LAND FOR WILDLIFE
South East Queensland

Newsletter of the Land for Wildlife Program South East Queensland

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Motion sensor cameras capture our wildlife

Quite a number of fauna monitoring cameras have been set-up around SEQ on Land for Wildlife properties and on Council reserves. Some of the data received to date has been fascinating, showing that there is a lot more activity occurring during daylight hours than anticipated. Some data has been especially rewarding for property owners who have put effort into retaining and restoring habitat for certain animals, and they are now seeing wildlife using these areas.

The Noisy Pitta (above) is a colourful rainforest bird that specialises in eating rainforest snails and was caught on film at a Land for Wildlife property in Logan. These Mountain Brushtail Possums (bobucks) shown below were photographed at night near Toowoomba.

If you would like to share wildlife pictures that you have taken on your property, or have any tips on fauna monitoring techniques, or ways to capture images of animals at night, please contact your local Land for Wildlife Officer.

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editorial

Next month marks my eighth year in this job. Almost unheard of by modern day chop-and-change standards. A few Land for Wildlife Officers in SEQ beat my tenure and we have about 200 members who joined the program back in 1998 and are still in the program. About 200 new members join the SEQ Land for Wildlife program annually and it is nice to be a part of something that is still as relevant today as it was when it first started.

I recently purchased a SLR camera and its arrival has sparked a surprising level of delight and a necessity to learn about all those dials and buttons usually ignored on cameras. With a professional photographer who knew exactly how to use his camera, I recently visited several Land for Wildlife properties to capture images of properties and their owners. After such days I know exactly why I have worked here for eight years.

The Land for Wildlife program seems to do so much more than offer nature conservation advice. It is one of the only extension programs still offered by governments and gives some landholders a sense of connection with other like-minded landholders and verifies that other landholders and agencies value "messy", "unkept", "grassy", "shrubby" and "unproductive" areas of bushland. Some landholders just like the greenery and others have expert ecological knowledge, but they are all contributing to the protection of our native wildlife. So thank you.

This edition has a bit of a bird and bat focus with great articles on our little-known nocturnal owlet nightjar and the six species of rarely seen crakes and rails. I aspire to take photos as impressive as the ones shown in this article by Todd Burrows.

It is rare that weeds or pest animals suddenly "disappear" from our environment. I can think of house sparrows and the prickly pear as two examples; both of which have declined significantly due to known (cactoblastis) and unknown reasons. Nick Clancy provides us with another species, Impatiens, a previously common environmental weed, now hardly seen at all.

The backpage depicts a photo of SEQ's most endangered mammal. Although this specimen was found dead, I take hope from this finding as it indicates that we still have enough habitat to support this top predator.

Thank you to those Land for Wildlife members who contributed stories and I am always delighted to receive images or articles from our readers. Stay warm this chilly winter and I hope you enjoy this edition.

Deborah Metters
Land for Wildlife
Regional Coordinator
SEQ Catchments

Landholder Registrations, Land for Wildlife SEQ - 1/7/2012			
Registered Properties	Working Towards Registration	Total Area Retained	Total Area under Restoration
2905	702	53,759ha	4,367 ha

Forward all Letters to the Editor, Fauna Vignettes and My Little Corner contributions to:

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SEQ Catchments
Healthy Land – Healthy Water

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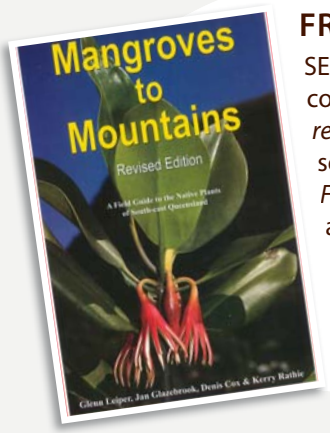
fauna vignette

Hollow, Snakes and Nightjars



FREE BOOKS

SEQ Catchments is giving away free copies of *Mangroves to Mountains revised edition* RRP $50.00 to selected contributors of published *Fauna Vignettes* and *My Little Corner* articles in 2012. Limit of two free books per newsletter edition. Please send your article and/or photographs to the Editor (details pg. 2)

Our property fronts a saltwater creek that has mangrove covered banks. Occasionally, I explore this corridor of mangroves for rubbish and wildlife. On one excursion I spotted a brushtail possum in a hollow. After casually passing this hollow on a later date I noticed it had filled with freshwater from all the recent rain. As I approached it, I noticed a slight ripple in the water. The sunlight reflected a pattern I was familiar with – Carpet Python. It was coiled into a very tight ball completely submerged underwater. I waited for about 15 minutes for it to surface and when it didn't, I decided to go and get my camera. I visited the site a couple of times over the next week and noticed it had moved to another branch and it had shed its skin.

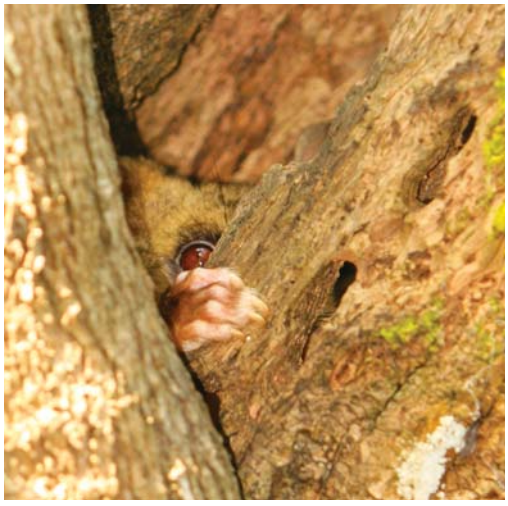
I emailed a photo of the submerged snake (see lower right image) to a friend who was a reptile breeder and he informed me that snakes often soak in water to loosen their skin before shedding and also to kill mites. He also said that Carpet Pythons can stay underwater for up to an hour.

I went back to the site a week later to check on the snake and found it entering another hollow 20 metres away in a Grey Mangrove tree. This tree had three tall hollow trunks and the snake had entered through one of these hollows. I noticed that the hollow above it was occupied by an Australian Owlet-nightjar and it did not seem worried at all by the python. In the past, I have noticed that owlet-nightjars will move to another hollow when disturbed. I wonder if during the night, owlet-nightjars check out a range of hollows to make sure there are safe places for retreat during the day if they have to flee from disturbance.

