The Sound Of Spring
Phil Lomas details the nesting season of the Spangled Drongo

The People March for Climate Change Action
An overview of the recent climate change march

Peter Garrett’s Big Blue Sky
An interview with Peter Garrett by Samantha Morris

World Surfing Reserve: Burleigh to Snapper
Burleigh to Snapper approved as the 8th World Surfing Reserve
THE PEOPLE MARCH FOR CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION

By Lois Levy

Around the world on the weekend of 28th and 29th November people in all major cities came together to demonstrate, with the Peoples Climate March, the urgent need for effective climate change action just ahead of the international Paris talks between world leaders in December. But this Peoples Climate March is just the beginning of achieving climate justice.

In Brisbane, The Peoples’ Climate March, organised by Australian Youth for Climate Change, took place on Saturday 28th November. In the months prior to this event, Gecko urged all Gold Coasters to join in the March and make it the biggest ever. It started at 9.30am at Queens Park, where the thousands gathered to hear speeches urging our Government to take more effective action on Climate Change.

Gold Coasters travelled by train to join the March in Queens Park where they gathered with the group marching behind the “Our Common Future” banner. This message recognised that it is essential that our leaders took a clear message to Paris that ordinary citizens expect effective action to address this most serious of global issues, climate destabilization, because it will affect every aspect of their lives.

World leaders - including China and the United States of America have already been in talks and made preliminary promises of action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The overall theme for the Peoples Climate March is for recognition that action on global warming will provide new jobs as well as justice for the millions of vulnerable people most affected by climate destabilization.

Prior to the March, a number of high profile people spoke out about the need for immediate action, including Prince Charles, Ban Ki Moon, President Obama, Premier of China Li Kequiang. In June 2015, church leaders joined in the call for action with the Lambeth Declaration on Climate Change, signed by Anglican, Muslim, and Sikh representatives as well as the Catholic Church in England and Wales, the Methodist Conference and Jewish communities.

At the same time, Pope Francis wrote of the urgent need to reduce climate change gases in his Laudato Si encyclical, dedicated to the environment.

In Brisbane, groups marched under different coloured banners, such as purple for many cultures; green for our common place; red for the front line; blue for the future of youth; white for health and science; orange for just transitions and yellow for solutions. There was a place for everyone and every sector faces challenges from a world of rising temperatures and climate instability.

Humans are the only species that have the power to do anything about the threat that irreversible climate destabilization poses to our world and the world we leave for our children to live in. We cannot avoid this reality and the longer effective action is delayed the greater the cost in both monetary and human terms.

Annual Environmental Awards Night

By Anna Itkonen

Each year thousands of people volunteer all over the Gold Coast; some for a day, some for 365 days, some at their local sports club, some to restore their local bushland. At Gecko’s Annual Environmental Awards we focus on thanking and celebrating those volunteers who work tirelessly to improve our natural environment.

This year there were 50 outstanding individuals, groups and organisations added to the long list of Gecko award recipients over the past 19 years.

The night was a celebration of recycling, scientific research, environmental activism, architecture, exercising with a conscience and whale spotting from one’s balcony, just to mention a few.

The award recipients came from all walks of environmental volunteering and it was impossible not to be inspired by each and every one of them. This truly is the Gold Coast community at its best.

An inspirational new category of young environmentalist was added this year and these young people gave the audience new hope that the upcoming generation already has some environmental champions.

The Gecko Management Committee would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all the volunteers who made this night possible as well as the local businesses and councillors who through in-kind and cash support enabled us to honour the environmental stars of our community. This special thank-you goes to Australian Ethical Investment, Currumbin RSL, Tugun Fruit Market, Flannerys Tugun, SeaWorld, Regen Australia, Barefoot Wines, Burleigh Brewery and Councillor Chris Robbins from Division 14, Councillor Daphne McDonald from Division 13 and Councillor Glenn Tozer from Division 9 for their support for the awards night.

Please visit our website for more on our 19th annual environmental awards.

‘THE SOUND OF SPRING’

By Phil Lomas

SPANGLED DRONGOS

Dicrurus bracteatus

A staccato cackle rips through the valley to announce the return of the Spangled Drongos from their winter playground up north. Their metallic rhythm blends with the sweet winter melody of the yellow robins to compose an orchestral anthem for the coming of spring on the Gold Coast.

It’s October, the change of seasons, a time of blooming and a time for breeding. As if unwittingly drawn by its vermilion blossoms, each and every year the drongos return to the same flame tree to weave a new nest. Since last season the old one has dissolved into leaf litter, and now, the new nursery on a neighbouring fork begins a new chapter in the family album.

