

Topic of Capricorn

August 2007

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

Phone: (07) 4927 86 44
Fax : (07) 4927 82 79
E-mail: ccc@cqnet.com.au
The Hut: Haigh Park, Livermore St.
Snail Mail: P.O. Box 4011, Rockhampton 4700
Web: cccqld.org.au

Co-ordinator: Crystal Jasperson
President: Ian Herbert
Vice-President: Michael McCabe
Treasurer: Graham Lightbody
Secretary: Sara Hanggi
Committee: Daniel Maluga, Jason Countryman, Mike Danaher, Lesley Hale, Joe Halloran.

Sponsored by Fitzroy Basin Association



Views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Capricorn Conservation Council Inc., or of the editors of the Topic of Capricorn.

Co-ordinator's Corner

Hi everyone, welcome to another edition of Topic of Capricorn, CCC's official newsletter. I extend a warm welcome to our new members. Also, please remember memberships were due in June. Enjoy!

Three Rivers Environmental Reference Group

Capricorn Conservation has recently been asked to sit on Livingstone Shire Council's Environmental Reference Group (ERG), that will be an advisory group for the management of Three Rivers, Byfield. More recently this beach which is used by 4wd among other users, has come under fire as the dune systems are being severely degraded. In particular the ERG will help assist Queensland Parks and

Wildlife Service (QPWS) in helping create an overall draft management plan of the greater Byfield National Park. All types of groups are represented on the ERG including Stockyard Point residents, Shoalwater Wilderness Awareness Group, CQ off road, Rural fire brigade, sunfish, commercial fisherman, Fitzroy Basin Association, tourism industry, surfriders and boardrider groups. The first official meeting was basically to find a chair (Paul Taylor from Boardriders) and to outline all environmental, social and economic issues regarding three rivers beach. CCC Committee members believe that all vehicular access should be banned from 3 rivers due to the environmental damage they are causing. I would like to hear from any members who also have any views/opinions on this issue. I will keep you updated on this one!

Environmental Reference Group for Causeway Lake

CCC has also been asked to join the newly formed Causeway Lake Environmental Reference Group, a group that will help guide the lakes future. This group has representatives such as fisherman, locals, people who rely on this area and us of course! The last 65 years has seen the Causeway Lake gradually silt up, so that now some parts are as shallow as 50cm! The first meeting was held recently at Livingstone Shire Council Chambers where we had specialists present their findings on sediment loads, seagrass, heavy metals and community perceptions. It was an interesting evening and a chance to get to learn more about the details of this artificially created lake.

Total sedimentation annually is 2600m³! This figure

includes both tidal and catchments sediment. The soils in and around the Causeway Lake are also acid sulphate which will have a strong influence on what work is carried out. CCC feels the Causeway is an important environmental area and if dredging caused minimal environmental damage, and avoided repetitious dredging, then dredging could be an option. We must remember while this area is important recreationally, it is more important environmentally.

There will be another meeting held soon, more on this in the next newsletter.

Plants of Capricornia

As you all may be aware, CCC has taken it on board to help Rhonda Melzer and Joel Plumb to publish Plants of Capricornia. The book will be launched at the Birds Australia Congress at Rydges Capricornia Saturday October 6th at 4pm. CCC is taking pre book orders now, softcover A4 books are only \$50 while the hardcover is \$80. If you have not received a brochure and would like one, please give me a call on 49 27 86 44 or drop me an email ccc@cqnet.com.au

We are taking orders up until and including the launch date.

Pre-Briefing with the Department of Defence on Shoalwater Bay Training Area (SWBTA)

On the 22nd of August, CCC Committee members were invited to a pre-briefing on the Values, Management and Condition of the SWBTA. The major facts/findings were as follows:

Since the 1994 Commission of Inquiry many things have changed at SWBTA. One of those is that an Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) was formed for which Leise Childs represents CCC. If there are any concerns members would like raised I can give you her contact details.

SWB was purchased by the Department of Defence back in 1965 for military training purposes. The land is therefore freehold land owned by the Commonwealth. The SWBA is 298, 700 hectares, more than four times the size of Singapore! The area also contains 164,000 hectares of water.

SWBMTA contains 2 bioregions under the Regional Ecosystem (RE) mapping; the Brigalow Belt (Marlborough Plains section) and the CQ Coast (Manifold and Byfield sections). A total of 68 RE's were mapped for the area; 44 of these in the CQ Coast bioregions and 24 in the Brigalow Belt bioregion.

When Defence purchased the land in 1964, 4% of the area had been cleared. In 2005, there had been only

1% cleared, therefore 3% has returned to remnant status.

There are three High Explosive (HE) areas set aside in the area. These are:

1. Townshed Island
2. Pyri Pyri Sector
3. Hummock Sector

No HE is permitted in the Waterpark Creek Catchment area. All water quality testing that was carried out on surface waters in and around the SWBTA concluded that the water was in good condition. The Defence department has not undertaken any groundwater monitoring.

