



# Topic of Capricorn

The *Topic of Capricorn* is the official newsletter of the Capricorn Conservation Council Inc

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## Coordinators corner



**CCC coordinator Pam Malyszek** (photo by Sara Hanggi)

Hi everyone, welcome to the first edition of *Topic of Capricorn* for 2008. I hope we are all feeling refreshed and ready to face the year of the rat.

As I write this the rain continues to soak the grounds in what has been a refreshing change to the dry Aussie summers of late. I have been getting reports from around the region that some of our native wildlife are making the most of the wet weather, with Brigalow flowering and the Fitzroy River Turtles extending their laying season.

I too am in for a change. I would like to announce that my time as coordinator at CCC has come to an end with the start of my new role at Greening Australia. I will remain involved with CCC as a member and look forward to tackling some of the environmental issues that face us in 2008.

I give a warm welcome to our new members, and a reminder to all that if you wish to get active on any of our issues, or would simply like to become more involved, then please don't hesitate to give us a call at the hut.

A big thankyou to all those who were keen to participate in the Shoalwater Bay Training Area field day. Unfortunately the day was postponed when staff of the Department of Defence were unexpectedly required elsewhere. The field day will be rescheduled later on in the year.

## Water hyacinth clogs river

The notorious weed Water Hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) has been a battle to control in our waterways since it's introduction as an ornamental in the 1890's. Locally, the Water hyacinth explosion after the construction of the Barrage in the 1970's prompted the Rockhampton City Council to introduce a regular weed maintenance program which had been effective for 30 years. It aimed at tackling infestations when they were confined and manageable. Unfortunately this program stopped in recent years and now we are seeing it's devastating effects despite the introduction of several biocontrols.



Photo: Hyacinth clogging Lion Ck (23/1/08)

It's ability to proliferate and clog waterways is not only a hazard to boaties, but has ghastly environmental consequences. Reduction of water flow; destruction of habitat; creating a haven for mosquitoes; and degradation of water quality by reducing oxygen content, are a few perils that come from letting this pest get out of hand.

CCC has asked RCC to identify their actions to effectively manage water hyacinth, with hope that the weed control program will once again be reinstated.

*By Pam Malyszek*

## Weir will the wildlife go?

The Fitzroy Basin has long provided the region with a steady supply of fresh water. However, it seems that the pressures of mines and agriculture will see our rivers turn into a series of ponds with the high number of dams and weirs proposed. At present, proposed infrastructure in the Fitzroy Basin include raising the barrage and Eden Bann weir, constructing a weir at either Rookwood/Tralangie/Bunavon, and building both Nathan and Connors Dam. In an attempt to 'drought proof' Queensland, it seems the government has lost sight of the importance of waterways to the environment.

CCC finds it worrying that despite Rockhampton currently using less than half of its 50,000ML/year

water allocation, the government is jumping ahead and implementing a flurry of new dams, weirs and pipelines, without introducing any water restrictions to the Rockhampton region.

There is a real concern for the future of rare flora and fauna, including the survival of the iconic Fitzroy River Turtle who need clear, flowing water to survive. Current infrastructure has already dwindled the population to a 'vulnerable' status.



Photo: Hyacinth clogging the river above the barrage

- . Other worries about the infrastructure include:
    - Loss of riparian habitat that hosts a range of native wildlife that are already pressured into these areas from land clearing. Where will these go when the water levels rise?
    - Weeds and Blue Green algae will flourish in the ponded areas created from the infrastructure. Who will pay to control this?
      - River flow is related to fish biomass (high flow = high fish numbers/mass). What will happen with lower fish numbers?
      - Structural barriers restrict movement of migratory fish (Barramundi) and turtles.
      - Loss of riffle zones which provide aeration of water, and niche habitats;
    - Migratory birds and bats will lose a food source that have long been provided by vegetation.
- CCC is currently trying to obtain 6 of the preliminary environmental impact assessments of the proposed barrage raising in Rockhampton. These include studies on the Fitzroy River Turtle, Crocodiles, the barrage fishway, and native vegetation and terrestrial ecosystems.

*By Pam Malyszek*

## Mt Jim Crow overlooks superdump

CCC has concerns about a proposed landfill site that will be situated in amongst 14 rare volcanic plugs. The 400 acres set aside for the dump can be found at the base of Pine Mountain on Old Byfield Road. Despite the fact that the sites geology is prime for a landfill with heavy clays being prominent, CCC believes that the area's environmental assets will be compromised.

The significance of the trachyte plugs, including Mt Jim Crow, Pine Mt, Camp Hill Rock and 3 other unnamed plugs, have warranted their placement on the Register of National estate. Providing habitat to rare flora and fauna, these treasures should be realized for their future in eco-tourism, not as a viewing point for waste products.

The property owners, George and Mary Seiffert, currently use the area as a hobby farm, however it is regularly used by various groups including bushwalkers, cadets and birdwatchers.