I guess snakes would be keeping owlet-nightjar numbers in check and this would be just part of nature.

The last time I saw the snake, it was up on the roof beams in our shed for maximum heat. This is also where the possums live. I have also noticed that owlet-nightjars like to sun themselves in the afternoon. They move to the edge of their hollow during the day and it would appear that they pick hollows that face west.

Amanda Johnston
Land for Wildlife member
Ransome, Brisbane



Photos right from top: An Australian Owlet-nightjar, Common Brushtail Possum and a Carpet Python submerged in water to soften its skin prior to shedding. All three animals were photographed utilising hollows in old mangrove trees.

Photo below: The Carpet Python after shedding its skin.

weed profile

Now you see me, now you don't: Busy Lizzie and the amazing disappearing act

Busy Lizzie or Impatiens (*Impatiens walleriana*) belongs to the Balsaminaceae family and originates from eastern Africa. It was introduced to Australia as a garden plant and has subsequently become a bushland weed in coastal eastern Australia. Lizzie has also been very busy invading natural areas in numerous other countries that lie in similar climatic zones.

Impatiens is a succulent-stemmed, perennial flowering plant that grows to about half a metre in height. Unlike many weeds it also grows happily under the shade of a forest canopy, where it forms a bright blanket of pink, red, purple, orange or white flowers.

Like most invasive species Impatiens is a successful disperser, which is why it's near impossible to keep contained in backyards. When ripe, the fruiting capsule 'explodes' dispersing hundreds of tiny seeds to germinate in the surrounding soil. While the succulent stems that are easily broken (for example in a high flow event along a creek) can also regrow from the smallest of fragments. Add some human aided dispersal via garden waste dumping in bushland and you have the perfect recipe for an environmental weed.

Given its preference for riparian and wetland areas, the use of herbicides to control this weed is often not an option. In addition, its ability to regrow from the smallest broken fragment of its brittle stems means that hand weeding requires meticulous care. Without vigilant follow-up maintenance you are quickly back to square one.

Prior to 2007, Busy Lizzie kept bushland weeders very busy indeed. This notorious garden escapee was a particularly common invader of forest understoreys in urban bushland throughout South East Queensland (SEQ). Its preference for shaded, damp habitats meant that it was a common feature in paperbark swamps, rainforest, along watercourses as well as on forest margins.

In the early 2000's, I distinctly recall visiting a couple of properties with large wetland areas infested with Busy Lizzie and I struggled to offer any useful advice on how it could practically be controlled. The reality was that in all likelihood this weed was there to stay and it would continue to spread further down the catchment.

Five years on and perhaps the weed fairy does exit! Busy Lizzie seems to have suddenly disappeared from many of its former sites, and presumably gardens. A quick check with some other Land for Wildlife Officers across SEQ supports this. What is obviously a problem for the Impatiens selling sector of the nursery industry appears to be a lucky break for local ecosystems. However, before I go and tear the Busy Lizzie page out of my weed book I will wait (impatiently) to hear from anyone out there that has seen any infestations recently. The apparent cause for this disappearance is Downy Mildew (*Plasmopara obducens*) which is a disease that affects the foliage and flowers of *Impatiens* species.

Overseas outbreaks have had a major impact on nurseries and garden populations. In Australia the disease was first detected in Victoria in 2006 and from there it appears to have spread quite quickly into New South Wales and Queensland. As is the case with Myrtle Rust, this mildew can move over longer distances on air currents, and also like Myrtle Rust, it is likely that this plant pathogen was imported to Australia via infected plant materials.

Landholders who were battling with this invasive plant on their properties may have been granted a rare opportunity to eradicate an invasive weed. If you had Impatiens on your property and it has disappeared, it is recommended that you monitor the sites where it was growing and, if you find a re-occurrence, remove it as soon as possible as these plants may have some resistance to the Downy Mildew. The recommended control method is to carefully hand pull plants taking care not to disturb the explosive seed pods. Place all plant material in a bag to be removed from the site. Away from watercourses and wetlands a foliar application of herbicide is also an option.

For more information contact you local Land for Wildlife Officer.

Article by Nick Clancy
Land for Wildlife Officer
Sunshine Coast Council

fauna profile

Room for Rent

I am not sure how we came by the hollow log in the first place but it seemed like a good idea to turn it into a room for rent (nest box).

Having covered the ends and cut an entrance to the nest box it was hoisted up into the Scribbly Gum (*Eucalyptus racemosa*) near the house. There it was easily visible from the kitchen window. We watched and eagerly awaited the log's first tenant.

We waited, and we waited some more, but it seemed that our 'room for rent' was not to the liking of any creature using the tree or in the area. Time passed and we had just about given up even looking at the nest box so it was a great surprise when finally there appeared a face in the entrance hole. But what on earth was it we were looking at? The face seemed to be light brown with vertical black stripes and it was quite small.

It wasn't until it turned its head and we could see it in profile that we realized the animal had a small beak and was actually a bird. Well that made the identification a bit easier!

Reference to the bird book identified our little tenant as an Australian Owlet-nightjar (*Aegotheles cristatus*). It is described as being slightly larger than a Willy Wagtail with a small black beak and large eyes. The head was wide with black eye stripes and a little black in the centre of the head. Our tenant seemed to be mostly reddish brown in colour but apparently they can be grey. They are said to be found throughout Australia and are classed as common, but rarely seen. Like so many other birds they need tree hollows to breed. He (or maybe she) makes a noise like a chuckle, "chirr chirr chirr" which we have heard both night and day.

Did you know?

- The Australian Owlet-nightjar is the smallest nocturnal bird found in Australia.
- They are harder to find with a torch or spotlight than some other animals because their large brown eyes do not reflect the light.
- They prefer a tree-studded area where there are suitable hollows, although open areas are also visited when needed.
- The Australian Owlet-nightjar is insectivorous and enjoys a variety of insects.
- They readily take prey in flight, or will pounce on prey either on the ground or in trees.
- Hunting is within a territory and they usually hunt in pairs. They watch for food while in flight, or by sitting and searching from a suitable perch.
- Australian Owlet-nightjars raise one brood per season. They form permanent bonds and both sexes construct the nest, which is a bed of green leaves, placed in a suitable tree hollow. Both birds incubate eggs and care for chicks.

