

PO Box 427 Capalaba 4157  
bayside@wildlife.org.au

**BAYSIDE NEWSLETTER** **April – May 2009.**

Next Meeting Friday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2009 starting at 7.30pm at Redlands IndigiScapes Centre



This meeting will be our Annual General Meeting. Shortly afterward we will have a presentation on fire ants.

Our guest speaker for this meeting is a representative from the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries. Christine Windle will tell us about what is happening with fire ants in Queensland as well as discussing identification and biology. Through a slide show presentation we will learn about where they came from and see images of how these ants impact on society and the environment. Some questions to be answered include: What is the National Fire Ant Eradication Programme? How many other pest ants are there in our local area? We will see ants in resin and other visual samples. To find out what the DPI&F is doing about fire ants please join us.



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**PRESIDENTS REPORT**

Steve Homewood

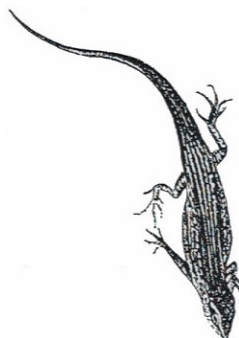
Our elected representatives are often criticised for their ambivalent attitude towards the environment and our wildlife, but the recent events have shown positive actions to potentially avoid the long-term consequences of the oil spill.

The amount of combined resource put into the clean up and also to the location of missing containers was impressive and deserves comment. Fortunately it appears that wildlife was not greatly affected, but it is a warning for the future and the need to protect our more fragile ecosystems from these near misses. A full risk assessment should be now undertaken to ensure actions are taken to avoid a repeat of this near catastrophe. We will not be so lucky next time

Over the past few months I have been watching the creation of wildlife aware traffic Zones between Avalon, Priestdale, Ford and Alperton Roads which are now extremely well signed with placarding and road markings,

generally the speed limits are well respected and monitored. While this is a 3 year trial, it is a positive sign to see such co-operation between the relevant local authorities and I would hope it turns into something more permanent. This area has plenty of walks and abundant wildlife and is well worth a visit now the cooler months are upon us.

Our AGM is this month and as usual I would like to thank the retiring committee for all their hard work over the past year whether it is for publications, finance, media or events. Your efforts are greatly appreciated and rewarded by the branch's continuing influence on the protection of our wildlife through the media, the community and on the ground. If any member is interested in a rewarding experience, nominate now for any of the positions on the committee, by contacting myself or another committee member.



## Oil Spill Update

For the latest information on beach openings, affected areas, the clean-up and how you can help, visit [www.qld.gov.au](http://www.qld.gov.au) or call **1800 216 723** (toll free, 8am to 6pm) or contact the MSQ Media on 33067553 (8am to 6pm) .



## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

Financial Members are reminded that the meeting on April 24<sup>th</sup> will be our Annual General Meeting.

Your participation is vital to ensure that the society meets its legal obligations. A Proxy Form has been printed here so that if you are not able to attend the meeting you can still participate by completing and return the proxy form. You may nominate any financial member of the branch as your proxy.

Financial members who would like to more involved in management of the Branch are encouraged to nominate for a position on the executive committee. A Nomination Form is included with this newsletter.

All forms should be sent to the Returning Officer by 17 April 2009 please.

THE WILDLIFE PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF QUEENSLAND BAYSIDE BRANCH (QLD) Inc

PROXY FORM

I.....  
of.....  
.....Postcode.....

being a financial member of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland, Bayside Branch hereby appoint  
.....  
as my proxy to vote on my behalf at the (Annual) General meeting to be held on  
(date).....

Signature :- .....

Is this proxy a general proxy? (Yes/No).  
If 'No', indicate if this form is to be used against or in favour of the following specific resolution:  
.....  
.....  
.....

Strike out whichever is not desired.

## Super Quarry downed

The rejection of the Mount Cotton super quarry by the State Planning and Environment Court is a win for the environment and for Queensland communities, said Wildlife Queensland today.

WPSQ was celebrating the Court’s decision to halt a proposed one million tonne a year so-called ‘super quarry’ in an environmentally sensitive part of the Redland Shire. This is a matter that Bayside Branch in particular has been involved in for quite some time. Secretary, Simon Baltais has worked tirelessly to see this through. We and local residents led by environmental scientist Ian Bridge campaigned against the proposal.

The Appeal by the quarry operator was rejected on the grounds it was not properly made. Simon remarked that the win sends a clear message to all developers that they cannot put development applications to councils which don’t meet community standards. A failure to do so will mean they will be challenged by the community and the courts will defend the community.