CCC is currently trying to obtain the list of alternative landfill sites in order to work with all stakeholders to find a solution to this issue. Craig Dungleison from Rockhampton City Council Recycles has kindly offered to talk to CCC members

on the current landfill scenario in February. A public forum is also expected to be held sometime in the new year.

*By Pam Malyszek*

### **GUEST SPEAKER**

Cliff Bunn talks on coastal care

CCC has invited Cliff Bunn, a key member of the Emu Park Bushcare group, to talk on his involvement with the vegetation regeneration at Coconut Point, Zilzie. Donated by the developers Seaspray, the 60 ha piece of coast has been transformed from a weed infested shamble to a National Park which is now enjoyed by all.

With vast improvements over the last 18 months, Cliff will describe the ins and outs of this wonderful transformation. All members are welcome to attend the talk. Details are:

**Date:** Wednesday, 30 February 2008

**When:** 7:30 pm

**Where:** CCC, 1 Livermore St, Haigh Park

## Threatened Species Recovery Plans out for Comment

The Federal Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and The Arts have two threatened species recovery plans of local species open for public comment. Comments are due to the department by 14th February. In both cases there are significant potential environmental threats to the species and further studies are required.

CCC has been involved for many years in the campaign against the proposed Nathan Dam on the Dawson River between Taroom and Theodore. The release of the recovery plan for Boggomoss snail (*Adclarkia dawsonensis*) provides a further incentive for conservation action which might lead to the Minister for Environment rejecting this proposal. The snail is found only in one of the mound springs (locally called boggomosses) in the Dawson River floodplain above the proposed dam site and at Isla Delusion Crossing downstream on the Dawson. Isla Delusion also has one of the best stands of the Vulnerable Dawson Fan Palm (*Livistonia nitida*). The construction of the Nathan Dam would lead to the flooding of many of the boggomosses near the Glebe Weir including the identified site of the snail.

The other recovery plan is for the critically endangered Capricorn subspecies of the Yellow Chat which occurs within Broadsound, the Fitzroy Delta, and on Curtis Island. While all sites are at potential risk from sea level rise the most immediate threats are related to expansion of industrial, port and pipeline projects in the Fitzroy Delta and possible grazing land management and ponded pasture creation at other sites. Sadly, the site on Curtis Island where the species was rediscovered just over 10 years ago is poorly managed due to overgrazing by a long term lessee despite being a Conservation Park theoretically managed by the Environmental Protection Agency. To the credit of the pastoralists around Broadsound some properties seem to have the right formula to give this attractive little bird some assurance of a longer term future.

If anybody wants to comment of the recovery plans the links are provided below.

If you want advice on how to comment on the recovery plans please contact CCC.

<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/publications/adclarkia-dawsonensis.html>

<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/publications/epthianura-crocea-macgregori.html>

## Website of the Month: Australian Backyard Wildlife Habitat

Ever felt like you would like to do more to help the environment but are not sure how? Here is a great chance for your average, everyday urban /city dwelling to be a haven for our native flora and fauna.

The Wildlife Protection Association of Australia have introduced the Australian Backyard Wildlife Habitat Certification for those whose backyard, balconies, patios or rooftop gardens provide the essentials needed for small native species. Schools and small acreage blocks are also welcomed to get involved.



The website ([www.australian-backyard-wildlife.com](http://www.australian-backyard-wildlife.com)) point out that loss of native habitat, pollution, climate change, and the introduction of exotic weeds and feral animals, are all contributors to our ever declining native wildlife. It also states that 40% of our bush birds will be lost in the next 5 years, and that frogs are rapidly disappearing. However, all is not doom and gloom.

The web page is ripe with doable ideas that any lay man or woman can apply to their home. Here are a few examples:

- Moist shady areas or a small shallow pond with a uncut grass and vegetation around it will provide a great frog habitat.
- Add native plants to your balcony and backyard. Try to use plants that grow naturally in your area. Visitors may include butterflies, honey eaters or small insect eating bats.
- Put nest boxes in your trees to provide a nesting area for wildlife. Make sure the boxes are a suitable size for each animal.
- Have a patch of native grasses. Insects and birds will love it.

Even if one isn't seeking accreditation, these are just a few of the many great ways that you can help do your part to restore some of the ecological balance in CQ.

By Pam Malyszek

## RUWI signs boost creek profile

CCC has sourced funding for a Rockhampton Urban Waterways Initiative (RUWI)—Interpretative Signage Project. The signage will identify two prominent creeks and their importance to the Fitzroy River and the Great Barrier Reef. A total of five signs will be produced, of these, four will be creek identification signs, and one will be a detailed educational sign. The installments aim to improve the communities interest and understanding of Rockhampton's creek system.

As part of this project, CCC will hold a RUWI logo competition, which is expected to begin in mid February. Details about the competition will be given at a later date.