So what are the threats to this bird? Habitat destruction is the greatest threat to Owlet-nightjars as fewer trees mean fewer places for them to live and raise their young.

The nightjar is nocturnal but apparently likes to sun itself during the day sometimes coming out far enough to perch on the edge of the entrance. You would think birds that usually operate at night would shun the sunshine particularly in the summer months, when we have often see it, but maybe it just likes to keep an eye on its neighbours.

We took pleasure in watching the nightjar for a few seasons until disaster struck and the nest box fell out of the tree. Fortunately when we checked there was no nightjar in the fallen box. When the nest box was repositioned in the tree more securely it didn't take the nightjar very long to re-establish itself as the tenant which we were very happy about.

If you have been thinking about installing a nest box on your property don't wait any longer. Build the home and they will come.

Article by Doreen Payne
Land for Wildlife member
Thornlands, Redland

The Australian Owlet-nightjar is Australia's smallest nocturnal bird. Shown here is the grey form, differing from the predominantly reddish brown individual in the "room for rent". This photo was taken at Eagleby Wetlands, Logan. Photo by Deborah Metters.

fauna profile

Our Wondrous Flying Mammals (Part 2): Flying foxes and people

Following on from Part 1 in the *April 2012 Land for Wildlife newsletter*, this article continues our journey with flying foxes, as presented by Dr Les Hall at a workshop in late 2011, and looks at how humans share the landscape, sometimes in close proximity, with flying foxes.

Sharing our space with another species can be highly rewarding. Most of us who own pets quite happily share our space with these "extended family members". I would suggest that most Land for Wildlife member enjoy sharing their properties with wildlife especially "birds, butterflies and frogs. However, it can get a bit challenging when we try to extend similar delight towards mosquitoes, ticks, snakes and other wildlife that can cause us stress. One such animal that can concern people is the flying fox, especially their camps.

Flying fox camps are generally noisy and smelly places that can bother people living nearby. Flying foxes are intelligent mammals that communicate to each other using at least 30 known different calls. They are basically chatting to each other, calling to their young, telling other rival individuals to go away and warning others about potential threats. I am not so keen on their smell, but I know some people find it pleasant. So on one hand a flying fox camp may be stressful for some people, or may offer entertaining eavesdropping opportunities with a nice aroma for others.

The management of flying fox camps in SEQ is an ongoing public interest issue with flying fox stories dotting the media from time to time. As someone who has been studying flying foxes in SEQ since 1975, I figure that Dr Hall is a good person to listen to regarding camp management and would have data on successful or unsuccessful camp relocation efforts over that time. It was interesting to hear him say that there have been only two known "successful" relocations in that time. In one case, the habitat was simply removed for urban development, but you can not consider it truly "successful" because hundreds of bats died and most of them simply moved to other urban areas causing concerns at the new locations. The second relocation was a result of illegal and repetitive shooting, again resulting in huge mortalities and the remainder of the camp occupants moving to an urban area, which is now Woodend Nature Reserve in Ipswich. So, neither "successes" were really successful at all.

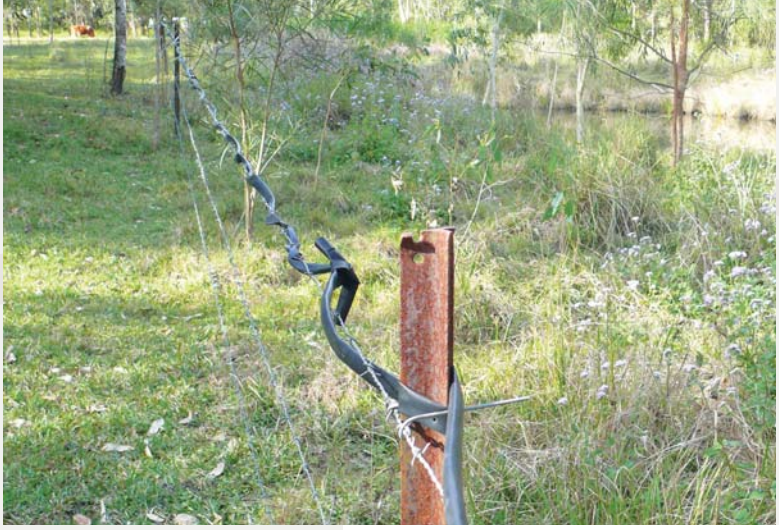
Current research and ecological understandings recommend that flying fox camps need to be well managed, exactly where they are. Management activities can be designed to lessen the impacts of camps on people. Such activities include the planting of buffer trees around the camp, weed control underneath camps, rezoning of flying fox camps under Local Government planning schemes, community involvement in camp management plans and planting quick-growing roost-providing trees in nearby locations to entice flying foxes away from contentious areas.

Any discussion about flying fox camps would not be complete without an understanding of how they have changed over time. Camps in the greater Brisbane region are probably the most studied. Not only has there been a significant decline in the number of flying foxes found around Brisbane (or Eastern Australia for that matter), they have moved from several large camps with millions of individuals on the outskirts of Brisbane, to much smaller camps throughout urban Brisbane. This is largely the result of three things. Firstly, habitat removal; secondly, less food trees in

Case Study - Woodend Nature Reserve

Woodend Nature Reserve offers an example of how to, and how not to, manage flying fox camps. Historically, there were no records of flying foxes camping at Woodend until 1984 when a large number of Grey-headed Flying Foxes moved in and started breeding. Their arrival coincided with extensive shooting sprees at the flying fox camp at Cameron's Scrub about 10kms away and Dr Hall believes that the individuals from Cameron's Scrub simply moved to Woodend. However, at Woodend, they were met with some hostility as they were basically camping in people's backyards, and thus Council approved their dispersal.

Loud noises, gas guns, drums and helicopters were all tried, unsuccessfully, and resulted in pet dogs running away and caged birds dying of fright. One local landholder successfully took out an injunction against these dispersal actions based on the fact that Grey-headed Flying Foxes are a threatened species under Commonwealth and Queensland legislation. Once the dispersal activities ceased, an advisory committee was formed involving Ipswich City Council, local landholders and researchers. The committee helped set up the Nature Reserve, a management plan for the site and a highly-commended educational centre. Woodend Nature Reserve is a great place to see all three species of flying fox found in SEQ (Black, Grey-headed and Little Red Flying Foxes).