Incredibly in just three weeks four siblings will be quickly fattened & feathered from an all-day menu, before fleeing the nest to wing their way back up north with the old folks for their first winter vacation.
1. A small cup-shaped nest in which 3-5 blotched eggs are laid is built in the fork of an outer branch.
2. After hatching the young have a very simple routine -- cry-eat-sleep, cry-eat-sleep.
3. A parent's day is never done; every five minutes, dawn to dusk, one or other delivers fresh takeaway back to the nest.
4. The slightest movement on branch & nest instantly prompts an open mouth from the ravenous youngsters.
5. Cicadas, green or brown, are a favourite. Too quickly for the eye (or camera), the adult repeatedly tosses the victim into the air, cracking its shell to make it easier for its baby to swallow.
6. Sleep is vital to accelerate quick growth for the youngsters are most vulnerable to pythons & predatory birds.
7. Pre-packaged poo parcels make for pit-stop nest hygiene.
8. Only a few more brighter and bigger spangles on the male's breast distinguishes it from the female drongo.
9. Danger from above, and the female quickly jumps on the nest and spreads her wings to hide the young.
10. A yawn during a rare rest for a dedicated parent.
11. The drongo is easily identified by its constantly-twitching forked-tail, its erratic stop-start flight, and its constant sharp, metallic chattering.
12. Just three weeks after hatching the young have fledged, placing new demands on parents for a continuous supply of food.
13. Like all youngsters everything arouses curiosity -- ants out for a walk, gnarled twigs, sibling antics, and especially cameras.
14. Anything that flies, breathes, moves or even stands still, runs a fateful gauntlet in drongo territory.
15. Already juveniles have inherited their parents 'attitude', but not yet their flaming eyes.
16. Sleep makes way for constant preening and stretching of wing feathers in preparation for departure.
17. The oldest, only by a day, will be the first to take flight into the big wide world.
18. "Wait for me!"... the youngest will have to wait one more day.
Evening was creeping across the artificial lawn and the cooling day was bringing the longed for relief to Belinda and her family from the ever present heat of each day. That evening Belinda was rummaging through her mother's box of memories, following a casual remark her grandfather had made about a family picnic long ago when her mother was a young girl. Belinda set aside the collected treasures of feathers, special stones, jewellery and pulled out an old and battered photo album.

She started to turn the pages, wondering why she had never noticed the album before. She was astonished to see the faded photos of her mother, two uncles and their friends playing outside during daylight hours. She wondered how this could be. She and her friends were only able to play outside during the cooler times of the night; it was just too hot during the day. Surely they would have been suffering from heat stress, but they looked fine, laughing and throwing a ball around.

Looking more closely at the photographs she noticed the children were wearing garments that covered their whole bodies – how could they stand the heat! And there was a dog sitting watching the children and he wasn’t even panting! In the background were all sorts of plants that Belinda had never seen, though she knew the photo was taken only a couple of kilometres away. The plants in her garden now were all heat tolerant and covered with shade sails and not nearly as attractive as the green, abundant plants in the photos. She could see the house next door and there was no solar or wind equipment providing power to the house. Was Poppy and Granny’s house like that too? It was all very strange.

Belinda decided she would ask her grandfather about the photos, since her mother was at work. She tucked the album under her arm and found Pop sitting with a nature magazine in the family room. He was happy to see Belinda and asked why she looked worried.

“I don’t understand these photos you took when Mum was a little girl. All the kids are playing outside in the day time. How could they do this?” she asked.

“Well” said her grandfather, “Things were very different in those days. It wasn’t as hot during the day as it is now. It is rather a sad story of lost opportunities, but many people are working hard to improve the situation and then your children or grandchildren will be able to play outside in the day.”

“...discredit the science. This battle of credibility went on for decades and the temperature kept rising along with the sea levels. Finally it was accepted by most world leaders that something had to be done and they thrashed out an agreement to reduce greenhouse gases and move to renewable energy. However the agreement was too late to stop the temperature rises altogether, so life had to change for the world’s people and working and playing outdoors in the day was one of the costs of this delay. There were other much more serious impacts, particularly for those displaced by the rising seas and extreme weather events. There were lots of new jobs and inventions too but Poppy thought that Belinda was too young to understand all this yet.

Belinda decided that she would find out much more about the world when it was cooler from her parents, and her teachers. There must have been lots of wonderful things in that time that she wanted to know about. Perhaps she could become a scientist, when she grew up and help the world heal.
Gold Coast – Love Your Birds!

By Kellie Lindsay

Australia boasts some of the most beautiful and peculiar birds on earth. Despite this, our rates of participation in bird related pastimes lags far behind the United Kingdom and the United States. BirdLife Southern Queensland aims to change this, and on October 28th, we were lucky enough to have Rochelle Steven from BirdLife join us for our guest speaker night, to tell us how we can all become more involved in this rich and rewarding pastime. Here are some helpful tips from Rochelle:

Watching birds

When you are starting out, it is best to become familiar with the birds that live in your garden, the local park, or walking routes etc. By gradually expanding your horizons, and birdwatching in new places, you will see more and more different species. Holidays to different parts of Australia or overseas will never be the same again.

About 800 different species of birds have been recorded in Australia. Some are unmistakable, but others are a little more difficult to identify. Fortunately, most of the hard work of identification has already been done, and there are many good field guides to assist you. You can also invest in a phone app such as the Michael Morcombe Field Guide, although these are best for users with a little more experience.

