

WILDLIFE DIARY

February 2017



Great Finds

Pheasant Coucals, *Centropus phasianinus* visiting back yards.

Tawny Frogmouth, *Podargus strigoides* heard at Birkdale.

Large **Carpet snakes**, *Morelia spilota* are still being sighted.

POPULATION MATTERS

“Nevertheless so profound is our ignorance, and so high our presumption, that we marvel when we hear of the extinction of an organic being; and as we do not see the cause, we invoke cataclysms to desolate the world, or invent laws on the duration of the forms of life!”

— Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*.

Koalas in trouble

Overall, koala densities at the survey sites in the Koala Coast and Pine Rivers declined between 1996 and 2014, with the greatest declines occurring at the Koala Coast sites. The estimated mean decline in koala density at the Koala Coast sites between 1996 and 2014 was -80.25% (95% credible interval: -86.19% to -70.81%).

<https://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/wildlife/koalas/pdf/seq-koala-population-modelling-study.pdf>

Pink Bloodwood, *Corymbia intermedia*

A beautiful soft bark tree with typical tessellated back its currently in flower. Individual flowers pedicellate. Operculum conical or broadly conical, about 5-7 mm diam., equal to or shorter than the calyx tube (hypanthium). Peduncles +/- square in transverse section. Outer and inner operculum shed together as one unit.

Great Carpenter Bee

Xylocopa (Koptortosoma) aruana

The 24mm Great Carpenter Bees are the largest bees in Australia. They cut nest burrows in soft timber such as dead limbs of the mango tree. The females have glossy black abdomens and bright yellow waistcoats. Male carpenter bees are covered with soft golden fur.

Did You Know?

Did you know **White-throated Needletail** is a large (20 cm in length and approximately 115–120 g in weight) swift with a thickset, cigar-shaped body, stubby tail and long pointed wings. The nominate subspecies **caudacutus** White-throated Needletail breeds in Asia, from central and south-eastern Siberia and Mongolia, east to the Maritime Territories of Russia, Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands and south to northern Japan and north-eastern China. Most White-throated Needletails spend the non-breeding season in Australasia, mainly in Australia, and occasionally in New Guinea and New Zealand. The species is usually recorded on passage through eastern China, the Korean Peninsula and Japan. They sometimes occur in large flocks, comprising hundreds or thousands of birds, though they are occasionally seen singly, and occasionally occur in mixed flocks with other aerial insectivores, including **Fork-tailed Swifts**, *Apus pacificus* and **Fairy Martins**, *Hirundo ariel*.



Great Walks

Cleveland Road East, Birkdale supports greenspace and bushland. It's in public ownership but it seems the Federal Government want to sell it to developers and they have the support of the State Govt. It would have been a great walk but seems destined to be turned into houses unless people challenge the govt.

WWW

Locals ask why koala bushland has been placed under urban footprint in regional plan

<http://www.redlandcitybulletin.com.au/story/4449289/push-on-to-save-federal-government-koala-habitat/>

Toondah harbour & political donations

<https://tinyurl.com/jnbqqqk>

Moreton Bay state of the Bay

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

Fish habitat for Moreton Bay or views for a few?