The above two images show how landholders can reduce the risks of flying foxes becoming entangled in barbed wire fencing. Metal disks or old CDs can be attached to the top strand to increase visibility (shown left) or old polypipe can be wrapped around the top strand especially near dams and fruit trees where the risks of entanglement are greatest (right).

the rural landscape and; thirdly, more food trees in urban areas.

The lack of roosting and feeding options in rural landscapes has pushed flying foxes into urban areas where they face new threats. Suburban grevilleas and other high nectar producing plants attract flying foxes to low flowering shrubs where they can come in contact with dogs, powerlines and barbed-wire fences – all of which can harm or kill flying foxes.

Within the flying fox colonies themselves, there is constant change. Individuals can migrate hundreds of kilometers per year. It would seem that although there is constant movement, individuals have an extremely strong connection to camps, and will return year after year to exactly the same tree branch in the same camp. Adult males scent mark branches and will strongly defend them from intruders. It is therefore not surprising that relocation efforts are unsuccessful.

The final bit I will mention about camp relocation recounts Dr Hall's experiments at Sydney Botanic Gardens where a flying fox camp was destroying heritage trees and researchers were called in to try to move it. All kinds of things were tried – sound, lighting, sprinklers, fish paste sprayed on branches and carpet python dung (carpet pythons are a natural predator of flying foxes) attached to branches. None of the attempts were successful indicating that humane methods of camp relocation are currently not feasible. I would have to agree with Dr Hall when he stated that if we decide to kill flying foxes to solve disputes, it is a sad indictment on humans as supposedly the smartest mammal on Earth.

Finally, we have to touch on the issue of the Hendra virus. Dr Hall talked at length on this subject, but it would seem that there are more questions than answers.

It is been 17 years since the first outbreak of the Hendra virus and it seems to be fair to say that it is not clear how horses are getting infected. Flying foxes are natural carriers of the Hendra virus; however, the virus seems to be benign in flying foxes - they get the virus and then recover.

We simply don't know, if, or how, it gets from flying foxes to horses. Horses may be catching Hendra from a completely different wild source, or it may travel from flying foxes via other vectors such as birds, insects or even pets. Some horses have been diagnosed with Hendra in areas where flying foxes are not present, so this throws a spanner in the works. As I said, more questions than answers.

Research has shown that Hendra does transmit from horses to humans and we know that there have been four human deaths from the Hendra virus.

Horse owners, veterinarians and the public all want to know how, or why, horses get Hendra virus and what they can do to protect themselves and their horses. The Queensland Government takes the issue of Hendra virus seriously and significant research is being directed towards answering some of these questions. I hope that some answers are found for us all in the near future.

Flying foxes are a fixture of SEQ. They travel incredible distances, pollinate our eucalypt forests and disperse rainforest fruits. The fact that they are also smelly and chatty should not annul their ecological roles and the wonder of them being the largest flying mammal on Earth.

What landholders can do:

- ✓ Plant native fig trees – they are an excellent source of calcium for flying foxes and other wildlife.
- ✓ Replace the top strand of barbed wire fences with plain wire, especially in high-risk entanglement sites such as ridgelines, near fruit trees and around dams as flying foxes fly close to the ground in these sites. Or at least improve visibility of the top-strand of barbed wire fences by attaching old CDs or wrapping them in old polypipe.
- ✓ If you find a flying fox entangled in barbed wire, contact Bat Conservation & Rescue Qld on their 24 hr rescue hotline 0488 228 134.
- ✓ If you need to net fruit trees, use appropriate netting and firmly anchor the net to the ground to prevent bats from entangling themselves.
- ✓ Become a flying fox carer. Bat Conservation & Rescue Qld offers excellent training and support to carers. Visit www.bats.org.au
- ✓ Do not handle any bats. If you are bitten or scratched by a bat, you should seek medical attention.
- ✓ Purchase the excellent book co-authored by Dr Hall, reviewed on page 13, to learn more about flying foxes and other bats.
- ✓ Visit the Queensland Government website at www.daff.qld.gov.au for more information on the Hendra virus.
- ✓ Prevent horses and other stock from grazing on fallen fruit from trees where flying foxes are feeding.

Article by Deborah Metters
Land for Wildlife Regional Coordinator, SEQ Catchments

property profile

Partnerships in Ecological Restoration

In 1991 when David Blomfield purchased his 66 hectare property on the upper reaches of Mudgeeraba Creek he knew he had a lot of work ahead of him. For years the property, which contains dry eucalypt open forest, wet sclerophyll forest and subtropical rainforest had been logged. Timber was milled on site and parts of the property were heavily disturbed. Buried amongst the thick lantana, David came across the rusted remains of old logging wagons and equipment.

Despite the impacts of logging and other disturbance, David soon became aware of the importance of the property for nature conservation. It adjoined Springbrook National Park and a botanical survey of the rainforest confirmed the presence of numerous rare and threatened species. The question was, "how to make a start with such a big job of restoration?"

While working full time during the week, David devoted his weekends to restoring a rainforest gully near his house. After clearing the lantana by hand he planted some native rainforest species including some propagated from seed collected on the property. However, it soon became apparent that with an excellent seed source from surrounding intact forest, natural regeneration was very vigorous and could be relied on to quickly fill the gaps.

At that time the thought of restoring the entire property seemed hardly possible but, encouraged by his success in one small area, David decided to continue the work by extending the initial project to a new area along the driveway. At this time the critical importance of follow-up weeding became apparent. It was found that after a couple of years of follow-up work, the canopy had closed sufficiently to shade out the lantana and prevent it re-infesting restored areas.

David registered the property with Land for Wildlife in 1999. Then, wishing to protect the property permanently, applied for a Higher Voluntary Conservation Agreement (VCA) with Gold Coast City Council in 2003. The Higher VCA places a covenant on the conservation land and is binding on future owners.