Listening to birds

As you gain experience, you will discover that birdwatching is not just about watching birds at all — it is also about listening. By listening out for bird calls you will increase your awareness of the different birds that are active in the area, as some birds are often easy to hear but difficult to see. There are phone apps and CD’s which contain the calls of most of Australia’s birds, and these are invaluable for learning to recognise their calls and songs. By learning a few bird calls, you will open yourself up to a whole new world of birdwatching.

Equipment

Birdwatching does not have to be an expensive hobby. Usually the most valuable item of birding equipment is a pair of binoculars. Although cheap binoculars are available, if you decide that you are serious about birdwatching it is a good idea to invest in the best binoculars you can afford. Before buying, shop around and ask for informed advice from experienced birders or a bird club.

Bird Clubs

There are many birding clubs throughout Australia that cater for all levels of experience in birdwatching. BirdLife Australia is Australia’s oldest and largest national bird research and conservation organisation. We have regional branches across Australia. These regional and affiliated groups are run by volunteers, and provide many services to birders. They publish newsletters, hold regular meetings, as well as conduct outings to good birding sites. Often they run projects to discover more about the birds in their area. Most importantly, they provide opportunities for anybody with an interest in birds to meet others in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Newcomers are always welcome.

Surveys and Projects

Once you are confident about identifying the birds you see every day, why not participate in one of Birds Australia’s bird monitoring projects? For example, the Atlas of Australian Birds project needs people to simply record what birds they see, with the date and location, anywhere in Australia. Another good project for beginners is the Birds in Backyards program, recording the bird populations in urban areas. And for the more adventurous birder, the Threatened Bird Network has many different bird conservation activities to get involved in.

For more information contact the BirdLife Australia National Office on 1300 730 075.

Be Warned

Be warned: at first glance, birdwatching may seem like an occasional or casual hobby, occupying an otherwise dreary hour or simply providing an excuse for some healthy outdoor exercise. However, its infinite, constantly unfolding variety may lure you on a passionate adventure that will transform your life!
Here are some tips from our Guest Speaker, Rochelle Steven from Birdlife Southern Queensland, on what makes a good bird garden.

**Presence of tall trees**
Mature, indigenous trees provide hollows and other nesting sites, night-roosts, flowers for nectar, insects on leaves, under bark and buzzing around the flowers. Acacias (wattles), eucalypts, casuarinas, banksias or palms may be appropriate.

**Presence of middle and ground level shrubs**
A thick understorey layer of ferns, tall grasses, and shrubs from about ground level to two metres gives security to small birds.

**Permanent water supply**
Although the birdbath does not need to be fancy it needs to be kept filled, as birds will come to rely upon it. It must be carefully sited to allow small birds to dive quickly into nearby cover.

**A garden for the birds**
Below are a few examples of plants that attract birds to your garden; some provide shelter, some food, others both. Try to have a balance—too many of a particular type of plant will attract a limited range of birds. For example large, showy grevilleas tend to attract the more aggressive nectar-feeders like Red Wattlebird and Noisy Miner, reducing the opportunities for smaller birds. Please check the indigenous plants of your own area before making a selection.

**Shelter for small birds (scrub wrens, fairy-wrens, thornbills)**
Prickly dense shrubs – hakea, acacia, sweet bursaria, burgan, leptospermum.

**Shelter for bigger birds (magpies, owls, Tawny Frogmouths, parrots)**
Tall trees – eucalypts, casuarina, banksia, acacia.

**Insect hosts for robins, wrens, treecreepers**
Acacia, bursaria, correia, hakea, leptothespermum, melaleuca

**Nectar for honeyeaters, lorikeets**
Eucalypts, correas, epacris, grevillea, mistletoe, xanthorrhoea

**Seeds for cockatoos, finches, pigeons**
Acacia, casuarina, native grasses – poa, sedges

**Multi-purpose**
Acacia, banksia, eucalypts, grevillea, hakea, leptospermum, melaleuca

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**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Should I feed the birds?**
A constant supply of ‘artificial’ food can be unhealthy for birds. Feeding birds can attract large numbers of one species at the expense of diversity. Seeds in some wild seed mixes are potential weeds. Groups of birds at a feeding station become easy targets for birds of prey, cats and foxes. It is better to create a bird habitat through planting and providing water.

**Should I be careful with snail bait and other garden poisons?**
Avoiding the use of poisons in your garden can increase the number of insects available to birds.

**How can I keep birds away from my fruit tree?**
Try hanging a hawk shape above the tree, nets, and the more permanent solution of building a cage around the tree.

**What should I do with sick or baby birds I find?**
Baby birds are best left where found. Parents will often continue to feed them. Registered animal welfare agents can be contacted to care for sick birds. Your local vet will be able to give you a contact.

**How can I stop birds flying into windows?**
Stick-on hawk shapes may help to deter birds flying directly into large windows.