This project received its funding from the from the 'Rockhampton City Council – Community Organisations Assistance Program, July 2007— June 2008', and is part of a joint effort with partners of the Initiative including the Fitzroy Basin Elders, Society for Growing Australian Plants, Fitzroy Basin Association, Rocky Creeks Group and Greening Australia.

Other upcoming projects that fall under the RUWI banner include the revegetation of Thozets Creek, and a series of five educational workshops on the importance of Rockhampton's urban waterways.

By Pam Malyszek

## Species in the Spotlight

### Red Tailed Black Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus banksii*

At an approximate 50-65cm in length, this vocal cockatoo is hard to miss. Commonly noted in large flocks the Red Tailed Black Cockatoo feeds on the riparian vegetation along the Fitzroy River. Characterised by a strong heavy bill built for crushing, cracking and tearing, the food source of this species includes nuts, seeds, flowers of species including the Forest She-Oak, Coastal She-Oak, Dallachys Gum, Lemon Scented Gum, White Cedar, Cocky Apples, Brushbox, Poplar Gum and Pink Bloodwood (Melzer & Plumb, 2007) just to mention a few.

Jet black plumage is offset by vibrant red panels in the tail feathers, with the females distinguished by barring and sometimes yellow- red colouration (Morcombe, 2000) further to that the females have an attractive speckling pattern of fine yellow –white blotches on the face and upper body. The males sport a thick crest, which they use in all manners of communication, and when this species feels threatened they often noted to spread their wings wide to make themselves appear bigger than they really are.

You can identify them by their distinctive call which is sometimes a harsh, grating "Karaak, Karaak" or a squeaky wheezing "Kreeik". Certainly the vocabulary of this species is well advanced, with different calls used for different purposes. An individual separated from the rest of the flock emits a panicked "Karaak Karaak" call which tugs at the heart strings.

Flocks are known to travel widely and migrate over

### War of the Weeds

#### *Catharanthus roseus* (Pink Periwinkle)

A native from Madagascar, this herbaceous perennial is easily identified by its pink to white flowers. Whilst listed as an endangered plant in its homeland, this exotic is toxic to cattle and our native wildlife from the milky sap it exudes. Its hardiness and easy seed dispersal allow it to become established on coastal headlands and around urban areas. If you see it, remove from the base and be sure to wash your hands after.



Species in the Spotlight cont.

long distances on a seasonal basis. Almost annually large flocks of Red Tailed Black Cockatoos can be noted feeding on the Pine Nuts at Yeppoon Main Beach, and I caution those people who enjoy lazing under the tree to be wary of this. Yes I know from personal experience since I have had a few half-chewed Pine Nut inadvertently dropped on my head by a very happily feeding Cocky.

An old wives tale, says that the presence or flying over of Black Cockatoos from the west heralds the coming rains....mmmh, then Rocky must be in for a significant wet this year because the Red Tailed Blacks frequent the Fitzroy river banks.

Take your Binoculars and see for yourself, you won't be disappointed!

By Sara Hanggi



We have now sold over 900 copies of *Plants of Capricornia* by Melzer and Plumb, including all the hardcovers which sold out by mid November. For anyone who is yet to get their own copy of this remarkable book, come and see Pam or use the order form below to have one mailed to you. You can always buy a spare one as a gift for your rellies. CCC has not passed the break-even point yet so we still need to sell as many books as we can to pay our debts. Don't wait until it is too late as there is no intention to do a reprint.

By Ian Herbert

# World Wetlands Day

Leave Saturday 2nd February 2008 for appreciating the complexity and importance of our waterways. This day commemorates the adoption of the 'Convention of Wetlands' in Iran 1971. Keep an eye out for some of the activities held around the region.

## Climate Change = more coal ports???

Does anyone else wonder if our government can do the math? The world applauded when the Rudd government came along and ratified Kyoto in an effort to join the global fight against climate change. This meant a reduction of greenhouse gases through better transport systems, a greater dependency on renewable energies and of course, a reduction of coal fired power stations.

Yet, here we are, hearing about the ever increasing rate of disappearing ice caps and....the expansion of Port Alma and Wiggins Island coal export facilities. Something doesn't add up.

How can our government expect to make any improvements on climate change with this blatant disrespect for our environment? Were they serious when they signed Kyoto or just winning votes?

Surely the billions of dollars spent upgrading coal promoting facilities could be spent on the future technologies of this great nation along with the new "green collar" jobs that it creates.

By Pam Malyszczek



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- To make every effort to ensure the land, waters and atmosphere of the region are not misused by any person or organisation,
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**CCC Membership is due for renewal each year by the 30<sup>th</sup> of June**

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OR

Call in to "The Hut" Livermore Street "Haigh Park" Rockhampton  
 The Coordinator is at the Hut most Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9am - 5pm