When an exercise is planned for the area, Defence issues to participants what is called a Standing Order and Environmental Compliance Certificate, that are arrangements put into place to assess and mitigate any environmental damage that is cause throughout an exercise. These documents also include the SWBA rules and guidelines that participants must abide by.

While exercises are on, environmental staffs are also in the area to assess and investigate any damage to the environment, and a breach of their contract. If participants do damage any part of the area, they Defence charges the participants for remediation costs.

The new Urban Operations Training Facility (UOTF) which is a life like small city, was already built on cleared land, and studies were still undertaken prior to the development (flora/fauna studies).

SWBTA is the most important node in the CQ area for connecting wildlife corridors identified by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA).

The poison 1080 is still used at SWBTA, all traps are buried and marked on a register.

It was good to hear more about SWBTA and what studies they have been doing. Just think, if this area was not set aside for military training, it would be cleared for urban expansions and resort developments quick smart!

Re-Vegetation Day at Byfield

On Sunday the 9th of September, the Queensland parks and Wildlife Service will be holding a tree planting day. Participants are asked to meet at Nine Mile Beach at 9am sharp, and the day will end with a sausage sizzle at 12pm at the Byfield Rural Fire Brigade Shed.

Interested participants will need to bring the usual items for a day at the beach, including: Hat, sunscreen, gloves, insect repellent, plenty of water and sun-safe

clothing. A 4wd vehicle is necessary to visit the area.

For more information contact QPWS on 4936 0511.

Hut Hire

CCC's premise at 1 Livermore Street is also available to hire. We have tea/coffee making facilities, small fridge, toilet, seat up to 30 people comfortably and a screen available for presentations. We only charge \$10 for a session (morning, afternoon, evening). For more information contact the Co-ordinator on 49 27 86 44.

Water storages on the mighty Fitzroy

As most of you would be aware by now, there are plans to raise the Fitzroy Barrage, raise the Eden Bann and build a new weir near Gogango called the Rookwood. CCC is still trying to get more information about all of three developments above. We feel these artificial barriers will decrease the water quality and create conditions favourable for pest species such as Hymenachne. Not to mention the many kilometres of remnant riparian vegetation that will drown needlessly because of these weirs. Has the vulnerable Fitzroy River Turtle been taken into account, will it lose a lot of its nesting sites (sandy banks)?

Have the cumulative impacts of these three proposals

been taken into account? The mighty Fitzroy, might not be so mighty anymore with these proposals. More on this in the next newsletter.

Draft Terms of Reference for Gladstone –Fitzroy Pipeline

CCC is currently working on a submission to the above TOR. The TOR can be viewed online at www.infrastructure.qld.gov.au/eis

Written comments are needed by the 24th September.

Walk Against Warming

CCC is trying to organise a peaceful walk against warming, a political walk to raise awareness about Climate Change. It will probably be held in October on a Saturday and we are also getting help from local radio station HOT FM. I will let you know more on this as it unfolds, but it would be great to get everyone involved!!!

Gunn's Pulp Mill Gets Draft Approval

The Commonwealth has made a draft decision to approve Gunn's controversial pulp mill proposal for Northern Tasmania.

The \$1.5 billion project would be the biggest in the country. Federal Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull says the approval is subject to 24 operating conditions.

They include an effluent monitoring program to check levels of dioxins entering Bass Strait.

But Greens leader Bob Brown says Mr Turnbull has failed in his responsibility to protect Australia's environment.

Senator Brown has labelled the 24 operating conditions as weak.

"They don't prevent dangerous chemicals going in to Bass Strait, they simply put limitations on those," he said.

"They don't prevent the destruction of some 200,000 hectares of native forest and wildlife habitat in north-east Tasmania, and the mill is still going to absorb an enormous amount of water."

Great Barrier Reef Water Quality Protection Plan (Reef Plan) Annual Marine Monitoring Report

Here are some of the findings from Fitzroy's Regional Synopsis from December 2004 to April 2006:

Queensland Water Quality Guideline values for all nutrient concentrations (except DON) were exceeded in samples collected in the 2004/2005 and 2005/06 wet seasons from the Fitzroy River.

Pesticides were detected in the Fitzroy River. Pesticides detected included diuron,

atrazine, simazine, hexazinone and tebuthiuron.

Mud crabs collected from the Fitzroy region contained traces of the pesticides chlorpyrifos, DDT and dieldrin. The herbicide diuron was detected in inshore areas in the Fitzroy region.

There is a clear distinction in the reef communities between the sites closest to the Fitzroy River and those further offshore. Sites in close proximity to the river have significantly lower cover of hard corals, markedly higher cover of macroalgae. Overall genus level richness of adult and recruit-sized corals is significantly lower than other regions.