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**References:**

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**Photo courtesy of Geoff Jacobs**
So you’ve heard of meals-on-wheels, driven past the animal shelter or maybe even participated in a Clean Up Australia Day and you sometimes think you would like to help out but have no clue where to start.

The first thing you need to know about not-for-profit community groups is that most of them have two things in common:

1. They are time and money poor yet have a huge demand for their services.
2. They are driven by one or more very passionate people who are usually volunteers.

Staff, whether paid or otherwise are always under pressure, they are determined and care deeply about what they do.

So how can you get involved in a meaningful way that benefits everyone?

Volunteering
Above and beyond the financial gains to the economy, volunteering enhances social cohesion, strengthens communities and provides benefits to you the volunteer. Benefits include an increase in social inclusion, physical and psychological wellbeing and career opportunities. If you happen to be part of the population who isn’t trying to balance three kids, two jobs and 100 other things to do, you may find you have a couple hours a week to spare. Below are my top tips for volunteering:

• Know what you can offer. Know your skill set, what types of things you might like to do and know when and where you can help. ie. time you have available and whether you prefer to work at their premise or remotely from home.

• Community groups will vary greatly in their capacity to manage volunteers and in some cases just the thought of managing volumes of work is completely daunting for them, but that doesn’t mean they don’t want your help. Be clear in your approach and keep it simple.

• Volunteering Gold Coast http://www.volunteeringgc.org.au/ is a great place to start. It is where community groups list the volunteer positions they have available.

• Gecko is in a very fortunate position where they can offer a wide variety of volunteering opportunities and have a fabulous team to support new volunteers. Volunteer positions available are listed with Volunteering GC and on the Gecko website. www.gecko.org.au

• Be respectful of the history of the group, take time to learn their ethos and protocols. After some time spent on this your own contributions can be directed in helpful ways.

Donations and Membership
If you ask any not-for-profit community organisation what is top of their wish list, they’ll tell you MONEY. It is true that money can’t buy you love but it can buy resources. Remember how I mentioned those passionate people behind these groups? Well they can do an awful lot of good with a little bit of cash.

• Consider a small, regular donation. Some organisations will be structured to manage this for you and others will be happy to receive whatever you have to give whenever you can afford it.

• Most community groups will have some sort of membership program. Member statistics are often used when applying for grants and reporting to authorities, and a group with a strong membership base can more easily prove that it’s meeting its objectives.

• Don’t disregard those sometimes irritating seasonal appeals. If you’re feeling generous at Christmas (or tax time) buy the slightly more expensive cards or chocolate, which sees proceeds going to a community group. Do read labels carefully though.

• Give money when you’re dead! Leaving money or property is becoming more popular. Have a chat with your solicitor and write your donation into your will.

• Gecko offers two types of membership:
  1. Gecko Membership which consists of a once-off fee and you become a member for life.
  2. Gecko Friends Program where a monthly or annual payment is made. To find out more about the benefits of becoming a Gecko Member or Friend please see page 18, or visit http://gecko.org.au/about-gecko/friends

• Remember all donations over $2.00 to registered organisations are tax deductible.

As with anything, it all starts with the first small step. Why not pop your name on mailing lists of local interest groups and turn up to their next meeting, bake sale or planting day and just say ‘Hi’.
“Always will be,” he said. “It never goes away.”

I’d just read the first hundred or so pages of his book *Big Blue Sky* and was struck nearly immediately by one of the images in the centre of the book, reflecting a much younger Garrett. It was a clipping from *The Sun* in 1979 actually – one of those Q-A things with emerging bands, and Garrett said he disliked journalists. Given that he was only 25 I was curious as to what happened to make him think journalists were so dodgy so early.

He laughed.

“At sometimes happens with in-jokes, people didn’t quite get the humour,” he chuckled. “I think in that thing, Telly Savalas was a role model.”

“Look it wouldn’t surprise anyone in public life who’s been misrepresented and who feel that journalists have an important role to play. Many perform that role well and then there’s others who don’t check facts, put a spin on things and play ‘gotcha’ journalism – who don’t abide by journalism code of ethics,” Garrett said.

“Wherever I could, consistent with policies of the government, I was able to help people,” he said. “And don’t ever forget Caring for Our Country – the National Reserve System got $180 million.”

He also speaks fondly of Reef Rescue and the impact that program had on rural land managers.

“Garrett’s move from musician to activist to conservation politics as President of Australian Conservation Foundation and then Labor politician has been well documented. It’s clear as well that he knew what he was in for when he did make that move to political public life. He says that he was “that” guy.

“Yeah, look, all that stuff is anybody’s guess at the moment,” he said, adding that whatever he does will be low-key.

“The Oils? It’s just a case of if the stars line up and the spirits are willing then there may be a time and place to get up on stage together.”

But of course, when talking about music and Peter Garrett’s life story, it’s not long before the conversation moves back to music. He has fond memories of playing live gigs on the Gold Coast and shares some of them with me. Not surprisingly, one of those favourites was a show at The Spit, when talk was just starting around development of that area.

