Humphries

The Earth has unofficially entered a new epoch – the Anthropocene. It suggests that humans are the dominant influence on the planet’s ecosystems and biosphere - the sum total of life and non-living material on Earth. Many ecosystems have changed so radically that it is no longer possible to restore them to what they once were, and in other situations it is not appropriate. Instead we need to look at what we can change, accept the things we can’t, and recognise that humans are now an important part of nature.

Restore, reclaim, reintroduce?

Accepting humans as part of nature will require a shift away from traditional views of restoration and conservation. Governments and communities worldwide spend enormous sums of money and countless hours of work on restoration projects, aiming to reverse the degradation that we have wrought over the past few centuries. The United Nations, for example, has agreed to a target of restoring 150 million hectares of land by 2020, costing about US\$18 billion each year.

In Australia, federal and state governments have several very large restoration programs targeting, in one case, the Murray-Darling Basin – to protect and restore the degraded flowing waters and wetlands of our most iconic river system – and, in another, the Great Barrier Reef – to maintain and restore the universal value of our most iconic marine ecosystem.

There is an elephant in the room

In most cases, restoration efforts aim to return ecosystems to a state closer to what they looked like in the past and how they functioned before modern society. This target is often termed an “historical baseline” .

Historical baselines are estimated from written, oral, photographic or other evidence of past conditions.

For example, restoration of an ecosystem to an historical baseline might involve removing an invasive species (such as carp) or reintroducing a locally extinct native species (such as bilbies). Historical baselines are inherently problematic, however, because estimates of what is “natural” depend on people’s perceptions, and ecosystems themselves change over time.

Environmental management often now seeks to rehabilitate, reclaim or remediate, all of which involve at best a partial move toward a past state. The elephant in the room is that many – perhaps most – restoration projects fail to return ecosystems to a state that in any way resembles historical baselines. Governments in most countries still remain focused on management activities that are narrowly restricted to historical conditions (such as eradicating invasive species). But management actions focused solely on historical conditions do not account for how ecosystems have changed and do not always represent the best course of action for maintaining biodiversity.

New baselines for a new world

In a new era, where anthropogenic pressures dominate, how

do we set targets for restoration and conservation?

In many situations, contemporary ecosystems no longer resemble the historical condition, nor are they expected to. In some cases, the historical condition has gone forever. For example, cities are here to stay and the Thylacine no longer exists. In others cases, the political will to reverse change (such as by removing large dams) does not exist, or else new species or conditions are now simply considered normal (for instance, trout in rivers or dingoes in the outback). Without enormous technological advances, or alterations to the ways we manage our landscapes and natural resources, we may have to accept new types of ecosystems and their human-modified baselines. We call these “Anthropocene baselines”. Anthropocene baselines are ecosystems or parts of biodiversity that cannot – or will not – be restored to historical conditions. They are usually caused by socio-economic and ecological (such as invasive species) constraints. Defining these new baselines represents a shift away from using past conditions in the absence of modern society and provides a new point of reference for managing biodiversity in the Anthropocene. They recognise a reality of the modern world: humans depend on natural resources and, in many cases, biodiversity is depleted or permanently altered - but may still be used sustainably. For example, the mouth of the Murray River has changed as a consequence of building barrages and draining inflows away from the Coorong. Connected systems are now isolated and species that were never part of the Murray mouth dominate this environment.

Given these massive changes, it is unreasonable to expect the contemporary ecosystem to respond to restoration efforts in the same way as it may have in the pre-European past.

But by delivering environmental water and minimising the effects of other human pressures, we may be able to achieve sustainability.

Should we just give up?

Anthropocene baselines do not mean we stop conserving or restoring ecosystems. Altered ecosystems have tremendous value to humans and wildlife, which must be maintained. Other environments, such as free-flowing rivers in wilderness areas, may function within historical baselines. Anthropocene baselines should, therefore, never be used as targets for management when restoration or conservation to historical baselines is viable.

The Anthropocene acknowledges humans as part of the environment - if not the most influential part. We are therefore the problem and the solution.

Points of reference for managing nature must balance the unavoidable effects of humans, while ensuring these effects don’t cause further degradation.

This does not mean giving up, far from it. It means setting sustainable targets that include ourselves in a changing world. These new baselines will ultimately represent choices made by people. But these decisions should be guided by scientific evidence – focusing on the long-term sustainability, benefits and costs of different human activities.

Resources

Page 3: <http://theconversation.com/to-save-australias-mammals-we-need-a-change-of-heart-27423>

Page 4 <http://www.wildlife.org.au/news/2015/StateLandFrameworkFacingChange%E2%80%93August2015.html>

Page 5: <http://theconversation.com/restoring-and-conserving-nature-in-the-anthropocene-means-changing-our-idea-of-success-42691>

Next speaker Doug Miller: **Dinosaurs.**



Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum of Natural History (AAOD) in Winton

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Keep Up to Date Online!

Blogs:

Wildlife Queensland Coastal Citizen Science

<https://wpsqccs.wordpress.com/>

Wildlife Bayside

<https://wildlifebayside.wordpress.com/>

Curlew Watch

<https://curlewwatch.wordpress.com/>

Websites:

Wildlife Bayside

<http://branches.wildlife.org.au/bayside/>

Ornate Rainbowfish

<http://rainbowfish.azurewebsites.net/>

Membership Application

Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland

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- \$45.00 Family or Non Profit Group
- \$12.50 Junior

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