Seagrass cover was variable over the four years of monitoring at the Shoalwater Bay monitoring sites although species composition has remained relatively constant over the monitoring period. The meadows have a capacity to recover from disturbance as there is a seed bank present.

Website of the Month

This month's website is called Amazing Alternatives. Amazing Alternatives' vision is to be instrumental in helping Australian's change their consumption behaviour to better protect our environment for the future. We will provide easily accessible products to Australians from all walks of

life so they can easily contribute to making our world a better place. By building alliances with organisations and companies we encourage the production of goods addressing issues of environmental sustainability and social consciousness.

They have all sorts of stuff for sale such as clothing and accessories, body and skin care, beauty and fragrances, outdoor items, gadgets among other environmentally friendly items.

For more info go to: <https://www.amazingalternatives.com.au/>

Key directions for buffering nature against climate change

Now is a critical time to ensure that national and state climate change adaptation strategies give top priority to securing core lands and waters and enhancing resilience across the landscape.

Although governments are developing climate change adaptation strategies, these tend to focus on socio-economic adjustments, rather than biodiversity. The National Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan 2004-2007 should be revised and incorporated into the larger adaptation agenda.

Species show resilience to climate change because they are able to move or retreat to refugia of favourable habitat or alternatively, are able to remain and thrive where they are by adapting.

Enhancing natural resilience has the following key elements:

- Identify and protect climate refugia;
 - Conserve large-scale migration corridors;
 - Maintain viable populations to enable adaptation;
 - Reduce threatening processes at the landscape scale;
 - Conserve natural processes and connectivity at the landscape scale; and
 - Special interventions to avert extinctions. Identify and protect climate refugia.
- “Refugia” is the scientific term for places where favourable habitat will persist or develop as the climate changes. Refugia may exist through natural processes or as a result of human actions.

Refugia may already exist within the current range of a species. Locations that have served as refugia during past climate changes may serve as refugia for the present period of climate change. As conditions outside refugia become hostile with changing climate, a species will be lost from the wider range and persist only in the refugia. For example, fire sensitive plants and trees of moist forests may be

eliminated by drought and bushfire through much of their range, persisting only in deep valleys where wetter closed forests survive. Fire suppression may help retain wet forest refugia that otherwise might disappear.

Also, refugia may not currently exist, but may develop outside of the current range of the species as climate zones shift and ecosystems shift with them. In this case it will be crucial to also identify and protect these new refugia and migration corridors to them. Identifying new refugia presents significant methodological hurdles but is an essential job to ensure reserve system decisions are optimal for enhancing natural resilience.

Conserve large-scale migration corridors
Habitat fragmentation and degradation present significant barriers to species that may need to move to new habitats and refugia.

Successful migration requires viable source populations and habitats, destination refugia, and large-scale connectivity in the form of migration corridors or stepping stones between sources and destinations.

For example, highland rainforest frog species need sufficiently large source populations to produce enough colonists to reach distant refugia. They also

need stepping stones of streams or wetlands spaced so that colonists can move safely between them. Alternatively, frog eggs may be carried by water birds to new habitats. Destination refugia must also be protected with appropriate resources and natural processes to allow successful growth and reproduction.

Since every species has other species and resources it depends on with similar requirements, whole communities may need to move together for any given species to survive.

This kind of biological permeability is needed at large scales with corridors of the order of tens to hundreds of kilometres across all tenures, to facilitate the migration of animals and plants tracking shifting climatic zones and generally requires protection of extensive areas with intact native vegetation cover.

However it important to remember that enhanced connectivity may also favour some native species perhaps to the detriment of other high conservation value species as well as favouring exotic invasive species, thus requiring more effort to control weeds and pests.

For more info go to:
<http://www.wwf.org.au/publications/cc-report/>

Yes!

I would like to join / renew my Capricorn Conservation Council Membership

I want to help The Capricorn Conservation Council attain its goals

- ◆ To make every effort to ensure the land, waters and atmosphere of the region are not misused by any person or organisation
- ◆ To promote the search for a socially and ecologically acceptable balance between population, resource use, economics, technology and lifestyle within the region and
- ◆ To promote and teach the principles and values of conservation in schools, other institutions of learning and the general community

ABN: 14 846 165 788

Incorporation No: IA4 922

Membership Form

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

E-mail: _____ Fax: _____

- Please circle: Non-wage earner \$5 Individual \$10
- Family/Group \$15 Corporate members \$50

CCC Membership is due for renewal each year by the 30th of June

RECEIVED BY _____

DATE _____ SIGNATURE _____

I/ we would like to make a one off donation of \$ _____

Donations over \$2.00 are tax deductible

I REQUIRE A RECEIPT

I DO NOT REQUIRE A RECEIPT

Please Return to:

Capricorn Conservation Council Inc.
PO Box 4011
ROCKHAMPTON QLD 4700

Ph (07) 4927 8644
Fax (07) 4927 8279
Email ccc@cqnet.com.au

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