Garrett recently let slip to journalist Emma Alberici that the process of writing his biography saw him pick up his guitar and write songs again. And he hasn’t ruled out reforming Midnight Oil.

It’s great that people want to see the band again.”

Peter Garrett’s biography *Big Blue Sky* is available now through Allen & Unwin and Peter Garrett spoke to Samantha Morris for Blank GC.
GECKO needs lots of FRIENDS!

After 25 years of progress, Gecko is now firmly established as a peak environmental body. However, with the cuts in funding and grants recently, to ensure our continuing service to the community, Gecko needs to be more financially independent.

**Gecko’s Vision:** "A vibrant Gold Coast community where people and animals, plants, water air and earth all form a happy and harmonious system.”

On the 25th February 2015, Gecko launched ‘Friends of Gecko’ – a regular ‘Giving Programme’ where people will sign up to give a regular donation. This will automatically be deducted from their credit card on the 15th of the month after sign up.

**Friends of Gecko will help us to:**
- Promote the conservation, protection and restoration of the Gold Coast ecosystems
- Assist with funding of educational programs
- Increase connections with Gold Coast’s environment and the community
- Ensure the sustainability of the surrounding natural environment for generations to come
- Coordinate annual events such as Clean Up Australia Day and Gold Coast Green Week
- Oversee bush regeneration groups to rehabilitate damaged areas

As a Green or Emerald Friend of Gecko you will:
- Have a tree planted in your name on the Gold Coast with your own personal message
- Receive a personal invitation to come plant your tree with our Bushcare group
- Have your name added to the ‘Friends of Gecko’ tree in the Gecko office
- Become a member of Gecko and receive up-to-date environmental information of what is occurring in the Gold Coast
- Be able to choose how often you would like to donate (monthly, quarterly, or yearly)

As an Emerald Friend you will receive a larger tree planted in your name and also receive a free session to Eco Explorers.

To find our ‘Gecko Friends’ we will have a professional market stall at the majority of large Farmers/Crafts Markets covering the whole of the Gold Coast, on a rotating basis, so that most markets are covered every three months.

Volunteers are now being sought to help operate the market stalls (contact greenteam@gecko.org.au)

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**WHAT YOU RECEIVE AS A GECKO FRIEND**

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<tr>
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<th>Green Friend</th>
<th>Emerald Friend</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tree planted in your name</strong></td>
<td>✓ Small tree</td>
<td>✓ Larger Tree</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Personalised message on tree &amp; on ‘Gecko House’ tree</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Receive Gecko pin</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Lifetime Gecko membership</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Receive ‘Out &amp; About’ email weekly</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Receive ‘Hills to Headlands’ eMagazine every second month</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Personal invitation to come plant your tree</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Certificate of appreciation</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Gecko Welcome Pack</strong></td>
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**EMERALD MEMBERSHIP ADDITIONAL BENEFITS**

- Receive 1 session to Eco Explorers
- Gecko T-Shirt
- Recognition on Gecko website
- Receive ‘Hills to Headlands’ magazine in hardcopy

* Your credit card information will be billed on the 15th of every month, quarter, half year or yearly depending on your choice
* Annual receipt statements issued July post end of tax year
* All gifts are tax deductible
* Our credit card payment system is PCI Compliant, ensuring that cards are stored securely

WE NEED YOUR FRIENDSHIP NOW!

Join up now by ringing our office to have a signup form sent to you or go to our website and download the sign up form at http://www.gecko.org.au/friends

All forms must be returned to our office as we do not accept Credit Card information on the internet.

**Address:** 139 Duringan Street, Currumbin QLD 4223
**Email:** greenteam@gecko.org.au
**Telephone:** 07 5534 1412
World Surfing Reserve: Burleigh to Snapper

By Anne Kercher

You’re on top of Kirra hill overlooking Kirra and Coolangatta toward Snapper Rocks. A few photographers have set up around you. What is all the fuss about? The skies are a smoky pinkish grey and a southerly breeze is blowing and your eyes hover past the attractive white, wide sandy beaches meandering to the point, toward the horizon to your right and you focus. There are glassy sets of waves rolling in consistently. You watch one fortunate surfer catch a wave and ride it for a cool 15 seconds all the way towards you. This is how it is here on the Coast: plenty of pristine waves for all the pros and would-be surfers.

Well the latest wonderful news comes from Andrew McKinnon, Chairman of Gold Coast World Surfing Reserve Inc.

‘The southern end of the Gold Coast from Burleigh Point to Snapper Rocks, a 16 km stretch has been approved as the 8th World Surfing Reserve by the world governing body Save the Waves Coalition on the 15th of October, 2015. Gold Coast won the bid from Noosa Heads and Brazil. Only one World Surfing Reserve per year is selected.

Save The Waves Vision Council, a highly qualified international panel of 15, including Academics, Environmental and Social Scientists, International Surfing Administrators, Surfrider Foundation etc. were suitably impressed by our world iconic point breaks namely Burleigh, the Alley, Kirra and the Snapper Superbank. The Gold Coast is home to 23 World Surfing Champions and is ready to launch a world first in a Surf Management Plan that is the authority for the Gold Coast World Surfing Reserve.