All Gold Coast VCA property owners receive financial support in the form of a rate rebate (referred to as a 'donation') and reimbursement of management costs incurred in protecting or restoring the conservation area. David found that this enabled him to make excellent progress with the restoration work as some of the VCA money could be used to employ a contractor to assist with lantana clearing and some of the follow-up weeding.

Gold Coast City Council has recently revised its VCA policy to provide increased incentives for ecological restoration. Council sees this as an essential part of its Nature Conservation Strategy that aims to increase the native vegetation cover in the City. Higher VCA landholders are now entitled to claim up to $5,000 per annum and the policy is more flexible in extending eligibility for a VCA to partly cleared or disturbed properties in critical corridors or other strategic locations.

By encouraging and assisting the efforts of dedicated landholders like David Blomfield, Council sees an excellent return on its investment in the form of biodiversity conservation and a buffer to protect adjoining national park and Council-managed conservation reserves.

Gold Coast City VCA Program at a glance

Program	VCA Area (hectares)	Annual Rates Donation (% of annual general rates)	Annual Management Reimbursement
Higher VCA	< 10 > 10	50% 50 - 100%	up to $5000 up to $5000
General VCA (for existing Nature Refuge properties)	< 10 > 10	50% 50 - 100%	up to $5000 up to $5000
General VCA (placed in Conservation Domain or equivalent in GCCC zoning policy)	< 10 > 10	50% 50 - 100%	up to $4000 up to $4000
General VCA	< 10 > 10	30% 50%	up to $2500 up to $2500

Photographs (top to bottom):

The work ahead - a lantana infested gully (shown on the left) contrasts dramatically with the restored subtropical rainforest on the right side of the image.

In partnership with landholders, Gold Coast City Council's VCA program helps to protect and restore areas of high conservation value such as this stretch of Upper Mudgeeraba Creek on David's property.

David Blomfield (left) shows Darryl Larsen (GCCC Land for Wildlife Officer) a patch of healthy regenerating rainforest that was a wall of lantana ten years ago.

Article by Darryl Larsen
Land for Wildlife Officer
Gold Coast City Council

fauna profile

Crakes and Rails of SEQ

South East Queensland (SEQ) has a great diversity of bird species with many of them fairly easy to observe. Crakes and rails are far more challenging though and prove to be one of the most difficult groups to see. As a birdwatcher and photographer I have experienced first hand the frustrations of this secretive group, two species of which I am yet to see.

Crakes and rails belong to the family Rallidae with six species occurring in SEQ. They are attractive small to medium sized birds with strong legs and long toes, making them good runners, most of them are also adept swimmers and divers. Despite being fairly poor fliers with their short, rounded wings they are capable of travelling large distances and migrate at night. When flushed they usually flutter weakly with feet dangling before dropping back into vegetation.

Crakes and rails are most common within dense vegetation associated with fresh or brackish water. They emerge at times to feed along damp grassy verges, adjacent muddy edges and into shallow water or on floating vegetation, constantly flicking up their short tails as they go. Males and females are very similar in appearance and breeding mainly occurs between late winter and summer.

Each species has their own distinct calls and they can be quite vocal during the breeding season. Identifying them from their calls is the easiest way of confirming their presence. Nesting takes place close to the ground hidden amongst vegetation, sometimes over water with between 3 and 8 eggs laid. Black downy chicks are capable of running and feeding themselves within days of hatching (precocial). They leave the nest quickly but still remain dependant on the adults for some time.

If you have a natural wetland or dam with dense bordering vegetation on your property, it is likely that at some stage you will have crakes or rails utilising these habitats, and maybe even breeding. Hearing their calls will be the best way of knowing they are present and if you are patient or lucky enough you may see them too!

The Buff-banded Rail (*Gallirallus philippensis*) is the most common and readily observed of these birds and is also the largest with a body length of 28-33 cm. The bird is distinctively coloured with a white eyebrow, heavily black and white barred underparts and a buff band on the breast. They are omnivorous, feeding on various invertebrates as well as seeds and other vegetation. I once witnessed a bird repeatedly jumping up about 1 metre off the ground to feed on the ripe fruits of the exotic Brazilian Nightshade (*Solanum seaforthianum*).

In some situations the Buff-banded Rail can become very tame and they are even a nuisance around camping grounds and accommodation on Lady Elliot and Lady Musgrave Islands. This is not common around SEQ, although I did know of an individual that was accustomed to people just adjacent to the old Palm Beach Lawn Bowls Club on the Gold Coast.

Photo by Todd Burrows.

The highly secretive Lewin's Rail (*Lewinia pectoralis*) is superficially similar to the Buff-banded Rail but is smaller (21-27 cm), lacks the buff band on the breast and white eyebrow and has a longer bill. The diet of this species consists of invertebrates with bird eggs and frogs occasionally eaten.

There are 3 sub-species of the Lewin's Rail in Australia, *Lewinia pectoralis clelandi* from Western Australia which is now considered to be extinct, *L. p. brachipus* in Tasmania and *L. p. pectoralis* occurring in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. The *L. p. pectoralis* sub-species is considered near threatened in Queensland under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* as a decline in density as been recorded across at least half of the range. Reduction of habitat through drainage and river diversion is seen as the major threat to this sub-species although wetlands that have impacts from inappropriate burning, grazing and trampling from stock and feral pigs will also be unsuitable. Further threats include predation from foxes and cats as well as birds killed by vehicles, mowers and barbed-wire fences.

Photo by Jon Irvine.

The Spotless Crake (*Porzana tabuensis*) has fairly plain plumage, coloured dark brown on the back and wings and blue-grey on the head and underparts with fine barring on the under-tail. It has an attractive red eye and eyelid, black beak and deep pink feet and is small in size at 17-21 cm. It feeds on invertebrates such as molluscs and insects as well as some plant matter.

Just occasionally one of these elusive birds goes completely against their usual timidness and puts on a show for the observer. This happened to a group of fellow birdwatcher/photographer friends of mine at a lagoon near Bundaberg last year. A Spotless Crake came out from among some reeds and walked out into the shallow water and mud right through half a dozen birdwatchers with cameras. It brazenly wandered around in the open between them for about 20 minutes! Needless to say hundreds of images were taken of that individual. Photo by Deane Lewis.