‘The super quarry could have had a serious impact on the Mount Cotton’s environment,’ said Simon Baltais. ‘It would have seen the removal of habitat used by koalas and many other species.’

‘We were also concerned about the impact on the local community from dust, noise and truck movements past local homes and schools.’

Simon passed on his sincere thanks to the Redland City Council and Logan City Council for standing by the community in the court. He believes the Redland City Council and Logan City Council’s community spirit certainly shined through in this matter. We are sincerely appreciative of helping us defend this legal matter in the courts.



## Thanks to Volunteers

Thank you to all those who helped with our fund raising stand at the recent Ormiston Swap meet.

## New community program launch

On Sunday 15 March the new community scientific program in Moreton Bay was launched - **Mangrove Watch**.

Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland (WPSQ) launched Mangrove Watch as part of its ongoing commitment to help state agencies, industries and communities protect valuable coastal environmental assets. Mangrove Watch is supported by the Port of Brisbane Corporation.

Mangrove Watch will follow the path of WPSQ's highly successful Seagrass monitoring program, which has over 300 volunteers and deploys over 150 trained volunteers into Moreton Bay three times a year to check on the health of Moreton Bay's Seagrass. With the generous help of the EPA (Marine Parks), DPI – Fisheries, Tangalooma Resort, Port of Brisbane Corporation, Healthy Waterways and SEQ Catchments.

Mangrove Watch is designed to train the community in scientifically rigorous monitoring techniques so they can gather important data about the health of Moreton Bay mangroves.

Mangroves provide habitat for wildlife, coastal protection for communities and the raw resources for commercial and recreational fishing. They also provide habitat, food and refuge for fish and at least 80% of commercial fish spend some part of their time in mangroves." The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimates the average global fishery yield from mangrove waters is 9 tonnes of fish, crabs and shrimp and 2 tonnes of snails and bivalves per square kilometre.

Without mangroves there would be few if any fish in Moreton Bay and so there is a need to closely monitor this valuable resource.

Currently there is great concern held for mangroves in Moreton Bay. We have in recent years seen mangroves starting to die off in Moreton Bay and the Port of Brisbane Corporation has asked us to help them investigate why this is happening. Port of Brisbane has already committed extensive resources to investigating the die off but recognises WPSQ has the volunteer base that can cover extensive areas of Moreton Bay.



If you would like to be involved in this new project please contact Chris Pfitzner – Mangrove Watch Coordinator - [chrispfitzner@wildlife.org.au](mailto:chrispfitzner@wildlife.org.au)

## Special Day Meeting

**Sunday May 3rd at 10am**  
**At Redland IndigiScapes Centre**



Our speaker will be Natalie Forrest from Pelican and Seabird Rescue. Natalie's expertise is in the rescue and rehabilitation of pelicans and other seabirds.

She has been particularly in demand with the recent oiling of aquatic wildlife and has many stories to tell. The PASR team is passionate about protecting the well being of our precious wildlife and their respective environments. This talk will give an insight into the commitment and sacrifice that our carers give for the sake of our wildlife.



## Wildlife and Roads

A new initiative is being trialed in Avalon Road Sheldon. Designed to make drivers aware of the fact that they share the road with wildlife, it includes both large signage and road markings.

Local government and the state have co-operated on this venture.

It is hoped this will be the first of many particularly on roads around the Redlands where many of our wildlife are still being killed on the roads.



## NELSON THE AGORAPHOBIC RINGTAIL

*By Jan Smith*

Some kind folk called me when they found a female ringtail possum that had become stuck in the fork of a tree and died. Her little body had fallen to the ground just as the man was mowing the lawn, and they saw that she had babies in her pouch. When I went to their house, I found the poor little mother ringtail had only three legs, one of her forelegs was missing. Some people think that ringtail possums can get around with three legs and maybe they can, in a safe aviary, but not in the bush. They can use their very strong tails to help them, but a female with babies in her pouch would not have been able to lift herself from the fork. The poor little thing was actually strangled.

There was only one big baby possum in her pouch, so I gently removed him. As I held him in my hand he tucked his head in and curled his body into as tight a ball as he could. I gently uncurled him to give him a quick check to see that he was OK then looked around to make sure that he was a lone baby. Tucking him into a warm pouch I popped him down my shirt. He would hear the beating of my heart and hopefully would take comfort from that.

I asked the kindly couple if they would like to name him. They were delighted and called him Nelson. To me it did not seem a suitable name for such a timid little joey but nevertheless he became Nelson. I promised to let them know of his progress.

Nelson would need a mate, or maybe two mates as ringtail possums live in family groups so carers always try to have at least 2 baby ringtails to keep each other company.