In March 2016 the Gold Coast World Surfing Reserve will be dedicated in a special Dedication Ceremony at Snapper Rocks that will be attended by the Premier of QLD Anastacia Palaszczuk, Governor of Queensland Paul de Jersey, Gold Coast Mayor Tom Tate, Federal Member of McPherson Karen Andrews, Surfing stakeholders and various dignitaries:

The Gold Coast’s surfing culture, its beautiful beaches, perfect point breaks and world champions past and present, all helped to secure the award.

Save The Waves, an international group, actively identifies, designates and preserves notable waves, surf zones and surrounding environments around the world. The Gold Coast’s nomination of a WSR was two years in the process.

The first international professional surfing event took place in 1977 in Burleigh. The World Surfing Reserve is a prime location for world class events including the Quiksilver and Roxy Pro competitions. World champions like Peter Townsend, Rabbit Bartholomew, Mark Occhilupo, World Women’s Champ Stephanie Gilmore, Mick Fanning, Joel Parkinson, and more were given opportunity to grow their surfing talent in this iconic environment. Now we can officially preserve the WSR and leave a legacy for future generations of young Australians.

For more information go to www.worldsurfingreserves.org www.savethewaves.org

Photo Courtesy of Paul Macklin

Environment
The Blue Triangle Butterfly

Cooraine the Butterfly (Cooraine means ‘the wind’ in an Aboriginal language) By Dereka Ogden

Cooraine in a tiny egg hung under a leaf, then hatched, a caterpillar now
A lovely colour green, she was so small she knew she must
eat and eat and eat.

She was so bright and colourful. She thought she looked quite smart.

A tasty meal for some she’d make if birds could see her there, but leaves gave cover as she ate, they’d have to look quite hard.
She munched and munched and grew and grew until she felt quite tired.
She hung below a little twig and felt her skin grow hard.

She had a sleep that took a while She was so very tired.
In her shell she grew some wings And now she had six legs.
She stretched and stretched and broke her shell.
All crumpled out she crawled. Her wings she spread them out to dry She was a butterfly.

November, 2015 GeckoEd News

By Dereka Ogden

GeckoEd has been busy lately conducting an excursion with 63 Lindisfarne children in Year 3. We had half of the children in the mangroves and half in Tarrabora wetlands and the topic was sustainability. Our message was that sustainability begins in maintaining healthy ecosystems and so perpetuating the benefits derived from them, which are among other things clean air, water and soil essential for most life forms on Earth.

Coomera Anglican College came here again to do their annual community service. We have had them coming for many years. Last year the Year 9 students planted another bed for our Learnscape, the one with the frog pond.

This year they dug out more grass, spread organic soil, planted the plants, mulched and watered them. Only one student had done this type of work before and so on the first day they were exhausted by night time. The teacher and supervising teacher were very enthusiastic and consider it very beneficial for the students to do this work. The supervisor of the community service programs said, they would be here next year for sure.

Another day we picked up rubbish behind the PBC High School in the mangroves and the next day they sorted it out and catalogued it all. It took them three days to completely finish the garden. We also played some re-enforcement games to lock in the knowledge given to them about mangroves, habitats and gardening.

Coming up are two excursions, one with Emmaus Catholic College from Jimboomba and will involve 87 Year 2 children. This one presents some logistical problems with so many children in the mangroves, but we will manage.

The students from Bedok Secondary School in Singapore will also be in the mangroves, doing scientific measuring and learning about the organisms living in the mangroves. The second day will be spent in the dunes in the morning and learning about bushfire management in Australia in the afternoon. This is the second visit from this school as their Year 9 came last year too.
Cane Toads: What you need to know

By Grace Patterson

As the weather warms up and the nights become more humid, Gold Coast residents prepare themselves for the annual invasion of cane toads. Cane toads are a feral species of toad that were released in North Queensland in 1935 in order to control the growing population of cane beetles that were devastating local sugar cane crops. Unfortunately, it was later discovered that cane toads are unable to jump very high and are consequently unable to eat cane beetles, which tend to dwell on the upper stalks of the sugar cane crops.

While only a relatively small number of cane toads were introduced into Australia, they are notorious breeders and quickly developed a thriving population. One male and female cane toad can lay approximately 33,000 eggs each time they spawn. Some particularly fertile breeding pairs have been recorded to produce as many as 60,000 eggs. Now cane toads run rampant on golf courses, in street gutters and local backyards. Worse still, the cane toads have no natural predators in Australia and the toxic secretions produced by a cane toad will poison any animal that dares prey on it. The toads are so poisonous, that even the water which cane toads and their offspring have inhabited becomes toxic to animals when ingested. Even the hardiest of Australia’s snake species are unable to hunt cane toads. In fact, many Australian museums have many preserved snakes in jars that were killed by cane toad toxins so fast, that the toad remains in their mouths, undigested.