The Pale-vented Bush Hen (*Amaurornis moluccana*) is also highly secretive and appears to be mainly nocturnal. The body length varies from 24-28 cm and it is coloured olive-brown above, a paler grey beneath with a rufous colour under the tail. It has an olive-yellow coloured bill but this changes to green with an orange base during the breeding season. This species can sometimes be confused with immature birds of the very common Dusky Moorhen (*Gallinula tenebrosa*) but the Bush Hen lacks the white-sides on the under-tail. They feed on seeds and shoots as well as invertebrates and sometimes frogs. Photo by Deborah Metters.

The Australian Spotted Crake (*Porzana fluminea*) has a body length of 19-23 cm. It is an olive-brown colour above with black and speckled with white-streaks. Underparts from the face to the belly are a deep blue-grey with black and white barring on the flanks. The beak is a yellow-green with red at the base and the legs are green. The tail has an all white underside which is a good identification feature as none of the other species in SEQ have this. It has a similar diet to the other crakes and rails consisting of insects, molluscs, tadpoles and plant matter. Photo by Julian Robinson.

The tiny Baillon's Crake (*Porzana pusilla*) is only about 15-16 cm in length. This crake has red eyes, a dull green bill and legs, pale grey-blue face, breast and belly, olive-brown back streaked with black and white and a barred belly and under-tail. They tend to be a little more obliging for the viewer by sometimes walking about in the open on water lily pads in search of food. Photo by Todd Burrows.

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Article by Todd Burrows
Land for Wildlife Officer
Gold Coast City Council

letters to the editor

How to deter window attacking kookaburras

Help! Can anyone suggest a way to discourage a very determined kookaburra from attacking our windows?

So far, we have covered some with shade cloth. Effective, but prison like. Sprayed others with white spray used for line marking, hung up flapping plastic door screens, old CDs and blown up wine cask liners. So far, kookaburra: three ruined fly screens, wake-up window attacks every morning and a smug look. Us: frustration.

We are getting a wee bit "anti" kookaburra, as much as we do enjoy all our bird visitors. We are open to any suggestions readers might offer.

P. Ledwith
Land for Wildlife member
Purga, Ipswich

Editorial reply...

This is a common, but tricky, scenario faced by Land for Wildlife members who value and enjoy wildlife, but find that some wildlife behaviours are unwelcomed. The Wildlife Queensland website suggests that the majority of window attacking kookaburras are responding to their own reflections, especially in tinted windows.

I have combined feedback from Wildlife Queensland and Land for Wildlife Officers to offer some suggestions on how to deter your window attacking kookaburras, excluding activities you have already tried.

- Hanging ropes or material a few feet away from the window in an attempt to impair the bird's flight and/or change the reflected image. Hopefully, this won't make your house prison-like, unlike the shade cloth.
- Analyse the causes of the window reflection and consider if, and how, you could change the light or shade on the window, such as trimming nearby foliage or extending an awning.
- Bird tape comes in two forms and has been successfully used. One is a holographic tape that reflects light and makes a crackling noise as it moves in the breeze and is best installed to hang loose. The second form is thicker and is best installed twisted as it makes more noise when strung tight.
- Opening all windows and doors and letting the offending bird come inside. This strategy successfully deterred a window attacking kookaburra who was complaining about not getting fed as the previous home owners fed wildlife.

It is important to remember that with any wildlife problem that all native wildlife are protected under Queensland legislation and any attempt to harm the offending animal may be a criminal offence. We want to encourage wildlife to live in their own homes, not ours. We can help do this by retaining old habitat trees, providing nest boxes, protecting native vegetation (including the understorey) and not feeding wildlife.

If you have tried everything and the smug offender continues undeterred, you can employ a trained professional to trap and relocate the kookaburra in accordance with Queensland legislation and permits.

The advance of Cat's Claw Creeper

There will be no Land for Wildlife if more effort is not made to try and curb the advance of Cat's Claw Creeper. It has the potential to wipe out all vegetation in its path. I don't believe the Tingid bug will ever be able to keep up with the spread of the creeper. But of course one has to try something.

For it to be declared a Class 3 weed is absolutely ridiculous and we see the consequences now. Surely all weeds should have equal status and their eradication, the goal. The spread of Madeira Vine, Dutchman's Pipe, Asparagus, Corky Passion Vine etc. etc. - all bad and will go on spreading unless the legislation is changed. Also, when properties are sold, these weeds should be pointed out to intending buyers. Unfortunately, as cattle are not adversely affected but these weeds, governments have little interest. Look at how much effort has gone into curbing Giant Rats Tail Grass.

G. Crossley
Land for Wildlife member, Gympie

Editorial reply...

I am sure your views are echoed by many readers who are not only battling these weeds on their own properties, but are seeing them expand across our landscape. It is a hard fact to accept that these weeds are permanent Australian residents and I do wonder when, and how, a balance between these rampant new-comers and our native plants will be reached.

The status of declared pests does reflect a bias towards weeds that have immediate economic impacts on horticulture and grazing. It could be easily argued that the long-term ecological and economic impacts of environmental weeds (Class 3 pests) could be greater or comparable to Class 2 pests. For governments to equally value agricultural and environmental weeds would require a shift in prioritisation of public spending and attitudes.

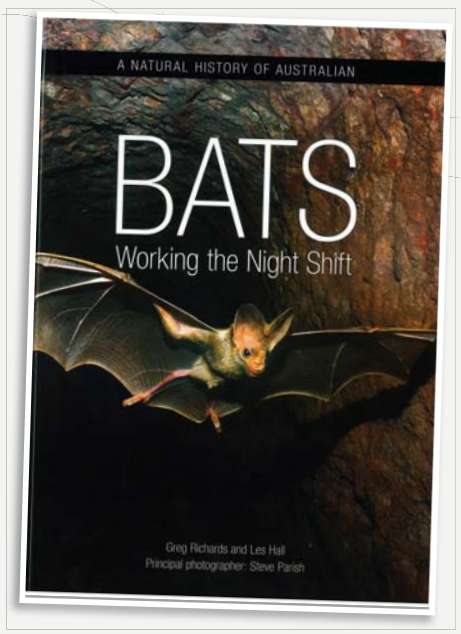
In April this year, Cat's Claw Creeper, Madeira Vine and Asparagus weeds were all added to the list of Weeds of National Significance (WoNS) indicating that these species will be targetted for national coordination and control efforts. The inclusion of these species as WoNS offers greater opportunities for landholders to access federal government funding for their control. You may wish to consider:

