

# WILDLIFE DIARY

March 2017



## Great Finds

**Channel-billed Cuckoo**, *Scythrops novaehollandiae* can still be heard around the Redlands.

**White-bellied Sea-Eagle**, *Haliaeetus leucogaster* seen patrolling over the Black Swamp at Cleveland.

## Did You Know?

Did you know the Kingdom Fungi includes some of the most important organisms, both in terms of their ecological and economic roles. By breaking down dead organic material, they continue the cycle of nutrients through ecosystems. In addition, most vascular plants could not grow without the symbiotic fungi, or mycorrhizae, that inhabit their roots and supply essential nutrients. Other fungi provide numerous drugs (such as penicillin and other antibiotics), foods like mushrooms, truffles and morels, and the bubbles in bread, champagne, and beer.

## POPULATION MATTERS

For the last 50 years, world population multiplied more rapidly than ever before, and more rapidly than it is projected to grow in the future. In 1950, the world had 2.5 billion people; and in 2005, the world had 6.5 billion people. By 2050, this number could rise to more than 9 billion. <http://www.prb.org/Publications/Lesson-Plans/HumanPopulation/PopulationGrowth.aspx>

### World population clock

<http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/>

### 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>

### Marine flower beds

Seagrasses are angiosperms, or flowering plants, believed to have evolved from terrestrial ancestors about 70 million years ago; more closely related to terrestrial lillies and gingers.

They photosynthesise and reproduce by producing pollen and flowers, and the pollen they produce is dispersed by currents until it runs into another plant, where it attaches and fertilises the flower.

<http://marinewaters.fish.wa.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/WF-Nov2006-Page6-9.pdf>

### Channel-billed Cuckoo

**Channel-billed Cuckoo**, *Scythrops novaehollandiae* The Channel-billed Cuckoo migrates to northern and eastern Australia from New Guinea and Indonesia between August and October each year. The birds leave Australia in February or March.

Fungi also cause a number of plant and animal diseases: in humans, ringworm, athlete's foot, and several more serious diseases are caused by fungi. Because fungi are more chemically and genetically similar to animals than other organisms, this makes fungal diseases very difficult to treat. Plant diseases caused by fungi include rusts, smuts, and leaf, root, and stem rots, and may cause severe damage to crops. However, a number of fungi, in particular the yeasts, are important "model organisms" for studying problems in genetics and molecular biology.

While fungi are not uncommon fossils their fossils tend to be microscopic. Fungal filaments have been found in Cretaceous amber from north France.



### Great Walks

A good place to find and view fungi would be the parks found along the upper catchment of Tinglapa Creek, where it flows under West Mt Cotton Road.

## WWW

### Fungi photos

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-03-11/steve-axford-discovered-his-love-of-rare-fungi-taking-photos/8345880>

### 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>

# Return of the ghostly Ghost Fungus!

By Robert Ashdown

Back in June 2010 I posted an [article](#) on naturalist Rod Hobson's discovery of the fascinating glow-in-the-dark Ghost Fungus (*Omphalotus nidiformis*) on the edges the Toowoomba escarpment in eucalypt woodland.

Fungi are always fascinating, but the Ghost Fungus really stands out — especially at night. A chemical reaction between fungal enzymes and oxygen causes a ghostly, and quite powerful, luminescence.

In December of 2010 I was walking with my 10-year old son in some urban bushland not far from home, when he drew my attention to a large patch of fungus on a tree stump, saying they looked like the Ghost Fungus. I was pretty sceptical, but we returned that night and sure enough, a mysterious glow could be seen from a fair way down the track as we approached. Spectacular and enchanting stuff.

I did not photograph them then, and when I returned in early January, there was no sign of them on the stump at all. As Rod reminded me, what we see as a fungus is only the fruiting body of the organism, with the main part invisible within the bark of stump or in the ground. Still disappointing though. Show yourself, fungus

After outrageous amounts of rain, and even floods through the rest of this year (flood, what flood?), the fungi magically reappeared, bigger than ever, so last night I set out with Harry in the howling wind and rain to see if we could sneak up and capture some images of the elusive things glowing away happily.

Yes, they were indeed glowing, but capturing them was not easy, despite their sedentary nature. Howling gales looked set to bring trees down, and rain pelted us. For some bizarre reason scrub ticks were out in this weather and Harry ended up taking one home with him, firmly attached (the trials of the assistant).



After answering the lad's reasonable question about how I would work out an accurate night exposure of barely-visible fungi in near cyclonic conditions ("Textbook mate — mess about with tripod, attempt to focus, set on manual, guess an f-stop, open shutter, count to a hundred, then count to a hundred again, close shutter, peer at screen, curse and mumble, repeat process with different variables etc etc.") we took a few photos, with the hapless kid holding an umbrella over me, the camera and the fungus. It got wearying, with little result, and constant water all over the lens. "Just one more," I said, and we sat and counted erratically to two hundred again. "It's completely bloody black!" I moaned, looking at the resulting image on the screen. "Dad," came a weary and mildly astonished voice, "you've still got the lens cap on!" Hmmm.

Groan, one more try. Lens cap OFF, fumble for cable release, shutter open. Start counting. Eventually we got two shots that worked, and back home we both agreed it was worth the uncomfortable excursion. What a mysterious, magical, and even ghostly thing fungi are!

Photograph by Robert and Harry Ashdown: <http://ashdown4628.clients.cmdwebsites.com/blog/?p=1584>

*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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