While cane toads are recognised as one of Australia’s greatest environmental pests and the government still seeks to control cane toad populations, there is no longer a legal requirement for local residents to cull them. When killing toads, it’s essential to use humane and reliable methods that result in fast loss of consciousness and prevent distress to the toad. So it’s best to leave it to the experts! While you may be tempted to kill cane toads that enter your property, you should be extremely wary. Do not, under any circumstances, attempt to club, incinerate or run over cane toads. One of the main reasons for this is that people are mistakenly killing native frogs instead of cane toads. Many native frog species look similar to cane toads, especially if they are seen at night. Unfortunately, as cane toads are also amphibians, they are attracted to the same areas as native frogs and look for sources of food, water, shelter and breeding grounds. Native frogs that are commonly mistaken for cane toads include the Great barred frog, Ornate burrowing frog, Tusked frog, Scarlet-sided pobblebonk and Gungan. Native frogs are integral to our local biodiversity and are legally protected fauna which cannot, and should not be, harmed.

In order to correctly identify a cane toad, check for the following characteristics. A cane toad will have a distinguishable bulging poison gland on their shoulders, visibly warty and a bony ‘M’ shaped brow line above their nose (see images). Cane toads, unlike native frogs, will not have suckers on their toes. Fortunately, unlike cane toads, frogs are effective climbers and jumpers, so it is possible to prevent cane toads from entering your property, while still allowing access to native frogs. If you are worried that the critters are posing a risk to your family or pets, you can create a cane toad fence that will exclude them from your property. If you wish to create a fence, it is recommended that it is at least 60cm tall and completely vertical. The fence should also extend below ground level by at least 15cm to prevent the toads from burrowing underneath. While you can use many different materials for cane toad fencing, you must ensure that the material used has no gaps. Juvenile cane toads are very small and can manoeuvre through extremely small passages. Avoid using wooden paling fences due to their gaps and tendency to rot and disintegrate.

One of the most effective ways to create cane toad fencing is by using shade cloth and star pickets. Begin by digging a 6-inch trench beneath the fence line. Hammer in star pickets into the bottom of the trench, ensuring that the pickets are no more than 1.6 metres apart. Attach the shade cloth to each picket, beginning with the final picket and attaching to each picket in order until you reach the final picket. Make sure the cloth is pulled tight between each picket and that 15cms of shade cloth drapes neatly into the bottom of the trench. Finally, fill in the trench with soil, ensuring that you cover both sides of the shade cloth and leave the surface completely level. If you already have a wooden or metal fence, but it has gaps, you can dig a trench beneath the existing fence and attach a shade cloth to the bottom half of the fence (at least 60cm high). Drape the cloth beneath the fence and then fill in the trench with soil.

So in the coming months, rather than donning your golf club, create a cane toad exclusion zone to prevent any undue harm befalling our local frog species. By installing an appropriate fence you can ensure your backyard is free of cane toads, while still protecting and supporting our native frog population.
Our Koala population is very important and vulnerable. So much so, that the Federal Minister for the Environment listed it as a threatened species in Queensland, among other states. What can we do to help save the koala?

As stewards of this iconic creature, and national treasure, motorists need to be vigilant as road trauma is the number one cause for koala rescue on the Gold Coast this year. Dogs can attack koalas. If you are a pet owner restrain your dogs on rural properties and while walking them. If you see a stray dog please report it to the Gold Coast Council’s Animal Management Unit on 07 5581 6664.

If you own a rural block, Land for Wildlife is a voluntary scheme that helps private landowners protect habitat on their land for all native plants and animals, including koalas. Report koala sightings to 1300 465 326 and injuries to Wildcare Australia 07 5527 2444.

Be involved in Koala Counts. There is a national citizen science survey developed by wildlife experts at the National Parks Association of NSW. Annually, conservation enthusiasts join in the Koala count across Australia to build an accurate picture of koala numbers and locations. The last project was open from 7 Nov 2015 to 22 Nov 2015. The numbers were 906 sightings, koalas, 159 locations, 352 members.


Call Gecko on: 5534 1412 (10am - 2pm Monday - Friday) or email us at: office@gecko.org.au

“ To waste, to destroy our natural resource, to skin and exhaust the land instead of using it so as to increase its usefulness, will result in undermining in the days of our children the very prosperity which we ought by right to hand down to them amplified and developed.”

Theodore Roosevelt

Cleaning up the Coast again in 2016

It all started in 1989 when Ian Kiernan, a concerned Sydney-sider and a passionate sailor, decided to take action to make a real difference. He sailed around the world a few years earlier and was concerned and disgusted with the amount of rubbish floating around in the ocean. And where do you start when you think globally and act locally? You start in your piece of the ocean - in this case, Sydney Harbor, where he was joined by co-founder Kim McKay (who went on to initiate Clean Up the World) to get everyone to participate in the biggest community clean up of the Harbour to that date. Approximately 40,000 Sydney-siders donated their time and effort in 1989 and the movement has been growing ever since. In 2015, an estimated 526,268 volunteers at 6,333 sites across Australia took part in the 26th annual clean up.