- Visiting www.nrm.gov.au for more information about funding available through Caring for Our Country, especially to control WoNS species.
- Contacting your local Council, local State MP or the The Hon John McVeigh MP, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to express your support for the prioritisation of environmental weed control activities.
- Controlling Cat's Claw Creeper before it sets flower in October.
- Finding out if you can source biocontrol agents (leaf-sucking tingid or leaf-tying moth) for Cat's Claw Creeper infestations by asking your local Land for Wildlife Officer.

book reviews

Working the Night Shift: A Natural History of Australian Bats

By Greg Richards and Les Hall with Steve Parish (Principal Photographer)



Published by CSIRO Publishing, 2012
Hardback, colour photos, 192 pages.
ISBN: 9780643103740
Price: $79.95
Available from CSIRO Publishing and all good bookshops.

What a beautiful book. Hardcover and packed full of professional "wow" photos of bats and the places they live. This book has a heartfelt introduction by the authors who are obviously passionate about bats and their conservation. It is clear that the study of bats has enriched their lives with wonder, travel and an unending desire to learn more about these animals.

The beginning of the book is a travelogue around Australia covering broad bioregions from the Nullabor to Cape York showing how bats have learnt to utilise vastly different habitats and climatic conditions. I love the section of this book about bats in our capital cities with Brisbane touted as the "bat capital city" of Australia boasting 25 species. In Brisbane, microbats can be seen flying around streetlights at night eating moths, and during the day they use old Forest Red Gum trees, disused mines and drain tunnels underneath the CBD as roosts.

A comprehensive chapter on bat ecology and conservation gives an insight into how the authors have seen the Queensland landscape change over the last few decades and how this has impacted on bat numbers and populations. The authors are concerned that declines in flying fox numbers, because of habitat removal, may result in reduced dispersal of rainforest fruits in the Wet Tropics, and may even change the composition of these forests. Hence, as with so much ecology, we learn how animals, plants and ecosystems are interdependent and have surprisingly far-reaching relationships.

The importance of understorey vegetation for microbats is made clear. Areas with a healthy understorey have many more microbat species and individuals than areas that have been burnt, overgrazed or "tidied-up".

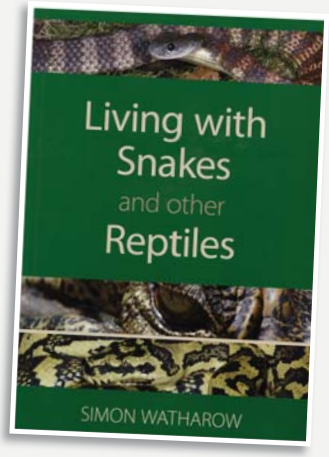
The final section of this book profiles 66 bat species found in Australia with excellent images, distribution maps and biological information useful for identification.

We are incredibly lucky to have this book. It distils two lifetimes of work from the authors, plus knowledge from bat carers, nest box manufacturers, photographers and others involved in bat conservation. Steve Parish should be commended on the outstanding photography throughout this book making it a joy to look at. It is a bit more in price than a standard field guide, but with the incredible photographs, hardcover and in-depth information, this is not your average field guide. It is a must-have book for those interested in Australian wildlife.

Review by Deborah Metters

Living with Snakes and other Reptiles

By Simon Watharow



Published by CSIRO Publishing, 2011
Paperback, colour photos, 160 pages.
ISBN: 9780643097216
Price: $29.95
Available from CSIRO Publishing and all good bookshops.

I have a fascination with the prehistoric resemblance of the crocodile and water monitor, and I like lizards but have a fearful respect for snakes. Simon Watharow could have written this book for me.

What is particularly appealing about the book is the great photographic collection of Australian snakes and reptiles in their natural habitat. Every page includes at least one image labelled with useful details such as name, colourings, size and active state to assist identification.

The introduction is a general overview of the information that is elaborated in the rest of the book. As the author states the purpose of the book is to dispel some common myths and fallacies, and to shed new light on snakes, lizards and crocodiles, and why they behave the way they do.

While the book is a good reference for identification alone, Watharow has included a brief outline of some historical and spiritual references to snakes, to help us understand how the negative folklore may have originated.

In simple language the book refers to seasonal behaviour, activity and breeding in snakes, lizards, crocodiles and Cane Toads. It includes property management and awareness, venom and antivenin, first aid (human as well as the family pet), location chart, glossary, references and useful contacts.

The book is suitable for young children as well as adults who seek more knowledge about Australian reptiles and information about how to identify and better manage a life with our Australian wonders.

Review by Susan Hollindale
Land for Wildlife member, Guanaba

The Carbon Farming Initiative and SEQ Landholders

Readers may have heard something about the Carbon Farming Initiative (CFI) over the last year or so as the issue has generated a fair degree of media coverage. This article aims to provide background information about the CFI and to let landholders know about opportunities that may be available to them under the CFI.

The CFI is an initiative of the Australian Government to help reduce and offset Australia's carbon emissions. The CFI provides incentives for landholders to adopt practices that reduce carbon emissions (and other greenhouse gases, such as nitrous oxide and methane), or store carbon in the landscape. These activities may be able to generate carbon credits, which can be sold on the carbon market.

The CFI will take time to roll out. As our understanding of carbon within the landscape advances, further opportunities for eligible activities will become evident, and the market will mature. Like entering any new industry, it is important you understand the risks associated with undertaking a carbon farming project before signing up to any agreements. It is recommended that landholders read widely, access trusted advice and don't rush into anything you don't fully understand.

Well managed properties that use best farming practices and appropriate land use will produce the best economic and environmental outcomes, and are best placed to adapt to future climate variability. For example, improving groundcover has significant productivity benefits, as well as environmental benefits through reduced paddock erosion. Improving groundcover can also increase the level of carbon stored in your soil, and so in the future may be an activity that could generate carbon credits under the CFI. In this way, the CFI may offer landholders an additional revenue stream to assist them to adopt sustainable management practices.

CFI projects must use the Australian Government's approved methodologies.

