

WILDLIFE DIARY



Great Finds

May 2009

Did You Know?

Albino mangroves found near Cleveland.

Brahminy Kite, *Haliastur indus*, also known as the Red-backed Sea-eagle, is a medium-sized bird of prey in the family Accipitridae; it has been seen in large numbers along foreshore of Cleveland.

Bush Curlews, *Burhinus grallarius*, heard calling in Thornlands.

POPULATION MATTERS

The Ecological Footprint measures how much land and water area a human population requires to produce the resource it consumes and to absorb its wastes, using prevailing technology.

<http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN>

World Environment Day - 5th June

World Environment Day was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1972 to mark the opening of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. Another resolution, adopted by the General Assembly the same day, led to the creation of UNEP.

On this World Environment Day, we should examine the state of our environment. Let us consider carefully the actions which each of us must take, and then address ourselves to our common task of preserving all life on earth in a mood of sober resolution and quiet confidence.

Shell less or almost land snails

An unusual family of land snail is Helicarionidae and amongst this family is a group of curious snails, the semi slugs, which are renowned for their much reduced shells and their sometimes spectacular colors. One very common species in the Greater Brisbane area is *Fastosarion virens*. Another much rarer species is the interesting rainforest semi-slug *Fastosarion aquila*, which has an extra flap of tissue that covers the shell and when the animal is active it acts as a secondary breathing surface. This snail can absorb oxygen directly from the atmosphere much like frogs.

Blue banded bees, *Amegilla sp* are good pollinators. They can pollinate crops such as tomatoes, eggplants and kiwifruit as well as native plants. In the colder months adult bees die off but the immature bees live on in their sealed cells to develop and emerge in the warmer months.

Did you know studies have shown some ectomycorrhizal fungi allow the transfer of nutrients and carbon between different trees linked through the fungi's mycelia?

Did you know Quandamooka people relied on the sea eagle to let them know when the mullet (fish) schools arrived, and they shared a special bond with dolphins? Aboriginal men fish with the dolphins by calling them by slapping the water and digging in the sand with their spears. The dolphins would herd the fish into the gutters where the men caught them in nets. After catching enough fish, they would feed fish back to the dolphins. Some of these dolphins belong to members of the tribe.

SEQ supports the greatest number of bird species in Australia (429 species). Unfortunately, the greatest threat to this diversity of bird species is habitat clearance and we note SEQ has suffered significant native vegetation clearing and it continues unabated. Over 80% of the Moreton Bay catchment has been cleared and about 70% of the SEQ bioregion.

The midden (Aboriginal site where food wastes are dumped) on Noagoon (St Helena Island) is over 2,700 years old. Interestingly, it shows changes in the composition of species in the various layers of material within the midden. The lower layers have more dugong and flying fox bones while the upper layers have more shellfish. This may indicate that the females of the tribe began to travel to the island in the later part of the life of the midden. This is consistent with the changing sea levels of the time, with the sea level dropping, siltation increasing and therefore the distance between the mainland and the island becoming shorter allowing females and children to cross the waters in their bark canoes in relative safety.

Great Walks

With the cooler weather approaching it is worthwhile keeping an eye out for **Glossy Black Cockatoos**, *Calyptorhynchus lathami*. Days Road, Russel Island, Macleay

Island, Erapah Creek and Alexandra Hills are all good locations to watch Glossies. Stake out a good patch of Casuarina as these cones are their only source of food.



WWW

Population matters
www.population.org.au

Dugong video

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iUa23yevmVo>

Lyngbya on Amity Banks

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2f_ohqn31r0

Platypus

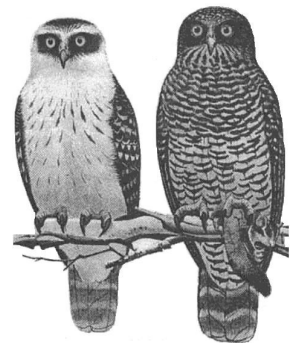
Still likely to be found in the Redlands is the amazing **Platypus**, *Ornithorhynchus anatinus*. Found in a few of our creeks their range is Cooktown to the South Australian Victorian border. In South East Queensland males grow to 493mm and weigh 1.5kg while females are 438mm 1.2kg respectively. They are quite small, about half the size of a household cat. They are a monotreme, a mammal that has a single opening, the cloaca, for the excretory and reproductive system. Females suckle their young from mammary glands but are famous because they lay eggs of a nature similar to some reptiles. Other reptilian traits include their extra shoulder bone and how they hold their limbs close to the body. They have a bill, which is sensitive to movement and vibration and their fur has two hair layers, denser than that of a polar bear, it acts as a special waterproof wetsuit. This enables them to be excellent divers and feed on small benthic animals (invertebrates that live on the bottom sediments of waterways). They are opportunistic feeders and on catching a feed it is stored in their cheek pouches and later chewed using the horny grinding plates within their bill. They propel themselves through the water with their webbed front feet but once on shore the webbing folds back and reveal sharp claws capable of digging them through the toughest bank soils. Their tails store about 40% of their total body fat and enable them to get through winter when food is in short supply.

It is difficult to tell the male and female apart, however, the male has a hollow spur on the inside of each hind ankle; these are linked to a venom gland in the groin area, which enlarges during the breeding season. Females have spurs but these are lost within the first year of life. The venom has not been known to cause fatality in humans but will cause severe pain and swelling.

The habitat of a platypus is a continuous one, with both female and male territories overlapping and they may share burrows. Male territories may extend to 7 km but generally platypus is considered solitary but often found in pairs or small family groups. A suitable home is a flowing permanent freshwater stream or lake, and they will use man made water courses, especially those linking a stream or river. They favour steep earthen banks stabilised by roots of native vegetation that overhangs the water. They have two types of burrows. Resting burrows are non-complex tunnels of one or more metres, with entrances close to the water line, both male and female may spend 17 hours of a day inside them. The Nesting burrow is more complex. The entrances are well above the waterline and are about 3 – 8 metres in length but can extend 30m. They have numerous branches and terminate in a nesting chamber of leaf material. The female will often plug the burrow at different intervals when they are absent to protect the young. Mating is in August to September in northern areas and females suckle their young for about 3 – 4 months. They have the ability to regulate their population density to match the productivity of their local environment, something (us) we humans have failed to do.

Powerful Owl, *Ninox strenua*

A magnificent large, solid owl standing 50 – 65cm tall has piercing yellow eyes and massive yellow legs and feet. The adult upper body is dark brown with white/brown barring. The under body is dull white with brown chevrons from its throat to vent. Capable of silent flight because of large broad wings with softened trailing edges to the flight feathers, enabling it to glide up and kill large arboreal mammals and strong enough to fly away with them. Its large forward pointing eyes gives them binocular vision but makes them immovable in the skull, a feature overcome by flexible neck muscles, which gives it the ability to rotate its head through a maximum of 270 degrees. Powerful owls can be found through Venman's National Park, West Mt Cotton and Sheldon.



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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