From the early steps of Clean Up Australia Day, the Gold Coast took part. The City of Gold Coast has hosted the event here for almost 20 years and Gecko has been proudly organising it on their behalf. This is a wonderful example of an event where any one member of the community can join in and make a real difference. Over the years, an estimated 20,000 Gold Coasters have cleaned up their stretch of beach, their local park or their local wetland down the road. Following each event, organisers have looked at new ways to add to the success and impact of Clean Up Australia Day and now people can register litter hotspots, be informed of clean ups on the Coast throughout the year and a new generation of creative and innovative youth have taken the lead. The effects of a simple idea have reached far and wide.

In an ideal world of course, we would not need community clean ups. In an ideal world we would not consume as much, we would not discard as much and what we consumed and discarded we would do so sustainably, responsibly and respectfully. Needless to say, we are not there yet. Our vision and aim at Gecko is to keep on coordinating these clean ups for as long as they are needed while we work to change and inspire communities, businesses and governments to reuse, reduce, recycle and rethink.

So what can you do right here and right now? You can become a site coordinator and register a clean up site for 2016 for your group, club or open it up for anyone in your neighbourhood. You can join an already registered site as a volunteer and meet new people while doing something worthwhile. You can register a litter hotspot and get us to promote it, or you can simply spread the word.

For anything and everything related to Clean Up Australia Day please feel free to contact our clean up team at Gecko by emailing events@gecko.org.au.
Garrawi has a friend whose name is Tingari. They fly next to each other in the flock and cuddle up on the same branch at night to go to sleep. The flock is on the ground feeding on grass seeds, when the lookout screeches a warning and as they all fly upwards, they see two people with nets in their hands, swinging them around, trying to catch a cockatoo. These unkind people catch Australian birds, give them something to sleep, then they put them in a piece of plastic pipe and send them overseas in planes to sell them.

On a footpath they found a bag that has split open. Hundreds of seeds lay on the ground. The birds are all busy filling up their tummies. Their thick tongues help their beaks take the outside husks off the seeds. Garrawi will have his turn to eat, when one of the birds on the ground has had enough and will fly up to take his turn as lookout cockatoo.

Suddenly Garrawi squawks and screeches and the whole flock flies upward. He has seen two cats creeping up on the flock just about to pounce, hidden by a hedge. The noisy birds do not hear them because their wings make such a din, but both cats howl, “Would you believe it?” one shrieks. The other hisses “I’m so furious. I could have had a great bird dinner. Now I’ll have to have that horrible stuff out of a tin, that my people give me.”

The two of them slink off home, while the flock quickly comes back to finish their meal, including Garrawi.

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The flock look back and hear a terrible sound. Poor Tingari is crying out, “Help me, let me go!”

She is caught in one of those nets and is flustered madly trying to get out. One of the men lifts a cage door swings open. Out come the galahs. He runs towards the house and drops his cage and the door flies open. “Yuk one of these birds has poohed on me. Yuk! Yuk!”

He sets to work with his very strong beak pulling and pushing at the bits of metal. It takes quite a long while, but finally they hear a click and the cage door swings open. “Come on, let’s get out of here,” he tells Tingari.

“But what about the other birds? They’ve been telling me they were caught the same way I was. We can’t just leave them here,” Tingari pleads.

“Ok,” Garrawi agrees, and the two of them set to work to open the other two cages. They hear a squawk from up in the nearby gum tree, and the two birds look around and see that the men are coming back. Seeing a cage with no bird in it, one of them angrily asks the other, “Did you shut that cage properly?”

“Of course I did. You think I’m an idiot?” and the two men argue until one says, “Well come on, we can’t afford to let the others get out too,” and they pick up the other cages and walk towards the house. The whole flock rushes down and flaps their wings around the men’s heads, making angry noises and some of them land on their heads and start pecking.

“Thank you, thank you, thank you,” they chirp and off they fly.

“OK let’s go then guys,” says Garrawi, and off they go on their long flight talking and complaining all the way home about their horrible experience.
SAY NO TO PALM OIL

PALM OIL FACTS
- 65% of vegetable oil used today is Palm Oil... and growing...
- 85% of Palm Oil comes from Indonesia and Malaysia.
- 90% of Orangutan habitat has been destroyed in the last 20 years.

Oil Palms like to grow in areas of high rainfall and temperature. JUST LIKE RAINFOREST!

NEED MORE CONVINCING?
Health effects of consuming Palm Oil:
- Higher risk of cardiovascular disease.
- Increased blood cholesterol levels.

NEED EVEN MORE CONVINCING?
2015 SOUTH EASTERN HAZE
- Due to illegal slash and burn clearing of carbon-rich peatlands in preparation for Oil Palm planting.

Australian food standards allow palm oil to be labelled only as “Vegetable Oil”
QUICK TEST – Saturated fat around 50% - Probability of Palm Oil high