<https://tinyurl.com/jgenoup>

Rhadinocentrus ornatus

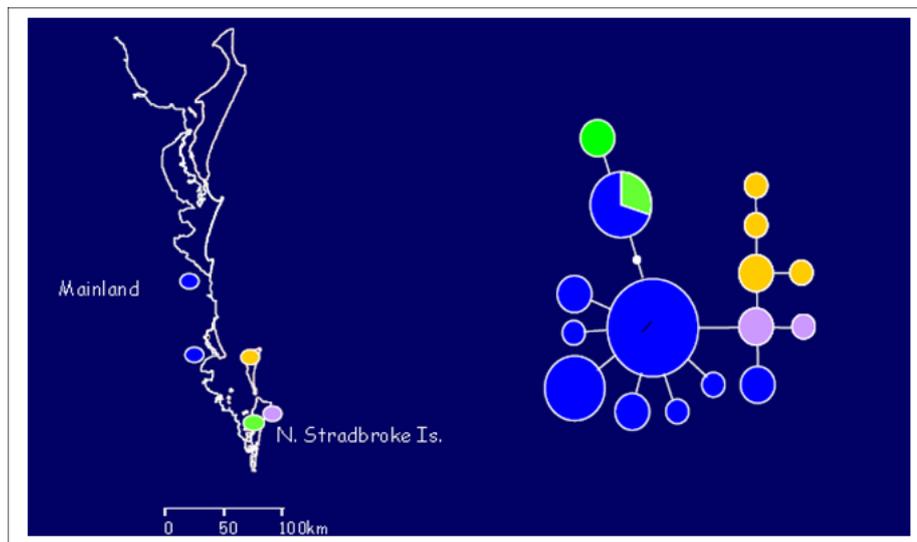
The *Rhadinocentrus ornatus* (Ornate Sunfish, soft spined sunfish, or Ornate Rainbowfish) is a freshwater rainbowfish from the Family *Melanotaeniidae*. This *Melanotaeniidae* family of fish is only found in Australia and New Guinea. It's a small, mainly insectivorous species, the largest individuals reaching a maximum length of approximately 80mm (Warburton and Chapman, 2007). It is a beautiful freshwater fish and its colours can vary between creek systems.

The *Rhadinocentrus ornatus* (*R. ornatus*) is said to be a small, obligate freshwater fish species restricted to the coastal wallum habitat of eastern Australia (Hancox et al, 2010), where waters are slow flowing and acidic, and submerged and emergent vegetation is plentiful (Warburton and Chapman, 2007). However, Wildlife Queensland has found this species utilising other habitat types, such as gallery rainforest along Tingalpa Creek West Mt Cotton. Good populations of *R.ornatus* were particularly found in clear slow – medium flowing streams supporting no aquatic or emergent vegetation located within gallery rainforest.

The *R. ornatus* has a highly restricted and narrow geographic distribution and is only found in a small area of South East Queensland (SEQ) and North East NSW. This includes Tin Can Bay, in the Great Sandy Region of central-eastern Queensland, to Coffs Harbour in north-eastern New South Wales (BCC, 2010). It also includes the islands: Fraser Island, Moreton Island and North Stradbroke Island, with a disjunct population occurring 350 kilometres away at Byfield in central Queensland (Warburton and Chapman, 2007).

In Brisbane *R. ornatus* was historically more widely spread in the Brisbane River system where it was common in the upper reaches of Oxley Creek and at Kholo Crossing (McKay and Johnson 1990). Prior to this report the species was still known to occur on the islands and in the upper reaches of Spring Creek and Ithaca Creek (BCC, 2010). In the Redland, the species has been found at five mainland sites (NR&W 2007).

R. ornatus exists as four separate “evolutionarily significant units” (ESUs), known as “SEQ”, “CEQ”, “NWC” and “SER” (Page et al, 2004). The *R. ornatus* clade “SEQ” is found on North Stradbroke Island, Moreton Island, Bribie Island and the mainland (Page et al, 2006). These clades diverged between two and seven million years ago, and so represent long-term divisions (Page et al, 2003).



Haplotype network for *Rhadinocentrus ornatus* showing relationships among haplotypes and their geographic distribution (Page et al, 2006).

Populations within this restricted area are highly fragmented, and due to this fact many ecologists consider the species vulnerable (Pusey et al, 2004). *R. ornatus* is now rare in the Brisbane area and is listed as significant in the city council Natural Assets Register; however, at present it is not recognised as a threatened species in national or state listings (Pusey et al., 2004).

Haplotype network for *Rhadinocentrus ornatus* showing relationships among haplotypes and their geographic distribution (Page et al, 2006).

R. ornatus is subject to many environmental threats, including competition and predation by exotic fish species, most notably the ***Gambusia holbrooki*** (mosquitofish or plague minnow). Additionally, urban development often causes degradation in waterway health, further compromising the number of ideal habitats available to *R. ornatus*. King et al (2010) highlight that the conversion of native grasslands, forests, wetlands and other natural land cover to cultivated and developed land represents one of the most significant causes of declining freshwater biodiversity.

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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