

# WILDLIFE DIARY



Great Finds July 2007

Did You Know?

**Stonefish** encounter at Tingalpa Creek, species unknown.

**Pacific Baza**, *Aviceda subcristata*, seen crashing into tree foliage along Tarradarrapin Ck. This is typical behaviour, a means of disturbing insects like **phasmids** (stick-insects), which they enjoy eating. They are an altitudinal migrant, they travel to lower land in winter when there are fewer insects in the mountains but generally are readily found in the Redlands along riparian corridors. They are easily identified by their prominent crest, yellow eyes and boldly barred breast.

## POPULATION MATTERS



Arguments for a larger Australian population are uniformly based on a belief that it will increase the growth of the economy. Whatever the merits of the argument (and there are few), the population boosters never ask the most fundamental question: Will a higher rate of economic growth actually make us any happier? Why do we equate national progress with economic growth when we know that continued expansion of our levels of consumption is putting ever-greater pressure on the natural environment? It's time to get over our growth fetish.

Clive Hamilton, Executive Director,  
**The Australia Institute**, April 2003

## Carbon Sink

Scientists have found that Australia's tropical rainforests are a lot more important in 'cleaning' the earth's environment than anyone previously thought. All trees absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere but until now, scientists had thought the temperate forests found in the northern hemisphere were better at sucking up CO<sub>2</sub> than the tropical rainforests of South-East Asia. However, new research shows there's quite a significant sink from the tropics and much weaker sink from the northern hemisphere.

## Birds have toolkits

Research in New Caledonia has found crows use and carry around with them a range of tools, sticks, used as long probes and some with hooks to poke about cracks and crevices to flush out small prey. Some are used as a grub grabber, a stick is inserted into a hole found in a suitable tree, the crow poking the grub until the grub latches on to it then it removes the grub and then yum.

Did you know bird injury and mortality due to collision with high voltage power lines is well documented overseas but not so in Australia. Of the limited research undertaken in Australia it was shown that the species most at risk were large bodied birds with awkward flight characteristics and species that fly in tight and or fast moving flocks. It would seem more research would be useful in helping to understand the impacts of human infrastructure on our flying friends.

Did you know baleen whales (Blue Whales etc) appear to have four stomachs, three major chambers and a fourth smaller chamber (the 4<sup>th</sup> thought to be part of the intestine).

A tagging programme, involving State Government fisheries biologists and amateur fishing clubs, was established in 1986 to examine the movement, growth rate and fisheries exploitation of juvenile tailor (<270 mm fork length) in Moreton Bay. The recaptured fish were found to have moved relatively short distances (mean 10.2 ± 15.0 km; maximum distance, 85 km). It was found that estuaries such as Moreton Bay function as nursery areas for tailor prior to their movement onto open surf beaches as adult fish.

## Great Walks (paddles)



Places to Paddle showcases 50 of the best paddling destinations in SEQ. Catering for a wide range of skill level, the destinations described in the book include sheltered

waterways suitable for beginners and families through to exposed ocean coasts for experienced sea kayakers. Author: Gerard & Tina Effenev. ISBN: 0-9751319-1-5.

# WWW

**Time to save Mt Cotton from the Super Quarry**

<http://www.superquarry.com.au/>

**Marine Protected Areas**

<http://depts.washington.edu/mpanews/>

**Outdoor Queensland**

<http://www.outdoorsqueensland.com.au/default.asp>

**Fishing research**

[www.frdc.com.au](http://www.frdc.com.au)

**Seagrass**

<http://www.seagrasswatch.org/>

# Salt Marsh



Nestled between the green of bush and mangroves is a ruby coloured shagpile carpet of herbage known as salt marsh, which is comprised of species like **Samphire**, *Sarcocornia quinqueflora*, **Seablite**, *Suaeda australis*, **Sea Purslane**, *Sesuvium portulacastrum* and **Saltwater Couch**, *sporobolus virginicus*. These plants not only live in this hyper saline environment but remarkably they thrive. The red hues of the samphires provide evidence of this adaptability, its succulent leaves storing salt, turning orange and eventually red as the salt concentration increases. It then drops these red leaves as a means of ridding itself of this salt. While the environment may be hostile it is very productive and attractive. Seablite provide succulent small red fruit while mats of Sea Purslane have attractive red or orange stems and pink flowers. Interestingly in 1770 when Captain Cook found time for mainland jaunts his crew collected it in quantities for cooking as a vegetable to help avoid scurvy. Salt Marsh also provides food for many species and a roost site for migratory waders during high spring tides.

Coastal salt marsh is a community of plants and animals that grow along the upper-intertidal zone of coastal waterways. Salt marshes can be found in association with all the major subclasses of coastal wetland systems above mean high water spring tide level in Australia including: tide-dominated deltas, tide-dominated estuaries, tidal creeks, wave-dominated deltas, wave-dominated estuaries and strand plains .

Salt marshes are habitats for communities of salt-tolerant vegetation (halophytes including: grasses, reeds, sedges and shrubs) and associated animals. The diversity of salt marsh plant species increases with increasing latitude whereas the diversity of mangroves is highest in the lower latitudes of the tropics. When salt marshes and mangroves coexist, salt marshes are typically found at slightly higher elevations than the mangroves, which are closer to the tidal flooding source. When seagrass beds are found adjacent to salt marshes and mangroves many material links and shared plant and animal communities exist.

Salt marshes are often associated with saltflats or exposed bare areas. The soils of salt marshes and saltflats may have salinity levels much higher than that of seawater, may be anoxic and have accumulated iron sulfides making them a potential source of acid sulfate soils. Disturbing these soils can cause sulfuric acid to drain into coastal waterways.

Salt marshes are important because they fulfil a variety of vital roles in processes operating in coastal systems.

## **Biological**

- Important for estuarine food chains, primary productivity and a support resource for estuarine food webs.
- Mediates a balance of nutrients and organic matter between salt marsh and other interacting systems including mangroves, seagrass beds and open water systems. It acts as an ecological buffer.
- Provides a protected habitat for both marine and terrestrial organisms.

## **Physical**

- Protection of coastlines from the erosive effects of storms and extreme tides.
- Traps and binds sediment aiding in the process of land making.
- Hydrologic support - water quality and maintenance of groundwater.

## **Economic**

- Value of ecosystem services such as the price one would pay for the water treatment function of wetlands.

## **Human values**

- Teaching and research and their contribution to intellectual wealth.
- Aesthetics, increasingly salt marshes are being valued more highly for their aesthetic appeal, especially when found in a more natural state.
- Recreation activities such as bird watching.
- Changes in salt marshes, in conjunction with mangroves, have been proposed as a means to monitor change in coastal environments as indicators of global warming, climate change, storm effects, sea level change, pollution, and sedimentation rates.

Source: [http://www.ozestuaries.org/indicators/changes\\_saltmarsh\\_area.jsp](http://www.ozestuaries.org/indicators/changes_saltmarsh_area.jsp)

So how can you help protect Moreton Bay's remaining salt marshes you may ask? Currently the Queensland Government is carrying out a 10 year review of the Moreton Bay Marine Park. The review will give each and everyone of us the opportunity to have our say about the future of the marine park. This is a good opportunity to raise your concerns about coral in Moreton Bay. If you would like to pass on your ideas and or concerns please send them to the Environment Minister. Write and or email. Hon. Lindy Nelson-Carr, Postal : PO Box 15155, City East Qld, 4002 Email : EandM@ministerial.qld.gov.au

*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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Bayside Branch  
P.O. Box 427 CAPALABA Q 4157  
[bayside@wildlife.org.au](mailto:bayside@wildlife.org.au)  
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