There are currently two approved methodologies relevant to SEQ landholders:

1. Environmental plantings, and
2. Destruction of methane generated from manure in piggeries.

The Environmental Plantings methodology provides an opportunity for land managers to generate carbon credits through participating in projects that use direct seeding or planting of species native to the local area. Project sites must have been cleared, or partially cleared, for 5 years prior to the project start. This is intended to prevent landholders from clearing existing vegetation for the purpose of claiming CFI credits.

Some existing revegetation areas are eligible under this methodology, with credits being generated only for carbon accumulated after the 1st July 2010 baseline. Revegetation for nature conservation meets this eligibility criterion. Revegetation done for financial market purposes, such as establishing a forest for wood products, is not eligible under the CFI. Any carbon stored as a result of a CFI project must be maintained for a period of 100 years. Project details will be attached to your property deed in a manner similar to a Voluntary Conservation Agreement.

Potential opportunities for SEQ landholders to generate CFI carbon credits in the future may include:

- Sequestering (storing) carbon in vegetation or soils.
- Reducing methane emissions from livestock or manure management.
- Reducing nitrous oxide emissions from fertilisers in cropping lands (via more sustainable farm practices).

There are no known examples of CFI Environmental Planting projects in SEQ at this point in time. As the market matures, landholders will be better able to access professional and project specific advice to assist them in their decision making as to if an Environmental Plantings project is suited to their personal circumstances.

Many groups around Australia are actively working to develop new methodologies for various farming industries. Once approved, they will be made publicly available. A current example of research that may be of interest to some Land for Wildlife members is being undertaken by the Queensland Herbarium. The Herbarium is investigating the carbon storage potential and growth rates of native regrowth forests. Outcomes of this research aim to provide a CFI project opportunity for landholders willing to undertake a change of management practice from actions that suppress or remove native forest regrowth, to actions that facilitate regrowth. If approved, this method will allow carbon credits to be generated through the promotion of regrowth in areas previously cleared of vegetation. Landholders who are interested in restoring forest habitats may wish to explore this opportunity to access financial incentives under the CFI in the future.

For further information about the CFI visit the Australian Government's website at www.daff.gov.au/climatechange/cfi. For details of approved and submitted CFI methodologies visit www.climatechange.gov.au/cfi

SEQ Catchments will be facilitating a number of free information sessions over the coming years about the CFI. These events are supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry as part of the Carbon Farming Initiative Communications Program. Keep a look out on the SEQ Catchments events page to see when there is an event in your area www.seqcatchments.com.au/events

Article by Apanie Wood
former Regional Landcare Facilitator
SEQ Catchments

Motion sensor cameras capture our wildlife

Article continued from page 1...

A close-up of the Australian Brush Turkey on a Land for Wildlife property, Sunshine Coast.

A Yellow-footed Antechinus was attracted to bait that had been laid out to entice Spotted-tailed Quolls in a Logan City Council reserve.

Red-necked Wallabies, western Brisbane.

Wild dogs / dingoes at Guanaba, Gold Coast.

A Long-nosed Bandicoot on a Land for Wildlife property, Brisbane.

This photo, taken back in 2007 on a Land for Wildlife property at Mudgeeraba, Gold Coast, compelled the landholders to undertake a fox control program.

Emerging from leaf litter on a Land for Wildlife property, this bizarre fungus was a bit alarming. It has several common names including veiled stinkhorn, referring to the veil-like skirt that descends from the smelly spore-containing slime cap. One of nature's wonders!

Land for Wildlife Regional Coordination is proudly managed by SEQ Catchments through funding from the Australian Government's Caring for our Country

A New Quoll Record for SEQ

The Spotted-tailed Quoll southern subspecies (*Dasyurus maculatus maculatus*) is possibly SEQ's most elusive, yet fascinating animal. Most Australians, I suspect, have never seen a quoll in the wild, reflecting this animal's cryptic and nocturnal behaviour as well as our preference for cities and the continuing fragmentation of our bushland.

I have not seen a quoll in SEQ, but was lucky enough to have one enter my tent in a cheese-stealing attempt while camping in Tasmania and I used to have one visit the lounge room regularly when I lived in the former asbestos-mining town of Wittenoom in the Pilbara.

This stunning animal pictured above was found on 17 April 2012 at Moogerah in the southern Scenic Rim, another unfortunate road kill statistic. Prior to this recent find, there have only been 54 reliable high precision quoll records in SEQ in the last 20 years, and only five records from 2008-2011. Obviously not all sightings get officially recorded, but only one record per year since 2008 is a worrying figure for this remarkable animal.

In SEQ, the Spotted-tailed Quoll is most likely to be found in our range country where large tracts (over 5000 hectares) of contiguous bushland still remain, such as the Border, Main, D'Aguilar and Blackall Ranges. Quolls feed on a range of animals including rabbits, possums, rodents, bandicoots, antechinus, beetles, grasshoppers, crayfish, birds, reptiles and carrion – pretty much anything that moves, or has moved. They shelter in caves, large fallen logs, boulder tumbles and rock crevices attesting to the importance of these ecological features in our landscape.

Quolls live for only a short-time, about 3-4 years, and face several key threats, the main one being removal of habitat (vegetation clearing). Other key threats include being killed by people trying to protect their poultry, roads, predation by wild dogs and cats, poisoning by Cane Toads, hot fires that destroy hollow logs and disturbance to their food chain supply. As a result of these threats and the drastic declines in quoll numbers, the Spotted-tailed Quoll southern subspecies is listed as Endangered under Commonwealth legislation (*Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*) and Vulnerable under Queensland legislation (*Nature Conservation Act 1992*).

The Spotted-tailed Quoll is the largest native carnivore on mainland Australia. Its distribution and abundance has plummeted since European settlement and it is a great privilege to see one in the wild. If you do, please report your sighting (dead or alive) via the Quoll Sighting Form on the Quoll Seekers Network's website at www.wildlife.org.au or by calling the Quoll Seekers Network on (07) 3221 0194. This website has excellent information on quolls such as building quoll-proof poultry pens and quoll survey findings as well as some cute quoll merchandise and an 'adopt-a-quoll' program.

Article by Deborah Metters

Opinions expressed by contributors to the Land for Wildlife newsletter are not necessarily those of the Land for Wildlife program nor any of the supporting agencies.

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