The very next day another tiny possum was found on its own. When she was brought to me she weighed only 59g and had ant bites on her little face. When questioned, the rescuer said the baby had fallen into a concrete tub which was actually the feed trough for their pony. Poor little Miranda, she had obviously been away from mum for many hours as she was very dehydrated. Her little face was itchy and she scratched at it, catching her nail in her eye. She had several visits to my wonderful vet to

be rehydrated and have treatment for her eye, but eventually she recovered.

Before long I put the two pouches side by side in a basket. Nelson, one of the most beautiful ringtail joeys I have ever seen, now weighed 91g but was still very timid. After a little while Miranda crawled into his pouch. Nelson went crazy! He was so terrified of her you would have thought he was screaming 'I'm being assaulted – help!' Funny little man. It took several days for Nelson to accept Miranda but eventually they were together in the same pouch. With Nelson's lovely thick fur they didn't need a heat pad, as Nelson kept Miranda with her flat fur just growing fluffy, quite warm.

Gentle as I was with him, I thought if he had any idea of what life would be like when he was released I am sure he would have died of fright right there and then.

Later, when Nelson was a bit braver, another ringtail of a similar size came into care. Nelson eventually accepted Ebony after several days of hiding in his fibre drey so he couldn't see her or she couldn't see him, I am not sure which.

For some months the three possums ate and grew and the time came, as it always does, for me to think about the best place to release these beautiful possums. Nelson's eyes were still big and bright and he was still very nervous, while Miranda was a lively, happy little girl always darting around the aviary at night having a lot of fun with Ebony.

*Miranda and Nelson*



*continued over page*

### *Nelson continued*

I decided that the best release site would be at Redland Bay where caring people with a lovely big aviary would look after them for a week or so. The release carers were pretty sure that there only a couple of ringtails in the area, releases of ours from the previous year. They would make sure that the three possums were eating the leaf from that area, and also that the wild possums did not seem to have a problem with them.

The weather was not good for releasing possums, wet and windy, so they stayed a little longer than usual in the aviary. When the carers eventually opened the little release hatch just on dusk, Miranda wasted no time. Without a backward glance at her mate of 5 months she flew out of the aviary, up the rope and was gone followed by Ebony.

Not so Nelson. When morning came the carers went to check on them. Nelson was still in the aviary and had obviously been very agitated, as he had started to shred his drey. They shut the release door for the day, and tried again that night. No way was Nelson leaving that aviary and the fact that Miranda didn't return made things so much worse.

This was a hard time for me as a carer, for every time orphaned possums grow and are released a little bit of my heart goes with them, but Nelson was a very special possum. I wished that I could just bring him home and keep him safe in his aviary forever, but of course I couldn't do that.

There was nothing for it but to accept that we had an agoraphobic ringtail on our hands, one that was terrified of the big outside world, so some new tactics were called for.

I suggested that the release carers no longer put fresh leaf in for him, hoping that would encourage him to go searching for food.

Unfortunately this was not successful as I found when the release carers phoned me again, so there was nothing for it but to give Nelson a strong push. His drey which was getting pretty threadbare by this time was hung a distance away from the aviary in some lovely scribbly gums where they could keep an eye on him.

Over the next few nights they watched as Nelson gradually crept out of the drey and started to feed. This was a relief. It took some time but eventually Nelson moved further out so he must have decided that the big wide world was not so bad after all. They still spotted him every so often and he looked well and happy but there was no sign of Miranda, the cheeky little female who had deserted her faithful friend at the first opportunity.

Perhaps Nelson would meet up with another female who would accept him warts and all, and he could have a normal family relationship. Maybe he would eventually become a dad. Well that was my wish for him anyway. My precious little Nelson had taken the first steps towards becoming a wild ringtail.



### **Baby birds**

A recent newspaper article highlighted the plight of young birds that fall out of nests. In most cases the parents are there nervously flapping about – wanting to help the young one who finds itself on the ground but not knowing how.

Unfortunately many chicks are unnecessarily removed from their habitat and brought into carers by well meaning people. But unless the youngster is injured or in danger it is often best to try to reunite them with their parents.

RSPCA have been flooded with young birds so much so that they are now proving “baby birds survival packs to vet clinics and pet stores to ease pressure on carers.” The packs are a simple bucket with a few drainage holes. The baby goes in the bucket and the bucket is hung in a handy tree thus providing a temporary shelter. The parents can then continue to provide for the young and teach it all it needs to know to survive in its world.

You can help young birds to survive by confining cats and dogs, particularly at night, and by planting bushy native shrubs and ground cover to provide food and habitat.

