

WILDLIFE DIARY



Great Finds

June 2007

Did You Know?

Flowering quandongs in West Mt Cotton are attracting a huge array of birds. These include **Scarlet honeyeaters**, *Myzomela sanguinolenta*, **Lewin Honeyeaters**, *Meliphaga lewinii*, **Eastern Spinebill**, *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*, **White-throated honeyeater**, *Melithreptus albogularis*, **King Parrot**, *Alisterus scapularis* and **Silvereyes**, *Zosterops lateralis*, both local (race *cornwalli*) and Tasmanian (race *lateralis*) forms, the latter on the winter migration to Queensland.

Golden crowned snake, *Cacophis squamulosus* found on a spotlighting expedition along Erapah Creek, Thornlands. While on another expedition a **Powerful Owl**, *Ninox strenua*, seen at Hilliards Creek, Thornlands.

Rare **Leopard Sharks** in the surf at Main Beach North Stradbroke,

Did you know that on Friday, 19th July 1799 Matthew Flinders made these comments in his journal from the Norfolk Sloop when exploring one of Moreton Bay's islands (most likely Coochiemudlo Island), "On the SE side of the island, this higher part descends suddenly into a steep bank, where the earth is as red as blood; and being clayey, portions of it are almost hardened into rock. The trees upon it are large and luxuriant and the new Pine is amongst them. The exterior part of the island on the west side is a flat, which the tide seems to rise over. It is abundantly covered with large Mangrove trees. On the S:W: and SE sides, it is mostly low & sandy and here the Palm-nut tree is produced. I conjecture that it is these nuts principally which induce the natives to visit this island. There was abundant testimony under the trees, that they were not suffered to fall off and rot. The black and the white Cockatoo, the beautiful lay lock headed parroquet and the bald headed Mocking bird of Port Jackson, inhabit here, but there were no marks of resident Quadrupeds, vermin excepted."

POPULATION MATTERS



You know, I have often thought that at the end of the day, we would have saved more wildlife if we had spent all WWF's money on buying condoms."

Sir Peter Scott,
co-founder of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

What's in flower

Quandong, *Elaeocarpus grandis*, a beautiful tall tree, growing to 35 metres, with shiny, narrow elliptical leaves about 17cm long. The feathery, greenish white flowers can still be seen along West Mt Cotton Road, Mt Cotton

Building a picture of the past

Knowledge of past indigenous foods and their farming practices can help develop a picture of long lost habitat now buried under houses. Fire stick farming for example was reported by explorer Edmund Lockyer in 1825, who noted parts of the Brisbane River region had a park-like appearance, brush-like with long grass and thinly wooded. **Bungwall Fern**, *Blechnum indicum*, was a popular indigenous food found in the lower reaches of the Brisbane River. This fern is common in **Melaleuca wetlands** and **wallum** and this habitat was often burnt to encourage this important carbohydrate rich food to multiply. It was the abundance of this type of food that sustained settled indigenous communities in the region. *Persicaria hydropiper*, a native plant that is found in **wetland areas** at the waters' edge and extending into the water was used by indigenous people to make an infusion toxic to fish. This was then used to stun fish which were simply gathered as they rose to the surface.

On reflection it helps us understand the wildlife and flora present at the time, white (**Sulphur Crested**) and black cockatoos (**Glossy Black** perhaps). Lay lock is an old English word for Lilac so we can only surmise this is the **Rainbow lorikeet** and the bald headed Mocking bird, perhaps the **Noisy Friar bird**. We would be interested to hear from others if they have any other information. It does appear that the bayside region has for a long time had resident white cockatoos, often criticized as the stock of escaped caged birds. Mangroves obviously abundantly present contrary to some urban myths.



Great Walks

One area which is alive with wildlife is the intersection of Erapah Road and Erapah Creek, Thornlands. Bushland birds, wallabies and koalas are obvious but this waterway holds many secrets. Different seasons bring different wildlife, in winter rainforest birds pass through, while the isolated waterholes support fish, yabbies and shellfish.

WWW

Time to save Mt Cotton from the Super Quarry
<http://www.superquarry.com.au/>

Marine Protected Areas
<http://depts.washington.edu/mpanews/>

Dragon Search
<http://www.dragonsearch.asn.au/>

Population issues – we must now address
www.population.org.au

Sea Horses



Seahorses have a horse-shaped head and live in the sea, hence their common name. All seahorses belong to the genus *Hippocampus*, from the Greek words for horse (*hippos*) and sea monster (*campus*). They are all members of the family Syngnathidae, from the Greek *syn*, meaning together or fused, and *gnathus*, meaning jaws. Other fish in the family Syngnathidae include pipefishes, pipehorses, and sea dragons.

Seahorses have heads at right angles to the body and fully prehensile tails, which wrap around seagrass stems, corals, sticks, or any other suitable natural or artificial object. These traits, along with a pouch for the young and eyes that swivel independently of each other, lend to the unique nature of these fish. Instead of the scales found on most fish, seahorses have a thin layer of skin stretched over a series of bony plates visible as rings around the trunk. These rings are useful in identifying species, as are the cheek spines and coronet (a crown-like group of spines on the top of the head). In addition to the spines, some species also have bony bumps or skin filaments protruding from these bony rings.

Seahorses have no stomach or teeth. They suck in prey through a tubular snout and pass it through an inefficient digestive system. Like other fish, they breathe through gills, extracting oxygen from the water that passes over them. Unlike other fish, however, the gills are small and compacted, almost "grape-like" in structure. Seahorses swim using the propulsive force of a quickly oscillating dorsal fin, and use the pectoral fins on either side of the body for steering and stability. They are more adapted to manoeuvrability than speed, and therefore rely primarily on camouflage to avoid detection from predators.

Seahorses are masters of camouflage, changing colour and growing skin filaments to blend in with their surroundings. Short-term colour changes may also occur during courtship displays and daily greetings. Male and female seahorses can be told apart by the presence of a brood pouch on the male.

Yes, the male seahorse, rather than the female, becomes pregnant. This unusual mode of reproduction is the most extreme form of male parental care yet discovered, although it arises from a general bias towards paternal care among fishes. Eighty-nine of 422 families of bony fish exhibit parental care, with almost half of these (36) being cases of paternal care. Most species of seahorses are monogamous, forming pair bonds that last the entire breeding season (and perhaps even last over several breeding seasons), although some species may not be pair-bonded. Pair bonds are reinforced by daily greetings in which the female and male change colour and promenade and pirouette together. This dance lasts several minutes, and then they separate for the rest of the day.

It can be difficult to identify seahorses because we have trouble understanding how individuals vary in shape, size, and form, or how this is determined by habitat, geographic locality, temperature, and/or age. Source: <http://seahorse.fisheries.ubc.ca/biology.html>

Moreton Bay supports a number of Seahorses; they include **Low-crown seahorse**, *Hippocampus dahlia* found in shallow waters on rubble substrates, once common they now appear to have declined significantly since the 1960s. Another species includes **Common seahorse**, *Hippocampus taeniopterus*, which is found along the edge of seagrass meadows and mangroves.

So how can you help protect Moreton Bay's remaining Seahorses 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 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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Wildlife Preservation Society of Qld Bayside Branch
P.O. Box 427 CAPALABA Q 4157
bayside@wildlife.org.au
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